

## **MEMORANDUM**

TO: John Lasseter,  
CCO of Pixar and Walt Disney Animation Studios  
Principal Creative Advisor for Walt Disney Imagineering

FROM: Alannah Johnson

RE: Keynote Address for the 2013 D23 Disney Expo

DATE: May 6, 2013

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Mr. Lasseter has been invited to speak at the D23 Expo: The Ultimate Disney Fan Event. This is the annual Disney conference for members of D23, the official Disney Fan Club, and is held in Anaheim, California on August 9<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> of this coming year.

The D23 Expo is a convention that is known for "bringing all things Disney under one roof." The Expo features pavilions from Walt Disney Imagineering, models of future attractions for the Walt Disney World Resorts and Theme Parks, examples of The Walt Disney Company's Corporate Responsibility, and a showcase of Disney memorabilia.

Mr. Lasseter will be speaking in the D23 Arena at the Anaheim Convention Center. This speech will be the highlight of the conference, so there is an expected attendance of over 3,000 guests, including several overflow arenas with a live feed of the speech provided.

This is a casual event, with many guests being families with young children or avid Disney fans. Many of the guests will be dressed in costumes of their favorite Disney, Star Wars, or Marvel characters. There will be a microphone and a chair provided. There will be a short question and answer session with the audience following the address, but it will be limited to the personal experiences that Mr. Lasseter has had with the Walt Disney Company.

This is an opportunity for Mr. Lasseter to share his experiences and views on why the vision of the "Disney Family" is essential for the future generations of Disney fans. Mr. Lasseter has been invited to speak due to his commitment to the ideals consistent with the "Disney Family" and his commitment to the company for nearly 30 years.

JOHN LASSETER "THE DISNEY FAMILY"  
KEYNOTE ADDRESS FOR D23 EXPO 2013  
HELD AUGUST 9-11 IN ANAHEIM, CALIFORNIA  
WRITTEN BY ALANNAH JOHNSON

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ATTENTION:

Thank you, thank you, ladies and gentlemen, now please, settle in and close your eyes for a moment. We're about to embark on an imaginary adventure like one you've never seen-so keep those eyes closed.

My name is John, and I'll be your skipper during this exciting Jungle Cruise.

For your own safety, please remain seated, keep your hands and arms inside the boat, and keep an eye on your children. In case of water evacuation, it helps to remember that kids make great flotation devices.

Over here on the left we see some beautiful Amazon butterflies. Did you know that these butterflies can have a wingspan anywhere from 12 inches all the way up to one foot?

You can open your eyes now.

For those of you who haven't picked up on this already, in the early 80's I spent most of my time cracking wise as a skipper on what I think is the best Disney attraction of all time.

One of the timeless Jungle Cruise quips is how proud our parents are that we graduated from college to become skippers on a glorified inner tube. See, the funny thing is that the joke is actually about me.

I had always known that I wanted to be an animator. When I was a kid, I would keep myself awake in church services by doodling pictures of the people in the pews.

Thankfully, my mother never scolded me. She was an art teacher, so she was the first to add a detail or two in, herself.

Later, she was the first to encourage me to enroll in animation at the California Institute of the Arts.

Unfortunately, I wasn't the program's first student. I was their second.

In college, I studied under three of the "Nine Old Men," of acclaimed animation fame. I took lunch breaks with my classmates, Brad Bird and Tim Burton. I even won a couple of student awards that you might not have heard about.

So after graduation, I took my degree and I went looking for a job at The Walt Disney Company, the most well-known animation studio in the world.

And I got hired-as a Jungle Cruise Skipper.

I wasn't discouraged, though, because I found something beautiful between those ferns along the river. I found something that I make sure reflects in my everyday work, in my movies, in my own home.

I found out what it means to be part of a family.

And tonight, I'd like to show you, too.

#### PROBLEM:

We're all familiar with the nuclear family idea. A mother, a father, 2.5 kids with a golden retriever playing ball behind the white picket fence.

It's nice, but it's not realistic.

The census tells us less than 50% of all households have two parents and a child living in their home. A growing number of children are raised by a stepparent, a grandparent, an aunt or an uncle. Some don't play in the backyard with Fido and their 1.5 other siblings.

Some live in an overcrowded city, in an apartment block where pets aren't allowed, with their grandparents and six siblings who all share their two bedrooms.

Some live on a farm stretching 100 acres each way, with their closest neighbors actually living in the next town over.

And yes, some live behind picket fences. But some split their time between mommy's picket fence, and daddy's picket fence, on a rotating schedule that skips holidays and birthdays every other year.

#### SOLUTION:

But the average American child watches four and a half hours of television a day.

And the average American child doesn't put on CNN or Grey's Anatomy by themselves.

The average American child will choose a Disney movie, for the familiarity and for what? For the feeling of family.

Now, Disney has never been the type of studio to bring you a traditional nuclear family in their movies.

Aladdin is a street rat running rampant all over Agrabah.

Simba runs away from his pride and ends up wandering across the savannah all alone, for a while.

Carl from the Disney/Pixar film Up lives alone after losing the love of his life.

But what these movies teach you-what all Disney movies try to reach in you-is the idea that family isn't just what you're given. It's what you make of it.

Aladdin finds the reassurance and the guidance he needs from an over-the-top genie, a carpet, and a monkey with a fez.

Simba ends up just fine after being raised by a neurotic meerkat and an apologetically over-flatulent warthog, two outcasts just like him.

And Carl ends up taking a youngster on board, as well as a talking dog and an eight-foot tropical bird, as he embarks on a brand-new adventure.

Now, I'm not saying that you have to find a talking animal to be part of your family. That's just a helpful bonus, brought to you by the Walt Disney Company.

What I'm saying is that you can find family in the most unconventional of places and the most unconventional of people.

You can find it in the grandmother who patiently waits two hours in line to make sure her granddaughter has her Princess Merida costume.

You can find it in the protective older brother who pops in The Fox and The Hound to make sure his little brother learns the power of sensitivity over brute strength and ill will.

And you can find it in the stepfather who opens his heart, and opens his arms, to pose for photos in front of Cinderella's Castle on their latest trip.

We have to teach our children that we can find family where we need it, and that we need to find family for the sake of our children.

#### VISUALIZATION:

Every so often, whenever my wife Nancy and my sons finally drag me away from the studio to take a vacation, we head over to-where else? Disneyland. That whole free admission thing comes in handy, you know.

And of course, I like to take a cruise down the river...just for old time's sake.

And as I listen to the dumb jokes that the new skippers tell-and boy, are those jokes dumb-I sit back and I watch the families enjoying the magic of my favorite Disney attraction.

There's the street rat-no, the rugrat-running rampant all over the boat while his parents try to keep her under control.

There's the young man dressed in black, sitting as far away from his parents as possible, trying hard not to smile in order to keep his image "cool."

And there's the elderly couple holding hands in the back, laughing at the skipper's jokes even with how dumb they are.

Seriously. Those jokes are that dumb.

I don't know whether or not these people live on a farm in the middle of the country, or if they live in a high rise off of Avenue A.

I don't know whether they live with Mom, or Dad, or Uncle Walt, or their friend Roy from down the road.

But what I see is the same happiness, guidance, and potential for adventure that Disney's movies bring out in all of us.

I see the same affection for each other that I saw in “nuclear families” nearly 35 years ago, drifting along the same lazy rivers.

And I see some unconventional people in some unconventional places creating some extraordinary futures for the families of tomorrow.

#### CALL TO ACTION:

#### INSPIRATION:

The late, great Walt Disney once said, “you can design and create, and build the most wonderful place in the world, but it takes people to make the dream a reality.”

I believe that we have the ability to continue to make dreams a reality for generations of children to come.

I believe that we have the chance to show our children what can be achieved through the support and the love of those they call their family.

And I believe that we as parents, as sisters, as brothers, aunts, uncles, and friends, are the foundation on which we build these wonderful places and bring them into reality.

#### LESSON LEARNED:

We live in a different world than we did when I first started working for this company.

The parks get bigger and the sketches get sharper, but the song always stays the same, and the jokes remain just as dumb.

The census can say one thing and the news can say another, but it's clear to me that the numbers don't matter.

What hasn't changed is the power of family-what you make of it, what you take from it, and what you do with it.

#### CALL TO ACTION:

So even when you step out of my glorified imaginary inner tube on this river ride down memory lane, I ask you again to please keep an eye on

the children in your life, and notice that they're keeping an eye on you, too.

Make sure that they are getting that kind of inspiration and motivation from the people in their lives.

Take care to provide them with not only the family that they have, but also the family that they need.

And don't be afraid to be an unconventional person in an unconventional place, helping to make dreams a reality.

CLINCHER:

Well, folks, that'll be it for our adventure today.

If you enjoyed my spiel, my name is John Lasseter and this has been the "world famous Jungle Cruise." If you didn't, well, my name is Joe and this has been Space Mountain.

Thank you, and have a great afternoon.