

Power of Place

1. Begin by introducing yourself and your organization. Prepare attendees by explaining how you will facilitate the conversation. For example, *“Today we are going to be talking about what the term, “Power of Place” means to us in our community. We will look at a couple of different poems and photos to help guide our conversation. I encourage you to listen to each other with respect and share your opinions and thoughts openly with the group.”*
2. **Introductions – 10 Minutes**
 - a. Introduce yourself to participants.
 - b. Have participants go around and introduce themselves by stating their name and their favorite place.
 - c. Ask participants:
 - i. Did anyone’s response surprise you?
 - ii. Would anyone like to explain why they chose their place?
 - iii. What about a place makes it your favorite or special to you?
3. **Small Groups- 15 minutes**
 - a. Pass out *Old South Meeting House* by January Gill O’Neil. Have participants break into groups of 2-3 and take turns reading the poem.
 - b. Have participants discuss the poem:
 - i. What is this poem about?
 - ii. How does this poem make you feel about place?
 - iii. What role do people play in making a place special?
4. **Whole Group- 15 Minutes**
 - a. Bring the group back together to discuss:
 - i. How does history make places special?
 - ii. Does anyone have a story about a place they connect with?
 - iii. How do we connect with places that are important to our national history, even if they’re far away?
 - iv. What local places can we use to connect ourselves with our history?
5. **Whole Group – 15 Minutes**
 - a. Pass out the image of *Lincoln Figure under Construction*.
 - i. Ask participants: What is this an image of?
 - ii. What do you think about this image?
 - iii. Why did the photographer take this photo?
 - iv. How has Mount Rushmore’s purpose changed over time?
 - v. How have our ideas about important places changed over time?
 - vi. How do you know a place is special or important?
6. **Wrap-Up – 5 Minutes**
 - a. Have participants go around and name a word or phrase that comes to mind when they consider the term, “Power of Place.”
 - b. Thank participants for attending and encourage them to keep talking!

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Additional Questions

1. What places hold special memories for you?
2. What places have you seen change during your life?
3. How do places tell a story?
4. What stories does your community tell?
5. What does “the power of place,” mean to you?
6. When have you experienced a powerful place?
7. How do we connect with place differently than we connect with each other?
8. What is the balance between preserving places and supporting growth?
9. What is the role of nature in creating places?
10. How do people create places?
11. Why do you think some places are more important than others?
12. What places are most important to your community? To your state?
13. What places are most important to Americans?
14. What places are important to you that do not matter as much to others?
15. How can you help preserve places that matter to you?

Old South Meeting House

January Gill O'Neil

We draw breath from brick
step on stones, weather-worn,
cobble and carved
with the story of this church,
this meeting house,
where Ben Franklin was baptized
and Phillis Wheatley prayed—a mouth-house
where colonists gathered
to plot against the crown.

This structure, with elegant curves
and round-topped windows, was the
heart
of Boston, *the body of the people*,

survived occupation for preservation,
foregoing decoration
for conversation.

Let us gather in the box pews
once numbered and rented
by generations of families

held together like ribs
in the body politic. Let us gaze upon
the upper galleries to the free seats

where the poor and the town slaves
listened and waited and pondered
and prayed

for revolution.
Let us testify to the plight
of the well-meaning at the pulpit

with its sounding board high above,
congregations raising heads and hands
to the sky.

We, the people—the tourists

and townies—one nation under
this vaulted roof, exalted voices
speaking poetry out loud,

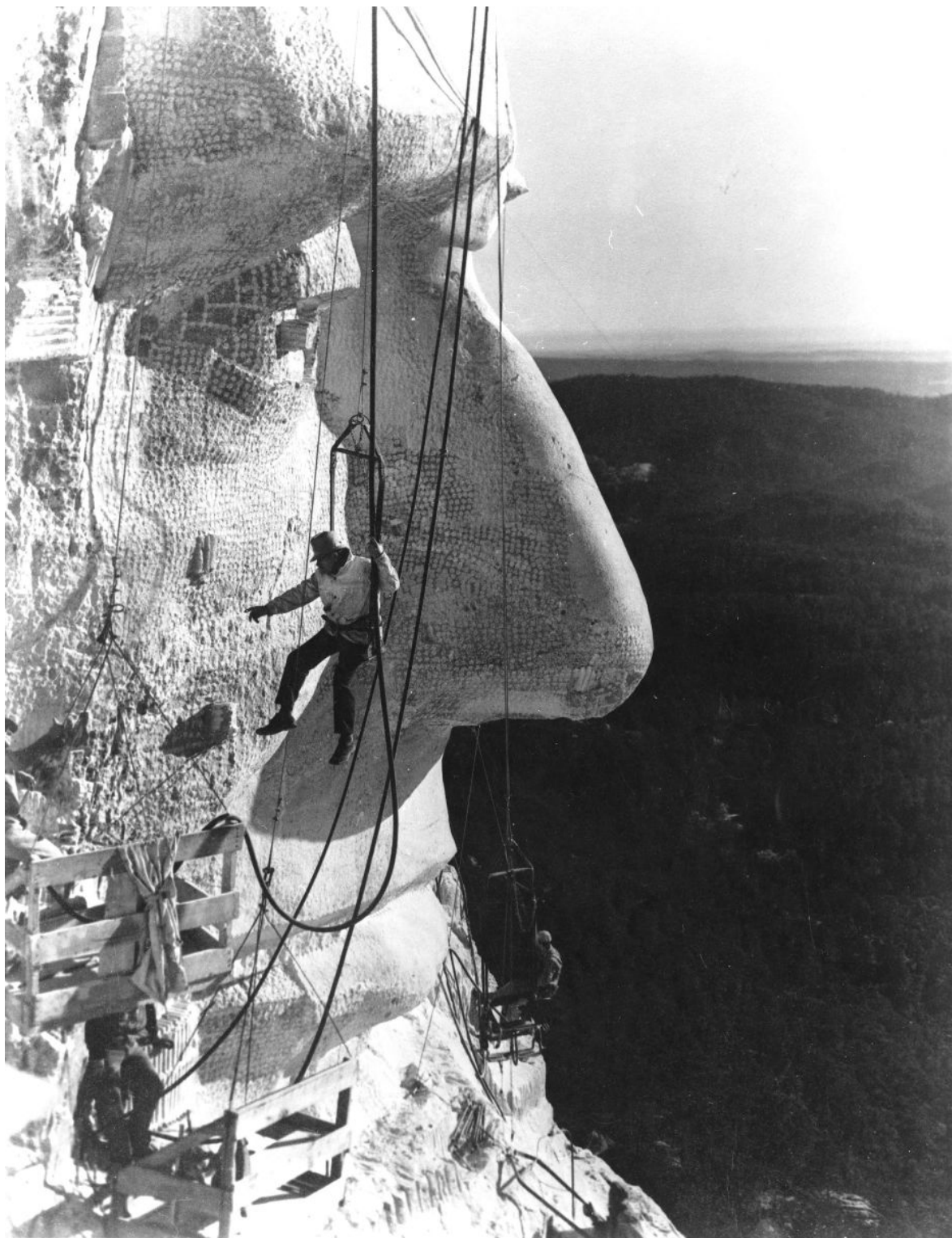
in praise and dissent.

We draw breath from brick. Ignite the fire
in us.

Speak to us:

the language is hope.

Lincoln Figure Under Construction



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11. January Gill O'Neil, *Old South Meeting House*, 2016. Retrieved from:

<https://poets.org/poem/old-south-meeting-house>.

12. *Lincoln Figure Under Construction*, 1936. NPS. Retrieved from:

<https://www.nps.gov/media/photo/gallery-item.htm?pg=3240960&id=f4a54918-155d-4519-3ee5-cd8f895f4e29&gid=F47518BA-155D-4519-3E3F35CAD0584ADE>