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Senior Thesis Seminar

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05 April 2022

**“Great Moments with Mr. Lincoln” - A “Disneyfied” Representation of President Lincoln
at the 1964 New York World’s Fair**

“We pay tribute here not to a man who lived a century ago, but to an individual who lives today in the hearts of all freedom-loving people. His prophetic words are as valid for our time as they were for his. And now, the skills of the sculptor and the talents of the artist will let us relive . . .

great moments with Mr. Lincoln” - “Great Moments with Mr. Lincoln,” 1964

It was May of 1964, and a young girl named Mary was visiting the New York World’s Fair with her parents.¹ Her father’s friend had attended the Fair in April and had insisted that the family makes the Illinois Pavilion their top priority, so once going through the gates, Mary’s father led the family to the right, going down past multiple strangely-shaped buildings. One building had a tree that appeared to be growing money from its branches, another was topped by a golden sun, and another was made up of giant white balls, a fluffy white cloud. But her father led them past all of these buildings with a claim that they would visit them later. Finally, after walking around a huge cube-shaped building, the family had arrived at their destination.

At first glance, Mary was not impressed by the Illinois Pavilion her father’s friend had spent nearly his entire postcard praising. In front of her stood a building made of red brick, a building similar to her elementary school. But in place of where a school’s name would have been, there was a sign proudly declaring this “Illinois Land of Lincoln.” The pavilion was small

¹ In this introductory story, all character are fictional, based off of primary sources from different attendees of the 1964 New York world’s Fair. Names were randomly generated from a base of popular names from the time period.

compared to the giant ones they had passed on the way and Mary wished she could go back to the cloud building - It had smelled wonderful. But her father was insistent on visiting the Illinois Pavilion first, so that is where they were going.

As the family entered the pavilion, they walked past the statue of Lincoln on his horse, stopping at a wall where a gigantic image of Lincoln appeared, along with a quote. Mary read from the large silver letters, speaking the words of the President. “As I would not be a slave so I would not be a master. This expresses my idea of democ-racy. Whatever differs from this to the extent of the difference is no democracy.”² Her father gave her an approving nod before gesturing towards the open space marking the entrance into the pavilion. The family entered the Exhibit Hall, which had not only photos of President Lincoln but screens telling the story of the state of Illinois and how it had influenced the 16th President’s life.

The family followed the crowd forming around one of the screens at the end of the room, where paintings of Lincoln were being shown along with a narrator talking about President Lincoln. “You are about to spend a few dramatic moments with Abraham Lincoln . . .”³ Mary’s ears perked up. Moments with Abraham Lincoln? How was the President going to appear in the pavilion in New York? The voice continued narrating the story of both Illinois and Lincoln, with images being shown on the screen, but Mary’s mind was racing with ideas of how Lincoln would be appearing.

“And now, ladies and gentlemen, if you will pass through the doors leading to our theater, you may spend more great moments with Mr. Lincoln.”⁴ The music swelled into a loud crescendo as the crowd began to file into the theater, Mary holding tightly to both of her parent’s

² Accessed February 23, 2022. <https://moldville.arcade-museum.com/24--lincoln-bust.html>.

³ Gary Gramling. *Great Moments with Mr Lincoln (1964 World’s Fair Version)*, 2017. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yeb-2gndjWc>.

⁴ Ibid.

hands so she wouldn't get separated in the crowd. The family began filing into the next empty row, a few rows back from the front. Mary's mother moved to the end of the row, patting the seat next to her for Mary to sit in. Mary's father settled in next to her, taking her hand and squeezing it as more people continued to file into the theater.

The room was shrouded in darkness, but Mary could see the orange curtains covering the back of the stage, with white columns in front of them. In the center of the stage was a chair placed upon a rug. To the chair's left was the American flag and on its right was a white flag that Mary's mother informed her was the flag of Illinois. A figure sat in a chair in between the two flags and Mary struggled to see the person's face in the darkness. "And now, the skills of the sculptor and the talents of the artist will let us relive great moments with Mr. Lincoln!"⁵ The patriotic music began to swell and, to Mary's amazement, the once still figure stood, rising to its full height from the decorated chair it had been resting in. A bright light illuminated its face and Mary gasped at the reveal. President Abraham Lincoln was standing right in front of her! She heard gasps from throughout the theater as other audience members realized what they were witnessing, and whispers of those who wanted to know whether it was really Lincoln brought back from the dead.

The figure gazed out into the crowd for a moment before opening his mouth and speaking, stating, "The world has never had a good definition of the word liberty, and the American people, just now, are much in want of one. We all declare for liberty; but in using the same word we do not all mean the same thing."⁶ Lincoln's head moved up and down as he spoke and his eyes blinked just as a human's eyes would. Was that really a person up on stage,

⁵ Gary Gramling. *Great Moments with Mr Lincoln (1964 World's Fair Version)*, 2017. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yeb-2gndjWc>.

⁶ fireurgunz. *Disneyland Goes to the New York World's Fair (Part 2)*, 2008. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mvfjvBO2l2Y>.

pretending to be President Lincoln? Mary leaned over to her mother and whispered the question into her ear, to which her mother shook her head, whispering back that it was actually a robot, an answer that shocked Mary. The Lincoln-like figure continued to speak on stage but Mary could barely focus on what was being said, still in awe at the magic unfolding in front of her. Her parents were staring attentively at the figure as well, taking in the words that the real Lincoln had written many years ago. Lincoln began to reach the end of his speech, proclaiming, “Let us have faith that right makes might, and in that faith, let us, to the end, dare to do our duty as we understand it,” and as the music played triumphantly he returned to his seated position, letting the darkness take over once again.

Mary and her family continued wandering around the pavilion. Her parents were commenting on the interesting curved architecture of the building, but Mary’s mind was still focused on the performance she had just witnessed. Could that figure on stage truly have been a robotic figure like the advertisements had claimed? It had to have been an actor - There was no way a robot could look so much like a human. Mary voiced her thoughts to her parents, who laughed, telling her that it would be impossible for a human to perform so perfectly for each performance every day during the Fair.

But not every fairgoer was having the same experience as Mary and her family. Just weeks before, when President Lyndon B. Johnson was giving his speech as part of the celebration of the World’s Fair opening, Tammy and her family were not as interested in seeing the robotic performance of a former president. Instead, they were focused on making the current president hear their voices, ensuring that their fight was being broadcast to the rest of the nation. As an African-American, Tammy and her family were a part of the Civil Rights Movement,

people fighting for basic rights that had been denied for years. Tammy's parents were a member of CORE, an activist group that had formed in the 1940s.

Tammy's parents each handed over their \$2 for admission and Tammy did the same, handing her \$1 bill to an attendant to receive her ticket. The trio walked into the Fair, meeting up with a group of fellow CORE members and beginning to walk over to the stadium, the Singer Bowl, where President Johnson was set to give a speech as part of the opening ceremonies. While others were stopping along the path toward the stadium, staring in awe at the unusual buildings and exhibitions surrounding them, Tammy and the group walked with a purpose, ignoring the glitz and glamor. These were all distractions, playthings to make white Americans forget about the struggles that were occurring in their own neighborhoods. The group was taking a different path than the main crowd at the fair, avoiding the parade of states and nations crowding the main path from the entrance to the stadium. Others would protest in those locations. Tammy would be going to the stadium as part of the CORE group protesting President Johnson himself.

A white man took to the stage, Robert Moses, the president of the corporation. Tammy's father started to boo but his wife slapped his side, muttering something about how it "wasn't time yet."

"We invite visitors from every state and land, solicit their friendship, and devoutly hope that in presenting here, this Olympics of Progress, we shall grow closer together in our shrinking globe and thus, in the end, promote peace."⁷ Tammy clapped politely at the short speech but was quickly distracted by the new man taking the stage, President Johnson.

⁷ British Pathé. *President Johnson Opens New York World's Fair (1964)*, 2014. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7F4HEE6nlvo>.

“This fair represents the most promising of our hopes. It gathers together from 80 countries, the achievements of industry, the health of nations, the creations of man. This fair shows us what man at his most creative and constructive is capable of doing.”

“Now!” One of the CORE activists hissed, and the people around Tammy rose to their feet, beginning a chant. “Jim Crow must go!”⁸ The crowd shouted, overpowering President Johnson and his microphone. Tammy screamed until she lost her voice, holding hands with her parents and feeling the support of her fellow protestors. But as she chanted, she noticed the man who had first spoken, Moses, give some kind of hand signal, and suddenly a group of men in uniform emerged from the corners of the stadium, slowly advancing towards the crowd. Tammy immediately pulled on her father’s sleeve, pointing to the men.

“Tammy, you have to go!” Her father said in response, pushing Tammy away from the crowd. “It’s not safe for you here, go back home. Go meet up with some of the others in another part of the park and make your way out of here.”

“I’m not leaving without you!” Tammy cried back as the men in uniform advanced closer, menacingly hitting their clubs against their gloves and glaring at the protestors. Then suddenly, chaos. The New York 1964 World’s Fair may have had “Peace Through Understanding” as its motto, but as Tammy was being shoved into a police car, separated from her family and friends, she could not help but think that these words were ironic, spitting on the African American people and the suffering they were going through based on decades of ignorance.⁹ Even though Tammy was in pain, she could not help but feel satisfied. The voices of African-Americans had been heard, fulfilling CORE’s goal.¹⁰

⁸ Democracy Now! *Protesting the 1964 World’s Fair: Activists Recall Effort to Highlight Civil Rights, Labor Struggles*, 2014. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3wOuBne-V2o>.

⁹ University of Vermont. *Forgotten Conflict: Remembering the 1964 World’s Fair*, 2015. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5FW6D73cbFQ>.

¹⁰ While the CORE protest may have made some news at the time, LBJ did not respond to the actions that took place at the World’s Fair.

The stories of both of these young women are based on primary and secondary sources on the 1964 World's Fair with the purpose of creating a narrative for readers to understand exactly the kind of impact that the event and its attractions had on American society during the 1960s. But in order to understand the experiences of both Mary and Tammy at the 1964 New York World's Fair, one must have context. This will be gained through introductions to both Abraham Lincoln and Walt Disney, a summary of the concept of the world's fairs and their purpose, and a brief recapitulation of the Civil Rights Movement and its current state in 1964. Once one has an understanding of the context of "Great Moments with Mr. Lincoln" at the 1964 World's Fair, one can examine the aspects that led to Disney having an attraction at the World's Fair, asking questions including why was Disney involved in the World's Fair? Why was Abraham Lincoln specifically chosen as part of the attraction?

Continuing with the focus on Lincoln, one can move on to how Disney created his own version of the former president to fulfill his company's agenda while attracting visitors to the World's Fair. There were many different ways that Disney could have represented Lincoln, but he ended up choosing one specific representation that would be a symbol for not only the state of Illinois but The Walt Disney Company as a whole. One can go into not only Walt Disney's investment in a certain version of Lincoln that excluded many Americans but why Disney, the corporation, would have had an interest in putting forward a specific Lincoln.

Ultimately, one will be able to answer this question - What was Disney's goal in creating his own version of Abraham Lincoln? Disney aspired to create a representation of the Lincoln of his childhood, one that for the values that Disney himself stood for. By creating this "Disneyfied" version of Abraham Lincoln, Walt Disney erased key components of Lincoln's life

and values, including the subjects of race and slavery. Disney dreamed that his version of Lincoln would be a symbol of hope and unity during a time of tension and chaos.

A Summary of Lincoln and His Public Image

“The name of Abraham Lincoln . . . will still hold its place in the memories of men, and find eloquent tongues to discourse of his virtues and hold up his character for admiration and imitation.” - Frederick Douglass, 1865¹¹

Fortunately for historians, Lincoln was open about talking about his life and how he had grown since childhood, publishing an autobiography in 1860 and having many descriptions of different points in his life. These primary sources, along with biographies and other secondary sources, have been used over the years to create an image of Lincoln that has continued to evolve. Abraham Lincoln was born on February 12th, 1809, in a log cabin near Hodgenville, Kentucky, before being brought to a homestead on Knob Creek at the age of two. To quote Lincoln himself, “It is a great piece of folly to attempt to make anything out of my early life. It can all be condensed into a single sentence and that sentence you will find in Gray’s Elogy - ‘The short and simple annals of the poor.’”¹²

By 1837, Lincoln was already debating the subject of slavery, stating that “[the] Institution of slavery is founded on both injustice and bad policy, but the promulgation of abolition doctrines tends rather to increase than abate its evils.”¹³ This statement would be exemplary of his beliefs on slavery at the time. Lincoln sided with the American Colonization Society, a group that wanted slavery to be abolished, but that also wanted the freed slaves to be

¹¹ Wilson, Kirt H. 2010. “Debating the Great Emancipator: Abraham Lincoln and Our Public Memory.” *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 13 (3): 455–79.

¹² Thomas, Benjamin Platt. *Abraham Lincoln: A Biography*. Electronic resource. Southern Illinois University Press pbk. ed. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2008.
<http://www.columbia.edu/cgi-bin/cul/resolve?clio14017522>.

¹³ Donald, David Herbert. *Lincoln*. Simon and Schuster, 1995.

sent to Liberia instead of being integrated into American society.¹⁴ When asked about his politics later in life, Lincoln proudly declared that he was “an old line Whig, a discipline of Henry Clay.”¹⁵ He supported the modernization of the economy of the United States and wanted the government to help fund projects, including railroads, that would lead to urbanization across the country.

Beginning in the 1850s, Lincoln would emerge as a Republican Party leader. The new party was focused on antislavery and was built out of a combination of former Whig, Free Soil, Liberty, and Democratic party members. In 1858, Lincoln went up against Senator Stephen Douglas, a Democrat, for a Senate seat to represent Illinois, participating in fierce debates that would become some of the most famous debates in American history. Lincoln would lose the Senate seat but would quickly move on to starting a campaign to run for President of the United States. After campaigning and making dozens of speeches across the country, Lincoln would be elected the 16th President of the United States on November 6th, 1860.¹⁶ Unfortunately, Lincoln’s election would be the final straw for many in the South. Six states would form the Confederate States of America, adopting their own constitution and declaring themselves a new nation. During his inaugural address on March 4th, 1861, Lincoln declared that he would not attempt to abolish slavery in the South, attempting to keep the United States together. This attempt would fail, with Confederate troops firing on Union Troops at Fort Sumter in Charleston, South Carolina, on April 12th, 1861, officially starting the Civil War.

¹⁴ Thomas, Benjamin Platt. *Abraham Lincoln: A Biography*. Electronic resource. Southern Illinois University Press pbk. ed. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2008.
<http://www.columbia.edu/cgi-bin/cul/resolve?clio14017522>.

¹⁵ Donald, David Herbert. *Lincoln*. Simon and Schuster, 1995.

¹⁶ Thomas, Benjamin Platt. *Abraham Lincoln: A Biography*. Electronic resource. Southern Illinois University Press pbk. ed. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2008.
<http://www.columbia.edu/cgi-bin/cul/resolve?clio14017522>.

As President, Lincoln would assume the role of Commander in Chief, fighting to preserve the union and win the war against the Confederacy. One of Lincoln's most remembered policies from the Civil War was the Emancipation Proclamation, which was made effective on January 1st, 1863. This proclamation would ensure that all slaves in the Union states would be freed. Later, Lincoln would give a statement, saying that "I never, in my life, felt more certain that I was doing right, than I do in signing this paper."¹⁷ In 1864, Lincoln would be re-elected President, giving his second inaugural address on March 4th, 1865, a speech which, according to historian Mark Noll, is "among the small handful of semi-sacred texts by which Americans conceive their place in the world."¹⁸ As the Civil War started to draw to a close, Lincoln began working on the Reconstruction of the South, attempting to figure out what would be done with the Confederates and freed slaves. His goal was to keep the United States together, so his concept of Reconstruction did not attack the Confederacy or the South as a whole. The Civil War would come to an end on April 9th, 1865, with Robert E. Lee surrendering to Ulysses S. Grant at the Appomattox Courthouse in Virginia.¹⁹

Tragically, before Reconstruction could truly begin after the end of the Civil War, Abraham Lincoln would be assassinated by John Wilkes Booth, an actor and Confederate spy.²⁰ Booth would shoot Lincoln at 10:15 PM on April 14th, 1865, at Ford's Theatre in Washington, D.C. during a performance of the play *Our American Cousin*. Lincoln was taken to the Petersen House but would pass away on the morning of April 15th after being in a coma since the bullet

¹⁷ Donald, David Herbert. *Lincoln*. Simon and Schuster, 1995.

¹⁸ Noll, Mark A. *America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln*. Oxford University Press, USA, 2002.

¹⁹ Thomas, Benjamin Platt. *Abraham Lincoln: A Biography*. Electronic resource. Southern Illinois University Press pbk. ed. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2008.
<http://www.columbia.edu/cgi-bin/cul/resolve?clio14017522>.

²⁰ Donald, David Herbert. *Lincoln*. Simon and Schuster, 1995.

entered the back of his head. Booth would run away and be killed on a farm in Virginia two weeks after the assassination.²¹

Even now, over 150 years after his death, Lincoln continues to be perceived in different ways by the American people. The public image of Lincoln has changed and developed over the past century and a half. Abraham Lincoln has remained “an active presence in our collective imagination and memory,” not just a simple figure in history.²² And as an active presence, different representations of Lincoln across history have led to different interpretations. To quote James Oakes, “The melancholy Lincoln explains the compassionate Lincoln. The racist Lincoln explains Lincoln the colonizationist. Lincoln the lawyer explains Lincoln the commander in chief. Lincoln the brilliant wordsmith explains Lincoln the brilliant politician.”²³

Historians have their own interpretations of Lincoln that continue to influence his public image, as what Barry Schwartz and Howard Schuman name “memory scholarship” continues to transform as opinions on Lincoln are shaped.²⁴ Lerone Bennett argues in his book, *Forced into Glory: Abraham Lincoln’s White Dream*, that Lincoln was actually a white supremacist who did not believe in the equality of black and white people.²⁵ Bennett, was in the minority, challenging the traditional historian’s viewpoint of Lincoln, which led to historians defending their own interpretation of Lincoln as a response to Bennett’s work. But Bennett is not the only historian to share a more negative viewpoint of Lincoln. John McKee Bar’s *Loathing Lincoln: An American*

²¹ Thomas, Benjamin Platt. *Abraham Lincoln: A Biography*. Electronic resource. Southern Illinois University Press pbk. ed. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2008. <http://www.columbia.edu/cgi-bin/cul/resolve?clio14017522>.

²² Wilson, Kirt H. 2010. “Debating the Great Emancipator: Abraham Lincoln and Our Public Memory.” *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 13 (3): 455–79.

²³ Oakes, James. "Review Essay: Lincoln and His Commas." *Civil War History* 54, no. 2 (2008): 176. *Gale Academic OneFile Select* (accessed April 5, 2022). <https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A180861434/EAIM?u=columbiau&sid=summon&xid=a6af7ac9>.

²⁴ Schwartz, Barry. 2009. *Abraham Lincoln in the Post-Heroic Era: History and Memory in Late Twentieth-Century America*. University of Chicago Press. <https://doi.org/10.7208/chicago/9780226741901.001.0001>.

²⁵ Bennett, Lerone. 2000. *Forced into Glory: Abraham Lincoln’s White Dream*. Chicago: Johnson Pub. Co.

Tradition from the Civil War to the Present goes into detail on how anti-Lincoln sentiments have existed since his time in office, even detailing how distrust of Lincoln was planted in the minds of civil rights activists.²⁶ But in the 1950s and 1960s, Lincoln’s image would again be transformed, turning the man into a believer in an equal society, with activists striving to complete his “unfinished work” of ensuring equality for black people in the United States.²⁷

But along with information on Lincoln and his public image, one must also understand the man behind “Great Moments with Mr. Lincoln,” a man who built an empire on storytelling. Who exactly was Walt Disney?

An Introduction to Walt Disney

“Ever since I was a small boy in Illinois, I’ve had a great, personal admiration for Abraham Lincoln” - Walt Disney

On December 5th, 1901, Walter Elias Disney was born to Elias Disney and Flora Call Disney in Chicago, Illinois, the “Land of Lincoln,” nearly a century after the birth of the former President.²⁸ The family, including Walt’s four siblings, remained in the city for around five years before moving to Marceline, Missouri.²⁹ Walter, called “Walt,” spent his childhood years in Missouri on a farm. He also worked on his drawing skills during this time, a formative period that would go on to influence his later work.³⁰ Later in his life, Disney would claim that Marceline was his true home, emphasizing the important role the place played in his life, giving

²⁶ Barr, John McKee. 2014. *Loathing Lincoln ; an American Tradition from the Civil War to the Present*. Conflicting Worlds: New Dimensions of the American Civil War. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press.

²⁷ Schwartz, Barry. 2009. *Abraham Lincoln in the Post-Heroic Era: History and Memory in Late Twentieth-Century America*. University of Chicago Press. <https://doi.org/10.7208/chicago/9780226741901.001.0001>.

²⁸ “Illinois State Slogan | Land of Lincoln.” Accessed January 19, 2022.

<https://statesymbolsusa.org/symbol-official-item/illinois/state-cultural-heritage/land-lincoln>.

²⁹ “Walt Disney, Up Close | American Experience | PBS.” Accessed January 19, 2022.

<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/walt-disney-close/>.

³⁰ Garrison, Libby, and Andi Wang. “WALT DISNEY TIMELINE.” The Walt Disney Family Museum. Accessed January 19, 2022. https://www.waltdisney.org/sites/default/files/Walt%20Disney%20Timeline_0.pdf.

him the opportunity to learn from both his school and his time working on the farm.³¹

Unfortunately, due to health complications, Elias Disney had to sell the family farm, leading the Disneys to move to Kansas City, Missouri, a few hours away from Marceline.³² To help raise money for his family, Disney joined his father in delivering newspapers around the city as a part of the “Kansas City Star” Route No. 145, with Walt delivering to around 50 customers.

Interestingly enough, his career as a newsboy would lead to his love for film and the entertainment industry as a whole. A Newsboy Appreciation Day was held in 1916 in Kansas City and Disney was given the opportunity to watch the silent film, “Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs,” which, according to Disney himself, “was the perfect story.”³³

But in 1917, when Disney was sixteen, the family would return to Chicago, the city where Walt would continue his education and begin learning more about drawing at the Chicago Academy of Fine Arts. His love for drawing would lead him into the world of animation and he would establish the Disney Brothers Studios in Hollywood in 1923 with one of his brothers, Roy. The studio was renamed Walt Disney Studios and would move in 1926.³⁴

Even from a young age, Walt Disney had an obsession with the 16th President of the United States, Abraham Lincoln. It is unsurprising that the man would have such a strong influence on Disney. During the first decade of 1900, people celebrated the centennial anniversary of Lincoln’s birth, commemorating the former president with different symbols including the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C., the Lincoln Penny, and dozens of celebrations across the country. But unlike other American citizens who may have simply

³¹ “Walt Disney, Up Close | American Experience | PBS.” Accessed January 19, 2022. <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/walt-disney-close/>.

³² Garrison, Libby, and Andi Wang. “WALT DISNEY TIMELINE.” The Walt Disney Family Museum. Accessed January 19, 2022. https://www.waltdisney.org/sites/default/files/Walt%20Disney%20Timeline_0.pdf.

³³ Disney, Oh My. “The Wonderful World of WALT: Walt Disney, Newsie! | Insider.” Oh My Disney, May 30, 2012. <https://ohmy.disney.com/insider/2012/05/30/the-wonderful-world-of-walt-walt-disney-newsie/>.

³⁴ Garrison, Libby, and Andi Wang. “WALT DISNEY TIMELINE.” The Walt Disney Family Museum. Accessed January 19, 2022. https://www.waltdisney.org/sites/default/files/Walt%20Disney%20Timeline_0.pdf.

acknowledged Lincoln's greatness, Disney became enamored with the 16th President and his work.³⁵ As part of a school project in 1911, a ten-year-old Walt Disney decided to emulate his hero by dressing up as him, stovepipe hat and all, and presenting the famous Gettysburg Address to his classmates. His teacher, thoroughly impressed with his speech, would bring him to the principal, who then delivered Disney to each classroom in the school, giving encore performances to his fellow students.³⁶

As stated by the Walt Disney Family Museum, "the memory of this triumphant experience [his impression of Lincoln] stayed with Walt for decades and eventually dovetailed with his desire to create new attractions for Disneyland, even after the park had opened."³⁷ When looking at Disney's plans to expand Disneyland, one can find plans from 1956 for "Liberty Street," a section of the park dedicated to the colonial period of American history. Liberty Street would have included thirteen buildings, a tribute to the original thirteen colonies of the United States. There would be skilled workers performing tasks common to the Revolutionary War era including blacksmithing.³⁸ But the highlight of the expansion of Liberty Street would have been the main attraction, "One Nation Under God," an attraction that would present a film of American history with wax figures of each of America's presidents.³⁹ Liberty Street would stand for American ideals, with the colonial period as a setting for revolutionary inspiration that would drive the future, as seen in "One Nation Under God."

³⁵ "Great Moments With Mr. Lincoln || The Disneyland Chronicles - Year Twelve // 1965 - YouTube." Accessed January 19, 2022. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RC0BOaz5k1Q>.

³⁶ "Look Closer: Great Moments with Mr. Lincoln | The Walt Disney Family Museum." Accessed January 19, 2022. <https://www.waltdisney.org/blog/look-closer-great-moments-mr-lincoln>.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ "Disney Extinct Attractions: Liberty Street and Edison Square - LaughingPlace.Com." Accessed January 19, 2022. <https://www.laughingplace.com/w/blogs/disney-extinct-attractions/2018/03/22/disney-extinct-attractions-liberty-street-edison-square/>.

³⁹ "Look Closer: Great Moments with Mr. Lincoln | The Walt Disney Family Museum." Accessed January 19, 2022. <https://www.waltdisney.org/blog/look-closer-great-moments-mr-lincoln>.

Blaine Gibson, one of Disney's animators who had learned sculpting during his time at The Walt Disney Studios, was given the assignment of bringing the presidents to life, creating busts of each of the thirty-four men. Unsurprisingly, Disney requested that Gibson begin the project by sculpting Abraham Lincoln's head, based on both his own interest in the man and the general population's admiration and recognition.⁴⁰ As more technology became available over the years, Disney and his staff members continued to work on developing the Abraham Lincoln sculpture, eventually evolving the still wax figure into an Audio-Animatronic.

The 1964 New York World's Fair

"The basic purpose of the Fair is to help achieve 'Peace Through Understanding,' that is, to assist in educating the peoples of the world as to the interdependence of nations and the need for universal and lasting peace." - Robert Moses in a 1961 New York World's Fair Progress Report⁴¹

World's Fairs gave different cities around the world the opportunity to create a glorious exhibition space that would display new innovations and spectacles. But they were not only spectacles to be viewed with awe. The Columbia University Libraries website "World's Fairs: A Global History of Expositions" states, the fairs "were not just exhibitors of the new and exciting, they were instigators in their own rights . . . Islands were connected, swamps were made solid and features that are now metonymic to their cityscapes . . . were conceived, designed and constructed for world's fairs."⁴² World's fairs were interdisciplinary, with features ranging from difficult concepts like globalization and machinery to more family-friendly items like hot dogs and Ferris wheels. Along with a range of different topics and exhibitions, there was a range of

⁴⁰ "Great Moments With Mr. Lincoln || The Disneyland Chronicles - Year Twelve // 1965 - YouTube." Accessed January 19, 2022. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RC0BOaz5k1Q>.

⁴¹ Tirella, Joseph. 2013. *Tomorrow-Land: The 1964-65 World's Fair and the Transformation of America*. Rowman & Littlefield.

⁴² "World's Fairs - Adam Matthew Digital." Accessed February 19, 2022. <https://www-worldsfairs-amdigital-co-uk.ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/>.

attendees. Children could attend the fair for a lower price than adults, giving more families the opportunity to visit different exhibitions as a family.

The 1964-1965 New York World's Fair was created in the 1950s, with New York politicians and businessmen looking to make an even grander World's Fair than the one held in 1939. The man who had originally suggested another World's Fair, Robert Kopple, was inspired to bring this suggestion to light after realizing the lack of knowledge his young daughters had of the world.⁴³ This new World's Fair would be held in the same location, Flushing Meadows Corona Park in the Queens borough. For the men organizing the World's Fair, "it was going to show the world that New York City was the center of American business, and that America was the center of the world's economy."⁴⁴ Another goal of the World's Fair, especially with its slogan of "Peace Through Understanding," was a reflection of fears of the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union. Nikita Khrushchev had installed nuclear missiles in Cuba, leading Kennedy to form a naval blockade around Cuba, attempting to prevent more nuclear weapons from being brought to the island. There would be no nuclear war, but tensions were still high, and many were fearful of the Soviet Union and communism in general.⁴⁵ The 1964 New York World's Fair was an attempt to continue messages of world peace while still displaying the power of the United States to the world. Even though the 1964 New York World's Fair is not considered to be a success by many historians, and certainly not the "greatest single event in history" as proclaimed by Fair officials, it still remains one of the most popular World's Fairs and affected many.⁴⁶

⁴³ Tirella, Joseph. 2013. *Tomorrow-Land: The 1964-65 World's Fair and the Transformation of America*. Rowman & Littlefield.

⁴⁴ Cotter, Bill, and Bill Young. 2004. *The 1964-1965 New York World's Fair*. Arcadia Publishing.

⁴⁵ Tirella, Joseph. 2013. *Tomorrow-Land: The 1964-65 World's Fair and the Transformation of America*. Rowman & Littlefield.

⁴⁶ Samuel, Lawrence R. 2007. *The End of the Innocence: The 1964-1965 New York World's Fair*. Electronic resource. 1st ed. Syracuse, N.Y: Syracuse University Press.
<http://www.columbia.edu/cgi-bin/cul/resolve?clio14070102>.

In order to understand the 1964 New York World's Fair and its complicated relationship with race, one must understand Robert Moses. Moses (1888-1981) "forever changed both the city and the state" of New York. Even though he was "never elected to public office, he was responsible for more public works projects than any of the elected officials under whom he served."⁴⁷ Between 1924 and 1968 he would hold 12 different positions in city and state jobs, leading to him holding power over the construction of a variety of projects including roads, recreational areas, public housing, La Guardia airport, and others. In terms of recreation, 668 playgrounds, 288 tennis courts, and 673 baseball diamonds were constructed by Moses and his administration.⁴⁸ While some would praise Moses for his recreational projects that shaped parks across New York, many during his time and in more recent years have pointed out his more problematic choices throughout his career. Working-class neighborhoods were being destroyed as Moses plowed through their homes to create projects like Lincoln Center, Columbus Circle, and the United Nations. Many, including Jane Jacobs, author of *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1963), protested against Moses and his actions, fighting to prevent more land from being seized and destroyed by the administration.⁴⁹

Robert Moses had been named the President of the New York World's Fair in 1960 and was visiting different designers to see how the development of pavilions for the fair was going. Moses met with Disney in 1962 at WED Enterprises, the location where Disney and his Imagineers were working on exhibitions for pavilions sponsored by General Electric (GE) and Ford. During his visit, Moses was astounded by the Audio-Animatronic prototype that was being developed into a replica of Abraham Lincoln, in awe of the technology. Moses would insist that

⁴⁷ Cotter, Bill, and Bill Young. 2004. *The 1964-1965 New York World's Fair*. Arcadia Publishing.

⁴⁸ Reitano, Joanne. 2015. *New York State: Peoples, Places, and Priorities: A Concise History with Sources*. New York: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203573280>.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

Disney create another pavilion for 1964 that would utilize the Audio-Animatronic he was so enamored by. The State of Illinois Pavilion would sponsor Disney's presentation of Lincoln, as the entire pavilion was going to be a tribute to the 16th president.⁵⁰

The Civil Rights Movement at the World's Fair

“While millions of dollars are being spent on the World's Fair, thousands of Black and Puerto Rican people are suffering.” - Joint statement between the Brooklyn and Bronx chapters of CORE, 1964⁵¹

On July 13th, 1963, Louis Lomax, an African American journalist, gave a speech at Queens College. During that speech, he suggest that a “drive-in” form of protest could be used at the upcoming New York World's Fair in an effort to gain the attention of Robert Moses, with the ultimate goal of integrating the construction trade in New York City.⁵² This was not the first time that Moses had been accused of racism, and it certainly would not be the last. Robert Caro, an American journalist, wrote in *The Power Broker: Robert Moses and the Fall of New York* that Moses would destroy underprivileged and minority communities across New York City. Caro writes that

Moses “began to limit access by buses; he instructed Shapiro to build the bridges across his new parkways low — too low for buses to pass. Bus trips therefore had to be made on local roads, making the trips discouraging long and arduous. For Negroes, who he considered inherently ‘dirty,’ there were further measures. Buses needed permits to

⁵⁰ “Great Moments With Mr. Lincoln || The Disneyland Chronicles - Year Twelve // 1965 - YouTube.” Accessed January 19, 2022. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RC0BOaz5k1Q>.

⁵¹ Tirella, Joseph. 2013. *Tomorrow-Land: The 1964-65 World's Fair and the Transformation of America*. Rowman & Littlefield.

⁵² "Threaten 'Drive in' Protests at Site of 1964-65 World Fair," *The Chicago Defender*, Jul 13, 1963, 2, <https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/threaten-drive-protests-at-site-1964-65-world/docview/493092187/se-2?accountid=196683>.

enter state parks; buses chartered by Negro groups found it very difficult to obtain permits, especially to Moses's beloved Jones Beach; most were shunted off to parks many miles further on Long Island. And even in those parks, buses carrying Negro groups were discouraged from using 'white' beach areas — the best beaches — by a system Shapiro calls 'flagging'; the handful of Negro lifeguards (there were only a handful of Negro employees among the thousands employed by the Long Island State Park Commission) were all stationed at distant, least developed beaches. Moses was convinced that Negroes did not like cold water; the temperature at the pool at Jones Beach was deliberately icy to keep Negroes out.⁵³

Caro's arguments are not simply assuming that Moses was racist. In a Tweet from November 9th, 2021, the New-York Historical Society published photos of an object from one of their exhibits, a page of tallies. Caro had gone to the entrance of the Jones Beach parking lot in 1967 and tallied the visitors based on race, illustrating an imbalance that proved the plan to keep African Americans and others who depend on public transportation out of areas like Jones Beach.⁵⁴ And this was the same man who would be controlling the 1964 New York World's Fair, making it understandable that African Americans were ready to protest the event.

Before the World's Fair opened in New York, the Brooklyn Chapter of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) decided to host a "Stall-In." While the more common "sit-ins" consisted of African Americans performing nonviolent civil disobedience by sitting in segregated areas of different places, especially lunch counters at diners, a "stall-in" consisted of groups of people

⁵³ Caro, Robert A. *The Power Broker: Robert Moses and the Fall of New York*. 1st ed. New York: Knopf, 1974.

⁵⁴ New-York Historical Society. "When Writing 'The Power Broker,' #RobertCaro Wanted Hard Evidence of the Damaging Impact That #RobertMoses Had on New York and New Yorkers. <https://t.co/EI50I1mi9k>." Tweet. @NYHistory (blog), November 9, 2021. <https://twitter.com/NYHistory/status/1458124305313632269>.

attempting to stop traffic using their vehicles as “barricades.” CORE was able to get around 2,000 people to help block several roads, bridges, and tunnels that were being used to access Queens, the borough hosting the New York World’s Fair. The “stall-in” was going to be held on April 22nd, 1964, the same time that President Lyndon B. Johnson was going to be arriving at the World’s Fair for its opening.

At the National CORE Meeting on April 11th, 1964, a former chairman of the Brooklyn chapter of CORE, Oliver Leeds, argued that having a “stall-in” at the opening of the World’s Fair would grab the attention of people across the United States, an event that might even inspire other African Americans to take a stand against injustice, especially in New York City itself.⁵⁵ CORE would certainly attain its goal of gaining the nation’s attention with its “stall-in.” Even before the event itself, a media frenzy had already begun, with the Mayor of New York, Robert Wagner, arguing that the protest would not be addressing “those responsible for discrimination,” believing that protesting the World’s Fair was not attacking those who were making the racist decisions.⁵⁶ Many New Yorkers and national media outlets agreed with Mayor Wagner’s condemnation, with President Johnson himself declaring that stalling roadways was unlawful.⁵⁷ Even those who supported the Civil Rights Movement were uneasy about the “stall-in,” with one reporter stating that the protest would “only cause an irksome, and possibly dangerous, disorder on the highways without making any civil rights advances.”⁵⁸

On April 15th, 1964, a new law in New York City was drafted, making it “illegal to run out of gas on expressways, bridges, and tunnels,” a law directly stopping any attempt at a

⁵⁵ Minutes of the National CORE Steering Committee Meeting, 1, 1 April 1964, CORE Papers, 1980, IV:5-984.

⁵⁶ Tamar Jacoby. “Someone Else’s House: America’s Unfinished Struggle for Integration,” *The New York Times* (The New York Times, 1998) <https://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/books/first/j/jacoby-house.html>

⁵⁷ “Powell Backing ‘Stall-In’ At World’s Fair.” *Chicago Daily Defender (Daily Edition) (1960-1973)*, Apr 20, 1964; 3.

⁵⁸ WMCA, “Radio Editorials,” Apr. 14, 15, 1964, AG-BCORE, box 4, folder 10. Cited by Brian Purnell in *Fighting Jim Crow in the County of Kings: the Congress of Racial Equality in Brooklyn*. Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 2015.

“stall-in.”⁵⁹ Along with this new law, the New York City Police Department was preparing to have thirty-two tow trucks at the ready in case any vehicles were stalling or breaking down on roads.⁶⁰

But momentum for the movement was continuing - 2,000 people had already agreed to participate in the “stall-in,” ready to break the law to prove their point and fight against injustice. Figures of the Civil Rights Movement including Malcolm X, Rep. Adam Clayton Powell, and Rev. Milton A. Galamison met on April 16th, 1964, to discuss the “stall-in,” attempting to figure out the logistics of the protest, showing their support through their planning.⁶¹ And the “stall-in” was not the only form of protest used against the World’s Fair. Other protests were also going to take place on the grounds of the World’s Fair as well as at subway and Long Island Railroad stations.⁶²

Unfortunately, the “stall-in” was not as successful as the Brooklyn CORE had hoped it would be. Few of the 2,000 who had pledged to participate showed up, presumably out of fear of arrest or worse, severe injuries and even death. The New York City Police Department reported no major traffic jams, and those who did attempt to stall their cars were arrested and their vehicles were removed from the road as quickly as possible. Other forms of protest, however, continued, with protestors chanting and picketing on the grounds of the World’s Fair as President Johnson gave a speech at the United States Pavilion. But these protests were not without struggle, as many were attacked by the police, ironic for a World’s Fair with the motto of “Peace

⁵⁹ “It’s Illegal To Run Out Of Gas In N.Y.C. Now.” *Chicago Daily Defender (Daily Edition) (1960-1973)*, Apr 15, 1964; 26.

⁶⁰ W. Apple Jr. 1964. "City Calls Talks Seeking To Avert 'Stall-in' At Fair: Core Aides Asked to Parley Today – Integration Plan Drawn By Rights Panel Talk on 'Stall-In' is Called By the City." *New York Times (1923-Current File)*, Apr 16; 1.

⁶¹ “New Rights Group to Meet Saturday: World’s Fair Protest Will be Discussed, *Philadelphia Tribune*, Apr 18, 1964.

⁶² “CORE Stall-in at 1964 New York World’s Fair · CORE Stall-in at 1964 New York World’s Fair.” Accessed February 2, 2022. <https://corestallin1964.omeka.net/exhibits/show/stallinexhibit>.

Through Understanding.” Approximately 200 protestors total were arrested, including the national director of CORE, James Farmer.⁶³ But despite all of these protests, the World’s Fair continued, and “Great Moments with Mr. Lincoln” would make its debut.

The Origins of “Great Moments with Mr. Lincoln”

“We wanted to bring to the people of today, the inspiring words of the man who held this nation together during its moment of greatest crisis.” - Walt Disney, 1964⁶⁴

When looking at “Great Moments with Mr. Lincoln” in the Illinois Pavilion, there tends to be a common question that appears - Why did Walt Disney have an attraction at the New York 1964 World’s Fair? But, Disney did not just have one attraction at the World’s Fair - He had four. Each was sponsored by a different company or government. “Great Moments with Mr. Lincoln” was sponsored by the State of Illinois, the “Magic Skyway” was sponsored by Ford, “Carousel of Progress” was created with General Electric, and “It’s a Small World” was built in collaboration with Pepsi-Cola to help benefit UNICEF.⁶⁵ Disney had a talent for drawing the attention of children and adults alike, as proven by the success of Disneyland, which explained the many companies wanting to sponsor attractions of his at the World’s Fair.

But why was Lincoln chosen? Why not have a character that represented Disney and his theme parks, like Mickey Mouse? The presentation could have simply been an entertaining show, encouraging children to have fun, hopefully persuading parents to buy the family tickets for Disneyland. One of the main reasons Lincoln was chosen was for economic purposes. All of

⁶³ Edward T. Folliard. 1964. "Johnson Opens Fair Amid Rights Din; Stall-in Plans Fail: President Ignores Chanters, Talks on Peace, Equality Envisions the Future Flop Down Near President Sprawled Demonstrators Chant as LBJ Pictures Better World some Ignore Anthem Fair Grounds Drenched Over 200 Arrested in Series of Wild Demonstrations Subway Train Halted Rights Disorders Mar N.Y. Fair Opening; Over 200 Arrested; Stall-in Fizzles Cars Quickly Removed 5000 Policemen Ready Cattle Prod Exhibited," *The Washington Post, Times Herald* , Apr 23, 1964; 3.

⁶⁴ “Presidential Salute | The Walt Disney Family Museum.” n.d. Accessed April 4, 2022. <https://www.waltdisney.org/blog/presidential-salute>.

⁶⁵ “Look Closer: 1964 New York World’s Fair | The Walt Disney Family Museum.” Accessed February 25, 2022. <https://www.waltdisney.org/blog/look-closer-1964-new-york-worlds-fair>.

the attractions that Disney and his Imagineers created for the 1964 New York World's Fair would be taken apart at the end of the Fair and shipped across the country to Anaheim, California, where they would be reconstructed as attractions at Disneyland. Disney's Hall of Presidents had failed, but now that an entire Lincoln presentation had been created, Disney was able to fulfill a small part of his goal, presenting "Great Moments with Mr. Lincoln" on Main Street, right at the entrance to the park.

There were many different ways that Disney could have chosen to represent Lincoln. The view of Lincoln as a "perfect savior and martyr of the Union" was certainly one option.⁶⁶ Representations of Lincoln that portrayed Lincoln in this way tended to be based on Josiah Holland's *Life of Abraham Lincoln* (1866), one of the first biographies to be published after Lincoln's death. Holland's interpretation of Lincoln was based on Christian values, with claims that Lincoln was able to do what he did because he was being guided by God.⁶⁷ By using Holland's interpretation, Disney could have depicted his own hero as a true martyr, one who was willing to die for the United States and the values it stood for.

Another option could have been a representation of Lincoln that the Civil Rights activists at the time would have liked. He could have had his interpretation of Lincoln giving a speech on slavery and the dangers of the South attempting to spread their slavery to the newer territories of the United States, as well as his fears related to secession and the Civil War. Many of Lincoln's speeches, including those from his famous debates against Stephen Douglas when running for the United States Senate, focus on the subject of slavery. Disney and his Imagineers could have connected Lincoln's beliefs to the beliefs of the Civil Rights Movement that was occurring

⁶⁶ Martinelli, Owen. 2018. "Abraham Lincoln: Making a Man of a Legend." Other. <https://doi.org/10.33015/dominican.edu/2018.HIST.ST.01>.

⁶⁷ Holland, J. G. 1998. *Holland's Life of Abraham Lincoln*. Electronic resource. Bison Books ed. Lincoln, Neb: University of Nebraska Press. <http://www.columbia.edu/cgi-bin/cul/resolve?clio14096548>.

throughout the 1960s, with claims that Lincoln was the blueprint for men like the recently-assassinated John F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King, Jr..

On the opposite side, Disney could have chosen a more negative representation of Lincoln, one that represented the “Lost Cause of the Confederacy,” an argument made by those who argued that the Confederates in the Civil War were justified in fighting against the Union, insisting that they were simply fighting for the rights of the Southern states. This representation of Lincoln may have presented the president as a warmonger, determined to have Americans fight against each other for basic liberties. It is quite easy to see why this representation of Lincoln was not chosen for “Great Moments with Mr. Lincoln,” as the show was being presented in the Illinois Pavilion, an entire state exhibition dedicated to the “great” man, Abraham Lincoln. Creating a Lincoln that divided the southern half of the United States from the northern half would not have given the “united” approach that Disney and his Imagineers desired, as made clear by the animatronic Lincoln’s speech. It may have been supported by Robert Moses, a man who historians like Robert Caro have argued created policies based on his own racism, but that would not have been enough for the presentation to survive.⁶⁸

Another interpretation of Lincoln that could have been used would be the “Reconciliationist” Lincoln, a man who had faced the hardships of the Civil War and was attempting to figure out what would happen to the South after Robert E. Lee’s surrender to Ulysses S. Grant at the Appomattox Courthouse. While Lincoln may not have agreed with the South and their viewpoints on slavery, while the Southerners may have seceded and fought against the Union like the traitors he believed them to be, he knew that the South could not simply be harshly punished. Now that the seceded states were being brought back into the United States, the damage that had been done during the war had to be fixed, bringing prosperity to not

⁶⁸ Caro, Robert A. *The Power Broker: Robert Moses and the Fall of New York*. 1st ed. New York: Knopf, 1974.

only the North but to the entire United States of America. In fact, Lincoln's final speech, given on April 11th, 1865, two days after the Confederacy's surrender, was dedicated to the subject of Reconstruction and the concept of reconciliation as a whole.⁶⁹ Lincoln begins by commenting on the unusual situation the United States is in, stating that "No one man has authority to give up the rebellion for any other man. We simply must begin with, and mould from, disorganized and discordant elements. Nor is it a small additional embarrassment that we, the loyal people, differ among ourselves as to the mode, manner, and means of reconstruction."⁷⁰

After his reflection on the United States as a whole, Lincoln moves on to the states that had seceded during the Civil War, stating that:

The sole object of the government, civil and military, in regard to those States is to again get them into that proper practical relation. I believe it is not only possible, but in fact, easier to do this, without deciding, or even considering, whether these States have ever been out of the Union, than with it. Finding themselves safely at home, it would be utterly immaterial whether they had ever been abroad. Let us all join in doing the acts necessary to restoring the proper practical relations between these States and the Union; and each forever after, innocently indulge his own opinion whether, in doing the acts, he brought the States from without, into the Union, or only gave them proper assistance, they never having been out of it.⁷¹

⁶⁹ Museum, Abraham Lincoln Presidential. "Lincoln Called for Reconciliation in His Last Public Speech." Accessed February 20, 2022. <https://presidentlincoln.illinois.gov/Blog/Posts/20/Abraham-Lincoln/2020/7/A-Call-for-Reconciliation-Lincolns-Final-Speech/blog-post/>.

⁷⁰ "Abraham Lincoln's Last Public Address." Accessed February 20, 2022. <http://www.abrahamlincolnonline.org/lincoln/speeches/last.htm>.

⁷¹ Ibid.

After his statement on the Southern States, Lincoln returns to the example of Louisiana, where 12,000 voters had already sworn themselves loyal to the Union and had organized a State government, following the United States Constitution and adopting their own free-state constitution. Black people were allowed to attend public school and black men were given the ability to vote, contributing to Louisiana's government. Louisiana's legislature voted to ratify the amendment that abolished slavery in the United States. Lincoln declares that "these twelve thousand persons are thus fully committed to the Union, and to perpetual freedom in the state - committed to the very things, and nearly all the things the nation wants."⁷² If the United States started changing its policies and going against everything that the Louisiana state government had created, it would be destroying the trust and faith of both whites and blacks in the state, leaving them angry and unsatisfied with the government as a whole.

What has been said of Louisiana will apply generally to other States. And yet so great peculiarities pertain to each state, and such important and sudden changes occur in the same state; and withal, so new and unprecedented is the whole case, that no exclusive, and inflexible plan can be safely prescribed as to details and collaterals [sic]. Such exclusive and inflexible plan, would surely become a new entanglement. Important principles may, and must, be inflexible⁷³

A representation of Lincoln had been chosen for "Great Moments with Mr. Lincoln." But what would the great Abraham Lincoln say to the people? What words would be chosen to summarize his great speeches over the years?

Lincoln's Speeches and Disney's Modifications

⁷² "Abraham Lincoln's Last Public Address." Accessed February 20, 2022. <http://www.abrahamlincolnonline.org/lincoln/speeches/last.htm>.

⁷³ Ibid.

Disney and his Imagineers selected five of Lincoln's speeches, putting them together to create a unique presentation never seen before. James Algar (1912-1998), a film director, was assigned with writing Lincoln's "new" speech, which would last for fifteen minutes and fifteen seconds exactly.⁷⁴ These speeches were his Edwardsville, Illinois speech on September 11th, 1858, his Young Men's Lyceum Address on January 27th, 1838, his Sanitary Fair Address on April 18th, 1864, his eulogy for Henry Clay on July 6th, 1852, and his address to the Cooper Institute from February 27th, 1860.

Once Disney and his Imagineers had built the Audio-Animatronic and written a script for his speech, the group had to choose someone to lend their voice to the 16th president, the final step in bringing the fear of engineering to life. Disney chose Royal Dano (1922-1994) to voice Abraham Lincoln, a man who had played Lincoln several times on film.⁷⁵ Dano had not only Lincoln's features, including his height but also had a drawl that attracted listeners to his voice, a characteristic that would be perfect to voice the Audio-Animatronic. He had a "rich cadence" that brought a "peaceful gravity" to Lincoln's words.⁷⁶ These qualities were in contrast to Lincoln's actual voice, which has been quoted as being "a little shriller, a little higher."⁷⁷ Disney may have chosen a lower-voiced actor to make Lincoln sound more powerful, matching the voice to the grand speech he would be giving as an animatronic.

When looking at "Great Moments with Mr. Lincoln," one sees the portrayal of Lincoln that Disney wanted the American public to see, a Lincoln carefully crafted for the period of the 1960s that reflected Disney's own ideals and viewpoints. One can clearly see this when

⁷⁴ D23. "James Algar." Accessed January 19, 2022. <https://d23.com/walt-disney-legend/james-algar/>.

⁷⁵ Press, The Associated. "Royal Dano, 71, Character Actor." *The New York Times*, May 19, 1994, sec. Obituaries. <https://www.nytimes.com/1994/05/19/obituaries/royal-dano-71-character-actor.html>.

⁷⁶ "Great Moments With Mr. Lincoln || The Disneyland Chronicles - Year Twelve // 1965 - YouTube." Accessed January 19, 2022. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RC0BOaz5k1Q>.

⁷⁷ Gambino, Megan. n.d. "Ask an Expert: What Did Abraham Lincoln's Voice Sound Like?" *Smithsonian Magazine*. Accessed April 4, 2022. <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/ask-an-expert-what-did-abraham-lincolns-voice-sound-like-13446201/>.

analyzing how Disney and James Algar were able to manipulate speeches on important subjects like the Civil War and slavery into a basic presentation of American liberty and the necessity for unity during trying times.

Below is the entirety of the speech the Lincoln animatronic presented, with color-coded highlights to represent which speech the sections came from.

The world has never had a good definition of the word liberty, and the American people, just now, are much in want of one. We all declare for liberty; but in using the same word we do not all mean the same *thing*. What constitutes the bulwark of our liberty and our independence? It is not our frowning battlements, our bristling sea coasts. These are not our reliance against tyranny. Our reliance is in the love of liberty which God has planted in our bosoms. Our defense is in the preservation of the spirit which prizes liberty as the heritage of all men, in all lands, everywhere. Destroy this spirit, and you have planted the seeds of despotism around your own doors. At what point shall we expect the approach of danger? By what means shall we fortify against it? Shall we expect some trans-Atlantic military giant, to step the ocean, and crush us at a blow? Never! All the armies of Europe, Asia and Africa combined could not by force, take a drink from the Ohio, or make a track on the Blue Ridge, in a trial of a thousand years. At what point then is the approach of danger to be expected? I answer: that if it ever reach us, it must spring from amongst us; it cannot come from abroad. If destruction be our lot, we, ourselves, must be its authors and finishers. As a nation of free men, we must live through all times, or die by suicide. Let reverence for the law be breathed by every American mother, to the lisping babe that prattles on

her lap. Let it be taught in the schools, in the seminaries, and in the colleges. Let it be written in primers, in spelling books and almanacs. Let it be preached from the pulpit, proclaimed in legislative halls, and enforced in courts of justice. And in short, let it become the political religion of the nation. And let the old and the young, the rich and the poor, the grave and the gay, of all sexes, and tongues and colors and conditions, sacrifice unceasingly at its altars. And let us strive to deserve, as far as mortals may, the continued care of Divine Providence. Trusting that, in future national emergencies, He will not fail to provide us the instruments of safety and security. Neither let us be slandered from our duty by false accusations against us, nor frightened from it by the menaces of destruction to the Government nor of dungeons to ourselves! Let us have faith that right makes might, and in that faith, let us, to the end, dare to do our duty as we understand it.⁷⁸

Sanitary Fair Address from April 18th, 1864

On April 18th, 1864, President Lincoln addressed the people of Baltimore at the Maryland State Fair for U.S. Soldier Relief, also known as the Sanitary Fair. The goal of the fair was to raise money for a national relief organization for Union soldiers, the U.S. Sanitary Commission. As the Sanitary Fair was being held, the Maryland Assembly was debating the adoption of a new constitution, with one of the new provisions being one that ended slavery in the state. Lincoln begins his speech by praising the “brave men” and “fair women” of Baltimore, those who have been defending the Union and keeping the Confederate Army from marching

⁷⁸ Gary Gramling. *Great Moments with Mr Lincoln (1964 World's Fair Version)*, 2017. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yeb-2gndjWc>.

north. The beginning of Lincoln's Sanitary Fair Address directly reflects the themes of slavery and war that had been following him throughout his presidency:

When the war began, three years ago, neither party, nor any man, expected it would last till now. Each looked for the end, in some way, long ere today. Neither did any anticipate that domestic slavery would be much affected by the war. But here we are; the war has not ended, and slavery has been much affected - how much needs not now to be recounted. So true is it that man proposes, and God disposes.⁷⁹

As any reader can see, Lincoln was speaking directly on the topic of slavery, admitting that it was unclear at the beginning of the Civil War whether slavery would even be affected.

But the only part of the Sanitary Fair Address that Disney and his Imagineers chose to include was a statement on liberty, that "The world has never had a good definition of the word liberty, and the American people, just now, are much in want of one. We all declare for liberty; but in using the same word we do not all mean the same *thing*."⁸⁰ Lincoln goes on to discuss the concepts of liberty and tyranny using a parable of the shepherd, the sheep, and the wolf. When a shepherd saves a black sheep from being attacked by a wolf, the sheep calls the shepherd a "liberator," while the wolf declares him the "destroyer of liberty," noting that the sheep he was attempting to kill was black. He then praises the people of Maryland for making a contribution to the definition of liberty, going against the wolf from the parable.⁸¹ The black sheep is notably missing from Disney's edit of the Sanitary Fair Address. One might understand Disney erasing the Maryland context of the speech as his show was based in the Illinois Pavilion, but Disney and

⁷⁹ "Address at Sanitary Fair in Baltimore: A Lecture on Liberty | The American Presidency Project." Accessed February 1, 2022. <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/address-sanitary-fair-baltimore-lecture-liberty>.

⁸⁰ Gary Gramling. *Great Moments with Mr Lincoln (1964 World's Fair Version)*, 2017. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yeb-2gndjWc>.

⁸¹ "Address at Sanitary Fair in Baltimore: A Lecture on Liberty | The American Presidency Project." Accessed February 1, 2022. <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/address-sanitary-fair-baltimore-lecture-liberty>.

his stories were built on parables and fairytales. In fact, the Sanitary Fair Address is transformed into one of these parables itself, becoming a humble story of the naming of liberty and the loyalty of those who fight for it.

The address ends with Lincoln referring to the events at Fort Pillow, Tennessee, where Confederates reportedly murdered 300 black soldiers as well as their white officers after capturing the fort. He had received a report that “There was a massacre of a black company and their officers at Fort Pillow - They were prisoners who later on, the day of their capture, were ordered executed.” Even though the numbers and the entire story were unconfirmed, Lincoln declared that:

Upon a clear conviction of duty I resolved to turn that element of strength to account; and I am responsible for it to the American people, to the Christian world, to history, and in my final account to God. Having determined to use the negro as a soldier, there is no way but to give him all the protection given to any other soldier.⁸²

The Sanitary Fair Address both begins and ends with the central subject on Lincoln’s mind - Slavery and the issue of race in the United States. He argues that black soldiers should be given the same protections as the white soldiers fighting for the Union, as both races were being used for the same purpose. The word “liberty” became a definition for the efforts of not only these soldiers but the people of the Union as a whole, those fighting for freedom.

Edwardsville, Illinois speech from September 11th, 1858

⁸² “Address at Sanitary Fair in Baltimore: A Lecture on Liberty | The American Presidency Project.” Accessed February 1, 2022. <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/address-sanitary-fair-baltimore-lecture-liberty>.

In the speech of Lincoln created by Disney, Lincoln's Edwardsville, Illinois speech from September of 1858 is shortened to emphasize the importance of keeping the American spirit alive through its liberty and independence. He is warning the people of Illinois against losing their spirit, as a loss of spirit can only lead to despotism and the failure of the United States.

Lincoln's full speech from September 11th, however, begins with Lincoln stating that he has "been requested to give a concise statement . . . of the difference between the Democratic and the Republican parties on the leading issues of this campaign."⁸³ This speech was not a president's grand attempt to unite a struggling country - It was a political move for Lincoln before he took the Oval Office. During the fall of 1858, Lincoln, a Republican, was engaging in a series of debates with Stephen A. Douglas, a Democrat, in an attempt to win an Illinois Seat in the United States Senate, an attempt that would be unsuccessful. Lincoln does not simply state differences between the two political parties, he directly attacks the Democratic party for being apathetic, for not considering slavery "a moral, social or political wrong," even going as far as to quote Douglas, who had stated that he doesn't "care whether slavery is voted down or voted up."⁸⁴ He claims that the Democrats have "constant and unvarying action," never changing their ideals even as the ideal of society and the period as a whole change around them. After going on the offensive against the entire Democratic party, Lincoln focuses on his main opponent, Douglas, and his arguments based on "popular sovereignty." According to Douglas, Lincoln argues, "slavery is as good and as right as freedom," being rewarded with applause at the end of the first section of his speech.

In the second section of Lincoln's speech, titled "Opinions of Henry Clay," the great debater read a letter from Mr. Clay himself. Clay stated that

⁸³ Lincoln, Abraham. *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln. Volume 3.*, 2001. <http://name.umdl.umich.edu/lincoln3>.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

I know there are those who draw an argument in favor of slavery from the alleged intellectual inferiority of the black race. Whether this argument is founded in fact or not, I will not now stop to inquire, but merely say that if it proves anything at all, it proves too much. It proves that among the white races of the world any one might be properly enslaved by any other which had made greater advances in civilization. And, if this rule applies to nations there is no reason why it should not apply to individuals; and it might easily be proved that the wisest man in the world could rightfully reduce all other men and women to bondage.⁸⁵

The third part of Lincoln's Edwardsville speech goes further into the concept Douglas invented when introducing the Nebraska bill to Congress, the concept of popular sovereignty. According to Lincoln, popular sovereignty "means the sovereignty of the people over their own affairs - in other words, the right of the people of every nation and community to govern themselves." He then goes on to claim that Douglas had not invented this term, that it had been around even before Christopher Columbus had "discovered" America and furthered solidified in North America through the Declaration of Independence and its statement that governments were "deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed." When applying popular sovereignty to the 19th century and the issue of slavery, Douglas was framing the concept in a new light, allowing it to mean that people had the right to govern slaves in the same vein that they had the right to govern themselves.

Finally, Lincoln ends his speech with a question - "What may we look for after the next Dred Scott decision?"⁸⁶ This is the section that Disney would draw from for "Great Moments with Mr. Lincoln," taking Lincoln's words out of the context of the rest of the speech and the

⁸⁵ Lincoln, Abraham. *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln. Volume 3.*, 2001. <http://name.umdl.umich.edu/lincoln3>.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

debates against Douglas as a whole. In his final section, Lincoln states that his goal was “to show you the logical consequences of the Dred Scott decision, which holds that the people of a Territory cannot prevent the establishment of Slavery in their midst.”⁸⁷ The speech ends with Lincoln declaring that a love of liberty is what brings all Americans together and that everyone’s rights must be protected for the country to survive and thrive.

Instead of focusing on the clear arguments of slavery that Lincoln outlines throughout his speech in Edwardsville, Disney and his Imagineers chose to focus on the concepts of despotism and the love of liberty, even though these concepts were only introduced in the final part of Lincoln’s speech. Where Disney ends the Edwardsville speech with “destroy this spirit, and you have planted the seeds of despotism around your own doors,” the next sentence tells the audience to “familiarize yourselves with the chains of bondage, and you are preparing your own limbs to wear them.” All of the speech is directly referring to slavery and how the Republicans and Democrats differ in their viewpoints on the subject, but Disney used a small section to give an interpretation of liberty, the opposite of slavery. There are no references to Dred Scott, Douglas, or even slavery. There are also no references to either the Republican or Democratic parties.

Young Men's Lyceum Address from January 27th, 1838

The Young Men's Lyceum Address that Lincoln gave on January 27th, 1838, was one of his first published speeches, given when he was only 28-years-old. The context of the speech itself is directly related to race relations. Lincoln’s law partner, William Herndon, stated that the speech was written a few weeks after an African American had been burned by a mob in St. Louis, which “Lincoln took . . . as a sort of text for his remarks.” The subject of “the

⁸⁷ Lincoln, Abraham. *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln. Volume 3.*, 2001. <http://name.umdl.umich.edu/lincoln3>.

perpetuation of our political institutions” was chosen for the meeting that Lincoln would be presenting his speech at.⁸⁸

According to Lincoln, the United States were given liberty and equal rights along with the land they acquired, but must give “gratitude to our fathers, justice to ourselves, duty to posterity, and love for our species in general.”⁸⁹ But, even with all of these gifts, Lincoln argues that the only danger that could come to the nation would be from within itself, a point that would be proven true nearly a quarter of a century later with the Civil War.

One of the particular aspects of the country that Lincoln was worried about was the mobs taking justice into their own hands, which was most likely inspired by the killing that had occurred a few weeks before the speech. He goes on to say that even though many of these kinds of incidents have occurred in the South, they also occur in the North as well, stating “Whatever, then, their cause may be, it is common to the whole country.”⁹⁰ While the direct consequences of horrific acts like lynching, burning, and hanging may not be severe except for the victim, indirect consequences include the introduction of mob law and fear throughout the nation. Lincoln claims that “by the operation of this mobocratic spirit, which all must admit, is now abroad in the land, the strongest bulwark of any Government, and particularly of those constituted like ours, may effectually be broken down and destroyed.”⁹¹

But Lincoln does not blame the American people entirely for the crimes committed by the mob. He says that he knows that “the American People are *much* attached to their Government; - I know they would suffer *much* for its sake.” The people must dedicate themselves to liberty to keep the United States of America from falling into evil, but “to

⁸⁸ “Abraham Lincoln’s Lyceum Address.” Accessed February 18, 2022.
<http://www.abrahamlincolnonline.org/lincoln/speeches/lyceum.htm>.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

conclude that no danger may ever arise, would itself be extremely dangerous.”⁹² In order to prepare for evil, the people must become attached to their government, not allowing any tyrant to pull them away from their values. Liberty and the government have changed since the American Revolution, but the American people have changed along with them.

The excerpt from Lincoln’s Lyceum Address is the longest in “Great Moments with Mr. Lincoln, making up nearly half of the entire speech, but still does not touch upon the subject of slavery, instead dedicating itself entirely to the concept of liberty and how only America will be able to destroy itself, which will not happen if Americans remain loyal to liberty..”⁹³

Eulogy for Henry Clay from July 6th, 1852⁹⁴

Lincoln’s eulogy for Henry Clay was delivered in the Hall of Representatives.

Along with the eulogy itself, one must have an understanding of Henry Clay and why Lincoln gave him such a powerful eulogy. Lincoln saw Clay as an ideal politician, declaring him a “beau ideal of a statesman.”⁹⁵

The eulogy begins with a recollection of July 4th, 1776, when the colonial revolutionaries declared their national independence. Lincoln claims that Clay was born along with the nation, a man who was dedicated to all aspects of the United States. One journal even called him “freedom’s champion - the champion of a civilized world, and of all tongues and kindreds of people.”⁹⁶ Lincoln goes on to quote this same journal, which actually disagreed with Clay politically but still respected him, allowing it to express the thoughts that he has been unable to put into words. After quoting from the journal, Lincoln goes into a summary of Clay’s life,

⁹² “Abraham Lincoln’s Lyceum Address.” Accessed February 18, 2022.
<http://www.abrahamlincolnonline.org/lincoln/speeches/lyceum.htm>.

⁹³ Lincoln, Abraham. *Famous Speeches [of] Abraham Lincoln*. New Rochelle: Peter Pauper Press, 1935.
<http://www.archive.org/details/famouspeechesof00linc>.

⁹⁴ Lincoln, Abraham, and David Lowenthal. *The Mind and Art of Abraham Lincoln, Philosopher Statesman: Texts and Interpretations of Twenty Great Speeches*. Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2012.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

starting with his poor childhood. Lincoln uses Clay's lack of wealth to say that "it teaches that in this country, one can scarcely be so poor, but that, if he *will*, he *can* acquire sufficient education to get through the world respectably," a statement that would become a reflection of the "American Dream" many Americans strove for decades after Lincoln's death.⁹⁷ Like Lincoln, Clay was elected to the House of Representatives, but unlike Lincoln, he would run for more than one term. He would also be elected as the Speaker of the House as well as a United States Senator. Along with his elected position, Clay would also be appointed as a commissioner to negotiate a peace treaty with England after the War of 1812 and the Secretary of State under President John Quincy Adams in March 1825. Lincoln claims that Clay had "constantly been the most loved, and most implicitly followed by friends, and the most dread by opponents, of all living American politicians."⁹⁸ Even after losing a presidential election several times, Clay never gave up on politics, continuing to remain involved in the political world. Lincoln praised Clay for his eloquence, sincerity, and conviction in his speeches, qualities that led many to be swayed by Clay over the years.

Lincoln and Clay shared many ideals, with Lincoln stating that Clay felt "that the world's best hope depended on the continued Union of these States," a quote that applied to Lincoln's policies throughout his political career, including during the Civil War.⁹⁹ Along with his desire to keep the states united, Clay also had "a deep devotion to the cause of human liberty - a strong sympathy with the oppressed everywhere, and an ardent wish for their elevation."¹⁰⁰ Both Clay and Lincoln made liberty their top priority, using their power to ensure that liberty remained the main principle of the United States of America. But Clay did not only focus on the liberty of

⁹⁷ Lincoln, Abraham, and David Lowenthal. *The Mind and Art of Abraham Lincoln, Philosopher Statesman: Texts and Interpretations of Twenty Great Speeches*. Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2012.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

Americans - Lincoln mentions that he helped both South Americans and the Greeks when struggling with civil liberties, assisting both in their times of need.

Towards the end of his speech, Lincoln finally gets to the topic that has been prominent but omitted, in his speeches that were selected for “Great Moments with Mr. Lincoln” - the topic of slavery. Lincoln believes that this subject is important for the eulogy, declaring “I am unwilling to close without referring more particularly to Mr. Clay’s views and conduct in regard to it [domestic slavery].”¹⁰¹ According to Lincoln, one of Clay’s first public efforts was related to the debate on the emancipation of slaves in Kentucky, claiming, in Lincoln’s words, that he did not believe that “on a question of human right, the negroes were to be excepted from the human race.”¹⁰²

Through his eulogy to Clay, one can see that Lincoln looked up to the deceased, a man who had grown up in a similar situation and had achieved greatness. Of course, as it is a speech dedicated to a dead man, Lincoln does not voice any disagreements that he may have had with Clay throughout his life, claiming that “his views and measures were always the wisest,” a fact that “needs not to be affirmed.”¹⁰³ But, while highlighting Clay’s views on emancipation, Lincoln notes that Clay indeed owned slaves and that he did not think that slavery could be immediately gotten rid of in places where it was already in existence. Instead, Clay focused his time and energy on the states that would be entering the United States of America, including Missouri and Maine as part of the “Great Compromise.” He uses the subject of slavery to attack men like John C. Calhoun and governors of South Carolina who were no longer following the declaration of Jefferson, that “all men are created free and equal.”¹⁰⁴ Lincoln discusses Clay’s involvement with

¹⁰¹ Lincoln, Abraham, and David Lowenthal. *The Mind and Art of Abraham Lincoln, Philosopher Statesman: Texts and Interpretations of Twenty Great Speeches*. Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2012.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

the American Colonization Society, including his role as President of the organization for several years until his death. Clay had argued that there was “a moral fitness in the idea of returning to Africa her children, whose ancestors have been torn from her by the ruthless hand of fraud and violence.”¹⁰⁵ By bringing the former slaves back to their home continent, the United States would be making up for the crime it had committed when it stole the African people from their land. Lincoln gives his support to the movement, saying that he hopes that the goal of the American Colonization Society would be realized after twenty-five years of planning and organizing.

Lincoln ends his eulogy to Clay with a power paragraph:

But Henry Clay is dead. His long and eventful life is closed. Our country is prosperous and powerful; but could it have been quite all it has been, and is, and is to be, without Henry Clay? Such a man the times have demanded, and such, in the providence of God was given us, But he is gone. Let us strive to deserve, as far as mortals may, the continued care of Divine Providence, trusting that, in future national emergencies, He will not fail to provide us the instruments of safety and security.¹⁰⁶

Disney and the Imagineers would only use the last two sentences of the eulogy, leaving no mention of Henry Clay himself or any of the policies and decisions he influenced during his time as a politician in the government.¹⁰⁷ It is unsurprising that Disney chose not to mention Clay - “Great Moments with Mr. Lincoln” was dedicated to one man from Illinois, and Clay was a figure who had been from Kentucky. But why was Henry Clay’s eulogy chosen as a part of the animatronic Lincoln’s speech if the subject of the speech was not going to be mentioned? Most

¹⁰⁵ Lincoln, Abraham, and David Lowenthal. *The Mind and Art of Abraham Lincoln, Philosopher Statesman: Texts and Interpretations of Twenty Great Speeches*. Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2012.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

likely because of the final two sentences, a powerful statement that could be applied to the United States as a whole, not just the United States that existed during the lives of Clay and Lincoln. When taken out of context, the sentences are a request to God to protect the United States, keeping it safe throughout any disasters that may strike, which related back to Lincoln's fear that the only way the United States could be destroyed would be from within, a prediction of the Civil War in the 1860s. One could also make connections to the threat of communism and the USSR, threats that hung over the United States during the 1960s as Disney was creating the Lincoln animatronic.

Address to the Cooper Institute from February 27th, 1860

Originally, the speech was supposed to be at Henry Ward Beecher's Church in Brooklyn, New York. An invitation had been sent to him in October 1859 to give a lecture at the church. When Lincoln gave his speech, it would actually be at the Cooper Institute in Manhattan, as the Young Men's Republican Union had taken over the arrangements for Lincoln's visit. Lincoln decided to tackle the subject of analyzing the different viewpoints of the signers of the Constitution, all 39 of them. To quote his law partner, William Herndon, "No former effort in the line of speech-making had cost Lincoln so much time and thought as this one."¹⁰⁸ Keeping to the subject of his previous speeches, Lincoln discussed slavery, and how 21 of the signers of the Constitution had argued that slavery in territories of the United States should be controlled by Congress and the government. If the Founding Fathers did not support the expansion of slavery, why were the Republicans of the 19th-century attacked for this viewpoint?

The speech begins with a quote from Senator Douglas, stating that "Our fathers, when they framed the Government under which we live, understood this question just as well, and

¹⁰⁸ Lincoln, Abraham, and Archibald Lewis Bouton. *The Lincoln and Douglas Debates, in the Senatorial Campaign of 1858 in Illinois, between Abraham Lincoln and Stephen Arnold Douglas; Containing Also Lincoln's Address at Cooper Institute*. English Readings. New York: Holt, 1905. <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/000341169>.

even better, than we do now,” which Lincoln agrees with, which brings him to his main question that would guide his speech - “What was the understanding those fathers had of the question mentioned?”¹⁰⁹ Lincoln focuses on the 39 men who signed the Constitution, using their founding document. One of the main questions that Lincoln has for the crowd is whether the federal government was able to control slavery in the federal territories. When worded that way, Lincoln makes those who oppose federal control seem silly, as why should the *federal* government not be in charge of *federal* territories? Lincoln starts giving examples of the viewpoints of the 39 signers of the Constitution, beginning in 1784 with the question of slavery in the Northwestern Territory. Four of the 39 Constitution signers were in Congress and voted on the subject. Three of them voted for the prohibition of slavery, with only one voting against it as “he thought it improper to vote for it.”¹¹⁰ The same debate returned in 1787, with two more of the Constitution signers voting for the prohibition of slavery. Eventually, a bill would be created and signed into law by George Washington himself, proving that “no line dividing local from federal authority, nor anything in the Constitution, forbade the Federal Government, to control as to slavery in federal territory.”¹¹¹

In 1803, the Louisiana Purchase gave the United States new territories, with territorial organization being given to the area by Congress in 1804. Slavery was permitted in the Louisiana territory, but there were some conditions that Congress applied to the territory. No slaves could be imported from foreign lands into the Louisiana territory, slaves had to have been imported before May of 1798, and slaves could only be brought into the Louisiana territory by their owner. If these laws were broken, the slave that was the subject of the issue would be freed and their

¹⁰⁹ Lincoln, Abraham, and Archibald Lewis Bouton. *The Lincoln and Douglas Debates, in the Senatorial Campaign of 1858 in Illinois, between Abraham Lincoln and Stephen Arnold Douglas; Containing Also Lincoln's Address at Cooper Institute*. English Readings. New York: Holt, 1905. <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/000341169>.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

former owner or violator of the law would be fined. Over a decade later, between 1819 and 1920, the Missouri territory brought the debate over slavery in the territories back into Congress. Two of the signers of the Constitution were still in Congress at this point, with one voting for the prohibition of slavery and the other voting against it.¹¹²

According to Lincoln's research, 23 out of the 39 signers of the Constitution made direct votes on the subject of slavery in the territories, with 21 of the 23 voting for the prohibition of slavery. Lincoln defends these men with the statement, "No one who has sworn to support the Constitution can conscientiously vote for what he understands to be an unconstitutional measure, however expedient he may think it."¹¹³

Lincoln makes a strong statement on not only the 39 signers of the Constitution but the 76 members of Congress from that time who created the amendments of the Constitution, declaring, "I defy any man to show that any one of them ever, in his whole life, declared that, in his understanding, any proper division of local from federal authority, or any part of the Constitution, forbade the Federal government to control as to slavery in the federal territories."¹¹⁴ But even after all of this research and bold statements, Lincoln explicitly states that he does not want the people of the 19th-century to be following everything that the Founding Fathers did. The times had changed and improvements had been made, but one can still take the words and decisions of the founders as a guide for the future.

In the middle of his speech, Lincoln speaks a memorable paragraph on the Republicans and their goals:

¹¹² Lincoln, Abraham, and Archibald Lewis Bouton. *The Lincoln and Douglas Debates, in the Senatorial Campaign of 1858 in Illinois, between Abraham Lincoln and Stephen Arnold Douglas; Containing Also Lincoln's Address at Cooper Institute*. English Readings. New York: Holt, 1905. <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/000341169>.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

Let all who believe that “our fathers, who framed the Government under which we live, understood this question just as well, and even better than we do now,” speak as they spoke, and act as they acted upon it. This is all Republicans ask - all Republicans desire - in relation to slavery. As those fathers marked it, so let it be again marked, as an evil not to be extended, but to be tolerated and protected only because of and so far as its actual presence among us makes that toleration and protection a necessity. Let all the guarantees those fathers gave it, be, not grudgingly, but fully and fairly maintained. For this Republicans contend, and with this, so far as I know or believe, they will be content.¹¹⁵

After his grand declaration of the Republican’s goals, Lincoln then directly addresses the Southerners, those who would probably not agree with his viewpoints on the Founding Fathers and the prohibition of slavery in the territories. He questions why they attack Republicans \, asking, “Is that warning a weapon in your hands against us, or in our hands against you? Could Washington himself speak, would he cast the blame of that sectionalism upon us, who sustain his policy, or upon you who repudiate it?”¹¹⁶ The Republicans claim to be conservative and following in the footsteps of the Founding Fathers, but Lincoln directly opposes this claim, stating that “not one of all your various plans can show a precedent or an advocate in the century within which our Government originated. Consider, then, whether your claim of conservatism for yourselves, and your charge or destructiveness against us, are based on the most clear and stable foundations.”¹¹⁷ Southerners claim Republicans are responsible for rebellions against slavery, including that of Harper’s Ferry, led by John Brown, but no men involved were proven to be

¹¹⁵ Lincoln, Abraham, and Archibald Lewis Bouton. *The Lincoln and Douglas Debates, in the Senatorial Campaign of 1858 in Illinois, between Abraham Lincoln and Stephen Arnold Douglas; Containing Also Lincoln’s Address at Cooper Institute*. English Readings. New York: Holt, 1905. <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/000341169>.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

Republicans. None of the policies nor doctrines of the Republicans encouraged such a rebellion, either.

Lincoln predicts the upcoming secession of the South with a bold statement to the Southerners, declaring that

You will break up the Union rather than submit to a denial of your Constitutional rights . . . Your purpose, then, plainly stated, is that you will destroy the Government, unless you be allowed to construe and enforce the Constitution as you please, on all point in dispute between you and us. You will rule or ruin in all events.¹¹⁸

There is no statement in the constitution that distinctly and/or expressly affirms the right of property when it comes to slavery, no matter what the Southerners might argue. Lincoln confirms that the words “slave” and “slavery” are not even found in the Constitution and that when slaves are indirectly referred to, they are called people, serving a debt through service or labor. The Founding Fathers made this choice without any disagreement, as it was passed unanimously. Lincoln compares the South’s arguments to a robber holding a gun to his head and claiming that, if he pulls the trigger, then Lincoln himself would be called the murderer.

But even after all of his attacks on the viewpoints of the Southerners, Lincoln still warns his fellow Republicans against attacking their opponents through violence. “Even though much provoked, let us [Republican] do nothing through passion and ill temper. Even though the southern people will not so much as listen to us, let us calmly consider their demands, and yield to them if, in our deliberate view of our duty, we possibly can.”¹¹⁹ But even after this, Lincoln

¹¹⁸ Lincoln, Abraham, and Archibald Lewis Bouton. *The Lincoln and Douglas Debates, in the Senatorial Campaign of 1858 in Illinois, between Abraham Lincoln and Stephen Arnold Douglas; Containing Also Lincoln’s Address at Cooper Institute*. English Readings. New York: Holt, 1905. <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/000341169>.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

launches into a more sarcastic hypothetical situation, suggesting the only way that Republicans can satisfy the Republicans:

Cease to call slavery *wrong*, and join them in calling it *right*. And this must be done thoroughly - done in *acts* as well as in *words*. Silence will not be tolerated - we must place ourselves avowedly with them. Senator Douglas' new sedition law must be enacted and enforced, suppressing all declarations that slavery is wrong, whether made in politics, in presses, in pulpits, or in private. We must arrest and return their fugitive slaves with greedy pleasure. We must pull down our Free State constitutions. The whole atmosphere must be disinfected from all taint of opposition to slavery, before they will cease to believe that all their troubles proceed from us.¹²⁰

Lincoln goes on to state that even though the Southerners have claimed that they simply want to be left alone, there is more to their demands, as they have not been satisfied with the Free States ignoring the South in their laws and constitutions. As Lincoln states, "Wrong as we think slavery is, we can yet afford to let it alone where it is, because that much is due to the necessity arising from its actual presence in the nation."¹²¹ He ends with a powerful statement that would remain in the heads of audience members:

Neither let us be slandered from our duty by false accusations against us, nor frightened from it by menaces of destruction to the Government nor of dungeons

¹²⁰ Lincoln, Abraham, and Archibald Lewis Bouton. *The Lincoln and Douglas Debates, in the Senatorial Campaign of 1858 in Illinois, between Abraham Lincoln and Stephen Arnold Douglas; Containing Also Lincoln's Address at Cooper Institute*. English Readings. New York: Holt, 1905. <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/000341169>.

¹²¹ Ibid.

to ourselves. Let us have faith that right makes might, and in that faith, let us, to the end, dare to do our duty as we understand it.¹²²

These powerful last sentences are what Disney chose to put in his representation of Lincoln's speech. Reading through the Cooper Union speech gives one the same thoughts that they may have had when reading the previous four speeches - Why did Disney and his Imagineers choose speeches that were explicitly about slavery but exclude all mentions of the subject from their animatronic Lincoln's speech?

Note that the speech that the animatronic Lincoln gives includes no mention of slavery or even the basic concept of race. Understandably, Disney and the Imagineers would not be presenting each of the speeches in their entirety, as that would have taken up too much of the audience's time. But if time was an issue, why did the team not use Lincoln's most famous speech, the Gettysburg Address, which only lasted for 271 words? This might be because the speech was dedicated entirely to the Civil War, which, according to the Union, was being fought to free the slaves of the South and to unite America once more.

Disney's Own Version of Lincoln

Why would Disney erase such an important part of Lincoln's life, the very cause he was assassinated for? The answer lies in the context of both Disney the man and Disney the company.

One of the particular issues that may have plagued Disney during the creation of "Great Moments with Mr. Lincoln" was the Cold War and the fight against communism as a whole. Disney testified before the House of Un-American Activities Committee in October of 1947, reporting that a strike at Walt Disney Studios was "a Communist group trying to take over my

¹²² Lincoln, Abraham, and Archibald Lewis Bouton. *The Lincoln and Douglas Debates, in the Senatorial Campaign of 1858 in Illinois, between Abraham Lincoln and Stephen Arnold Douglas; Containing Also Lincoln's Address at Cooper Institute*. English Readings. New York: Holt, 1905. <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/000341169>.

artists.”¹²³ According to Disney and others at the time, communism was un-American and went against the rights of Americans at the time. In 1993, it was revealed that Walt Disney “served as a secret informer for the Los Angeles office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation,” giving J. Edgar Hoover, the FBI’s Director, names of animators he believed to be communists. He would also give Hoover some of his scripts, allowing him to make revisions. In return, Disney was allowed to film at the FBI’s headquarters in Washington.¹²⁴ Walt Disney was a patriotic man who felt that rooting out communism was a form of serving his country.

Lincoln may have also stood as not just a representation of the former president, but as a representation of Disney and his own struggles. When the actor voicing Lincoln, Royal Dano, was recording his lines for the show, he was dressed in full costume, giving the speech in character. But after the first take, Disney insisted Dano record another one, then another one. Ultimately, by the final take, Dano’s interpretation of Lincoln, while strong, had a sense of weariness, reflecting just a small fraction of the stress that Lincoln must have been under during his presidency.¹²⁵

For Disney, one of the benefits of presenting exhibitions at the 1964 New York World’s Fair was that he would be able to take these constructed attractions and ship them across the country to Disneyland, saving himself the time and money of creating new shows and rides. While programming and building the Lincoln Audio-Animatronic for the World’s Fair, another one was being built using slightly more advanced technology, pushing some of the boundaries that had been established with the first Audio-Animatronic.¹²⁶ “Great Moments with Mr.

¹²³ Kinolibrary. 2016. *1947 Walt Disney Testifies at HUAC*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kJLQ3efGG4k>.

¹²⁴ *The New York Times*. 1993. “Disney Link To the F.B.I. And Hoover Is Disclosed,” May 6, 1993.

¹²⁵ Bob Gurr (former Imagineer) in conversation with the author, March 2022.

¹²⁶ “Great Moments With Mr. Lincoln || The Disneyland Chronicles - Year Twelve // 1965 - YouTube.” Accessed January 19, 2022. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RC0BOaz5k1Q>.

Lincoln” would be brought to Disneyland and opened in Times Square on July 18th, 1965.¹²⁷

Children under seventeen years old were given a ticket to the attraction for free, with the ticket declaring that “So young people may have a better knowledge of the man who played such an important part in American History . . . Walt Disney Productions invites you to be their guest to spend a few . . . Great Moments with Mr. Lincoln.”¹²⁸

A Connection Between CORE and Lincoln

“I’m sitting behind a row of CORE. And they’re motionless.” - Bob Gurr, 2022¹²⁹

But even with the question of racism and Disney’s choice to remove all references to slavery from Lincoln’s speech for “Great Moments with Mr. Lincoln,” some African-Americans still viewed the show as a powerful reflection of true American values. Bob Gurr spoke of the first time he was able to see “Great Moments with Mr. Lincoln,” the show he had helped create.¹³⁰ As he was taking his seat in the theater, ready to watch the presentation, a group of CORE protestors wearing bright yellow vests burst into the room, loudly taking over the front row. Gurr, who had never seen the reactions of anyone to the animatronic Lincoln, was spooked at the response. “But the more Lincoln talked, the quieter they got.”¹³¹ Gurr watched in awe as the protestors became completely silent, every ounce of their attention focused on the “man” speaking in front of them. Finally, the end of Lincoln’s speech came and the show ended. An older black man, the leader of the CORE protestors in the Illinois Pavilion, stood up, tears streaming down his face as he exited the theater. It was a truly powerful moment for Gurr, who, as the animatronic Lincoln’s “mother,” was finally able to see the reactions of those at the Fair,

¹²⁷ “The Disneyland Story Presenting Great Moments with Mr. Lincoln | Disneyland Park.” Accessed January 19, 2022. <https://disneyland.disney.go.com/attractions/disneyland/disneyland-story/>.

¹²⁸ “Great Moments With Mr. Lincoln || The Disneyland Chronicles - Year Twelve // 1965 - YouTube.” Accessed January 19, 2022. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RC0BOaz5k1Q>.

¹²⁹ Bob Gurr (former Imagineer) in conversation with the author, March 2022.

¹³⁰ Bob Gurr was assigned by Walt Disney to create the animatronic Abraham Lincoln after others at WED Enterprises struggled to figure out how to make the robot “human.”

¹³¹ Bob Gurr (former Imagineer) in conversation with the author, March 2022.

including those who may not have gone in expecting to enjoy the performance. Many Americans, including members of CORE and civil rights activists, continued to see Abraham Lincoln as a great man to be admired and respected.

The Future of Lincoln

July 5th, 2018, was a hot and hazy day in Redlands, California. But the inside of the Lincoln Memorial Shrine was buzzing with excitement, team members running around the building, making final preparations.¹³² Today was the official press day for “Reflections of the Face of Lincoln,” a presentation created by Garner Holt Productions as part of the Shrine’s goal of sharing the life and legacy of Lincoln, bringing visitors as close to the man as they possibly could. Finally, the red tape was being cut and members of the press were going to be witnessing the first presentation of “Reflections of the Face of Lincoln” before its opening a few days later on July 7th. As soon as the press stepped into the presentation room, they were in awe of the scene in front of them. A collection of different figures stood in front of them, with a simple background wall of blue and gold with stars. There were busts of great minds at the time like Frederick Douglass, Clara Barton, and of course, Lincoln, seemingly carved into a block of marble, left trapped inside of the stone. After several minutes of introduction to the world of Lincoln through videos and audio, the moment everyone had been waiting for had arrived. “Even now, his face is etched in the mind of every American,” the narrator’s voice echoed throughout the silent room, “in popular culture, currency, works of fine art, and more. This is the face of the nation for his time, for all time.”¹³³ The room went dark and sparkles began to fly around the sculpture of Lincoln. The music rose in a crescendo, and then, in a burst of light, Lincoln came to

¹³² “Weather in July 2018 in Redlands, California, USA.” Accessed February 25, 2022. <https://www.timeanddate.com/weather/usa/redlands/historic?month=7&year=2018>.

¹³³ The Press-Enterprise. *Lincoln Shrine in Redlands Debuts Animatronic Bust*, 2018. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SvoVngGMRw>.

life! “Fellow citizens, we cannot escape history. We will be remembered in spite of ourselves.” The audience sat in awe as Lincoln gave his speech, moving just like a human would, head tilting, eyes blinking, lips moving as if he was speaking himself. The presentation was a success, a true great successor to the original “Great Moments with Mr. Lincoln.”¹³⁴

Unfortunately, Walt Disney would pass away on December 15th, 1966 after a battle with lung cancer, unable to see the completion of his work in Florida. Five years after Disney’s death, Liberty Square would be one of the “lands” that opened in the Magic Kingdom of Walt Disney World, a section of the park that would finally introduce the Hall of Presidents to park guests. To quote Erin Glover, the Director of Publicity and Communications at Walt Disney Animation Studios, “Imagineers knew they could make Walt’s dream of The Hall of Presidents an even grander reality,” introducing Audio-Animatronic figures to represent the Presidents instead of wax figures as originally intended.¹³⁵

Even now, decades after Disney’s death and centuries after Lincoln’s assassinations, the two men continue to inspire creators. Garner Holt was so inspired by “Great Moments with Mr. Lincoln” that he began building animatronics himself, leading to the creation of his own company, Garner Holt Production, that would eventually make its own Lincoln animatronic over fifty years after the original Lincoln animatronic was created. This new Lincoln took what Disney had created and used modern technology to make it even more impressive with state-of-the-art motors that enable the machinery to be both quiet and powerful, enabling Lincoln to give presentations at The Lincoln Memorial Shrine in Redlands, California. Others, including

¹³⁴ The Press-Enterprise. *Lincoln Shrine in Redlands Debuts Animatronic Bust*, 2018.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SvoVngGMRw>.

¹³⁵ “A Look Back: Liberty Street at Disneyland Park | Disney Parks Blog.” Accessed January 19, 2022.

<https://disneyarks.disney.go.com/blog/2013/07/a-look-back-liberty-street-at-disneyland-park/>.

current Imagineers at The Walt Disney Company have stated that “Great Moments with Mr. Lincoln” was one of the reasons they first got involved with engineering and animatronics.¹³⁶

Conclusion

Ultimately, “Great Moments of Lincoln” at the 1964 New York World’s Fair offered a presentation of Abraham Lincoln that Walt Disney and his Imagineering team created specifically for this show. There would be no mentions of slavery or the Civil War in Lincoln’s speech, only thoughts on liberty and the United States of America that could be applied to the country even years after the World’s Fair would close. Indeed, thousands of guests continue to watch the “Great Moments with Mr. Lincoln” show daily at Disneyland in Anaheim, California, listening to fragments of speeches they may never know the full context to.

But even after all of this research and attempts to answer questions about “Great Moments with Mr. Lincoln,” there are still many unanswered questions that one can ask. Why exactly did Disney and his Imagineering team choose the specific speech excerpts they did? What were some of the reactions of African-American audiences to the Lincoln animatronic? But for now, one can end in the same way “Great Moments with Mr. Lincoln” did, a proclamation that may be ironic for those who know the truth behind the presentation:

Glory, glory hallelujah!

Glory, glory hallelujah!

Glory, glory hallelujah!

His truth is marching on!¹³⁷

Acknowledgments

¹³⁶ The Press-Enterprise. *Lincoln Shrine in Redlands Debuts Animatronic Bust*, 2018. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SvoVngGMRw>.

¹³⁷ Accessed February 25, 2022. <http://www.nywf64.com/illinois09.html>.

This thesis would not have been possible without the guidance and support of Joshua Schwartz, my senior thesis advisor, and Dr. Andrea Tucher, my second reader. A special thank you to Nathan Eick for all of his assistance in finding sources for this work. Mr. Bill Butler and Mr. Garner Holt must also be thanked for providing sources and for meeting with me to discuss the future of animatronics. Thank you to Bob Gurr for sharing some of his experiences in creating “Great Moments with Mr. Lincoln” and to Ernie Alonzo for arranging the meeting with Mr. Gurr. Boris & Horton is where most of this thesis was written and I must thank them for their delicious iced coffee and grilled cheeses over the past year. I would also like to thank my parents for all of their love and support, especially for the many trips to historic sites and Disney World as a child that ended up inspiring this thesis.

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