1920s Conference: Debating the Benefits of Diversity

As the 1920s dawned, many Americans reacted to the rapid changes that had taken place during the first two decades of the twentieth century. In the aftermath of WWI, prominent and powerful forces pushed for a return to “normalcy”- a return to traditional values and beliefs. The yearning for a return to traditional values and norms led to friction between old-stock Americans and newcomers. Out of this tension came intolerance. The Ku Klux Klan grew to unprecedented numbers. Lynchings were on the rise. Communists and anarchists were arrested. Racial tensions erupted as riots broke out in northern US cities. Many people openly wondered how much diversity the United States could tolerate. **Would the country become a place where diversity was accepted, even celebrated, or a nation that put up barriers to diverse people and ideas?**

**ROLES:**

* **ACTOR** Plays the part of the historical figure being questioned by reporters and audience members during the Conference. Takes time to learn the ideas and personality of the historical figure. Helps others learn about the figure he or she represents. Cuts out the mask and designs a way to WEAR the mask during the Press Conference. Thinks of appropriate props and costumes to help bring the historical figure to life.
* **MINISTER OF PROPAGANDA**  Prepares group to make your historical figure “look good” during the conference. Digs up “dirt” on “enemies” of your historical figure (using biographical briefings). Must have THREE questions prepared to ask during the Conference with the goal of creating controversy and heated debate!
* **AGENT** Takes time to learn about the ideas and personality of the historical figure. Prepares an introductory speech to give at the start of the Conference. This speech should include the following:
  + background information on your historical figure
  + description of historical figure’s opinions about the benefits of diversity in the United States
  + a description of your slogan and symbol

Assists the actor in answering any difficult questions during the conference.

* **INVESTIGATIVE REPORTER** Carefully examines biographical briefings and student handouts to find out which historical figures on the panel have ideas that support or oppose your actor. Prepares and asks at least THREE probing questions for the panelists to show support for your actor or to find flaws with other historical figures’ views.

**TASKS:**

1. Determine your role.
2. Answer the Stop and Discuss questions on the LEFT side of notebook (part of Notebook Entry # ).
3. Create a Name Plate which includes: your historical figure’s name (large enough for it to be read from across the room), a symbol and slogan representing your historical figure’s ideas about the benefits of diversity in the United States.
4. Are you prepared??? Note: If you do this well, there will be a very spirited and fun discussion during the Conference
   1. Rehearse by asking the Actor questions that are likely to come up during the press conference.
   2. Make sure the mask is going to fit snugly and comfortably on the Actor’s face.
   3. Make sure the Agent has an introductory speech prepared.
   4. Make sure the Minister of Propaganda and the Investigative reporter have at least 3 probing questions prepared for the panel.

Grading Guidelines:

1. **Actor**: Delivery and knowledge of material 15 individual points
2. **Investigative Reporter**: # of quality questions 15 individual points
3. **Agent:** Delivery of speech and support of actor 15 individual points
4. **Minister**: # of quality questions 15 individual points

**Name plate/Mask/overall group effort** 10 group points **Total Score: 25**