This paper reflects on the success of the Four Freedoms paintings and analyzes reproductions of Rockwell’s original works since Roosevelt’s presidency. Between those two sets of images, however, there exists a gap in the intention and message of their respective artists. Rockwell’s paintings depicted relatively limited and exclusive individuals, while modern renditions extended the originals’ subject matter and continued FDR’s initial call for a most inclusive application of the Four Freedoms.

The Fight for the True Representation of the Four Freedoms

While Norman Rockwell’s series of idyllic paintings that were created in conjunction with President Roosevelt’s idealistic “Four Freedoms” succeeded after the President’s words failed to appeal to the nation. The paintings’ immense success was twofold. First, they fulfilled their immediate purpose of boosting a government war bonds campaign. Second, more profoundly, the paintings rallied the country behind the total war effort and comforted the American population during times of distress. Interestingly, Rockwell’s Four Freedoms turned away from Roosevelt’s original global and ubiquitous application of the Freedoms towards a more domestic and exclusive one. In a time of national crisis, Rockwell chose to step back from the President’s untimely and less-pressing human rights agenda and instead portray relatable images of white, heteronormative, and Christian subjects that could comfort the American people in the context of World War II. In response, later renditions of Rockwell’s originals aimed to further Roosevelt’s initial mission of extending the right to the Four Freedoms to all of the world’s people, including those who lay on the periphery of American society at different points throughout the nation’s history. A new time of crisis emerged with the 9/11 attacks, however, and both Roosevelt’s intended, ubiquitous application of the Freedoms and the civil rights mission of Four Freedoms reproductions was put on hold in favor of returning to essentially a Rockwell original that comforted Americans. The memory and the fight over the Four Freedoms’ definition and whom they apply to have paralleled eras of civil rights progression, which Roosevelt, who attempted to install the feeling of necessity for Ameri-
can military involvement in World War II among the nation’s people, spearheaded by claiming the Freedoms applied to everyone and modern artists continued. That struggle has also occurred alongside that progression’s excluding and conservative backlash, which Rockwell initiated and the New York Times took part of, during times of national crises.

President Roosevelt’s 1941 Annual Message to Congress introduced the nation and the world to his vision of “Four Freedoms” - freedom of speech, freedom of worship, freedom from want, and freedom from fear - that he believed to be inalienable to individuals “everywhere in the world.” Since the address, it seems as if Roosevelt’s profound set of principles have been nothing but praised. At the 2012 dedication ceremony of the Four Freedoms Park on Roosevelt’s Island in New York City, lead speaker, Tom Brokaw, claimed that the content of FDR’s address “on that day and forevermore… defined the aspirations and the rights of all.” At least five other FDR and Four Freedoms monuments, located everywhere from the nation’s capital to Burbank, California, echoed similar sentiments of complete praise for FDR’s supposedly world-changing phrase. A Four Freedoms Award that is annually granted by the Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt Institute exists even to this day. However, those who praised Roosevelt and his genius address after the commencement of World War II failed to note the Four Freedoms’ initial failure in the public eye. The New York Times, for example, utilized the term “lend-lease” twenty times in its issues that circulated during the week immediately following Roosevelt’s address to Congress. Meanwhile, the term Four Freedoms, the intended main point of the speech, did not appear once in that same week’s issues.

With war raging on in the European theater, Roosevelt’s international application of the Four Freedoms may have hindered its success among the nation’s population in an isolationist and post-World War I United States. During his original speech to Congress, President Roosevelt made a distinct effort to include the phrase, “everywhere in the world,” after reciting and describing each individual freedom. Hearing a set of freedoms that were meant by the President to be enjoyed by all of the world’s people, instead of just Americans, may have turned many of the latter away from the phrase. The President’s words, however, were not deliberately trying to deter Americans away from the prospect of a more internationally involved United States. In the midst of recent developments of the war, President Roosevelt actually began to appreciate the gravity of the situation, and ultimately decided that military involvement would be necessary for the survival of American ideals. Through calling for the global application of the Four Freedoms, the President attempted to establish the notion that the United States would have to assume a substantial role in the world’s affairs and the War. Regardless, the Four Freedoms gained little traction amongst the public upon their introduction: a failure that could be partially explained by the President’s intention for the ubiquitous presence of American ideals in the presence of widespread sentiments of American isolationism.

Although it posthumously received endless recognition as a defining phrase of the American narrative, Roosevelt’s “Four Freedoms” and his administration’s choice of a printed pamphlet as the vehicle through which they were introduced to the American people were too distant and abstract to enable the phrase to succeed at first. The administration’s decision to popularize the “Four Freedoms” through a pamphlet published by the Office of Facts and Figures (OFF) and the Office of War Information, both notorious for producing dull and exhaustive instead of dramatic and concise written work, did little to help the phrases’ cause. Writers within the OFF recognized the futility of the job even before the pamphlet was published. One of these writers was E.B. White, who noted to his wife, “it really is kind of funny: the President…draws in skeleton form a wholly Utopian picture and now it is up to the writers to state it in more detail without either embarrassing the government or… mak[ing] it controversial.”

Affirming White’s implied predictions, the pamphlet did little to nurture widespread familiarization of the Freedoms amongst the American people. It drew strange connections and made odd comparisons that were simply difficult to understand. One such comparison was that between the interdependence of all Four Freedoms and “the four seasons of the natural year, whose winter snows irrigate the spring, and
“Pictures Worth More than Words”

whose dead leaves, fermenting, rebuild the soil for the summer’s yield.” Another connection that was made between 1942 and 1942 as years during which views of the world had been completely transformed further evidenced the pamphlet’s many additions to the phrase’s confusion and lack of common appeal.

ROCKWELL’S FOUR FREEDOMS

Norman Rockwell’s series of four corresponding paintings, which he independently created to contribute to the war effort, not from commission, were able to “breathe the breath of life into” “The Four Freedoms” after the President’s and government’s attempt proved unsuccessful. Instead of perpetuating the President’s initial, global application of the “Four Freedoms,” which was evidenced by Roosevelt’s deliberate repetition of the line, “everywhere in the world,” during his address to Congress, Rockwell’s content matter focused more on the domestic application of the phrase. In Freedom of Speech, Rockwell depicted a white, blue-collar worker, with a Vermont town report sitting in his jacket pocket, exercising his First Amendment right in the all-American, town hall meeting. The man glows in an almost holy light, highlighting the sanctity of the Freedom and its idealistic commonplace in American small-town life. In his iconic Freedom from Want, Rockwell depicted the sentimental image of a smiling white family ready to enjoy their Thanksgiving dinner, the patriarch eager to carve the turkey and the matriarch donning an apron after preparing the meal. Those two paintings clearly evidenced the common effort Rockwell put into focusing solely on each individual freedom he portrayed in a distinctly domestic setting. Whereas Roosevelt had introduced his “Four Freedoms” as a set of inalienable human rights alongside other convoluting components of his political agenda, such as the lend-lease program and the Economic Bill of Rights, Rockwell presented the Four Freedoms in the context of what he envisioned the American way of life to be. Rockwell’s achievement of tangibly representing Roosevelt’s words with a domestic focus that many Americans found relatable was a primary source of the paintings’ success.

WHO IS LEFT OUT?

While the Four Freedoms were extremely successful in rallying the American people behind the war effort, the visual representations of the paintings reflected a small fraction of the American population and left little room for inclusion. The images’ defining characteristics of focusing on a domestic setting and on the Freedoms themselves, which made the paintings so successful, actually evidenced Rockwell’s breakaway from Roosevelt’s original, global vision for the “Four Freedoms” in favor of a more limited and exclusive one. One example of this exclusion was evident in how the human subjects of Freedom From Fear, Freedom From Want, and Freedom of Speech were all white. The racial composition of the remaining freedom does not prove to be much more diverse; while there are two discernible persons of color in Freedom to Worship, three white figures, a black bible, and the rosary cross, the latter two items both symbols of Christianity, com-

“Through calling for the global application of the Four Freedoms, the President attempted to establish the notion that the United States would have to assume a substantial role in the world’s affairs.”

The immediate success of Rockwell’s paintings was immense and measurable by both their total views and financial contribution to the war effort. Although they were originally released in the Saturday Evening Post over the course of four consecutive weeks, the first of which was Freedom of Speech on February 20, 1943, Rockwell’s Four Freedoms popularized themselves best as posters for the government’s war bonds campaign. Producing $123,999,537 in war bonds and capturing the gaze of more than one million Americans along the way, the “Four Freedoms” became a national phenomenon during its April of 1942 war bonds tour. Celebrities such as Madeleine Carroll, a hugely popular actress and heartthrob of the day, made appearances at showings of the Four Freedoms and took widespread photographs posing next to the paintings, attaching themselves and their fame to both the war bonds campaign and the paintings’ messages. One particularly exciting show utilized the popular Rockefeller Center as a venue and hosted the Army Band to play alongside famous singer, Lucy Monroe, at no charge to all who came in order to maximize turnout for the campaign. An advertisement in the New York Times paid for by Jay Thorpe, a high-end New York clothing store, for a Four Freedoms show was only one piece of evidence that the paintings and their purpose received support from a broad range of sources.

In addition to the enormous publicity the tour garnered, the paintings themselves were seemingly ubiquitous in daily American life, located in post offices, schools, hotels, Elks clubs, railroad stations and much more across the nation.
Christian who only wanted to depict those who were similar to him. It did reflect, however, Rockwell's desire to portray the Freedom to Worship with subjects to which the majority-white American population would attach themselves. This image allowed Americans to better visualize why their nation was fighting a total war.

Rockwell also focused on heteronormative subjects across those of the Four Freedoms that portrayed American families, further evidencing his exclusive vision of the Freedoms, as opposed to the all-inclusive one of Roosevelt. In the most iconic of his paintings, Freedom from Want, Rockwell depicted a grandmother “placing a turkey, that most American of birds, on a white tablecloth before her children and grandchildren[,] Her husband… waiting to demonstrate his skills with the carving knife.”22 The image of a large, happy family dining with each other on a characteristically American holiday did well in striking a sentimental note in the hearts of many Americans. However, those who eye the patriarch of the family placed at the head of the table, his wife donning an apron after fulfilling her duties as a woman to tend to the household and cook the meal, with resentment, do so out of a feeling of exclusion. The image simply did not include those who choose to not adhere to traditional gender roles or sexual orientations as a part of the definitive visual representation of American Thanksgiving dinner and who could enjoy the right to the Freedom from Want. Through Freedom from Want, Rockwell revealed that his definition of who the Four Freedoms applied to was not only just a domestic one; it was also one that may have excluded, whether inadvertently or not, those who did not adhere to the time’s heteronormative standards.

Rockwell’s Freedom from Fear similarly excluded those who did not fit traditional sexual orientations or gender norms. The painting’s portrayal of a mother tucking her children into bed, the father grasping the newspaper he presumably read after a long day at his white-collar job, resonated deeply with families built in the same traditional structure. However, the scenario of two fathers tucking their children into bed, for example, would simply not be able to attach itself to the image in the same way. The possibility of anything besides the heterosexual familial structure, following traditional gender norms, did not fit into Rockwell’s depiction of who was entitled to the Four Freedoms. That exclusion evidenced a breakaway from Roosevelt’s original “Four Freedoms” and his intent for them to be ubiquitous and inherent human rights. Rockwell’s visual representation of the American family in Freedom from Fear excluded, yet again, a substantial subset of Americans who did exist on the relative periphery of society at the time.

VISUAL RESPONSES TO ROCKWELL

Renditions of the Four Freedoms produced post-Rockwell have pointed to the lack of inclusion in the original paintings on the basis of race and created new visual representations of a more inclusive Four Freedoms. For Anton Refregier, creator of the “History of San Francisco” Mural located inside the Rincon Center in San Francisco, CA, additions to the racially limited content matter of Rockwell’s original images were necessary.23 The mural printed each of the Four Freedoms in the corner of a panel, with the focal point of the image being an amalgam of people, among which are Asian and black girls in addition to white children and adults, intertwined in the center.24 Because the mural was created only five years after the painting of Freedom from Want, its creators were able to address the lacking of diversity and assign, in Refregier’s opinion, a person of color to each freedom.
“Pictures Worth More than Words”

after the Four Freedoms were released in 1943, it was obvious that Refregier quickly felt compelled to account for the perspectives of certain groups of people who were excluded from the original paintings. Rockwell’s subtle focus on Christianity as the religion that Americans were free to worship was also addressed in the 1948 mural. Portraying a stack of three books, each of which had either a cross, a David’s star, or a crescent of Islam on its binding, Refregier’s image extended Rockwell’s definition of what religion Americans were free to worship to more than just Christianity, but also Judaism and Islam.25

Refregier’s portrayal of additional races, which was effective-ly his decision to continue Roosevelt’s original mission of inclusion and ubiquity through the visual depiction of the Four Freedoms, had a historical context of increased awareness of widespread civil rights. The 1948 “Declaration of Human Rights” of the United Nations perfectly embodied the era’s amplified attention to affirming that, as the first article of the document states, “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights,” at least amongst international leaders.26 Many veterans from non-white groups, however, faced a different reality after returning home from World War II. To many minority groups, an opportunity to serve their country and make the ultimate sacrifice was also an opportunity to highlight the distinction between their dedication to their nation and their experience as second-class citizens back home.27 African-Americans, in particular, used the War to win equality and justice in the States by assuming the toughest role as service members in America’s triumph abroad: a “Double-V” Campaign.28 Successful black units, such as the 761st Tank Battalion or the “Tuskegee Airmen” and the 369th Coast Artillery Regiment or the “Harlem Hellfighters,” secured African-Americans’ role in victory overseas.29 Achieving the latter “V,” however, was an even longer-fought battle. The formation of hundreds of citizen and interracial committees around the country between 1944 and 1950 clearly proved that whites and blacks alike both believed that the latter’s efforts in the war merited equality.30 Even though it took some black veterans, such as six who were posthumously presented Medal of Honors by President Clinton in 1977, a great amount of time to earn just recognition from their nation, the hard-fought civil rights mission their peers dedicated themselves to almost immediately earned the attention of Refregier in his efforts to include every race in depicting those who had the right to the Four Freedoms.31

A re-creation of Freedom from Want, titled Freedom to Share, created by Frank Moore in 1994, likewise made Rockwell’s original, racially-constricted subject matter more inclusive. Depicting a family in the same physical positions as the one from Freedom from Want, Moore’s rendition differs only in the family members’ race and the contents of the plate in the grandmother’s hands.32 The interracial family, which includes a black patriarch and white matriarch, looked onto the turkey that is instead composed of a motley assortment of medical supplies including IV drips, medicine bottles, syringes, and pills. Although Moore implemented Freedom to Share’s characteristic turkey as a proponent of more equitable healthcare, the deliberate change of the race of five people from Freedom from Want was done not only out of criticism of Rockwell’s choice to portray only an all-white family in the original painting. Moore created Freedom to Share also out of his own desire to create the representation of the American family that he personally wanted to see. Moore recognized Freedom from Want’s exclusivity and edited it so that an interracial family enjoying more equitable healthcare could become another example of who could enjoy the right to the Four Freedoms.

Moore, like Refregier, reproduced a Rockwell painting for the purpose of critiquing the original’s exclusive subject matter in the historical context of a civil rights battle. The difference is that, for Moore, that battle was not just for racial equality, but also for the equality of AIDS victims, the majority of whom were gay men early on, in the eye of the federal government during the United States’ AIDS crisis. The initial spread of the disease in the early 1980s, which infected hundreds of victims with roughly a 50% mortality rate, garnered little attention and public health response from the government.33 It was only after over 15,000 cases had been reported, with over 7,500 deaths, that the prevalence of AIDS became a point of concern to the Reagan administration and CDC, finally spurring the latter to launch an AIDS prevention plan in 1985.34 The plan, however, did not come to fruition. As chairman for the AIDS task force at the CDC, Dr. John Bennett, recounted, the highest levels of government rejected the proposal and directed them to, instead, “Look pretty and do as little as [they] can.”35 Infected citizens and their supporters did not sit idly by as their numbers increased while the federal government refused to act through vital treatment research and awareness campaigns.36 Activist groups, such as ACT UP, sprung up across the country over the second half of the 1980s. It was clear that the gay/lesbian movement shared close ties with the AIDS movement through the fact that the majority of ACT UP self-identified as homosexual. Frank Moore, a gay man who learned he was HIV positive in 1985, was motivated by his personal experiences to dedicate himself to AIDS activism by producing socially-conscious artwork.37 Through Freedom to Share, Moore continued Roosevelt’s and Refregier’s shared mission of progressing the Four Freedoms’ ubiquitous and indiscriminate application. The particular inclusion that Moore strove for, however, primarily involved AIDS victims and the gay/lesbian community instead of the others’ dedication to all nations and all races, respectively. Regardless, Moore still played a role in expanding the definition of who had the right to the Four Freedoms by explicitly critiquing Rockwell’s exclusion in the original paintings.
Contemporary national crisis evidenced that Roosevelt’s, Re- freiger’s, and Moore’s mission to extend civil rights through 
the Four Freedoms did not continue unimpeded after Rock- 
well’s conservative step back through his creation of the ex- 
clusive Four Freedoms. In 2001, that crisis was the September 
11 attacks, and in that context, the New York Times recreated 
one of Rockwell’s Four Freedoms to provide solace and depict 
a past-day’s America that many yearned for during a vulner- 
able time in the nation’s history. Recreating Freedom from Fear 
also served as consolation for a traumatized American popu- 
lation, just as the original did during a relatable time of turmoil.

The New York Times’ reproducing of Freedom from Fear was 
motivated not only by its desire to help put a fearful popula- 
tion at ease, but also by its objective to rally the American people. When President George W. Bush stated that Ameri- 
can freedoms were inherently at war with terrorism, he was 
effectively acknowledging that “Freedom and fear [were] at 
war,” and that Americans needed to rally behind his admin- 
istration for the former. This is where The New York Times came in. Whereas Rockwell had rallied the American people 
behind the total war effort six decades before, the Times ral- 
lied the American people behind a momentous set of new 
security policies such as the USA PATRIOT Act and the 
creation of the Department of Homeland Security. By show- 
ing the American people a sentimental and tangible image 
of what they were fighting for, the New York Times helped 
elevate the primacy of the government’s drastic security poli- 
cies. These policies, however, did not remain entirely true to 
the essence of Four Freedoms and the guarantees they made 
to Americans. Not only did the policies suspend civil liber- 
ties in the name of the preservation of freedom from fear, but they also fostered vicious anti-Muslim sentiment that would 
have found no place in Rockwell’s original Four Freedoms 
and their global application. The New York Times, with the 
purpose of rallying the American people behind the Bush 
administration, may have used Rockwell’s imagery hypocrit- 
ically. Aiding the institution of extreme security policies that 
actually provoked more fear, the New York Times failed to 
stay true to the principle of both Roosevelt’s and Rockwell’s 
Freedom to Share.

The New York Times’ perpetuation of circulating rumors 
about Iraq’s possession of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs) before and during the Iraq War was another exam- 
ple of the newspaper’s aggravation of American fear and the 
paper’s mindless support of the government’s security policy 
and its decision to invade Iraq. The Times’ main proponents 
of poor journalistic practice, epitomized by unjustified trust 
in unnamed sources and exclusive use of sources that were al- 
ready in agreement with the administration, during the time 
included Judith Miller. After the Bush administration had 
affirmed that aluminum tubes Iraq had been importing only 

Freedom From Want (1945) 
Source: National Archives and Records Administration
had one possible purpose as a component in the uranium-enrichment process, Miller failed to acknowledge skepticism from within U.S. intelligence agencies and the government of Iraq and wrote a front-page article that strictly aligned itself with the government’s public statement. The truth, which diverged from the administration’s narrative about Iraq’s definite possession of WMD’s, one of Bush’s central justifications for the invasion, emerged as the war waged on, forcing the Times to reflect. The Times’ swift apology, titled “The Times and Iraq” and published on May 26, 2004, was the ultimate admission of guilt. The New York Times’ support of Bush’s hawkish stance through its false exaggeration of Iraq’s WMD possession further revealed the Times’ ill-motivated role in provoking American fear in order to garner support for the government’s following drastic actions.

CONCLUSION
In the wake of Rockwell’s Four Freedoms’ omnipresence in American life, many neglect the initial flop of the abstract ideals Roosevelt voiced during a high-minded Congressional speech. Rockwell’s narrow interpretation, in terms of race, familial structure, and religion, of the Freedoms was undoubtedly a major cause behind the paintings’ success. The paintings’ exclusion, however, was proof of Rockwell’s failure to stay true to Roosevelt’s indiscriminate and global application of the “Four Freedoms.” The wartime American population quickly attached themselves to Rockwell’s familiar images of white, Christian, heteronormative families and more easily saw the domestic ideals for which their nation was fighting. The reactions of following artists was significant over the course of five decades immediately after the war, with renditions created by those such as Refreiger and Moore that fought to uphold Roosevelt’s original intention to include as many people as possible to define who could enjoy the right to the Four Freedoms. Moore’s and Refreiger’s utilization of the Four Freedoms to extend civil rights, however, did not continue unimpeded until present day. The national crisis of the 9/11 attacks produced a fearful American population that felt vulnerable and searched for a more inward-looking and domestic image to comfort them. The New York Times capitalized on both of those desires, essentially reusing Rockwell’s original and exclusive Freedom from Fear to induce a rally effect that would ease the passing of security policies that ironically aggravated fear and betrayed the essence of the Four Freedoms. Although the lessons from the New York Times’ journalistic fault, in retrospect, may decrease the susceptibility of the American people to allow the news to coax them into blindly following the government’s agenda, the fight to uphold Roosevelt’s primary “Four Freedoms” is still ongoing. The United States is periodically experiencing not only the progression and expansion of civil rights, but also national crises. The panic and sentiments of vulnerability these crises produce introduce a superior objective that oftentimes suspends the efforts of those such as Refreiger and Moore. Widespread fear influencing government action and political leaders’ rhetoric is especially relevant today, as we lay on the eve of the election of a new president amidst a context of global terrorism. Moving forward, it is important to remember that comforting the American people during troubling times with propaganda doesn’t require departing from the Freedoms’ original values. Although Rockwell’s Four Freedoms are irreplaceable visual representations of some of the United States’ core principles, the nation should be aware, even in times of crisis, of the exclusion of the paintings’ subject matters. Upon that realization, we can continue the ongoing fight to maintain Roosevelt’s initial proclamation for an indiscriminate and ubiquitous application of the Four Freedoms.
Endnotes

[3] Ibid., 47.
[8] Ibid., 55.
[9] Ibid.
[10] Ibid., 56.
[14] Ibid., 98.
[18] The New York Times (June 12, 1943), 8, ProQuest Historical Newspapers [ProQuest].
[24] Ibid.
[25] Ibid.
[28] Ibid.
[31] Ibid., 183.
[34] Ibid., 295.
[35] Ibid., 296.