

SCAR Happy Times Activities

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Summary:

SCAR Happy Times activities is a 2 minutes and 33 seconds long silent clip in color, that has been digitized from film that was originally 100 ft long. It is a recording of special eds classes around 1968/9. Archivist Lydia Pappas has no metadata information regarding the footage, and is not sure if the file title was made up or written on the original can. The clip consists of three scenes in three settings -- hairdressing, arts & crafts, and gift-wrapping.

Context:

The mid-1960s in the United States were defined by social change, political upheaval and advocacy for African Americans and women. The Civil Rights Act was passed in 1964 with provisions to protect individuals from discrimination race, religion, sex or nationality. This was a significant and historic stride for change but those with disabilities were left entirely out of the bill, which meant that they could still legally be denied access to employment based solely on disability. This didn't change until 1973 with the passage of the Rehabilitation Act, allowing for equal opportunity employment and preventing employment discrimination on the basis of disability.

It wasn't uncommon for parents with children diagnosed with Down's Syndrome to institutionalize them or at least keep them entirely out of the public eye. Dr. Stedan and Dr. EichhIn were among the first scientists in 1964 to argue that institutionalization has a negative impact on children, and that those with disabilities have the same emotional needs as any other child and denying them that will only lower cognitive ability. In the 1969 court case *Wolf v. State of Utah*, it was declared unconstitutional to deny any student the right to an education after two students with mental disabilities were denied the ability to enroll in a public school. This was also around the time when the term "mongoloid" was just starting to be criticized as an outdated and offensive term to describe those with Down's Syndrome. The Happy Times footage was likely shot amidst all of this change surrounding the education of children with disabilities, and one could argue that the footage is important to save simply for that reason- it was filmed during a time period when those with Down's Syndrome were rarely acknowledged by the public let

alone be preserved in film. The simple act of showing real people with Down's syndrome on camera was somewhat of a rarity in the 1960s.

Assumptions:

Promotional nature

As such, it would seem that the nature of this clip could have been promotional. The aforementioned historical and social context of the time leads us to believe that the turnover of beliefs about the education of children with disabilities would have led to a need for programs such as the one that is shown in Happy Times Activities. In return, these presumably young programs would have to advertise themselves as desirable and safe environments; and what better way to do so than showing their everyday students performing and learning fun tasks?

A second clue that lends itself to the clip's promotional nature is its aesthetics. The subjects (the children and the professor) do not pay attention to the camera. In any setting, if children were being filmed within their classrooms, they would be looking directly at the camera and even probably interacting with it. Therefore, their conscious attempts at avoiding looking directly into the camera lens (though they cannot always resist), lead us to believe that they are following directions. That being said, the camera's purpose is not to merely act as an observer and simply document, it is playing an active role in the construction of this clip; therefore, questions of just how much of it is constructed arise.

There is a general filmic quality to the footage: the camera is orchestrated, with motivated zooms and pans that shift focus and emphasize the subject's' participation in the various activities. An establishing shot, focused on the words "Arts and Craft" is even included, before a drastic zoom out reveals the scene, as well as a general maintained continuity in each individual scene (a shot of a caretaker looking down at the table working cuts to a shot of what she is working on). There is an emphasis on laughter, which contributes to the wholesome tone, that implicates an appeal to pathos. Other aspects of the mise-en-scene suggest further directorial manipulation -- the way the colors in the costumes and props are all coordinated to contribute to the overwhelmingly festive atmosphere.

Gender Divide: A faulty research path....

Upon a first viewing, one might think that there is a gender divide in the activities shown on screen. There seems to only be girls in the hairdressing segment, and to only be boys at the first crafts table. However, it would seem that though we are preconditioned to believe that a hairdressing class for youth in the late 1960s is question of a clear gender divide, this clip proves this assumption to be false, as a boy can be noticed at the sink in the background. In addition to this, two people at the crafts table are obstructed and their gender cannot be determined, and, in any case, the activity performed is not one that is generally associated to the male gender.

Clip Length

Another assumption is the fact that the 2 minutes and 33 second clip entitled Happy Times Activities might be part of a longer clip or outtakes for promotional material. The reason for this is that it starts off quite abruptly, with no introduction or context, in the middle of a hairdressing course. That being said, In addition to this, once the hair dressing segment is over, we are introduced to the next activity by means of a title card that reads “ Arts and Crafts”. This hints at the fact that the entirety of the clip must have been following this title card formula, and that we are thus missing the introduction to hair dressing class and as an extension, perhaps activities that came before it. The fact that the clip ends abruptly and with no conclusion also suggests that we might be missing some footage. That being said, we can deduce that we are missing some context for the film, as we seem to only be examining part of it, presumably, the middle.

Significance:

The presumably staged nature of the footage is revealing of attitudes towards developmentally disabled children in the late sixties. The emphasis on community and collaboration could be seen as intended to contrast modern views on people with disabilities -- here are physically different people participating in everyday activities as regular children would, evidence that standard practices at the time -- institutionalization -- could perhaps be misguided; nurturing may be a better tactic.

The clip provides important insights to the standards of the educational system for the youth with disabilities in the late 1960s. The personnels involved with the education of the youth with disabilities can

assess the condition of the facilities of the 1960s from this clip, appreciate what they have improved since then, and maybe even be reminded what they would bring back to the educational environment now.

There are number of things that even viewers with no special knowledge towards special eds can detect from the clip, namely the facilities. We can see from the glass door that there is a playground right outside which indicates that the classes not only indoor activities such as crafts but also outdoor activities and exercises. The classes all seem well equipped. The hairdressing class for example, has combs, hairdressing gowns, a mannequin head with the wig available. This is important because it means that the class was conducted to be hygienic and the instructor was probably giving demonstration on the mannequin in the beginning of the class which ties into the safety and the quality of the class. However, the clip also shows the areas where improvements are needed. Firstly, the age range seems to be very wide in the second class. Some barely look 5 years old and some are in their late 20s. This would affect the content and the quality of the classes significantly. Also, there are only one instructor present in these classes. Judging from the face, hairstyle and the same earrings, it is the same instructor. It is a problem to have only one instructor in a class when there are tools involved (scissors, staplers etc.) not just for special eds class but for all classes that have very young children present. In the first clip, the instructor has her back towards the girls because she has to take care of the much younger boy which indicates that there should be another adult present in the same space. For one person take care of several different classes is a physical burden for the instructor as well.

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