

When Mickey Came to Town

The following film discussion guide will help you introduce the film, *When Mickey Came to Town*, and host a discussion around the Stop Disney movement.

If you are looking to start your own movement, we challenge you to think about how you can apply the same principles and actions to the change you wish to provoke.

INTRODUCING THE FILM

Facilitator: We are happy to present the film *When Mickey Came to Town*.

This film looks back on a campaign waged a little over 20 years ago in Haymarket, Virginia – which was, at that time, a rural area about 30 miles from the Nation’s Capital. Although Haymarket was a small, farming village, it was surrounded by some of America’s most historical and scenic areas including Civil War Battlefields, historic homes including Jefferson’s Monticello, and landscapes dating back centuries.

With all the history and rural landscape at stake, you can imagine the trouble that arose when the Walt Disney Corporation announced that they had selected this site for a new theme park – “Disney’s America!”

We hope that this film will strike a flame in you to take action and give you confidence in the idea that surprising things happen when a group of people come together to protect a place that is special to them.

I don’t want to spoil the story, but you will recognize the David and Goliath nature of the epic battle that followed.

This 30-minute film was produced by the American University Center for Environmental Filmmaking under the guidance of Chris Palmer and direction of Sam Sheline. After the film, we will have a discussion about what members of a community can do when they feel that a place they hold sacred is threatened.

Enjoy the film.

USING THE FILM ITSELF TO GUIDE A DISCUSSION

This guide will direct you to segments of the film that make a particular point about how this campaign was developed and managed. By moving to the screenshot frame of each part of the film within the suggested time code, the discussion leader can help the audience develop an understanding of the elements of this successful campaign.

PART 1: The First Step (4:55 – 5:18) Developing a Strategy

TALKING POINTS

Early in the film, Tracey Shafroth who has been asked to organize an opposition, says, “The first step was me knowing I had no idea what to do.” She calls upon an experienced organizer, Doug Wheeler

- Recognized need to act quickly
- Reached out to an expert for advice. Who said:
 - o Bring together smart people
 - o Give them good food
 - o Lock the door

QUESTIONS

- What was the essence of the advice Tracey received?
- What were the benefits of each step Wheeler recommended?
- What do you think happened behind that locked door?
- Why was it important to lock the door?
- What can we learn from this strategy?

PART 2: Assessing the Situation (5:18 – 5:59) What is the nature of the threat? Who are the people on the other side?

TALKING POINTS

“This idea had 98% voter recognition and 75% public support. ...”

Disney had already lined-up political support at the state and local levels, hired local attorneys to identify those who would benefit from the idea and launched a media campaign.

QUESTIONS

- How important to you think “public support” was in this campaign?
- How important was it relative to political support?
- How did the campaign organizers go about changing public opinion?
- Which do you think were the most successful techniques?
 - o Testimonies from well-known historians
 - o Facts about the environmental impacts
 - o Facts about the traffic congestion
 - o Humorous stabs at Disney

PART 3: The Role of Partners (12:00 – 12:25)

TALKING POINTS

“The environmental impacts would have been horrendous...we started partnering with the Lung Association and the Sierra Club. We did a major study of the impact on the local water supply...”

QUESTIONS

- How and why did they reach out to other organizations? What did these organizations have to offer?
- Why do you think the other organizations were willing to get involved?
- What role did studies and research play – why were they an important part of the strategy?
- Is it important to connect with organizations that have interest in your campaign?

PART 4: Gathering and Using Facts (13:06 – 13:38)

TALKING POINTS

“One of our big challenges was to get a handle on just what the traffic impacts would be so that we could help the other jurisdictions—and the public—see what the impact of Disney would be on them.”

QUESTIONS

- Why did they want to engage the other jurisdictions in the region?
- Do you think it was important that the site Disney chose was within a region that consisted of 2 states and the District of Columbia?
- How did this help Disney and how did it ultimately harm them?
- If you don't have the funding to do major studies, how can you get this kind of research and information to really impact your campaign?

PART 5: Finding and Utilizing Financial Resources (13:50 – 14:25)

TALKING POINT

“Fred Prince devoted the resources of the Prince Charitable Trusts, a family foundation. He also became an ‘activist’” – a role he had never played before.”

QUESTIONS

Note: the Prince family is part of the Piedmont community and has property in the area, so their interests were directly affected. However, like so many Virginians, their personal sense of the importance of history and, in particular, this historic landscape is a deeply-held value.

- Why was a “family foundation” a good resource for this campaign?
- What might the citizens of the region have done if there had not been a family foundation willing to provide resources quickly?

- What other sources of support might have been available?

PART 6: Developing a Message (15:25 – 15:45)

TALKING POINT

“Disney, Take a Second Look”

QUESTIONS

- Do you think this was an effective message? Why or why not?
- What do you think of Bill Backer and his impact on the campaign?
- What other messages stood out to you?
- How do you think the messaging affected the outcome?

PART 7: The Value of a Multi-Pronged Approach (16:42 – 17:45) (22:30 – 22:47)

TALKING POINTS

- “We started to fund a whole host of organizations that played different roles....not one silver bullet...role of cartoonists and cartoons”
- “Disney was getting slammed from every direction...”

QUESTIONS

- What does the film reveal as the components of this multi-pronged approach?
- Why do you think this campaign adopted a ‘multi-pronged’ approach?
- Do you think that was effective?

PART 8: The Campaign Attracted National Attention (21:04 – 21:50)

TALKING POINT

“The threat to the Civil War Battlefields drew national attention.”

QUESTIONS

- What made the national news media want to cover this campaign?
- Do you think it was a ‘news worthy’ issue?

PART 9: The Application of the Film

TALKING POINT

This film is filled with many great lessons for advocates, students, and organizers.

QUESTIONS

- What can we learn from this film that we can apply to our own advocacy?
- Based on this film, what elements do you feel are vital to this campaign?