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Rachael Marusarz

Illinois Wesleyan University

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Abstract

This article, which is about the "Logos" statue of Adlai Stevenson outside Stevenson Hall at Illinois State University, also discusses Adlai Stevenson himself and the values he stood for. It shows how his peaceful beliefs were controversial during the Cold War, yet they were also a beacon of hope for those who agreed with him.

**Adlai Stevenson as an Icon:
The Historical Significance of the Commissioning of "Logos"**

Rachael Marusarz

Twenty-foot tall "Logos" stands in the courtyard of Illinois State University's Stevenson Hall for the Humanities, a bronze sculpture depicting a flame rising out of a public fountain. Erected on United Nations Day, October 24, 1969, the artwork honors the memory of former statesman Adlai E. Stevenson II, a native of the neighboring town of Bloomington. Stevenson's family and personal friends commissioned the creation of this statue during a time of widespread political and social tension in the United States with the hope of its providing a positive influence for the campus through Stevenson's memory. Through "Logos," the individuals involved with its creation hoped to elevate Stevenson to an iconic status in order to promote certain ideals they felt necessary in the social atmosphere of the time.

The statue was created to commemorate Stevenson only a few years after his 1965 death. "Logos" aims to reflect his nobility, optimism, and hard-working spirit. While he never attained a national elective office and was often derided by a considerable number of opponents for his more liberal arguments, supporters felt he deserved greater power and recognition and stood by his rather lofty ideals.

Stevenson had played a considerable role in mid-century American politics. As the grandson and namesake of former U. S. vice president Adlai Stevenson I, Stevenson II made a name very quickly in state and national affairs. After a successful Chicago law practice of over a decade, he served as Assistant to Secretary of the Navy and then as Assistant to Secretary of State under Franklin Roosevelt. Stevenson would later be appointed as a delegate to the United Nations directly after WWII. He was elected as governor of the state of Illinois from 1949-1953 and ran as the presidential candidate for the Democratic party in 1952 and 1956. In the 1960's, he served a four-year term as United States Ambassador to the United Nations until he died in London in 1965.¹

Throughout his career, Stevenson was a strong advocate for liberal reforms like racial integration and increased funding for public education.² However, he established himself most notably through his involvement in the United Nations and his steadfast promotion of peaceful intervention in foreign affairs. He is often noted for his successful intervention with Russia that kept the Cuban Missile Crisis from becoming a full-scale war. He strongly advocated the use of educated reason in international affairs in his speeches, particularly in the face of Cold War paranoia and other turbulent events of the times.

He perhaps best expressed his hopes for international accord near the end of his life, when he told students at Princeton: "I believe, therefore, that at this

time the only sane policy for America... lies in the patient, unspectacular, and if need be lonely search for the interests which unite nations, for the interests that draw them together, for institutions which transcend rival national interests... for the elaboration of a changing world for a stable, workable society."³ Stevenson consistently strove for nonviolent means of progress in international relations and, in all the events of his career, he advocated an educated populace and the need for enlightened reason in the face of international and domestic crises. These principles gained him the support of many of his most loyal backers throughout his career.

Nonetheless, Stevenson was never overwhelmingly popular with the American public. This is evidenced by his failed attempts for the American presidency in 1952, 1956, and 1960—the last in which he lost the Democratic nomination to John F. Kennedy.⁴ He was generally associated with the more liberal elements of the Democratic party, and in the midst of the Cold War, many Americans were unwilling to accept his advocacy of peaceful intervention and decreased armed forces over military strength.⁵

Likewise, the people of Bloomington-Normal often held mixed feelings about Stevenson's being in power. Biographer John Bartlow Martin stated that Bloomington never fully accepted Stevenson until after he was brought back for his burial.⁶ The twin towns of Bloomington-Normal had been a Republican stronghold since its establishment in the 19th century, so the Democrat Stevenson was often at odds with much of his hometown over issues like federal funding of health care, which he supported strongly against the Republican Party, and his criticisms of McCarthyism, which led many throughout the nation to regard him and other "New Deal Democrats" as Communist sympathizers and therefore "pink."⁷

Martin further suggested that the Bloomington-Normal only embraced Stevenson three times during his career: after his gubernatorial campaign speech in Bloomington, which touted his humility and debt to his hometown; after his success in the Cuban Missile Crisis; and upon his death.⁸ Certainly, even a perusing of the editorials about him in the *Daily Pantagraph* from the 1950's and 1960's shows different sentiments, ranging from praises of "our favorite son"⁹ to suggestions that Stevenson could not effect changes in the government from the strictures of the Democratic Party.¹⁰

He did not consistently win the *Pantagraph*'s political endorsement, either; in 1952, the paper's editors refused to support his presidential candidacy because they were displeased with the previous Truman administration and would support the Republican candidate regardless of who it was. It was not until 1956 that the *Pantagraph* would back him, weary of Eisenhower's failures on the domestic front.¹¹

After Stevenson II's death, gradually more residents of Bloomington-Normal began to publicly praise him, often lauding his high ideals and personal

integrity. The *Daily Pantagraph* devoted several pages to honoring Stevenson's memory, the towns of Bloomington and Normal held various tributes, and the mayor of Bloomington declared a Day of Mourning for Stevenson.¹² The *Pantagraph* even printed a photograph of orphans visiting Stevenson's grave in the months following his death to highlight his benevolence and his impact on the more unfortunate parts of society.¹³ Those involved in most of these tributes, though, were quite naturally those who knew him closely and had the greatest desire to ensure his legacy.

"Logos" was one such memorial, funded solely by individuals who knew Stevenson closely—Mr. and Mrs. Ernest Ives, who were Stevenson's brother-in-law and sister, and Loring Merwin of the *Pantagraph* Foundation, a personal friend with whom he had worked as a *Pantagraph* editor in the 1920's and into the 1930's.¹⁴ Although all three were publicly named as "anonymous donors,"¹⁵ they had also been among the most active in prior memorials to Stevenson. Mr. and Mrs. Ives were key sponsors for the Adlai E. Stevenson Memorial Lectures at ISU. This lecture series was held for several years after 1966 and offered talks on current affairs by prominent political figures. It was perhaps the most widely recognized of the memorials to Stevenson in Bloomington-Normal at the time.

Illinois State University had also been a strong supporter of Stevenson both before and after his death, and the administration was very willing to accept "Logos" in conjunction with the Stevenson Hall for the Humanities, which was under construction by 1967. University administration had already planned to name the building after Stevenson shortly before his death, and they developed plans to design a room in the building strictly to commemorate him, filled with memorabilia collected throughout his life and donated by his family.¹⁶

ISU dean James Fisher expressed his expectations for the proposed sculpture in a letter to the donors: "I feel it is extremely important for the University to provide examples of artistic excellence to its students and staff in order to cultivate their tastes in these areas. My excitement in this project stems primarily from the prospect of pairing the artistic excellence of the sculpture with the excellence of the man whom it commemorates."¹⁷ Fisher envisioned "Logos" as a means to enrich the campus culturally and to espouse Stevenson as a role model for the ISU community.

Working closely with dean Fisher and ISU director of development Hal Wilkins,¹⁸ the donors commissioned Milan-based sculptor Henry Mitchell to create a memorial sculpture for ISU's campus. A Philadelphia native, Mitchell admired Stevenson himself, as evidenced by his decisions about the statue's symbolism.

Mitchell played an important role in developing the vision for "Logos." He placed a large emphasis on Stevenson's character and personal qualities,

insisting that the sculpture not be a statue of Stevenson's personage, as was originally suggested, but rather a symbol of his lofty ideals. He told reporters, "It doesn't make any difference what he looked like- it is what he stood for." Mitchell intended for the public to remember Stevenson likewise and expressed this idea through the symbol of a flame. Mitchell described it as "the fire—the inspiration."¹⁹ He hoped to convey Stevenson's inspiration in his work to the public through a symbol and expected its meaning would be understood by the public and anyone who saw its connection to Stevenson.

Mitchell, the donors, and ISU also debated the statue's title and accompanying inscription very carefully. Once again, Mitchell hoped to accentuate Stevenson's qualities through representation rather than by direct reference. According to preliminary drawings, the sculpture was originally entitled "The Adlai E. Stevenson Memorial Fountain"²⁰ and was later changed to "The Flame."²¹ However, Mitchell then suggested the name be changed to the Greek "Logos," or reason. As he told the *Daily Pantagraph*, "It represents what I think Mr. Stevenson represented—a man of reason...the hope of the world is in reason."²² Here, Mitchell once again referred to the statue's representative nature, rather than a direct depiction of Stevenson himself, and he turns to an optimistic view of reason and what it can accomplish.

The donors and ISU's administration also spent a great deal of time deciding what inscription should accompany the sculpture on a nearby plaque. Originally, Stevenson's son, Adlai Stevenson III, suggested several quotations from Stevenson's speeches to Fisher,²³ but after much discussion, they officially settled upon an inscription reading, "A symbol of that moving in all things through which reason kindles an answering spark in the mind of man. Dedicated to the memory of Adlai E. Stevenson, United Nations Day, October 24, 1969." While this inscription aligns the ideal of reason with Stevenson's memory, it still relegates the message of the sculpture to the use of symbols over a concrete example of who Stevenson was or what he accomplished. The final product of "Logos," was rather different from the donors' original intentions, even though they heartily accepted it.

The changes that Mitchell and "Logos" sponsors made in its title, design, and inscription demonstrate the artist's continuing desire to portray Stevenson as an icon, making him a symbol of certain human traits to which the public should aspire through his memory. The ISU administration and donors warmly accepted Mitchell's vision for the statue, as is apparent through various correspondence between the parties, as a suitable way to commemorate Stevenson's memory, even though "Logos" does not make a direct reference to the man himself in any way.

Likewise, much of the public was willing to accept "Logos" as a symbol of what Stevenson represented, as well. For instance, ISU's student newspaper, the *Daily Vidette*, wrote about "Logos," "The clear and shining flame of fire symbolizes the clear and shining fire and zeal in the man Stevenson himself. It

is like a leaf opening to a hopeful, better world that is ever reaching upward.”²⁴ This quote reflects the optimism this writer—presumably a college student—associated with Stevenson. Whether the writer created this image himself or herself or whether it had been suggested by an outside source is questionable, but it is a sign of much of the popular sentiment surrounding Stevenson at the time. This is particularly significant, because he had been popular with college students throughout his career. The *Vidette* also reported that several students protested “Logos” installation, but the only reasons cited were lack of artistic merit or the loss of a hill that once stood in the statue’s place.²⁵ Neither the *Vidette* nor the *Pantagraph* ever published criticism over the statue’s connection to Stevenson.

Some spectators associated “Logos” with even deeper symbolism, connecting it to Christian ideals or other Biblical concepts. Bloomington resident Elwell Crissey wrote to the *Pantagraph*, “That the flame is the Church’s ancient symbol of the Holy Spirit, obviously motivated Mr. Mitchell’s choice. But his master’s touch was his title for the memorial: “The Logos”- straight out of the opening sentence of St. John’s Gospel.” Here, Crissey connects the sculpture’s title and its vision to a specific Bible verse, even though Mitchell never publicly identified any Biblical basis for “Logos.”²⁶ Crissey attached his own symbolism to the sculpture and turned it into a symbol for his own ideals. This happens often with public art, because art is by nature open to interpretation, and as Mitchell had intended, much of the Bloomington-Normal public was willing to associate “Logos” with their own ideas of lofty character.

In his letter, Crissey continued, “The burnished sheen of its soaring golden flame will ever remind us—and generations of students who will come after us—of a chivalrous soul, a shining intellect, a great heart.”²⁷ This individual not only associated Stevenson’s memory with high ideals and an optimistic outlook, but also with his own deeply personal religious convictions. He was willing, as many were at the time, to accept Stevenson as a symbol of some greater human quality.

Through all these aspects of its creation and reception, it is important to examine “Logos” in the context of memorial artwork as a genre. Memorial artwork is by nature a representation of an individual or group; it cannot re-create those memorialized, only symbolize what the artist or the public would choose to remember about them. This elevates those memorialized to a nearly iconic status. The artwork must focus on specific qualities or actions associated with these persons, and they thereby become a symbol of those qualities to the public, as memorial artwork is intended for the public’s benefit and understanding. As art historians Harriet Senie and Sally Webster explain, “Art in the public domain is part of a complex matrix where personal ambitions as well as larger political and economic agendas often merge. On many levels and in many ways, these non-art factors influence and even determine the

appearance, siting, and interpretation of public art... Symbolic civic monuments are easily linked to ideals promoted by their supporters.”²⁸ As such, “Logos” was created and developed to project certain ideals to its public. This is evident in its visual symbolism, connection to Adlai Stevenson—a man revered for his high character—and its placement on the campus of a state university, where its message could be directed at youth and make an impression on their way of thinking.

The way “Logos” uses Stevenson’s memory as a public icon takes greater significance when one places it in the historical context in which it was created. The years 1968 and 1969 were turbulent ones for the United States. The country had become increasingly involved in the Vietnam War and had suffered a great moral letdown with the great casualties of the Tet Offensive. There was a great deal of public dissension and mistrust of American intentions in Vietnam, as many suggested that the government had economic interests. President Nixon began to take troops out of the country in response to these problems in June 1969. Americans accordingly felt divided over the issues that the Cold War initiated decades before, such as the importance of the fight against Communism or the use of force in foreign affairs.²⁹

The Vietnam War also brought the nation’s young people to the fore as a significant social force. The creation of politically radical student groups like Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), which had formed years earlier, had drawn media attention towards youth’s more insurrectionary elements, and this caused a great deal of tension among the country’s older, more moderate and conservative constituency.

ISU was not immune to these anxieties. Students for a Democratic Society had become more active on campus by 1968 and 1969, and although they didn’t inspire much concern from faculty or fellow students, the ISU administration and the surrounding communities feared the possibilities of further uprisings and violence involving SDS. In those years, SDS had hosted gatherings of student revolutionaries from other state universities and brought several radical speakers to the ISU campus. Their most notable opportunity for more militant action came in September 1969, when the University workers’ labor union, Local 1110 engaged in a strike against ISU administration. For eight days, SDS members joined union pickets, blocked food delivery and garbage pickup to University dormitories, scattered nails and broken glass to slash the tires of University vehicles, and provoked confrontations with University police. As a result, President Braden requested state police assistance in response to student participation in the strike.³⁰

Outsiders to the University also recognized these anxieties. When Stevenson’s close friend Carl McGowan spoke at ISU’s dedication for Stevenson Hall just months before “Logos” dedication, he stated, “Where [today’s students] falter sometimes... is in the priorities they assign to the various causes which move them to remonstrance... Boycotting classes to show

hostility to a University's participation in building a bigger bomb is arguably of a higher urgency than doing the same thing because marijuana smoking is forbidden in the college dormitories."³¹ He continued, "Protest does not have to take violent and repressive form in order to be effective, nor does it dictate dropping out of a civilized way of life."³² McGowan recognized the concerns of the older ISU community over the apparent unrest among America's youth, and he used this speech to address these issues to students, staff, and community members alike. He, too, cited Stevenson as an example of the reason and moderation students needed to positively impact society.³³

"Logos" was created in this atmosphere, at a time of political anxiety and unrest. As mentioned before, Stevenson had come to signify a spirit of optimism and patient wisdom in the face of a turbulent political atmosphere on both international and domestic levels. Accordingly, several residents of Bloomington-Normal felt that uplifting the memory of Adlai Stevenson as such an icon could encourage the type of rational understanding they felt necessary for the time, particularly among the more militant youth who had become more vocal and seemed more apt to provoke violence than earlier generations of youth.

Historian Henry Steele Commager wrote of Stevenson shortly after his death, "His greatest contribution was, perhaps, that at a time when Americans were inclined to think power irresistible he reminded them of the limitations on power that at a time when they were inclined to turn from moral responsibilities to the enjoyment of their well-earned prosperity he insisted on the primacy of moral considerations."³⁴

Many supporters associated Stevenson with an earlier time period in America because of his optimism and long-standing political career. He was a member of the new federal establishments, but he had also been a part of international politics since WWII. His speeches echoed the optimistic rhetoric of Depression-era leaders like Franklin Delano Roosevelt. As a matter of fact, Eleanor Roosevelt was one of Stevenson's most vocal supporters, speaking in his favor at various events like the 1956 Democratic Convention.³⁵ Photographs from the event show her speaking next to a picture of her deceased husband, in hopes of associating Stevenson with the late president, who was to that day an American icon for many who lived through the Depression and WWII.³⁶ Certainly, older supporters appreciated the connection between Stevenson and Eisenhower and came to view Stevenson as an established, dependable political figure. Many felt Stevenson's liberalism and optimism were indicative of earlier eras and were important qualities in a time of great change. Stevenson's association with New Deal optimism also made his supporters feel they could relate to him. Stevenson won over many of his most loyal supporters with these qualities.

Contemporary academics, too, felt there was something to be learned from Stevenson's example. In 1967, historian Herbert Muller wrote, "Americans can

still afford to read what Stevenson said at that time for he was confronting the ultimate issues of the modern world, the fate of all mankind...³⁷ Stevenson's ideas on international politics still impacted the American psyche by the end of the 1960's, after he could directly affect foreign or domestic policy. Accordingly, many individuals throughout the nation hoped to preserve his memory through memorials, lecture series, and various other commemorations. However, it is important to note that such memorials may play a larger role for the public than simply revering a person or people—they often champion what traits made the individual or group noteworthy or honorable. This would elevate the person commemorated to an iconic status, as a symbol of what the public should try to emulate.

"Logos" upholds Stevenson as a symbol of reason and optimism—certainly, it makes these traits almost more important than Stevenson himself. It uses Stevenson the man to further ideals he presumably embodied in life, thus uplifting him as a model for society. Artist Seitu Jones once wrote, "Public art documents our place in time by visually rendering issues, ideas, traditions, and history. Through visual symbols, signs, and images, it identifies and comments on the challenges that affect us. Public art can be a mirror we hold up to ourselves and a reflection of ourselves we present to the outside."³⁸ "Logos" reflects the desire for optimistic idealism in the turbulent social atmosphere of the late 1960's in just such a manner, using the images associated with one individual to encourage others to share such ideals.

Endnotes

- ¹ See Porter McKeever, *Adlai Stevenson: His Life and Legacy*, (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1989), 252. For a more concise explanation, see *World Book Encyclopedia*, 2001 ed., s.v. "Stevenson, Adlai Ewing," by James I. Lengle.
- ² McKeever, *Life and Legacy*, 253.
- ³ Quoted in Porter McKeever, *His Life and Legacy*, 571.
- ⁴ Porter McKeever, *His Life and Legacy*. For a more concise explanation, consult *World Book Encyclopedia*, 2001 ed., s.v. "Stevenson, Adlai Ewing," by James I. Lengle.
- ⁵ Porter McKeever, *His Life and Legacy*, 230-1.
- ⁶ John Bartlow Martin, *Adlai Stevenson of Illinois: The Life of Adlai E. Stevenson* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1976), 6.
- ⁷ McKeever, *Life and Legacy*, 229.
- ⁸ Martin, *Stevenson of Illinois*, 339-40.
- ⁹ Dave Haake, "Our Favorite Son: Citizens Show Pride in Adlai," *Bloomington (IL) Daily Pantagraph*, 19 August 1956, p. 2.
- ¹⁰ Staff editorial, "Can Stevenson Effect Changes?," *Bloomington (IL) Daily Pantagraph*, 11 August 1952, p. 4.
- ¹¹ McKeever, *Life and Legacy*, 252.

- ¹² Staff editorial, "Adlai E. Stevenson: He Turned Our Eyes Up," *Bloomington (IL) Daily Pantagraph*, 14 July 1965, p. 3. Anonymous, "Mayor Proclaims Day of Mourning," *Bloomington (IL) Daily Pantagraph*, 15 July 1965, p. 3. Associated Press, "Adlai Stevenson Served State, Nation, World," *Bloomington (IL) Daily Pantagraph*, 15 July 1965, p. 5. Roger Cushman, "Normal Centennial to Open with Tribute to Stevenson," *Bloomington (IL) Daily Pantagraph*, 16 July 1956, p. 9.
- ¹³ Anonymous, "Orphans Visit Adlai's Grave," *Bloomington (IL) Daily Pantagraph*, 30 December 1965, p. 2.
- ¹⁴ Hal Wilkins to James Fisher, 17 December 1968, Samuel Braden Papers, Illinois State University Archive, Illinois State University, Normal.
- ¹⁵ Anonymous, "Adlai Statue Leaves Italy," *Bloomington (IL) Daily Pantagraph*, 15 August 1969, Sec. A, p. 5.
- ¹⁶ James Fisher to Walter Schaefer, 5 February 1969, Samuel Braden Papers, Illinois State University Archive, Illinois State University, Normal.
- ¹⁷ James L. Fisher, Normal, to Mr. and Mrs. Ernest Ives, Bloomington, 26 December 1968, Samuel Braden Papers, Illinois State University Archive, Illinois State University, Normal.
- ¹⁸ Hal Wilkins to James Fisher, 17 December 1968, Samuel Braden Papers, Illinois State University Archive, Illinois State University, Normal.
- ¹⁹ Quoted in anonymous, "'Logos' in Place at ISU," *Bloomington (IL) Daily Pantagraph*, 21 October 1969, Sec. A, p. 3.
- ²⁰ Hal Wilkins to James Fisher, 17 December 1968, Samuel Braden Papers, Illinois State University Archive, Illinois State University, Normal.
- ²¹ Anonymous, "Adlai Statue Leaves Italy," *Bloomington (IL) Daily Pantagraph*, 15 August 1969, Sec. A, p. 5.
- ²² Quoted in anonymous, "'Logos' in Place at ISU," *Bloomington (IL) Daily Pantagraph*, 21 October 1969, Sec. A, p. 3.
- ²³ Adlai Stevenson III to James Fisher, 18 October 1968, Samuel Braden Papers, Illinois State University Archive, Illinois State University, Normal.
- ²⁴ Anonymous, "Dedication Marks U.N. Day," (*Illinois State University) Daily Vidette*, 30 October 1969, p. 3.
- ²⁵ *Ibid.*
- ²⁶ Elwell Crissey, "'Logos' a Masterpiece," *Bloomington (IL) Daily Pantagraph*, 30 October 1969, sec. A, p. 4.
- ²⁷ *Ibid.*
- ²⁸ Harriet F. Senie and Sally Webster, introduction to Part II, "Politics, Patronage, and Public Art," of *Critical Issues in Public Art*, (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, Inc., 1992), 101.
- ²⁹ See Phillip B. Davidson, *Vietnam at War: the History, 1961-1975*, (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1988). For a more concise explanation, consult *World Book Encyclopedia*, 2001 ed., s.v. "Vietnam War," by Marc Jason Gilbert.
- ³⁰ Roger J. Champagne, *A Place of Education: Illinois State University, 1967-1977* (Normal, IL: ISU Foundation, 1978), 52-3.
- ³¹ Carl McGowan, "Adlai Stevenson: The Man," (dedicatory speech for the Adlai E. Stevenson Hall of the Humanities, Illinois State University, 5 February 1969), Samuel Braden Papers, Illinois State University Archive, Illinois State University, Normal.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Quoted in McKeever, *Life and Legacy*, 571.

³⁵ McKeever, *Life and Legacy*, 374.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ McKeever, *Life and Legacy*, 251.

³⁸ Seitu Jones, "Public Art that Inspires: Public Art that Informs," in *Critical Issues in Public Art*, ed. Harriet F. Senie and Sally Webster (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, Inc., 1992), 282.