

Process Paper

We chose to research the Love Canal because of its influence on the environmental movement. This conflict is still relevant, allowing us to find a wide array of high quality sources for our project. Its relevance led to plentiful amounts of video footage, photos, and interviews available, making it a good fit for a documentary. It's strong connection to the theme was the cherry on top.

We conducted an extensive amount of research, and we always made sure it had purpose. First we researched background information about the Love Canal with databases. Then we looked into the historical context of our topic. Once we knew more about our topic we looked into in-depth articles and primary sources. We looked over many different secondary and primary speeches and interviews that were connected to our topic. We also conducted three interviews ourselves, including the Superfund Coordinator and Resource Conservation and Recovery Act Unit Supervisor from the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, Crague Biglow. His interview mainly helped us to understand the complexity of the law itself. We also interviewed Stephen Lester, Science Director of the Center for Health, Environment & Justice. He worked closely with Lois Gibbs, a key leader in the Love Canal conflict. The third interview was with Hank Balling who managed the clean up of Love Canal which helped us get the other side of the issue. These interviews allowed us to understand this conflict in a new light told by those who experienced it.

We decided to make a documentary because while conducting our research, we realized that there was an extensive amount of high-quality visual resources relating to our topic. We took advantage of these visual resources to offer audiences another perspective to our project.

When only half of the residents of Love Canal were evacuated, conflict arose among the ones forced to stay in unsafe chemical laden homes. The State of New York would not give the other financially unstable families funding to leave the area. After many resident protests, the State of New York compromised and gave the rest of the residents funding to leave the toxic area. There was also conflict between the State of New York and the Hooker Chemical Company about who was responsible for the cleanup costs of the toxic town that the State of New York executed. The Hooker Chemical Company soon compromised with the State of New York to settle the issues of the cleanup and the costs that came with it.

The Love Canal is important in history because it resulted in the Superfund Law, which grants money to clean up other toxic waste sites comparable to Love Canal. The residents of the Love Canal used their voices to fight against the Hooker Chemical Company, inspiring others to stand up for their rights too. This resulted in changing the already existing environmental movement through grassroots movements. It also made us think about how the United States government puts profit over people and our environment.