



Sharing the Spirit of America

A Proposed Emcee Script & Talking Points

Opening Remarks /Welcome (5:50 PM)

“Good evening and welcome to Sharing the Spirit of America. Thank you for joining us at [LOCATION] as we gather in community to reflect on the ideals, aspirations, and ongoing work of democracy and civic participation. Tonight’s program is part of a shared public reading tradition that connects communities through history, dialogue, and civic engagement.”

Land Acknowledgment

“We also wish to acknowledge the Indigenous peoples who have stewarded the land where we gather today, including the Piscataway peoples. In that we honor their enduring relationship to the land, waters, and culture.”

Historical Context

“In July 1776, public readings of the Declaration of Independence helped share the ideals of independence and self-governance throughout the colonies. Tonight, communities across the country continue that tradition by gathering together in reflection and shared civic participation.”

Optional: “Gathering here at [LOCATION X] for this reading is particularly significant because [Insert why your site is special and how it embraces these ideals.]”

Historical Context: ***What if I don’t want to read the Declaration of Independence?***

“You still belong here. The Declaration is a broadside against the abuses and excesses of tyrannical government and a living template that the people hold the first and last say in how they are governed. We also recognize that in 1776 the promise “all men are created equal” was practiced mainly for white, property-owning men. Many communities have been hurt, excluded, or underrepresented since.

“There are other ways to participate in this moment such as listening and reflecting during the Declaration reading; Offer to read an alternative text that expresses your community’s perspective; join a brief reflection circle after the reading, or observe a moment of silence.”

“If you don’t feel connected to the Declaration, we welcome you to read a different text after the presentation that is respectful and non-threatening, contributes to civil discourse and reflects the spirit of our founding principles (Declaration, Constitution, Bill of Rights): consent of the governed, unalienable rights, equal dignity under the law.”

Transition to Reading (5:58 PM)

“In just a moment, we will begin our community reading of the Declaration of Independence. Thank you to all of tonight’s readers for lending your voices to this shared experience.”

Reflection / Transition/ Closing Remarks

“As we reflect on these historic words, we also recognize that generations of people have worked to expand the meaning and promise of ‘We the People.’

OPTIONAL: We invite this next portion of the program as an opportunity for thoughtful reflection and shared understanding.”

“Thank you for being part of Sharing the Spirit of America. Whether through reading, listening, or reflection, your presence contributes to the ongoing work of civic engagement and community dialogue. And Thank you to our readers, volunteers, community partners, and Chesapeake Crossroads Heritage Area for supporting this gathering and helping connect history, culture, and community.”