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English 1121
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RESEARCH ESSAY

An American Icon of Hope.

Just as the twin towers in NYC were struck by 19 plane hijackers with box cutters,

devastating an entire city of New York, and bringing tears to millions across the world, Saddam Hussein became the national image for terrorism. But how does one event lead people to a single such meager incident into an icon, an image, thus, unconsciously correlating terrorism to a single man? Whether big or small, mankind has been defined to label their surroundings, whether it be people, objects, society, or whatsoever that is deemed irrational. As a little kid, I used to look at pictures, and posters of the Statue of Liberty and remarked to her being "the green lady that wore a sari," sari being a traditional Indian clothing worn by married women. With age, I came to realize that this colossal monument isn't just an ordinary woman cradling the tablet of law and a torch that shines freedom but, a women that faces the Old World, lighting the way for all immigrants. But exactly how did the Statue of Liberty become the American icon for hope?

America's symbol of freedom, ironically however, is French. The idea, the design, the fabrication, and the contributions were all provided by the French. It was actually during a dinner party in 1865 hosted by Edouard de Laboulaye that the conversation began (Dillon, 5). The topic for discussion was an idea for a way to commemorate the alliance between the United States and France during the American Revolution, as well as according to the National Park Services, to "create something honoring America's commitment to freedom and liberty and present it to the US in time for the nations 100th birthday celebration in 1876." Laboulaye's idea of a gift to the United States was intended as a "symbol of friendship between France and the US and as an expression of liberal opposition to the Second Empire." According to Wilton Dillon from "The

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Statue of Liberty Revisited, “Laboulaye additionally saw the gift as a way to reflect his wish for democracy in France (28).

The Statue of Liberty, was designed by French sculptor Frederic-Auguste Bartholdi and was completed in July 1884, according to Eric Homberger of New York City: A Cultural and Literary Companion (68). Fixed into his mind, becoming his obsession, and working with dreams of the famous figure for over a decade before its completion, Bartholdi produced a number of miniaturized working models. Once the design was finalized, wooden molds were made over which copper sheets, worked in an ancient technique called repousse, were attached and hammered into shape. The copper shell was then joined to an internal iron structure designed by Gustave Eiffel, who later built the Eiffel Tower (National Park Services). The finished statue was made up of more than 350 segments, held together by more than 600,000 rivets. On the 4th of July, 1884, the 151 feet (46 meters) tall, 225 ton Statue of Liberty was delivered to the American Ambassador in Paris. As said by Homberger, “people were daunted as the colossal 15-story lady towered over the four and five-story buildings surrounding her” (72). The Statue of Liberty, likewise, was dismantled into 300 pieces and packed into 214 wooden crates in order to bring it to New York Harbor. The pieces of her torch-bearing arm alone, which had been displayed previously in Philadelphia for the 1876 centennial then was moved to Madison Square Garden in NYC, filled 21 boxes. The head of the statue, moreover, was finally finished in June of 1878 when it was moved to the Champ de Mars, site of exposition (Dillon, 30).

But where did Lady Liberty get her “green copper skin?” Liberty’s mystery for a “green copper skin,” led many officials uncapping 20 months of detective work that involved rummaging through Bell Laboratories scientists, a French mining company, scattered historical records and Norwegian Government officials. The end of the trail led to an obsolete copper mine

on a Norwegian Island in the North Sea, which government officials later planned on making into a museum. Ultimately, the discovery of the old Visnes copper mine as the source for the copper had reduced many of "history bluffs" (Diamond).

In the beginning of something big, disparagement almost always lurks in every corner, and this was no exception. Even with all this planning, and precision in building the statue, criticism still prowled everywhere, just as Tom never seemed to release Jerry from all the chase. According to New York Times "Statue of Liberty", critics debated that "if the statue were to be placed in Battery Park instead of Ellis' or Bedloe's Island, it would be quite useful and much more satisfactory to the public." For people wouldn't have to feel compelled to hire a boat in order to reach it, and that Battery park would be of easy access. Beside Battery Park, Coney Island, according to the critics, "would have been another eligible site," coming to use both as a lighthouse and an attraction. Another controversy that was brought about questioned why Lady liberty was draped. They believed that "the Genius of American Liberty should be clad in trousers," however, no Frenchmen seems to share this delusion, and as recipients "we shall be entirely contented with the Orthodox style of drapery. a respectable work of art" ("Statue of Liberty," 6).

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"Ever since her dedication 75 years ago, the Statue of Liberty has been a one-woman welcoming committee for returning soldiers, a talisman for immigrants, high adventure for civics classes and a testimonial in metal to the country's highest ideals," according to Arthur Herzog from "The Lure of Liberty." To immigrants "the statue arouses a deep sense of freedom."

Coming in from Ireland, a woman recalls looking at the statue and commenting that "this is a wonderful country and the statue is a symbol of welcoming liberty and freedom" (Homburger, 71), an automatic response given without much thought. The pilgrimage up the 354 steps to the

crown of the statue is worth all the climb, acknowledged an elderly woman gasping for breath who happens to suffer from heart disease (Herzog, 3). According to Homberger, the Statue of liberty and Ellis Island were famously known as the immigrants city, due to its welcoming opened arms for all foreigners. As most immigrants look back with fondness on the welcoming sight of the Liberty, there seemed to be a consensus as they all stood, choked with emotions learning the importance of proving to this determined statue that indeed they are here to do something, to become something, to prove their worth (Michener).

Beset by money woes almost prior to construction, “the Statue of Liberty was initially greeted in this country by a collective yawn” (Dillon, 37). Since the Statue was a joint effort between America and France, it was agreed that the American people were to build the pedestal, and the French people were responsible for the Statue and assembly. Eventually, the French were brought to an abrupt halt in construction because neither did the French have enough money nor was President Grant willing to support the project. Soon the French fundraising campaigns were formally launched in 1875, supported by both the public and the President of the French Republic. Gala performances were held at the Paris Opera, along with fees being charged to enter the torch-bearing hand at Philadelphia and Madison Square Garden to help raise money. “None of the city’s millionaires were prepared to reach into his pockets for the \$100,000 that was needed,” according to Homberger (70). Public fees, various forms of entertainment and items with the Statue on it were ultimately the only ways to raise money. Meanwhile, when congress rejected an appropriation bill in March 1883, the American fundraising scheme looked on the verge of collapse. “The New Colossus” was hence, written by Emma Lazarus in November 1883 at the request of Mrs. Burton Harrison, who solicited manuscripts from writers for a charity auction in aid of the Bartholdi Pedestal Fund. Even Joseph Pulitzer’s *The World*,

opened the eyes of many 'plain people' bringing in about \$102,000 of the \$250,000 in five months. All the hard work had finally worked out at the end with regard to Bartholdi's project, and the United States (Homburger, 70-2).

She began as the symbol of an idea. Her creators gave her the title "Liberty Enlightening the World" but, later a young poet gave her another name, "one less grand and more human and personal; Mother of Exiles" (Moreno). The Statue of Liberty originated as a gift to symbolize the friendship of France and the United States, ultimately succeeding in demonstrating the historic interdependence between the two countries. Bartholdi was a great admirer of the classical art of ancient Greece and Rome, as it played an important role in his sculpture. In the ancient world, before the Christian era, female figures had been used in art, literature, and mythology to represent the ideals of truth, faith, peace and liberty. This led Bartholdi to agree that his sculpture will indeed be a female. The Statue's feature: the torch, the book of law, and the radiating crown, derive from symbols associated with the freemasons. Likewise Bartholdi, a member of the Freemason lodge, incorporated some of the ideals of freemasonry that resonated with the secular ideas of equality and liberty. His name for the statue, Liberty Enlightening the World, furthermore, reflected a major theme of freemason thought- the idea of enlightenment and the spread of truth as the basis for a just and free society (Dillon).

Be Her Fair Defense needs - a way of "Lifting"
Another key element in Bartholdi's art was his admiration for large scale monuments that

stood in unobstructed public spaces and that would inspire a sense of awe in masses. The idea that an entryway to a harbor was often adorned with a huge statue of a male or female, symbolizing both the greatness of the nation and the guardian spirit that illuminated and protected the passageway had deeply inspired Bartholdi. The largest statue of that time was that of the Greek Island of Rhodes, The Colossus of Rhodes, representing the Greek God Helios

holding onto a torch with either leg on each harbor later, became one of the major influences on the Statue of Liberty (Dillon, 9).

^{good} The statue furthermore, is a collection of symbolism. The book she carries bears July 4, 1776 in roman numerals, signifying the declaration of independence. This statue, symbol of hope, tells us that liberty lives only "through truth and justice, light and law" (Dillon, 35). This image of "freedom is linked to notions of equality, fairness, due process, and equal treatment" under the law. The seven spikes on the crown, however, represent the suns rays along with the seven seas, and the seven continents of the world. The Masonic "Torch of Enlightenment" also referred to back in the 1700's by the Illuminati Masons as the "Flaming Torch of Reason" represents the "Sun" in the sky thus, the official title "Liberty Enlightening the World".

Illuminati means to "bare light", one way to symbolize this is by carrying a torch, to exemplify, there is a torch on top of JFK's grave, and on top of the tunnel where Princess Diana was killed (Moreno). According to Laboulaye, "the torch to which the statue holds onto represents not the torch that sets fire, but the flambeau, the candle-flame that enlightens." According to Dillon, rumor has it that Bartholdi used his own mother as a model for Liberty's face, along with Bartholdi's wife, Jeanne de Puyssieux, who served as a model for Liberty's shapely arms and expressive hands (36). Although it is invisible from the ground, there is also a shackle on her ankle which she has broken as she steps forward with the torch breaking all tyranny (Herzog, 2).

Being so grand, and loved by everyone, the Statue of Liberty as well hadn't been spared from the routine terrorism. With the help of an undercover NY cop, the NYPD and FBI caught a group of terrorist-one woman, 3 men and "cache of dynamites" - who were planning to blow up the Statue of Liberty and other national monuments in 1965. "The pro-Castro group, who lived in the NYC, were the Black Liberation Front," according to the New York Post (1965). Officer

Wood, who was promoted to detective after the “would-be terrorist” were arrested, learned that the group was planning to blow up the Statue of Liberty, the Liberty Bell and the Washington Monument in a sabotage campaign. The police commissioner, according to the Post, said that the group’s goal was to make a statement: “to make it symbolic” (NY Post).

It sits in the NY Harbor, a giant copper colossus holding aloft a torch that symbolizes the light of liberty that illuminates the United States of America. It is the Statue of Liberty- a gift from France to America celebrating the friendship between the two countries. It was born out of a casual dinner hosted by Eduardo de Laboulaye, and sculpted by Frederic Auguste Bartholdi in 1865. Many ideas speculated both in Laboulaye and Bartholdi’s mind but, in Laboulaye’s mind the future monument in America should convey the idea “that the US was the worlds beacon and prime guardian of liberty” (Dillon, 8). Draped in the heavy robes of ancient Roman goddesses, she seems to move forward, her sandals treading upon broken chains, which symbolize the forces of oppression and tyranny. In her left arm, she cradles the tablet of law, inscribed “July 4, 1776,” in Roman numerals. In her right she holds high a torch, which shines with the golden flame of freedom. On her head, she wears a crown bristling with seven spiky rays, representing the seven continents and the seven seas. The Statue of Liberty in it’s final form synthesized the ideas and images that Bartholdi and Laboulaye sought to communicate to the US and France. It is indeed a “gift without parallel between two nations,” and a grand symbol depicting timeless and universal human aspirations. Likewise, she has become the most powerful modern symbol of the longings of human beings everywhere for hope, and freedom.

