



Be the Light

Senior Project

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for  
The Esther G. Maynor Honors College  
University of North Carolina at Pembroke

By

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Art  
May 6, 2020

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Emmaline Mansfield  
Honors College Scholar

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Date

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Heather McMillan Nakai  
Faculty Mentor

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Date

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Joshua Kalin Busman, Ph.D.  
Senior Project Coordinator

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Date

### Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the Town of Pembroke for allowing me to paint a mural in my home town and giving me the opportunity to give back to a community which has meant so much to me.

I would like to thank Darla Oxendine for allowing me to paint my mural on the side of her building and giving me the space to make my dreams come true.

I would like to thank my mentor and advisor, Heather McMillan Nakai, for all of her support and wisdom shared with me during the preparation and execution of my project.

I would like to thank both Dr. Teagan Decker, Gordon Byrd and the rest of the faculty and staff in the Honors College for their continuous support and encouragement throughout my years in the Honors College.

I would like to thank Dr. Joshua Busman, Senior Project Coordinating, for all of your guidance throughout the execution of my project.

I would like to thank Carlton and Alicia Mansfield for their monetary donations towards supplies and also for their constant support and encouragement to not give up on completing my senior project.

Thank you to Lydia Mansfield for her photography and videography of the process. Thank you to Cameron Mathis for his assistance in executing this project. Thank you to Alison Ridenhour for her monetary donation towards materials. Thank you to Pyper Harrell for coming out and painting for a few hours..

### Abstract

The purpose of this project is to bring positivity through a 12 foot by ten foot mural of the sun on Third St. in the town of Pembroke, NC. Despite all the negativity in the world, it is important for us to remember that there can always be some light. This mural is intended to be enjoyed by everyone who sees it including those who live in Pembroke, those who attend UNC Pembroke, and anyone who visits the town. Within this mural, there are also tributes to the Lumbee people who are indigenous to the Pembroke community. The importance of this project is to give art to the public, giving everyone an equal opportunity to enjoy this piece of artwork no matter age, race, gender or socio-economic town. This mural is intended to be a gift to the town of Pembroke. Due to unforeseen circumstances, as of May 6, 2020, the mural is not complete and there will be more added to this painting in the upcoming months.

### **Be the Light**

In order to understand a piece of artwork to its fullest, it is important to know who the artist is and what drives them to create art. I am Emmaline Austin Hardin Mansfield. I am a member of the Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina. I was born and raised in the small town of Pembroke, NC, the Land of the Lumbee. I was homeschooled until middle school and then graduated from Purnell Swett High School in Pembroke. I fell in love with art at a very young age and decided at the age of 13 that I was going to pursue some sort of career in the art world. I have now obtained a Bachelor of Arts in Art from the University of North Carolina at Pembroke. The community which makes up Pembroke and the surrounding areas has given me my identity and shaped me into the person I am today. I would be nothing without my community, and that is why I chose to paint a mural in my hometown.

Ever since I can remember, I have had a passion for my community and the people who are in it. A dream of mine has always been to find a way to give back to my community through my art. However, I never knew exactly how to give back to my community through my art until I was asked to paint a mural at a private social club in Pembroke. Painting a mural had always been a dream of mine, but I was not confident enough in my abilities to pursue that as a project on my own. After my first mural was received very well by my community, I decided I was confident enough to have my artwork “hanging” in the middle of Pembroke for thousands of people to see every day.

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This mural became the way that I turned my dream of using my artwork to give back to my community into a reality. It's the perfect combination of two of my biggest passions.

### **Purpose of Public Art**

Throughout the renaissance, baroque, rococo, impressionistic, and into the early contemporary movement, art has been reserved for those who can afford to go to a museum or purchase artwork for themselves such as the elite and wealthy. Starting in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, artists have begun to create conceptual artwork with a deeper meaning than beauty. Art began to be used to bring awareness to issues, talk about one's feelings or emotions, or talk about something that was going on in the world. The problem with this work being in galleries remains the same, that not everyone has the opportunity to see it, even if the art is created with the intent to make an emotional impact on a large amount of people. Instead of creating a gallery painting, I chose to create a piece of public artwork in my hometown of Pembroke, NC. Being that Robeson County is the poorest county in the state of North Carolina, the average person does not fit into the category of the elite or wealthy. I wanted to create a piece of artwork with an impactful meaning that everyone can experience and be inspired by no matter their socio-economic status.

### **Behind the Mural**

Gifted the town of Pembroke with a mural started off as a way to get art out into the public but grew into a way to bring positivity to the town in more ways than one. The world we currently live in is often filled with so much negativity that I wanted

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to place a positive image in town for people to drive or walk by and see. I decided to paint the sun in hope to remind people that even in the darkest of times there is always light to be found somewhere.

When it came time to paint my mural, COVID-19 hit the United States. As people began to stay in their houses, the majority of what I saw on social media and the internet was negative, making it the perfect time to start my mural, "Be The Light." My sister record videos of me painting and I posted them to my social media accounts in hopes to make someone smile that day. I can only hope that those who see my mural are reminded that they can create their own light in their worlds and their dreams can come true, too.

### **The Preparation and Execution**

All the research I did on painting murals suggested that I have the entire piece of artwork laid out ahead of time, but that is not how I create my artwork. I knew before painting my mural I was going to be painting the sun, and that somewhere in the mural I would feature the Lumbee River, but that is as far as I planned. I had several sketches of different ways to paint the sun and river but I was going to make it up as I went along. At the hardware store I collected colors of house paint for the sun, sky and river, then I gathered up my artist grade acrylic paints, as well as my sketches and headed to Third Street. Some of these were sketched out prior to beginning to paint the mural while others were sketched on site or as a reflection of my work that day.

### **Symbolism Within the Art**

Although this mural is intended to uplift everyone, I could not paint a mural in Pembroke without paying tribute to my Lumbee People. Featured at the bottom of this mural the sun shines down on our sacred Lumbee River with cypress trees; behind and in front of the river are pine trees. For many years the Lumbee people have identified themselves as the People of the Pines, a name I have identified with my entire life due to the fact that I grew up under the pine trees but now the Lumbee Tribe adapted the term People of the Dark Water. I wanted to include both pine trees and the river so that no matter which term someone identified with, they could still recognize the symbolism with this piece. The River, Pine Trees, and Swamp have given refuge and safety to the Lumbee people for hundreds of years. Above the sun I have created my own Southeastern Woodland floral design inspired by different traditional Native American artwork and beadwork. Southeastern Woodland designs are special to many different Indigenous tribes in the southeast because they represent who we are, and the land where we came from being that each floral design is a representation of flowers that are native to this region.

### **Materials Used**

I primed the wall with an all purpose Primer before getting started. I then used house paints and artist grade acrylics. I also used a combination of wall brushes and artist paint brushes to apply the paint. Once this design is complete I will place a sealer on top of it.

[References] [Works Cited] [Bibliography]