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MCA 276

Professor LaRosa

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Documentary Film Proposal

My documentary proposal is, *Riding the Rails of New York*, which would chronicle traveling by train throughout the State New York. It would consist of a multi-volume series with each episode consisting of sixty minute. Each episode would concentrate on different locales of New York State. The series would be best formatted for a PBS or Smithsonian Channel broadcast. I have three goals for this series. First, to educate the American public and New Yorkers about the past, present and future of New York States. Second, to show the impact America's railroads have had on the state of New York and its population. Third, to provide viewer's with an adventure. To prevent it from being niche specific, I would avoid a generic format, opting to make it fun and exciting. Trains are an adventurous and exciting vehicle for storytelling that will appeal to everyone, not just train lovers. I want to create a sense of immediacy for the viewer, as often, talking about American history can be very general, boring, and redundant. Talking specifically about a state's history provides greater focus and new insight for a viewer. I want to offer an adventure, as the viewer visually travels with the host to interesting and exciting locations in New York State. A commentator would be cast as the main character, who will serve as the viewer's guide through their journey. Narration would provide information regarding photos, and silent film would be used as visual stimulation for the viewer. Interviews with historians and the general public would be included. These interviews would

provide various perspectives about trains, educational and fun facts, and add color to the overall feel of the documentary. As an example, I will discuss the first episode of the series.

The Train would depart from New York City's Grand Central Station, with the commentator briefly discussing the station's history and its impact on New York. Since it is one of the largest railroads in the city and the world, it would certainly be of interest to a great many people. For example, in the article "100 years of Grandeur The birth of Grand Central Station" written by Sam Roberts for *The New York Times* he states that over 10,000 workers at a time were assigned to work on construction of the station. He further writes that the station cost \$114 million dollars to construct, which today equates to \$2.7 billion dollars. Next, I would take the subway to travel across the city, to cover some of New York City's famous landmarks, such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art and Central Park. While at these locations, I would incorporate views of a variety of the most fascinating and charming aspects of the two landmarks. An array of visuals coupled with great information would make the documentary appealing to a larger and more diversified population of people.

During the train ride, the commentator would discuss the history of the New York Subway system. In addition I would include a visit to the famous City Hall Station. In an article for *The New York Times* Learning Centers it states that "today, the New York City Subway system has 22 interconnected routes and three shuttles running more than 200 miles among 468 stations, nearly as many stations as there are in the rest of the United States combined." Merely providing facts and figures would be boring. Thus, I would include a diverse assortment of pictures of the train station. I would perhaps even show pictures of the train station when it was originally constructed and opened and compare them on the screen to pictures of it today. I think

people get a kick from viewing photos of locations, as they were in the past and how they have transitioned into how they look now.

In an article written for *The New York Times* Douglas Martin “A Village Dies, a Park is Born” he writes that Central Park was the site of Seneca Village. In 1855, it was one of the most stable African American communities in New York City with 264 residents. He further writes the village had churches, schools, and cemeteries. In an article written for centralpark.com by Elizabeth Blackmar and Roy Rosenzweig, eminent domain caused the removal of the town and its people. The documentary would show views of where the village buildings once stood and what stands in its place today. I would also include interviews of people at the park and get their perspective of the park. Maybe even test their park knowledge by way of a fun quiz about the park’s history. This would serve two purposes, first it would give park visitors some cool facts and the viewer could play along, people tend to enjoy playing entertaining quizzes, especially if they are not getting graded.

This a sampling of what one location I would cover. Each location would have its own distinctive style and history. I would make sure to present each one with accuracy, exciting photos, and thought provoking interviews.