

**Statement by Sheldon Hackney  
Nominee for the position of Chairman,  
National Endowment for the Humanities  
June 25, 1993**

At first glance, my life does not appear to be one that was ever in need of transformation, yet I can bear personal witness to the sort of personal transformation that I believe the humanities have the power to accomplish.

I was born and raised in Birmingham, Alabama, the third son of a thoroughly Methodist family that eventually included five sons, the offspring of a marriage that is now in its sixty-fourth year. My childhood was spent in the Great Depression and World War II, and I was acutely aware that my world was one of scarcity and vulnerability. Nevertheless, my childhood was unproblematic, at least if one doesn't count my being continuously terrorized by my older brothers.

My father was a newspaperman before the war. As that was not the era of the journalist as hero, and as his family was large, when he returned from the Navy he set himself up in business buying and reselling war surplus material. His business evolved, and he eventually did very well.

As I went through public school in Birmingham, like most children of middle-income families, I could imagine various futures for myself, each of them honorable and productive, but I never imagined the life I have actually had. That life was opened up for me in part because of two superb History teachers at Ramsay High School, Mary McPhaul and Ellen Callen, and in part because I loved to read. My mother read to us a lot when we were young, and when I was a bit older I remember listening wondrously to her practicing the dramatic book readings that she did for literary clubs around the city, legitimate theater not having a very lively presence in Birmingham then. Although reading was a bit of magic for me, I was

thoroughly imprisoned in the myth that real boys did not work very hard in school and real men were men of action rather than thought.

The major reason, however, that the world was saved from having yet another lawyer was my older brother, Fain, whom I worshipped. He was charismatic and multi-talented and very imaginative, so that he was always the leader in the neighborhood and the one who would organize our play, not only the standard games like kick-the-can and hide-and-seek, but elaborate war games and a game we called "town" in which everyone had a role selling something, and Fain was always the banker because he could draw so well and make beautiful dollar bills. My brother, Morris, always got the lemonade concession and ended up with all the money that Fain had issued from the bank.

Fain was a young man of grandiose projects, usually too grand ever to finish but always exciting enough to draw in everyone else. Despite all his talent, he had an uneven academic record, reflecting his enthusiasms and his lack of focus, but he had a great time and made all those around him have a great time also. He went off to the University of Alabama where parties were then known to occur. He had a wonderful time his freshman year, and his abysmal grades showed it.

Something happened to him that following summer, and I don't know what the transforming event or experience was. In any case, he became a different person. He started reading books that were not required for school. He began to listen to classical music, to write poetry, and to talk of serious subjects. He transferred to Birmingham Southern College and started to work at his courses. I was fascinated.

Part of his plan for remaking his life was to become a Navy pilot, which he did. When I went off to Vanderbilt on a Naval ROTC scholarship, he was on the West Coast and then in Japan flying amphibious patrol planes. Letters from him were not only reports of adventures

in exotic places but accounts of what he was reading and thinking and guilt-producing questions about my intellectual life, which even at Vanderbilt could be as sparse as one wanted it to be.

It was at about this time, because of Fain's example, if not his specific recommendation, that I was captured by the novels of William Faulkner, Ernest Hemingway, and especially Thomas Wolfe. I am almost embarrassed to remember how much I identified with Eugene Gant, a young Southerner coming of age by trying to read his way through the Harvard library. Vanderbilt was saturated, of course, with the tradition of the Fugitive poets and the Agrarians, and I studied them with appreciation. Though the Agrarians had taken their stand twenty years before in very different times and had since then taken diverse political paths, the big questions they had raised (about what is the good life, and what is the value of tradition, and what is the function of government, and what are the perils of modernity) were common and lively topics of debate among my friends.

We also talked of race relations, an omnipresent concern of Southerners black and white that was intensified by the Supreme Court's ruling in the Brown case that put an exclamation mark in the middle of my college years. For reasons that I find difficult to explain, but that probably have to do with my religious training, I had broken away from southern white orthodoxy even before going to college and had concluded that racial segregation was wrong. As a historian, I have continued my interest in race because it is a major factor in American history. As an individual, I have continued my commitment to racial equality because I believe it is right and that group relationships are one of the major unresolved questions on the domestic scene. In the more formal curriculum at Vanderbilt, Dewey Grantham, Herb Bailly and Henry Swint in the History Department increased my interest in History.

I was devastated by the death of my brother in a military plane crash in Japan in 1954 during the summer after my sophomore year. He had meant so many things to me that it was not until years later that I realized that his most important gift to me was to give me permission to use my mind in serious ways, to risk pursuing a subject that I enjoyed, to spend my life in pursuit of education for myself and for others. Watching him change, and being lured into the pleasures of thought as a way of enhancing experience, transformed my life and gave it purpose.

After three years on a destroyer and two years teaching weapons at the United States Naval Academy in Annapolis, I went to Yale to study under C. Vann Woodward, the leading historian of the South and the man who became the most important influence on my career as a historian and on my devotion to academic freedom, intellectual honesty, free speech, and the obligations of collegiality. I had been attracted to Woodward not only by his reinterpretation of the history of the South from Reconstruction to World War I, but by his subtle exploration, in the essays collected in The Burden of Southern History, of what it means to be a Southerner and what the history of the South means to the nation and the world.

After Yale, I joined the faculty of Princeton where I worked away at becoming the best teacher and scholar I could possibly be while raising a family and doing the sort of committee assignments and quasi-administrative tasks that faculty are called upon to do. My career as a historian, in fact, was diverted because I kept saying yes to such requests. When William G. Bowen became President of Princeton in 1972, he invited me to become Provost. The slippery slope turned into a water chute. I became President of Tulane University in 1975 and the University of Pennsylvania in 1981. This confirms the truth of the aphorism that life is what happens to you while you are planning something else.

I believe my twenty years of major responsibility in universities has prepared me to lead the National Endowment for the Humanities. For the past generation, universities have provided tough environments. University presidents operate in a sea of powerful and conflicting currents. To succeed, one must have a clear sense of strategic direction, a fundamental commitment to the core values of the University, the strength to persevere through contentious times, and the ability to gain and keep the support a variety of constituencies. I have not only survived in that environment, I have prospered, and my institutions have thrived.

Among the values that I hold dear is a belief that a university ought to be open to all points of view, even if some of those views expressed are personally abhorrent. I take some pride in having protected the right to speak of such diverse controversial figures from William Shockley at Princeton to Louis Farrakhan at Penn. The university should belong to all of its members and not be the exclusive domain of any particular person, group, or point of view.

During my twelve and a half years at Penn, I have made the undergraduate experience my highest priority. Penn has revamped the general education components of the curriculum in each of its four undergraduate schools, provided a livelier sense of community through the creation of freshman houses within the residential system, added a reading project that asks freshmen to read a common book and then to discuss that book in seminars during orientation week and throughout the year, revised our advising system, revitalized the freshman seminar program, and drawn senior faculty into the teaching of introductory courses. I have increased the diversity of the Penn student body and worked hard to sustain an inclusive and supportive atmosphere on campus, to provide a campus in which everyone has a very strong sense of belonging and in which our animated debates are carried out with civility. I have also created a new sense of partnership with the neighborhoods around us, as a close working relationship

with the school system of the City of Philadelphia, and a national model program of volunteerism that I institutionalized a year ago by establishing the Center for Community Partnerships to stimulate and coordinate the involvement of faculty, staff and students in off-campus service activities.

Universities exist to create new knowledge and to preserve and communicate knowledge. The NEH, as a sort of university without walls, through its research, education, and public programs, is engaged in the same effort. I am dedicated to the proposition that we can improve the human condition through knowledge and that our hope for tomorrow in this troubled world depends on the sort of understanding that can come through learning.

I have great respect for the NEH. It is the single most important institution in American life promoting the humanities, and it has a long record of accomplishment. I believe there are things that can be done to extend and broaden the impact of the NEH as it fulfills its statutory task of stimulating the humanities.

I like to think of the humanities as human beings recording and thinking about human experience and the human condition, preserving the best of the past and deriving new insights in the present. One of the things that the NEH can do is to conduct a national conversation around the big questions: what is the meaning of life, what is a just society, what is the nature of duty, and so on. In this big conversation, it is not the function of the NEH to provide answers but to insure a discussion, to create a forum in which all voices can be heard.

Because they are not just for the few but for everyone, no single approach to the NEH mandate is adequate. There is a need for balance among research aimed at creating new knowledge, educational programs to insure that the humanities are creatively and invitingly represented in the curricula of our schools and colleges, and public programs to draw everyone

into the big conversation. Those three activities should be related to each other and should be mutually supportive.

The country has never needed the humanities more. We not only face the challenges of a new geopolitical situation and the problems of adjusting to economic competition in a new global marketplace, but we face a crisis of values at home. What is happening to family and community? Who are we as a nation and where are we going? What holds us together as a nation and what do citizens owe to each other? What is the relationship of the individual to the group in a society whose political order is based upon individual rights and in which group membership is still a powerful social influence.

Even more importantly, the humanities have the capacity to deepen and extend to new dimensions the meaning of life for each and everyone of us. They have the capacity to transform individual lives, not necessarily in the external circumstances of those lives, but in their internal meaning.

Every human experience is enhanced by higher levels of knowledge. When I listen to a piece of music, I may like it and think it beautiful, but the person who knows the historical context of its composition understands what the composer was trying to accomplish technically and can compare the composition and the performance to others will get infinitely more out of the experience than I will. That is why I enjoy talking about common experiences with people who will see it through a lens different from mine. The task of the NEH is to enrich the conversation and bring more people into it.

The premise of my approach to the tasks of the National Endowment for the Humanities is simple but profound. The more you know, the more you hear and see and feel. The more you know, the more you can know. The more you know, the more meaningful life is. Such can be the gift of the NEH to the American people.

SWEARING-IN CEREMONY  
FOR  
SHELDON HACKNEY  
NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES  
WASHINGTON, D.C.  
WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 4, 1993  
3:00 P.M.

MR. GIBSON: It's the quietest I've ever heard it in this room. Good afternoon. This is a great day, an important day, a very exciting day, and it's also a fun day as all of the balloons around this room can readily attest, but we'll get to that fun part later. We are witnessing and celebrating the formal installation of the sixth chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

It is my great honor and my deep personal pleasure to introduce Dr. Sheldon Hackney to the staff of the National Endowment for the Humanities. He is a distinguished scholar, a superbly accomplished university administrator, and he is truly dedicated to the advancement of the humanities. It is my privilege as well to introduce the staff of the National Endowment to you, Dr. Hackney. I can attest personally to the professionalism, the dedication, and the creativity of this superb staff. And now I turn over the podium to the Honorable Louis H. Pollak, U.S. District Court Judge, who will administer the formal oath of office.

JUDGE POLLAK: Before I call Sheldon Hackney forward to administer the oath as chairman, I want to tell a brief story. It's a story about Sheldon's great teacher, C. Vann Woodward. Twenty-eight years ago, in March of 1965, I got a phone call from that extraordinary historian asking, didn't I think it appropriate for us to fly down to Montgomery, and I said, "Why?" And he said, "Because we'll want to be there tomorrow, won't we, when Dr. King and the marchers from Selma arrive in Montgomery." And I said--as I usually did with respect to any suggestion by Professor Woodward--"Of course."

The next day we were in Montgomery where we were very graciously hosted, I should say, by Virginia and Clifford Durr, Lucy Hackney's parents. But the purpose of our visit was to be there and to walk with the Selma marchers for the last half mile of their history-making march. And with Professor Woodward and me was another, Professor Woodward's very distinguished historian colleague Professor Hofstadter of Columbia. The end of the March was the Capitol Building in Montgomery, and Dr. King walked several steps up on the great staircase and spoke to the marchers plus those auxiliaries like us who had walked the last half mile.

in the course of Dr. King's address it came a point in which he wanted to talk about what racial discrimination really meant. And then he said, in essence, that the best way he could explain what that meant was to read a few sentences from a book called The Strange Career of Jim Crow, by Professor C. Vann Woodward. And I remember then standing there next to Woodward and listening to Dr. King reading from Woodward's book, and I had a feeling that this was the apogee of what the academic enterprise meant: the union of the historian's vision, the humanist vision and the active identification of that vision and readiness to proceed with an agenda to change that vision and make it conform to the promise of American life, in the words of Dr. King. Professor Woodward didn't seem at all surprised or especially affected one way or another though he must have been inside.

I tell you this story because Sheldon Hackney is one of the cohorts of Professor Woodward's extraordinary students who has achieved most greatly in his teaching and his scholarship, he has carried forward Professor Woodward's inquiries most especially into those areas that address the meaning of American life, the vindication of American values; a long, long progress we have undertaken. And when Sheldon Hackney turned to administration as provost at Princeton, as president of Tulane, and then at Penn, he undertook what is arguably the even harder job of translating into the reality of university life the imperatives of a democratic society, a job difficult in the extreme, but crucially important. If democracy can't be made to work on our campuses, it's hard to know how we're going to be able to make it work in our larger national life.

I take the liberty of reporting all of this to you today because it seems to me that today, we celebrate the rounding out of Sheldon Hackney's extraordinary career as he now assumes governmental responsibility for connecting the academy--and most especially the humanities--with the setting of public policy for the United States of America. And on that day of extraordinary triumph, I count it a very great privilege now to be able to swear Sheldon Hackney into his new office. Lucy and Sheldon Hackney, would you come forward.

Dr. Hackney, would you please repeat after me the following:

I, Sheldon Hackney, do solemnly swear that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic, that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same, that I take this obligation freely without any mental reservation or purpose to evade and that I will well and faithfully discharge the duties of the Office of Chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities. So help me God.

CHAIRMAN HACKNEY: Thank you very, very much. I do want to say a few words. First I want to thank Lou Pollak for coming down from Philadelphia to do this chore today. We have been friends for thirty years, going back to the days when I was a very young history graduate student at Yale and he was already a very old professor of law. He was then the dean of the Yale Law School and then preceded us to Philadelphia, where he was dean of the Penn Law School--maybe the first double in the history of higher education--and is now a distinguished judge in the Federal District Court of the Eastern District of Pennsylvania. He is, of course, a person of great wit and actual wisdom--what you probably don't have a good sample of here today--but he is a truly wise man and has been an inspiration to me in my career. He is a person of great judicial restraint. He has a wife who does not have that same sort of judicial restraint, and I'm only sorry that Cathy could not be with us also today, a great friend.

I also want to thank Senator James Jeffords, who is here who came from the Senate Committee on Labor and Human Resources and from the state of Vermont and I really have enjoyed my conversations with him. And he voted right. Ana Steele from the NEA is also here. I passed her on the way in; I don't know where she is. Thank you very much for coming by. Let me introduce again the most important person in my life, Lucy Durr Hackney. She is a lawyer and a child advocate who is the President and the founder of the Pennsylvania Partnership for Children, which is an agency that is very young in years--being only about eighteen months old--but already extremely successful. It is a state-wide version in Pennsylvania of the Children's Defense Fund, and it is doing a great job and she is doing a great job there.

There are a number of other people here whom I would like for you to recognize and maybe if you would hold the overwhelming, spontaneous ovation until I go through these it might be nice. But I have been through quite an experience this spring, and I could not have gotten through it, in any fashion at all in one piece--either mentally or physically--without the help of a lot of people, so I would like to thank them here, in public, and ask them to raise their hands so that others may see, and I hope I'm not going to leave anyone out. Nestor Davidson, from White House Congressional Affairs. Nestor, would you raise a hand? I know this word is out of fashion, but he handled me and did a wonderful job and is a wonderful person. Melan Verveer from the First Lady's Office is right there with him. Thank you very much. Ricki Seidman is, I think, not here. She is from the White House also. Kathy Kruse, who is on the Senate Committee staff, was a great help. Sandy Crary from Senator Pell's staff is here and was just very staunch. John Gonperts and Julia Prifield from Senator Wofford's staff. Would you

raise a hand Julia? Senator Wofford was, of course, my senator from Pennsylvania and was a champion for me during all of this. Bill Gilcher from White House Personnel as well. Susan Clampitt right in front of him. John Hammer from the National Humanities Alliance was a great source of knowledge about the humanities in general. So I want to thank all of them for what they did for me, if you would help me do that.

I'm glad that you have welcomed me so heartily--that really does make me feel good--but I really don't think you can understand how wonderful it is for me to be here. The process that I have just gone through was a rather rough one; I will not go into particulars. It may be even ugly to some people's view, and I really don't want to recommend it to anyone. But I would like to say two things about it. One is that I hope you consider it a compliment that it was somewhat controversial and that it attracted so much attention. It is a compliment perhaps in two different ways. One is that some people felt that the NEH was so important that it was worth fighting very hard about, and I think that is a compliment. And secondly, I hope that you feel somewhat complimented because you should infer that I think the NEH is so important that it is worth suffering slants and arrows in order to get here, and I have done that.

So I want to assure you at the outset that I do think the NEH is very important--the single most important agency promoting and supporting the humanities in America--and that I come to the Endowment with the utmost respect for its tradition of accomplishment and that I come with the belief that the humanities have never been more important to the nation, to America, than they are now, given our anxieties about our future, our uncertainties about our identity, which are being revealed in a rather sour public mood. I believe the humanities have never been more important than they are now and that they have a lot to offer us in this particular historical moment. There is, of course, no magic formula for transforming that sour public mood, nor is it really our particular responsibility to do that here at the Endowment. But we can transform and touch lives. We can offer something of enduring value through the humanities that will enrich and intensify the life of those who participate in our processes and our programs, and we can offer an experience that will illuminate alternative lives that anyone may choose to live.

I arrive here, therefore, not so much with answers as with questions. Questions that arise out of my own thinking as a historian, questions that underlie the human sequest in all fields at one level or another. What is the meaning of life? How should one live it? What is a just society, and how can we achieve that in a population that is so diverse as ours is? What is duty? What do we owe each other as human beings and as citizens of America? What is the nature of knowledge, and how

do we tell what is true and what is not true? Why do we believe and behave as we do? These and other big questions are important now because of the unsettled state of the American mind.

I like to think of us here as conducting a grand conversation about these important questions and many other questions that may not seem so grand but are related in some remote or indirect way to those big fundamental questions that humanists have always asked and tried to answer. The conversation, this big grand conversation, should be a rich and lively one. It should be stimulating; it should be fun. And, most importantly, all voices should be heard in this conversation. Our task here is not so much to provide the answers to the questions that are being asked in that conversation, but to make sure that the conversation takes place and that it is, of course, as well-informed as possible.

Finally, on a more personal note, let me urge you not to believe all that you've read about me, especially the negative things. You will get to know me soon enough as we work together, and then you can make up your own mind about who I am, who the real me is, and I will not try here to do any kind of autobiographical analysis, but I will plead guilty at the outset to believing a lot of the pieties that one associates with the sentimental 19th-century bourgeoisie, of which I may be an example. I don't wear a cape, of course, or a uniform, but truth, justice, and the American way seem to me to be very noble goals to which we should aspire. More particularly, I really do believe in free speech. I believe in participatory governments, in intellectual honesty, in civility, and in service to others through the pursuit of knowledge. Those are quite fundamental to me, and I hope they will be to you as we do our work together.

I remember talking to a reporter; reporters always bring up the controversy. Every time there is a news hook, there's a rehearsal of the controversy of the spring, which I understand, and we were going through that again just the other day with the question being "Won't the controversy always come back? And my answer then is one that I actually believe, and that is that if our criterion for selection among grant applicants for the programs that we run and the things that we do and the thought that we stimulate is always the highest quality--that is, if our goal is always one of excellence and that is the criterion that we apply--then I think we will not go very far wrong, so I look forward to working with you over the next several years in doing something very good and interesting and stimulating for the American people. Thank you very much.

MS. JOHNSON: Mr. Chairman, we welcome you on behalf of the Federal Women's Program Advisory Committee, and we are so proud

to be a part of this swearing-in ceremony and reception. The Women's Committee, responsible for vitally important programs here at the NEH, will assist you in your transition in any way that we can. Your distinguished career as an educator and historian eminently qualifies you to unfold a new chapter here at the Endowment. We look forward to an exciting and productive future with you at the helm. Congratulations on your new appointment, Dr. Hackney. And now it's my pleasure to turn over the floor to Don, who will give the toast.

MR. GIBSON: First, I would like to say that before we came down here, Dr. Hackney said he could not imagine that anybody would be as happy as he was about this day, but I can assure him that there are a lot people in this room who are very, very happy. And now we would like to offer a toast to Dr. Hackney, and I would invite all people here to obtain a glass of champagne or similar substance from the tables. It will take a few minutes; we'll wait for you if you'll get the champagne from those tables.

Could I have your attention please? Everybody stop talking. And now, Dr. Hackney, we are honored, we are pleased, we are excited that you will lead us. Lead us in the Endowment's efforts to ensure that all Americans are engaged in the study and appreciation of human history and culture. Welcome.

Now we're invited to talk, to start that grand national conversation.

# # #

Sheldon Hackney  
Nathan Mayhew Seminar  
Martha's Vineyard, Mass.  
August 8, 1993

We live in fascinating times. Never before has the cause of human freedom made such giant strides around the globe in such a short period of time as it has since the fall of the Berlin Wall. The emerging "new world order" may turn out to be a wonderful thing, but as of now, the retreat of authoritarianism has permitted the advance of violence and the human misery it begets, for almost everywhere one looks the human community is riven with hatred of one primal sort or another. In India and Northern Ireland and Israel and Bosnia, religion sets people against each other; ethnic minorities strive for autonomy in Sri Lanka and Spain and Iraq; race is the dividing line in South Africa, clans in Somalia; political ideologies batter each other in Cambodia and in Central and South America, and nationalism has reasserted its disturbing presence in the lands of the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. The eternal struggle between THEM and US yields images of horror nightly on our television screens, reminding us of the human capacity for evil.

This would not be so worrisome to us here in fortress America if, as we glanced around this great land of ours, we did not see a society fractured along lines of race, religion, ethnicity, nationality, and language, the same principles of division that are synonymous with suffering in other parts of the

world. If the riot in South Central Los Angeles last spring in the wake of the Rodney King police brutality trial did not destroy it, the car bomb that killed five people and disabled the largest office building in the world, and the conspiracy to bring New York to its knees by blowing up the Holland and Lincoln tunnels, certainly should have done away with the notion that the end of the cold war has made America a safer place. Gone is the contingent terror of nuclear holocaust, only to be replaced by the more certain violence of regional and communal warfare. It is as if we banished the guillotine only to fall victim to "death by a thousand paper cuts." We could be a multi-dimensional Beirut waiting for the mother of all civil wars to reduce our neighborhoods to bloodstained rubble and our people to tears.

There is apparently something of a paradox at work in our turbulent post-modern and post-Cold-War world. As the world shrinks, it is a less friendly place. As communication satellites, the micro-electronic revolution in radio, television, computers, and data transmission, jet planes and the miracles of modern travel, and the increasingly interdependent world economy bring the globe together, there has been an explosion of nationalisms, parochialisms, and particularisms of all kinds. Environmentlists may have some people thinking in terms of our common citizenship on "spaceship earth," but we are nevertheless witnessing ferocious communal strife in almost every quarter of the globe.

It is almost as if the overwhelmingly powerful forces of modernization, fed by the pent-up desires of people for better standards of living, create a countervailing commitment to traditional loyalties even as those customary ways are being undermined by the new and preferred patterns of living. Rapid change in one area of life produces compensatory traditionalism in another. My theory is that we cannot understand one of this bound pair of opposing forces without the other; we must somehow comprehend the linkage of universal values and parochial commitments if we are to understand the contemporary world. Further, I believe that the most significant barrier to social justice in the United States, and at the same time the chief threat to the social order, is the challenge of multi-culturalism, the task of building a single society out of several culturally different communities.

What is to hold us together? In what principle of cohesion are we to have faith when violent emotions of one kind or another threaten to set us against each other?

The fact that our motto is "E Pluribus Unum" is eloquent testimony that the task of nation-building has been problematic from the first and that we have been aware of the special role our nation has been called upon to play. The history of the United States can be understood as the modulation through time of the tension between the "pluribus" and the "unum" in our motto,

between communities based on shared interests and communities based on birthright cultural identities, between a commitment to universal standards and a loyalty to kith and kin. This tension is inevitable in a nation that always has been culturally diverse, and cultural diversity has been only one of many factors setting Americans apart from each other and apart from their own pasts.

From the first, the American experience has been shaped by a constant pressure toward dissolution, countered by self-conscious community building. One might say that this process was at work even before the pilgrims arrived. On fragile ships challenging the terrifying North Atlantic, headed for the very ends of the earth, expecting to find a vast, empty wilderness, the direct antithesis of civilization with its customary restraints, the immigrants bound for Plymouth Rock were afraid of what would happen. They, and others who came later, feared that society would atomize and disappear like liquid introduced into a vacuum. Therefore, they entered into a written agreement setting forth their social contract, their commitment to an ordered community. The Mayflower Compact is the most dramatic early evidence of the uncivilized threat of the empty continent and the typical American response -- the resort to written constitutions, contracts, laws and formal mechanisms for prescribing how people shall behave toward one another, to replace the customary, the traditional, the inherited.

The centrifugal forces at work in American history have been constantly reinforced. Repeated waves of immigration, drawn by the lure of economic opportunity and still very much in process, have produced an ethnically heterogeneous and everchanging population. Geographic and social mobility have continuously undermined the stability of a society on the move. Urbanization and industrialization are words that mask the painful drama of prolonged folk movements and of massive changes in a people's way of life. Today, technological change disorients the world around us even when we can manage to stay in one place. Each force, acting over long periods of time, has meant continuously wrenching and uprooting changes in the lives of Americans.

Small wonder that we worry so much about what is going to hold our society together, what is going to be common to our diverse population, what is going to exert the centripetal force that in other lands is applied by centuries of tradition, a homogeneous culture, a consistent core of shared meanings and expectations! Small wonder that, as Richard Hofstadter once argued, there may be detected from time to time a "paranoid style" in our political life, the playing upon natural suspicions that people who do not look like us, or worship like us, would not treat us fairly if they were in positions of power, either economic or political, so we had better keep them out of such positions.

One current field of combat in the struggle between centripetal and centrifugal forces in American history is the galaxy of charged concepts orbiting around the reality of our growing cultural diversity. The forces of change wish us to glory in our pluralism. They think that it is a good thing that the melting pot did not melt, and they argue that to insist on the primacy of the Western Tradition is to disenfranchise and denigrate all members of minority groups and women. For them, the values and texts of the canon descending to us from Fifth Century Athens and the Roman Empire (through Dead White European Males) are oppressive because they leave no room for alternative voices. The more exuberant of the multi-culturalists, seeing themselves as the champions of groups that have historically been victimized, imply that the enemy to be overthrown is to be found in small-town, middle class, white, Christian, heterosexual, male America. In their court, the conventional mainstream is on trial.

On the other hand, conservatives fear that if we grant that every cultural value is as good as every other cultural value, and encourage everyone to identify with his or her racial, ethnic, or religious group, and if there is no recognized central tradition of values mediating among the claims of groups, then we will become like the Balkans or the Middle East. There will be no common ground. Irreconcilable differences will soon eventuate in violence. Better, they say, to deemphasize group identities

because they are divisive and to emphasize individual equality in the context of a single national identity.

Isaiah Berlin has pointed out in one of the essays in The Crooked Timber of Humanity that different civilizations, different cultures, different societies have values that are incompatible with each other. That is why the "peaceable kingdom" is a utopian or post-apocalyptic vision. The pursuit of an ideal harmony in the here and now is not only impossible but fraught with the dangers of tyranny, because the seekers after purity tend to eliminate the impure in unattractive ways (witness Hitler's Germany, Stalin's Soviet Union, Mao's China, Pol Pot's Cambodia). Life is therefore full of choices, dilemmas and ambiguities because all beliefs are not reconcilable with each other and we must choose among them.

It is also true that even within a single society, especially one so culturally diverse and syncretistic in its origins as the United States, there are competing values held in an uneasy suspended animation, making life in America unusually contingent on choice. Perhaps a few trivial but suggestive examples will make the point.

For instance, we are the most philanthropic people on earth, yet our system is based upon the pursuit of economic self-interest. We idealize what used to be called "the common man," and our political system rests ultimately upon the wisdom of the

masses of ordinary individuals, yet we are also fascinated by exceptional people: rock stars, sports heroes, creative geniuses, and the super rich. We elected Harry S/ Truman because he exemplified the virtues of the ordinary American, and created a cult of John F. Kennedy because he came to seem so extraordinary in glamour and style. We are a youth oriented culture that neglects its young in so many ways. We believe mightily in the necessity and moral value of work, yet we harbor get-rich-quick dreams that lead directly from the 1849 gold rush in California to its contemporary equivalent in Atlantic City on the opposite coast. The most tolerant and free society in the history of the world has only a small radical tradition operating at the fringes of the mainstream. We are a nation of immigrants given to periodic fits of ethnocentrism. One could go on.

These contradictions are not simply wonderfully confusing and idiosyncratic; each of them points to an unresolved conflict of values in our culture, as if each strongly established orientation generated its own opposite, so that opposing pairs of values march through American history marking the frontier of social conflict. Like matter and anti-matter, and the mirror image of the double helix in the DNA molecule, things in nature seem to proceed in linked pairs of opposites.

So it is with our culture. The mythic lonely hero, stalking through the forests and plains of the American imagination from

James Fennimore Cooper's Leatherstocking Tales to the movies of Clint Eastwood, is balanced by the fact that America has been the world's laboratory for utopian communities in which individuals seek to achieve happiness or salvation by subordinating themselves to the life of a group. Please note here that David Koresh's Branch Davidian community was located in Texas, that promised land of unbranded individualism. That surpasses irony and becomes metaphor.

To resolve this apparent conflict between group and individual in American culture, perhaps we should start by asking the right question. Perhaps the question should not be, "why have we fallen so short of the American ideal of equal justice and equal opportunity for all," but "how have we managed to live as a heterogeneous society with so little conflict and so much equity as compared to the communal violence that is so characteristic in the rest of the world." Put that way, the answers becomes obvious. I think they are at least three.

First, economic opportunity provides a rational basis for allegiance. Even though we may fall short of our own ideal of equal opportunity, there has always been enough of it to offer hope, and it has always been far superior to the available alternatives. The increasing disparity of income over the last twenty years raises the question of the elasticity of this bond of social cohesion. How much disparity can be tolerated in the United States before the bonds break?

Second, the civic virtues enshrined in the Constitution are recognized by almost everyone as fundamental and superior to all other claims of secular loyalty. Each of us is heir to the promise of "equal protection of the law" simply because we are citizens, regardless of what race, religion, region, ethnic group, gender or nationality may also claim our loyalty, and we possess that great heritage not because we are a member of one group or another but because we are individual Americans. Group loyalties may be honored and diverse cultures can be celebrated as enriching elements of national life without fear of divisiveness as long as we are all clear that our most basic commitment must be to The Law (writ large). The thing that we most fundamentally share is our commitment to the rule of law and to an open political system for determining who makes the law, what the law is, and how it should be enforced.

As powerful as THE LAW is as a magnetic force for Americans, however, there are large and important areas of life in which it does not operate. It therefore can be a fundamental part of the national identity, but it can not be the whole of it.

Third, an equally compelling reason for faith in the future is that our past is one of overcoming differences and reconciling conflicting forces. With the one great exception of the Civil War, we have generally managed to forge a national interest out of a welter of competing interests, and we have evolved an identity and hundreds of subtle values that encourage us to think

of ourselves as one people, despite our many differences. To the extent that history shapes consciousness, it is a friend in our search for national unity.

The challenge is to imagine an American future in which birthright identities exist as a source of individual and collective strength, but in which also they are subsumed under a common American identity that is open and inclusive yet unitary. Just as we believe in both the common man and the hero, in hard work and getting rich quick, we must hold together in suspended animation the birthright identities of groups and our universal identities as individuals.

Such a vision of the American future is possible. In my more optimistic moments, I dream that the current rancorous cultural warfare will cause us to think carefully about who we are and where we are going as a nation. From that thought and from a vigorous debate among people of good will, should come an idea of a usable future that is rooted in the past yet relevant to the present. If we can accomplish that, we should be able to reclaim our position as "a city on a hill," a model of civil society for a troubled world.

Sheldon  
Hackney

## BURRELLE'S

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### RADIO CLIPS

DATE August 31, 1993  
TIME 8:00-9:30 PM  
NETWORK NPR  
PROGRAM All Things Considered

ACCOUNT NUMBER 21/6298 AA

LINDA WORTHHEIMER reporting:

The National Endowment for the Humanities has been under fire recently with conservative critics keeping close watch on new chairman Sheldon Hackney. But with final congressional action on its budget still pending, the NEH has decided to take a more public approach to explaining its role in both university life and in communities. NPR's Phyllis Joffe has this report.

PHYLLIS JOFFE reporting:

It's lunchtime at the Mine Safety Appliances factory in Smithfield, Rhode Island, a small rural town northwest of Providence. The company makes gas masks for military use. Today, about 20 assembly line workers, all women, sit around a semicircular conference table in a small room just off the plant floor. They open their lunch bags and start eating as actors Ed Shea and Marilyn Meardon perform a scene portraying Roger Williams and Anne Hutchinson, the founders of Rhode Island (segment of the performance is heard). This performance at the factory is part of a traveling humanities program called "Feast Your Mind." After the play, the actors stay in character while engaging the workers in a discussion of modern-day moral and social issues.

Unidentified Woman #1: All right. Why could a woman not be a priest?

Unidentified Woman #2: Now, now, the pope said there'll never be a woman priest.

JOFFE: This interactive format is an alternative to traditional scholar-based programs, those in which humanities experts give public lectures or lead discussion in libraries, museums and universities. The "Feast Your Mind" program also uses scholars but as resources for the actors, advising them on how the historical characters might respond to today's concepts and ideas. Tom Roberts is the director of the Rhode Island Committee on the Humanities, which developed the program as a way to link ivory-tower scholarships with people's everyday lives.

Mr. TOM ROBERTS (Director, Rhode Island Committee on the Humanities): I guess if we've learned something, it is that our hopes are well-founded and that people don't have to have a college degree to still participate in the humanities. They may not call it the humanities, but in a sense--I don't really care what they call it. It's getting to see their minds in action, to see them thinking and being critical. That's what makes the program a success and makes me feel satisfied.

JOFFE: The Rhode Island Committee on the Humanities gets most of its money from the National Endowment for the Humanities. The NEH spends nearly a fifth

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of its grant money each year to fund local projects through 54 state humanities councils in the US and its territories. NEH chairman Sheldon Hackney believes that public discourse should take place wherever people come together--at universities and community colleges, small-town libraries and major museums, cultural and community centers of all sorts.

Mr. SHELDON HACKNEY (Chairman, National Endowment for the Humanities): Out of those meeting and discussions of--of--people all over the country come new ideas and new interests. And those probably filter up and put some pressure on local school boards, for instance, or community colleges for new courses and new curriculum to respond to the interests that have been discovered by--by people in these conversations. So I think it is--it is not only--it's not down processes. It is a bottom sub-process as well.

JOFFE: Among the more popular public humanities programs are the chautauqua revivals springing up in the western, southern and mid-western states. Based on the 19th-century educational forums that traveled through the eastern US, the modern chautauquas attract thousands of people. They get the chance to debate such issues as race, gender and identity with scholars posing as historical figures--Frederick Douglass, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Walt Whitman, Malcolm X. Another community-based program, this one in southeast Washington, DC, is called "In Search of Common Ground." Senior citizens living in the Potomac Gardens housing project record their life histories on video- and audiotape.

Unidentified Woman #3: I was the only black child and there was only one white child. And we lived about five miles from each other. That was the only child I had to play with. She was a member of the family.

JOFFE: The DC Community Humanities Council funded the project. The oral histories will be used in schools and public programs to explore the heritage and traditions of African-Americans in the nation's capital. Thelma Russell heads the senior-citizen group recording the Potomac Gardens histories.

Ms. THELMA RUSSELL (Head of Project for Recording Potomac Residents' Histories): I think it will help a whole lot. It will help the children, the generation that's coming out. They're killing one another so bad and they need to have something to look--to look at. And if they can see where their grandparents and great-grandparents, the things that they have tried to accomplish, maybe we'll give them some incentive also.

JOFFE: Founders of the NEH say "In Search of Common Ground" is an example of the programs they envisioned 28 years ago, programs that would bring discussions of history, literature, philosophy, law and ethics to people in all of America's communities. But many humanities scholars don't support this populist approach and, according to Jamil Zenaldine, the dispute may be damaging to the NEH. Zenaldine heads the Federation of State Humanities Councils. He says scholars have been busy debating their own rhetoric and the public has been left out of the discussion.

Mr. JAMIL ZENALDINE (Federation of State Humanities Councils): We have got to find a way to put roots back down into our communities and that's--and I think

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that--that higher education increasingly is realizing that its very survival will depend on whether or not the public understands and appreciates why what they're doing is important. Certainly, the budget deficit means that we're going to have to be better at saying why we deserve to exist.

JOFFE: At the Mine Safety Appliances plant in Rhode Island, Fran Kinacome trims and inspects biochemical masks. She's worked there 10 years. Every couple of months, this state humanities program, "Feast Your Mind," returns to the factory for a lunchtime encounter with history. Fran Kinacome has attended every one.

Ms. FRAN KINACOME (Mine Safety Appliances): I wanted to know what it was like before. I really wanted to know what Martha Washington looked like, and that's--that's one thing that I really like. Some--in that area, where I can think and use my imagination what it was--used to be.

JOFFE: The Federation of State Humanities Councils is urging the National Endowment to redefine its mission and put more funding at the grass-roots level. Next month, the federation and eight other national organizations kick off a public-awareness campaign on the arts and humanities. It's called "There's Something In It For You." This is Phyllis Joffe.

**Opening Statement by Jane Alexander  
Confirmation Hearing  
Before the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee**

**September 22, 1993**

Thank you Mr. Chairman, Senator Kassebaum, and members of the Committee. I am pleased to come before you today as President Clinton's choice to head an extraordinary agency, the National Endowment for the Arts, which has meant so much to me and to so many others.

I grew up in Brookline, Massachusetts, not far from Senator Kennedy's family homestead. My mother was born in south Boston, excelled in school, and became a scrub nurse to a neurosurgeon. My father, born in Nebraska and schooled in North Platte and Omaha, was awarded a scholarship at age 16 to Harvard and then to Harvard Medical School. His father, Daniel Quigley, the son of Irish immigrants, distinguished himself not only as physician to Buffalo Bill Cody in North Platte, but as a pioneer in the use of radium for cancer over 75 years ago, and in extolling the virtues of vitamins. Thus, all I knew was the world of medicine. It was assumed, I suppose, that my brother, my sister, and I would find a life in science as well.

In 1945, a man I barely knew, my father, returned from the war. He had been gone most of my young life. In an effort to get to know me, this handsome stranger took me one afternoon to the ballet. It was surely the seminal experience of my life. The ballet was "Coppelia"; it was danced by lighter than air magicians from Copenhagen, Denmark -- American ballet companies being few and far between at that time. Although I was barely six, that performance transformed my life -- my waking thoughts and my dreams. How could human beings defy gravity with such grace? Hovering in the air like hummingbirds? How was the corps de ballet able to execute their steps in such perfect unison? How did such beauty come to exist? You didn't see it in the real world, not costumes like that, or lights, or scenery or the seemingly limitless extension of the human body itself.

I was introduced to art, and from that moment on it never left me. Although I dedicated myself to becoming a ballerina, it was not to be. The sheer discipline of the endeavor, the actual pain endured in being "on pointe" was more than I was cut out for. After getting

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## Alexander Opening Statement, Page Two

some good laughs as Long John Silver in a third grade production of Treasure Island. I switched my allegiance to theater. At 14, I went with my class to an Old Vic production of Romeo and Juliet. I was transfixed by the romance of Shakespeare's tale and wondered if I would ever grow up to play Juliet -- did only the British have a lock on theater like this?

I began my search for a life in the theater, one that would allow me to act the great classic plays of the world. At the time, there was virtually only the commercial theater represented by Broadway in New York City and its try outs and tours which visited cities across the United States from time to time. Beyond that, there was community theater where amateurs banded together and, for the love of it, put on plays wherever and however. My dream was to be like the great American actress, Katherine Cornell, and do a play a year on Broadway and then tour that production around the country for a year. But by the time I grew up, that kind of theater had dwindled to almost nothing.

Then in the early 1960s President Kennedy's vision for the arts as a part of everyone's life began to be translated into reality. Congress declared in 1965 that:

"An advanced civilization must not limit its efforts to science and technology alone but must give full value and support to the other great branches of scholarly and cultural activity in order to achieve a better understanding of the past, a better analysis of the present and a better view of the future. Democracy demands wisdom and vision in its citizens. It must therefore foster and support a form of education, and access to the arts and the humanities, designed to make people of all backgrounds and wherever located masters of their technology and not its unthinking servants...."

This was the Declaration of Independence for the Arts and Humanities. Senator Pell was its orchestrator, for which we are all deeply grateful. It legitimized the endeavors of tens of thousands in the creative community and recognized the worth of creative thought made manifest through painting and other visual arts, sculpture, architecture, dance, literature, design, music, opera, theater, film, and folk arts. It confirmed that the arts belong to all people and that art is of the people, by the people, and for the people.

Almost immediately things began to happen, all across the country. With seed money from the Endowment, people took heart and went to work to raise matching funds for small presses, for dance companies, for an opera, for artists to come into their schools, for museums to celebrate and safeguard our heritage.

I experienced first hand the impact of this renaissance in the arts. From Boston's Charles Playhouse, I went to Washington's great Arena Stage. And with the Endowment's help, at the height of the Civil Rights movement, we did a play called The Great White Hope with an interracial company of 63. It was the first from a not-for-profit theater to transfer to

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## Alexander Opening Statement, Page Three

Broadway. The play won a Pulitzer prize for its author, Howard Sackler. James Earl Jones and I moved from the theater to a film version and received Academy Award nominations for our performances.

The impact of the Endowment was not limited to The Great White Hope. Significantly, every single theater Pulitzer Prize since has been awarded to a play that originated in the not-for-profit theater and was funded by the Arts Endowment. I think you will agree that's quite a record!

My first love of theater has continued to this day. This past year I have been performing in The Sisters Rosensweig which began at Lincoln Center, an Endowment-supported arts complex, and transferred to Broadway. Its author Wendy Wasserstein, a Pulitzer Prize winner, was awarded an Endowment fellowship at the beginning of her career.

I have performed in Indiana, in Georgia, in South Carolina, in California -- in more than 20 states across this vast and wonderful land of great diversity and beauty. As Senator Boren has told you, I have taught often in Oklahoma's remarkable Arts Institute -- young people who have never been out of the state but whose commitment and desire to be an artist causes them in fact to be the best I have ever encountered.

I am grateful to have been welcomed and to have felt at home in so many places. The life I have led in the theater, in the world of art, has given so much to me personally -- particularly from Endowment-supported works -- that I wish to give something back.

Perhaps I can make a real contribution at this difficult time. The Endowment has struggled these past few years to keep itself alive and valued in the public eye. In these 28 years, it has awarded 100,000 grants. It has been an unparalleled success, perhaps the most successful of any of the independent Federal agencies. Directly and indirectly, it has affected most artists and arts organizations alive today and created an arts economy of about 6% of the Gross National Product, and over 2 1/2% of our work force. The Endowment's budget is modest in comparison with other government agencies, but with its \$175 million budget last year, it created a 20-fold return in jobs, services and contracts. In partnership with the private sector, it leveraged that \$175 million to almost \$1.4 billion.

With all these accomplishments by the Endowment, how has this success story managed lately to be depicted as a villain? A handful of controversial grants has taken the focus from the thousands upon thousands of grants that have enhanced the lives of millions. I respect the right of people to be heard -- the voices of those who are disturbed by art and the voices of the creative community. This, after all, is the greatness of our democratic system. But the arts should not be used as a political football by those on the far right or the far left. The arts are for everyone. The Endowment is too important to be misused by some who disseminate

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## Alexander Opening Statement, Page Four

misinformation for their own ends or attack the Endowment as a campaign platform.

I believe strongly that the sound and the fury of the past few years over that handful of controversial grants must end. When judging the National Arts Endowment, we must look at the complete picture. Let's give the arts a chance to help us heal and understand one another.

Should the Senate confirm me, I cannot promise that under my Chairmanship the arts will be free of controversy. The very essence of art, after all, is to hold the mirror up to nature; the arts reflect the diversity and variety of human experience. We are, as Hamlet says, "the abstracts and brief chronicles of the time," and as such, the artist often taps into the very issues of society that are most sensitive. I can, however, assure Congress that I will follow the statutory guidelines on funding to the very best of my ability to insure that grants are given for the highest degree of artistic merit and excellence. I will be accountable and look forward to working with Members of Congress. My goal for the arts is that the best reaches the most.

As the President's nominee for Chairman of the Arts Endowment, if confirmed, I intend to let the American people know the truth about the Endowment and the value of the arts in each and every one of their lives. I am committed to making the Endowment a driving force for education. Arts education helps inspire and motivate students, gets them to focus on creative approaches to problem-solving, and frees the imagination.

I also look forward to an enhanced partnership with the private sector, which matches dollar for dollar Endowment grants to arts organizations. I want to work with state arts councils and local agencies to develop new and innovative ways to reach communities everywhere. I hope to travel all across this country to listen to the people about their needs with regard to the arts, from the most rural area to the inner city.

I have a vision for the arts in this country. That vision is that every man, woman, and child find the song in his or her heart. I see the arts as part of the solution to our problems and not, in any way, part of the problem. The arts are life enhancing and bring joy. Through the arts, we release the very best that is in our imaginations, and it is through our imagination that we draw the map for our future. Through the arts we learn the discipline of a skill and the accomplishment that comes with collaboration. The arts are a community issue. They bring together, they do not rend asunder.

Mr. Chairman, I am honored to be considered for this position. It is the culmination of my life in the arts, which has given me much joy. I hope to be able to help provide the people of this country the opportunity to find through the arts some of the richness and joy that I have experienced.

Transcript--Not for Publication

DEMOCRACY AND THE ARTS - FRIENDS OR FOES?

by Garry Wills

Baird Auditorium, Smithsonian Institution

October 5, 1993

Thank you very much. It's nice to be in sunny Washington, having come from not very sunny Chicago.

The arts, we would all like to believe, thrive on freedom and contribute to it, making democracy and the arts natural partners. This should be true, our instinct tells us, since both democracy and the arts depend on free expression. The citizen must speak his or her political opinion in order to be self-ruling, and the artist must go where inspiration takes him or her. There is a mutual stake, then, in liberty. But history is not very supportive of that claim.

Art has a perverse way of thriving in captivity. One could even make an a priori case for shackling the artist to perfect the art. The highest masterpieces were created in the past under conditions we would consider demeaning and debilitating. This is a side of our history that is not given the attention it deserves. And precisely because it is disturbing to our hope that freedom might animate both democracy and the arts, we should take a close look at the political conditions under which great art has been created in the past.

First: Few, if any, would doubt that the Tudor and Stuart ages in England produced great poetry, music, drama, prose. Shakespeare's plays alone would make that time one of the summits of human expression. Yet every play of Shakespeare was subjected to prior censorship of a strict and, what was probably worse, capricious sort. Not only did each play have to be licensed by the political authorities of the time, so did each troupe of players and each house of performance. The actors wore servants' livery, which put them at the disposal of queen or king or nobleman. No one under the rank of baronet could authorize a troupe of players. We normally call Shakespeare's last company the king's men. They were, more properly called in their day, the king's servants. Laws referred to them as "belonging to the lord." Earlier, Shakespeare's company had been Lord Lester's servants, as the head of the company, Richard Burbage, made clear when he petitioned Lester. He said, "Take us as your household servants and daily wagers," wagers meaning attendants. And he begged to wear the servants' livery. When James came to the throne, Shakespeare wore the king's colors as a groom of the chamber and was expected to perform when his company was at court. Even as late as 1603, when he was composing his own greatest masterpieces, he had to learn a major role in Ben Jonson's Sejanus and perform it at a court revel.

Why did players want to wear servants' clothes? Well, for one thing, it protected them when they went out in public, where they faced a checkerboard of local bans on acting at all. When Richard Tarlton and his players got into trouble in the provinces, it helped them that they wore the red coat of Queen Elizabeth's household. Others were chary of attacking the queen's men. Remember how furious King Lear becomes when someone "dares to strike my man." Puritan criticism of players was inhibited when dealing with authorized troupes. We read from them formulas like, "Saving their livery, these actors would be intolerable."

Now, the legal fiction was that household companies had to give some public performances to keep in practice for their main job of entertaining the king or the queen. Naturally, their patrons, whether noble or royal, had to be responsible for these servants, which meant that the players lived with an understanding that they must not embarrass their lord with any offensive matter. That was especially true of the royal companies. In A Midsummer Night's Dream, Philostrate offers Theseus a menu of possible entertainments for the wedding party, including a play of Pyramus. But he says, "I have heard it over, and you do not want to." Philostrate is the master of the revels. He must see or read every performance before it can be put on before a ruler. The same thing was true of Elizabeth's and James's masters of revels. No play could be performed cold before a royal audience.

Now, the right of the master to prior review of all materials at court was expanded in Elizabeth's day to cover all theatrical performances throughout England. This huge authority was spottily exercised at best in the provinces, but it was thoroughly enforced in London and its environs. Before any play could be put on, it must be submitted to the master, who charged a sizable fee for reading it. Then he might give the play a license or put off licensing until revisions were made, when a second reading would call for a second fee, or simply disallow it. In one case of entire disapproval, the master simply burnt the play, but he still took his fee for reading it. Censors not only suggested revisions, but made them, inflicting unmetrical improvements on the verse.

Now, we might wonder, knowing that there's this tremendous censorship going on, why the texts that we have are so bawdy. Did the master not care that all of this dirty stuff was being performed before the queen? Well, in general he didn't. What he really cared about were theological and political opinions expressed in the plays. Those were strictly policed. The queen, and later the king, did not want players stirring up more religious trouble than they already had, and they didn't want players complicating tricky alliances with foreign rulers by insulting references to them or their subjects. Royalty was not to be attacked in the plays, or even nobility, except in carefully screened ways. And, after plays had gone through this whole licensing process, they could still be quashed if they caused any

trouble. Shakespeare's troupe had to stop performing a drama about the Gowrie plot, and we have consequently lost the play.

The penalties for unlicensed plays, or for tampering with a text after the master had approved it, could be severe. They ran to imprisonment, flogging, and mutilation. Playwrights were obviously inhibited a bit, even before they submitted any text to a censor. They did not want to lose their troupe, they did not want their theater to be dissolved, they did not want to make a patron suspect them of being troublemakers. When the queen's majesty's players were suspended for violating the licensing provisions, they had to beg abjectly to be taken back, with promises never to make such a mistake again.

Not only did plays have to be censored beforehand, but dramatists' books as well when they did publish their plays. The master of revels had extended his lucrative licensing operation to these books early in the reign of King James. And here the authorization process had three steps. Omission of any one of them resulted in what was called a disorderly book, one without license or warrant or entrance. The license was given by the master of the revels, then a warden had to legitimate that license with a warrant for publishing the book, and that warrant then had to be entered into the list of the stationer's company to advertise that this book could now be published. The last entry stood for the whole process, so unauthorized books were said to be published without entrance. That is the tortuous procedure that gave us books like the Shakespeare first folio.

Now, those are hard conditions to write under. Flattery of the queen or king was a condition that had to be met frequently--ingratiation to ensure against harsh judgment on touchy matters if they should arise. It was so easy to offend inadvertently when new situations arose at court that one could not risk conscious offense. It was hard enough to make provision for accidental troubles.

Shakespeare was also under implicit censorship by the fellow shareholders in his company. He did not have a free hand to risk their livelihoods. The company was consulted on economic and artistic matters, which often merged. So before he wrote, he and his fellows would have decided what kinds of story are currently popular, what actors are bringing in audiences, and so forth. Then Shakespeare wrote to those specifications.

How, with all that in mind, did Shakespeare manage to write masterpieces? He did. So did Marlowe and Jonson and Chapman and dozens of others. And what is said here of the playwrights could be said just as easily of a court painter in England like Holbein or court musicians like Byrd and Tallis or court historians like Raleigh.

Well, was Shakespearean England unusual in this tremendous censorship? Not at all. It was typical. Other high periods of art tell much the same story.

A painter in the Italian Renaissance lived under restrictions very close to those of a player in Shakespeare's time. The player could not act except in a licensed troupe. The painter could not accept commissions except as part of a guild, whose rules had dictated his training, whose continuing fees were considerable, and which could discipline him in many ways. If a painter from another city tried to work in Florence, he was either prevented by the guild or forced to pay double the local guild's normal fees while, of course, he was still paying his fees back in his own native town. When Ghiberti was given the contract to cast in bronze his great doors for the Florence baptistery, he was not yet a master in the goldsmith's guild, so his father, who was, had to be a co-signer of the contract to keep it within the guild's authority. A patron of sufficient power could, it is true, take an artist out of the guild's control--Pope Paul III did that with Michelangelo--but the captor's grasp was often tighter than the original group's. Michelangelo's tasks were to glorify the Medici in his greatest sculpture series and to glorify the papacy in his greatest painted series. The papal program is spelled out mystically on the Sistine ceiling, a sublime piece of propaganda for the della Rovere pope, whose oak shows up up there, but just as certainly an act of propaganda as Leni Riefenstahl's movies of the 1930s. And what Michelangelo did for Popes Julius and Clement and Paul, Raphael did for Pope Leo X, whose features tend to show up very frequently on the stanze, on the figures of King David and other saints. The artist, that is, was still an artisan in the Renaissance, as the actor was still a groom of the chamber in Shakespeare's day.

Even the prickly Leonardo had to trail around behind Cesare Borgia as his hired expert on fortifications. Commissions to artists spelled out the subject matter to be treated, the materials to be used and what they will cost, and the right to reject or change the work if it proved unsatisfactory to the patron. In 1436, Paolo Uccello had to efface a fresco he was working on because it did not please the owner of the wall. Payment could be refused, and artists could even be sued and have to pay the patron, instead of vice versa, if he broke the contract, if he delivered something that was not ordered. The patrons could dictate working terms to the artists. The organization that commissioned the baptistery doors from Ghiberti stipulated in a follow-up agreement that he must "work every working day, all day, with his own hands" to prevent him from turning over any significant part of the task to assistants. He would be penalized for any attempt to shirk this requirement, and a commission of three men was appointed to oversee his work and make sure this clause was fulfilled. Those powerful enough to impose such draconian provisions were usually grandes of church estate or influential lay confraternities or religious orders. Not surprisingly, then, most Renaissance art is a glorification of rulers and ruling families and monasteries and churches which had the power to contract for these works.

Now, it would be easy to pursue this theme through the

whole of European life at a time when the church and/or royal families were the principal patrons. Whatever art displeased them tended not to get created or could be destroyed when it did, and books were just as vulnerable as paintings. The humanities were under the same discipline as the arts. Universities and academies had to be authorized by lay or clerical power holders, who could prevent books from being written or published or circulated. In fact, much of European history looks like a passing of the torch back and forth among zealous partisans, Catholics burning Protestant work, Protestants burning Catholic work, Christians burning Jewish works, Massachusetts authorities destroying Quaker books or sometimes Quakers. It was a continual bonfire of the verities.

This repressive tradition comes farther down to us than we tend to remember and reaches farther back. Verdi's operas in the nineteenth century ran a gauntlet of censors and had to be cut, altered, or withdrawn according to the rules of each theater's locale. The licensing of plays in England continued right through the 1960s. All of Shaw's plays were pre-censored, just as Shakespeare's had been. And if we go back to Roman antiquity, Ramsey McMullen tells us how nervously what he calls the enemies of the Roman order were spotted and silenced. Cremutius, for instance, the historian, had his volumes burnt before he was forced to commit suicide.

Art not in service was generally not acceptable. The Emperor Augustus's great program of reform had a propaganda agenda that Virgil conformed to just as closely as Michelangelo did to the della Rovere ideology. Most of the art in Europe's past deferred to reigning dogma.

Now, that's a pretty grim picture, and one looks around hoping there's at least one exception, and one is often offered--what of ancient Athens, the first great democracy and a home of high art?

The Greeks treasured freedom of expression--not only free speech--isegoria--but rash speech--parrhesia--untrammelled in ways that can shock us even today. Aristophanes, the great comic dramatist, buried his day's politicians in avalanches of verbal filth. He mocked the government. He called gods ludicrous. He used obscenities that make Shakespeare's bawdy look amateur, as if the great Elizabethan were not really trying, so that when we read that a comic rival, Cratinus, managed to crowd in even more dirty stuff than Aristophanes, we wonder how on earth he could have done that. And remember that Shakespeare's theater was secular, but Aristophanes flung out his bawdy lines in the middle of a religious ceremony presided over by a priest of Dionysus sitting in the front row right on the edge of the orchestra.

Those plays were part of a ritual that began with the religious procession, with one of those incredibly messy sacrifices of various animals that made Athenian civic life so pungent. The serene Acropolis we visit today was once the site

of sacred butchery on a huge scale, making the rocks slippery with blood. In the theater itself, on a slope of the Acropolis, where Aristophanes' plays were acted, the dancing precinct had just been purified before the plays were put on with the blood of a slaughtered kid. And since the actors were the gods' celebrants, they could not be interfered with during the days of the ceremony. The Athenians did not, that is, regard the Dionysiac contests, dithyrambian in tragedy as well as comedy, as optional entertainments but as necessary rites enjoined on them by divine oracles to be celebrated with flutes and dancing and much blood on specified holy days.

So, holy cow, why all this dirty talk at a religious ceremony? Why, for that matter, those monstrous phalluses worn by some of the choruses and actors?

Religion is itself the reason. Artificial phalluses show up mainly in religious contexts as on the herms that stood by each private residence, phallus projecting outward. The roughhousing, filthy-mouthed activities of comedy were service to Dionysus. As the chorus says in Aristophanes' Frogs, comic mocking takes place in the time-honored rituals of Dionysus. In other words, the scatological irreverence is an act of carnival, which means that it is not simply allowed but required. It also means that it was divorced from everyday life. That explains, in part at least, how the city could elect Cleon to lead it in the same year that a representative panel of judges, chosen by lot from all tribes, gave Aristophanes the first prize for a play, The Nights, that savaged Cleon mercilessly. We may get a distant sense of those two acts occurring together but on different levels of meaning if we think of a modern celebrity roast, where speakers are not only encouraged but required to insult the honoree, the more hyperbolically, the better. In the case of Athenian comedy, then, free speech was less a secular civic right than a religious injunction.

But even outside their theater, Athenians seem very speculative and free to us. They entertain daring hypotheses about the gods in ways that would be considered heretical to most later societies. Yet heresy was impossible in Athens. You cannot have unorthodox opinions when you have no orthodoxy, no creed. Athenians were latitudinarian about religious views because they did not matter much. What mattered was religious practice, the rituals that filled Attic life at all levels. Cult was important, because it had concrete effects. Cult neglected, improperly performed, performed before the wrong audience, revealed to the wrong people, brought divine displeasure. Say what you will of the gods, but do what they enjoin.

The greatest American classicist, Basil Lanneau Gildersleeve, said the fifth-century Athenian did not really have a separately formed set of grammatical categories. Any errors of syntax were simply mispronunciations. In the same way, there was no heresy, just ceremonial defect.

Religious practice, then, had more resemblance to magic than to theology. What was at issue were things like pollution--miasma--and cleansing--katharmos. These were omnipresent in Greek life--for instance, in the rule of the fifth century that murderers could not be tried in the regular courts because that would involve entering the agora and contaminating the whole city. In fact, weapons or dumb animals, say a donkey that stumbled and killed someone, could be put on trial. They were tainted with the unholy deed and could taint others. Found guilty, sword or donkey was cast out from Attic soil. That shows how little opinion or motive had to do with acts of objective piety or impiety.

So, all of Attic life was saturated in the state religion, something we can judge partly from the Panatheniac festival memorialized in the frieze from the Parthenon. Here, all the resources of the city went into song, festival, sacrifice, spectacle, steaming altars, virgins with holy water, naked young men on horseback. It was an orgy of patriotic celebration to make a Nuremberg rally seem like a faculty meeting. And much of the art that we admire so comes down from that and related ceremonies.

So, even Athens did not have freedom of the arts as we, at least, understand that concept. Its art, too, was in service to power. It celebrated gods and the native population, what we would call church and state, but they didn't have those categories yet, just as Shakespeare's troupe celebrated the royal power that held it in economic submission or as Ghiberti, Donatello, and Uccello did the will of their noble ecclesiastic patrons. Nonetheless, great art was produced.

Does that mean that the arts do not need freedom, or that we might be doing a favor to artists by shackling them? I don't resemble Shakespeare in the slightest, but even I could resemble him in one way, by submitting to a constant and intrusive censorship. Is that the real lesson of this quick historical survey? As you may suspect, that's not what I am here to recommend. But neither do I think we should support art as somehow democratic by its very nature.

Against this background of variously fettered arts in the past, I would like to make just four points about support for the arts and the humanities in America.

First, the obvious: The fact that art could be created under repressive conditions is not an argument for repressive conditions. Some individuals have written beautifully from jail cells. That's no reason to throw people into jail, hoping for a masterpiece. Suffering can deepen an artist's work, which does not give us license to inflict suffering. How circumstances affect an artist's creativity will always be a mystery, but there's no mystery about the evil of repression, even for a supposedly good cause.

Second: Why have democracy and the arts so rarely met in history? Because one of them was absent most of the time. Democracy is a rare and late development. Even the apparent exception, Athens, was a limping democracy at best, with a citizenry restricted to native-born male freemen in constant service to a cult state. And even that limited experiment was vilified throughout the succeeding centuries.

Democracy in the modern sense begins in the late eighteenth century with the United States of America. How can I make this patriotic boast? After all, America had slaves, too, at the outset. We, too, denied the vote to women for most of our history. But we did something whose importance to intellectual freedom cannot be overstated. We separated the state from religion, an original move in history, one of the few truly original political acts.

All the regimes I have been considering, including Athens, consecrated art to the celebration of conjoined secular and religious power. That was as true of a Gothic cathedral as of a Greek acropolis. It was true of any Renaissance palazzo pubblico. All of them had their patron saints, their altars, chapels, priests, and their artists celebrating all of the above. Basic agreement was secured by incorporation of the citizens into a religious community which prayed to the official god or cluster of gods. That is something we cannot, by our Constitution, have. Even if we wanted to, we could not give governmental support to arts that celebrate an established religion. Some predicted this would result in disunity and the dissolving of that moral fellowship on which community action depends. But, in fact, religion has flourished in America, and so has the secular state--far more than in countries with state religions. Not that we have lived up even now to the full separation Madison and Jefferson envisaged. The nonestablishment clause was so new, so shocking to some, that Americans have always doubted that the words really mean what they say. Still, we have implemented this part of the Constitution progressively over the years. And the lack of a religious orthodoxy sets the standard for freedom of thought in all areas. This is a radically new situation in the history of governments.

So, third: The question then arises, can art survive without the largely religious state support it had in the past? One answer might be, religion is making it on its own. Why can't art? Nonsupport for religion has worked. Let's try nonsupport for the arts. But the latter restriction is not only not in the Constitution, as the first one was, it was never envisaged by the founders. George Washington, in his first annual message to Congress, urged the legislators to act for "the promotion of science and literature," and suggested as one, but not the only way of doing this, the formation of a national college.

The art of the old regimes, though it was intended primarily to glorify religious and state authority, also gave the people aesthetic satisfaction. The sacred holidays and festivals

were entertaining, relaxing, uplifting, and we do not have to lose those effects of the arts just because we have cut off ideological, theological patronage. Our government works for the good of its citizens in many areas, physical and intellectual and spiritual. Aesthetic satisfaction is an important element in civic pride, intellectual stimulation, mutual enlightenment, the exchange of ideas. The schools the government supports would be inadequate if they did not include aesthetic training. Even good prose is more than correct grammar. It involves artistic elements such as euphony or rhetorical force or refinement. Our cities are meant to reflect more than mere utility, our national parks are sources of aesthetic as well as hygienic benefit. A critic might, I suppose, object that one can encourage aesthetic satisfaction in the schools without paying artists to provide objects of aesthetic satisfaction. That could be done, perhaps, but it would be like hopping on one leg all the time--very strenuous, tiring, and confusing.

Nonetheless, point four: What warrant has our government for supporting the arts? If we turn from Washington, the first president under the Constitution, to the Constitution itself, we find a clause in that document not often given very close attention, which tells us interesting things about the framers' values. Ralph Brown of the Yale Law School pointed this out to me many years ago. In itself, all that this clause does is authorize Congress to issue patents and copyrights. But it does so in an odd way. Section 8 of the first article grants various powers to Congress, listing them in a standard way. Each power is stated in an infinitive: to regulate commerce, to coin money, to establish post offices, to declare war. In the middle of this run of infinitives is the patent and copyright clause, Clause 8, where we expect this: to secure for limited times to authors and inventors the exclusive right to their respective writings and discoveries. That would be clear in its purpose. But the authors did not think it sufficient. The actual power granted in this case, and in this case only, is stated in an instrumental subordinate phrase using the gerund: Congress is to do something "by securing for a limited time to authors and inventors," etc. If the power granted is put in the instrumental phrase, what was important enough to precede it in the infinitive? Not the bestowal of a specific authority matching other items in the list, but this: "To promote the progress of science and the useful arts by securing the rights of authors and discoverers." This is not just a power to act, like the power to declare war; it is the statement of a goal achievable by the specific powers mentioned. This infinitive, in other words, resembles those from the preamble that state the aims of the document: to promote the general welfare or to secure the blessings of liberty. In fact, the copyright clause has a kind of mini-preamble inside the body of the Constitution, and it's the only clause that has that. It follows up and makes specific the general preamble's words, "to promote the general welfare." One way of promoting the general welfare is to promote the progress of the arts. It is interesting as well that in a document devoted to rights and powers, this is the only use in the body of the Constitution

itself of the term "right"--secure the rights of the authors and discoverers.

If it is said that only authors and only useful arts are mentioned in the instrumental phrase, one can make three answers to that. First, the infinitive statement of a goal goes beyond the specification of the means, as Washington's use of language, very like that of the mini-preamble, "promotion of science and literature," recommends the founding of a national college. Second, the fine arts were useful arts in eighteenth-century theory, articulated by Shaftesbury, Hutchinson, Kames, Hume, and others, since the aesthetic sense was closely allied with the moral sense. Third, our courts quickly and uncontroversially decided that copyright covers not only inventions and literature, but music, the graphic arts, dance, and all creative artifacts. So, our government is expressly commissioned to protect the citizens' rights to the benefits of artistic creativity, and to do this by laws protecting the artist. Yet the mini-preamble goes beyond the protection of the individual concerned, to the encouragement of the arts themselves of their progress.

So, if it can encourage the arts in this way, why not in others? The government is not ruled away from this as it is from the support of religion. What the founders did was take the old religious and artistic patronage and split it in two, ruling out government activity for religion but expressly not ruling out support for the arts. That is the meaning of the eighth clause in the eighth section of Article I, to be contrasted with the First Amendment, which guarantees free exercise of religion, but not government encouragement for any progress of it. The arts, in other words, deserve government support, not because there is approved natural interdependence of fine arts and free government. The aim is not to promote democracy but to promote the arts. That's a legitimate goal of the government stated in the Constitution. They are goals in themselves, and a democracy need not deprive people of them just because we have removed regime-boosting forms of patronage.

All kinds of autocratic regimes have had great artistic achievement. That does not mean that a democracy must lack them. In fact, in our relatively new form of government, with its daring disestablishment of religion, it is a challenge for us, and should be a satisfaction, to show just what the new kid on the historical block can do. We can support the arts without imposing a governmental agenda on them. We can break the old rules, including those that made the arts depend on cardinals and princes. It is a task we should welcome, as we welcome the unheard-of, up to then, separation of government from divine sanction of cult.

Art was not free in the past, however great it was. Even if art were to be less great among us, we would still demand that it be free. And we may in the process demonstrate that there's no historical necessity for sacrificing greatness. Some, after all, said religion could not flourish separated from the state.

We have disproved that. We may be doing the same thing with the arts. Our experiment is still young.

Hilton Kramer, in the current issue of his journal New Criterion, deplors the current politicization of art and summons us back to the serene upper air of high art above politics. What? Above politics? Which art: the ideologically programmed Acropolis at Athens? Louis IX's cathedrals? Pope Julius's Vatican with its papal propaganda on the ceiling? Elizabeth's court with her reined-in dramatists? Charles IV's Escorial decorated by the royal painter Goya? Whitehall with its Rubens' paintings to glorify the Stuarts? Napoleon's imperial regime with its director of the arts, Jacques Louis David? High art was born and lived most of its life as the acolyte of political power, as the slave of politics. When in America the artist expresses the humanity of the nonpowerful, of the immigrant, of the aliens who arrived here, of people once enslaved by politics, this is called politicizing art. It is the opposite. It is an art not speaking from the courts of privilege but to them.

Mr. Kramer's complaint reminds me of one made in his magazine by his colleague, Roger Kimball, that modern art has been sullied by the introduction of gender as a concern. No gender was there before, because it was all one gender. For women to speak on their own, not solely to be the subject of male artistry, is not to introduce gender into the arts, but to counter the monopoly of one gender. We have broken a political stranglehold, not imposed one.

So our art, unlike art patronized by kings and cardinals, will not speak with one voice, support one orthodox agenda. Even if that were to mean sacrificing the benefits of order and control, we would be compelled by our own principles to make the sacrifice. We will not have a slave state, even if that means we will have no Phidias. We will not have a papal ideal of government, even if that means we shall have no Raphael. We will not have the government censoring plays, even if that means we must lack a Shakespeare. I do not think that's the case.

I put it as the extreme hypothesis to make it clear that, even if one did grant such an outcome, our choice would be determined by democracy itself. If freedom is by some mysterious chance detrimental to art, then artists will learn to get around that difficulty, as they got around all the other difficulties thrown up before them by repressive regimes in the past. I don't think that outcome is a given. I think we are still engaged in something so new, so unsettling to past connections, that there is no telling what will be accomplished by our arts as by our free religion and our free secular state.

I ask then, at the end, is current art political? Not as it was in the past. Ours is political only as Americans understand the politics of a pluralist and secular society, one that welcomes dissent, free expression, and, yes, turmoil. Only police states need to fear that.

Thank you.

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## Questions and Answers

I'm asked to take questions, which I'm happy to do, but I don't know if I can see you unless the house lights go up a little bit. Good. Well, if anyone will raise their hand, I'll try to repeat the question because there's no mikes out there in the room out there. Any hands?

**Question** (repeated by Garry Wills): Do I have any problem with the fact that Arthur Miller, who once belonged to the Communist Party, is going to be given a Medal of Art.

**Wills:** I was down speaking at the University of Virginia earlier this year, and so was Gorbachev, and a number of people said that he should not be allowed to speak at Jefferson's university about freedom, since he had been the enemy of freedom. St. Augustine, who was a Manichaeian and an academic and a sinner of all kinds, did okay when the orthodox church accepted him, so I think we should hope that everybody will repent.

**Question** (repeated by Garry Wills): What went wrong with the censorship machinery when the Essex plot had Shakespeare's company put on the play Richard the Second?

**Wills:** That play had been licensed. It involves the deposing of the king, as you know. And the troupe did not submit it for relicensing because the Essex plotters wanted to commission a special performance for them. It was in the public theater, but it was in the nature of a private performance because they were paid a patron's fee rather than the box-office toll. The troupe did not know that it was part of a plot, that they were trying to encourage the idea of deposing royalty, so they were not punished. They were told to keep that damn play off the boards, but they were not punished. A lot depended on your patron. You could get away with certain things if you had a powerful patron. But, even so, you had to be very careful. One of the plays that submitted to the master of revels has a section of it that most people think was written by Shakespeare's own hand to improve the prospects of the play passing by the censor because it had been turned down before. Everybody got censored in one way or another.

Jonson and Chapman got censored especially frequently. Jonson became so subservient, Ben Jonson, to royalty, attacking the Catholics with special vengeance to prove that he was no longer a Catholic--see, he was allowed to repent too--that he was actually in line to become the master of revels and censor all his fellow playwrights, but he died before he could take office. So, it was a very tricky thing, what was acceptable and what was unacceptable in the climate of the moment.

And Shakespeare's troupe got into trouble at least several times. One is the Gowrie plot time that I mentioned, and the other is Richard the Second. But they were very cautious. There is very little in Shakespeare that a censor would get upset at, which makes it very strange, it seems to me, that the talk now among literary analysts of Shakespeare is all about subversion

and how he's secretly carrying on a war with power, and he's mocking the queen and the king. Well, if that's the case, you have to assume that the master of revels was uniformly stupid, and there's nothing that would indicate that. It's people wanting Shakespeare to be freer of power than he was.

Question: (Inaudible.)

Wills: No. What the government cannot do is support established religion or promote religion. But in the granting of freedom of free speech to people, obviously, if people want to be free to speak about religion, then that's part of the First Amendment, too. Nat Hentoff is very good on this, it seems to me, whatever his other views. He has uniformly attacked people who tried to say that, because there is no established religion, people can't talk about religion in the schools or read the Bible or anything of that sort. And he said they forget there are a lot of things in that First Amendment, and free speech is one of them, free opinion. If you think... One of the cases he gave was of a student who got up and gave a commencement address and said the most important thing in life is her religion. Well, some people wanted to censure her and say this was the introduction, this was the protection of religion. What was she supposed to do? Lie? Say, "The most important thing in my life is my tennis shoes"? Freedom of expression allows you to have opinions about religion as about everything.

Question (repeated by Garry Wills): The question was, doesn't art make people more moral in the sense of more sensitive and humane?

Wills: Then the Marquis de Sade was not an artist, I guess. I know a lot of moral people who are not artists, and vice versa. Ideally, of course, in a platonic world in which human excellence is a single thing and advances uniformly on all fronts, intellectual excellence would also be moral excellence. In fact, Plato tried to argue that that was the case. But I think you and I come up against many experiences of brilliant scoundrels that seem to undermine that. There are certain spiritual qualities, I think, that art brings into people's lives. Whether that results in a net improvement in their morals is problematic. At any rate, people who have tried to advance art as a way of improving people's morals have not been very successful, and that's why I would not want us to try to advance arts in order to make democracy more strong and powerful. Those are kind of tenuously connected things. Either the arts are good and should be supported, or they're not. That should be the question. They shouldn't be good because, if we expose people to the arts, they will become saints or become model democrats or anything of that sort. They will be better people because they will be open to one part of life.

Question (repeated by Garry Wills): She would like to know more about the eighteenth-century notion of the useful arts.

Wills: The eighteenth century had a kind of mechanics of human psychology. Diderot and the encyclopedists were leaders in this--so were the Scots, so, in some measure, was Locke--that the

human mechanism vibrates in response to other human mechanisms. And we do this through compassion and fellow feeling, which in one sense is the moral sense, in another sense is the aesthetic sense. Cocteau had a wonderful metaphor. He said that artists and human beings in general are like the famed Stradivarius in a certain town. Whenever any other Stradivarius played in that town, it would resonate and give out the ghostly tune. Well, that's the way many people in the eighteenth century conceived morality, that by empathy with each other, we learn to treat each other well. And there was usually a kind of physical basis for this, which is what made it attractive to Jefferson, who was a committed materialist. As you know, he did not believe there was such a thing as spirit, so everything was based in the body. And this body resonating in sympathy to other bodies was a concept that was very important to him.

Question (repeated by Garry Wills): The question is, if federal funds go to arts that upset the community, that's criticized, whereas in journalism, if the government tried to support journalism, it would be considered a co-optive move, buying off the community.

Wills: Well, that in a way does put the problem. If the only art that the government can support is government-supported art, we've circled back into the old kind of patronage that existed in the past. We have not lived up to the originality of our Constitution, it seems to me. If the government support of arts has to have some qualitative measure, it can't be governmental, it seems to me. We should not be buying artists to boost the regime, for all kinds of reasons. It's very hard in a democracy because the regime shifts all the time. If you go down that line, you would end up saying a Democratic administration will hire artists to boost the Democratic administration, Republican will do it for Republican, and that's the way it was always done in the past. Cardinal Riario bought his artist to celebrate himself and to promote his career and get him into the papacy, along with other acts, like bribery.

But it seems to me the only thing you can do to support the arts in a free community in which you're not buying regime boosting, is to let qualified artists, those who are credentialed by their fellows, by some record, by some standing, decide what are worthy projects. And, of course, that's what we do in the academy, for instance. People are credentialed in the academy, more formally, perhaps, than in the arts, but in a way that's not much different, especially since now the arts and the academy and the humanities all overlap so terribly. But in general, for instance, when the government is accrediting schools and it says, we will not accredit schools that teach creationism because accredited scientists, ones who are respected by their peers for their knowledge of science, who have a track record, who have produced scientific work which works--I know people who have come up with concepts that have been proved--those people will decide it. It's not that the government should decide that, it seems to me. You should not elect a president who will become the arbiter of what is good science, whether evolution or creationism. So, whenever you have an arts that has a certain integrity of its

own, as opposed, say, to journalism, which is reporting on the government, which is perhaps an adversary, but nonetheless a dancing partner to the government, that's an entirely different situation.

I don't know if that's an adequate answer because it's a complex and interesting question. Is there some other angle I should try? I know it's hard to argue with Jim.

Anyone else?

**Question (repeated by Garry Wills):** To what extent was abstract expressionism influenced by the rise in democracy in America?

**Wills:** Well, they were not chronologically very close, for one thing, for democracy arose a long time before that. Art reflects all of the society, but it also reflects oppositional strains within the society. We can do that in a way that Shakespeare couldn't. He couldn't get away with being critical of the parts of society that the authorities of society would rather have accepted without criticism. I don't know. I don't want to go into any one school of art. As I say, all art reflects the society around it in various ways, but I don't think there's a deterministic pattern that democracy must produce abstract expressionism. It doesn't work that way, I don't think, but I'm not an artist.

**Question (repeated by Garry Wills):** Yes. Did you get that? I gave many male examples of artists, and isn't there a revisionist view that would try to find some female artists back in the past, too?

**Wills:** Of course there is, and that reflects the more important thing, that now women are free in the arts world in a measure that never existed before in anything like the current scale. I used male artists because generally it was impossible for a female to become an artist. They were not admitted in the guilds; they were not admitted in the religious companies in Athens which produced most of the arts; they were not admitted in most academies. It was considered evil to have a woman looking at a male nude in the academic studio. So it's true that there were exceptions--Angelica Kaufman and others--and they deserve a special credit because they went so much against the grain, but they were mainly male in the past because their patrons were mainly male. It was the church, it was the royal succession. A lot of the church art had to be done by people who went into cloisters and painted there, and women couldn't do that, not even nuns. So, it was a repressive regime. That's what I was trying to emphasize.

**Question:** You said that plays were still being licensed in the '60s in England. "Banned in Boston" is a relatively recent phrase also. What's the difference?

**Wills:** Banned in Boston was something that was brought against specific works of art. The city council... It was not a general censorship. Every play that went on in Boston was not read ahead of time by a censor and passed. Things that acquired an evil reputation were banned in Boston--Mencken's magazine, in

one famous instance--not every issue of it, but one issue which had a specific article that was considered immoral. But in England, every play had to be licensed by the censor, in the most restrictive way. I was talking just recently to Jules Pfeiffer, who put on his play--"Little Murders," is it?--in 1967, and the licenser, the government official, took out every use of the word "shit"--that cut the play in half, you know--and all kinds of things. And Pfeiffer went and tried to defend this, saying, "Well, it's played everywhere. It's played in Boston," but he couldn't do it. So, as recently as 1967, every play had this prior censorship, so that plays about homosexuality, for instance, were not allowed, simply not allowed. And language, dirty language was simply not allowed. England has a puritan tradition that has survived extraordinarily energetically in, for instance, something like the licensing hours of their pubs being closed off and on and off and on all day long. But that's an interesting thing. There certainly was censorship in Boston and in other cities. Baltimore had a censors' board for movies and that kind of thing. But England, the censorship of the theater went from Henry VIII to Queen Elizabeth II. That's a pretty long time to have one regime last, one discipline.

Thank you.

John Hope Franklin  
NEH Brown Bag Lunch, Old Post Office Pavilion  
October 6, 1993

**Sheldon Hackney:** I want to say only a brief word by way of appreciation to Professor Franklin for coming to share some of his ideas with us today. This is the first of these occasions that I have had a chance to attend. I think there are going to be many more in which we learn a bit more about the humanities. And it is a great pleasure to me and, I think, appropriate that John Hope Franklin be the first guest at one of these. If you've been following the writings of George Frederickson and others trying to figure out why he is such a major figure in the world of history, you will live a real pleasure. I will not repeat any of that.

I happen to share professional interests with Dr. Franklin, so have known his work for a long, long time. We have a lot of friends in common and an acquaintanceship that goes back a long way. I will say merely that he is... There are two people in the profession of history that I respect absolutely ultimately, and that is C. Van Woodward and John Hope Franklin, and it is no surprise that they are close friends themselves. John Hope Franklin represents what is absolutely best about the community of scholars. He is the embodiment of the ethos of the community of scholars, not only because he has contributed so much through his own work to American history and the history of African Americans and the history of the South, which is, I suppose, his major field, but in teaching us all how to do that with grace, how to disagree with others in a way that advances the cause of truth, and how to keep the community of scholars working together. So it is a real pleasure for me to be here with Professor Franklin.

**Michael Lanza:** John Hope Franklin is a distinguished man. He's internationally recognized as a distinguished scholar of American history. In his highly regarded work, he has written about people who have been neglected in the past, primarily Americans from the southern part of the United States, both black and white. Among his path-breaking works are The Free Negro of North Carolina, The Militant South, George Washington Williams, and Reconstruction After the Civil War, which began a complete revision of the history of that period. From Slavery to Freedom: The History of Negro Americans is still the standard work in the field. First published over 45 years ago, it is now in its sixth edition and has been translated into several languages. Professor Franklin just told me that the seventh edition is well on its way. In 1990, Race and History appeared, a collection of Professor Franklin's essays over the past 50 years. His most recent work is The Color Line: Legacy for the 21st Century. His current research on runaway slaves, which he will discuss today, was supported by a grant from the Endowment.

Professor Franklin's contributions to scholarship have been recognized in many ways. He holds nearly 100 honorary degrees and has been president of the United Chapters of Phi Beta Kappa and all the major historical organizations.

John Hope Franklin's scholarly achievements have not been detached from his commitments to the American people. He worked on the historic Brown v. Board of Education decision, served on the National Council on the Humanities, and in the bicentennial year of 1976, he was chosen the Jefferson Lecturer in the humanities. Tomorrow, he will be honored once again by the Endowment with the Frankel Award.

John Hope Franklin is also a distinguished teacher. He has taught at North Carolina Central University, Howard University, Brooklyn College, the University of Chicago, and Duke University. He has also lectured around the world--in England, the former Soviet Union, Australia, India, Africa, and China. I happen to know that John Hope Franklin is a distinguished teacher; I was one of his students. His model for scholarship and teaching is enviable and sets the standard.

John Hope Franklin always had two phrases to pound into my head. He used to say to me, "You haven't lived," when referring to something wonderful he had done and I hadn't. For example, he would ask, "Have you had Chef Austin Leslie's red beans and rice in New Orleans?" "No." "You haven't lived." The other phrase was, "You should treat me with more respect."

I don't know why Professor Franklin thought that I was a precocious, sometimes troublesome graduate student and research assistant. But this opportunity to introduce him today allows me to pay him the respect he deserves. May I present a distinguished scholar, public servant, and teacher, John Hope Franklin.

**John Hope Franklin:** Thank you very much to both the Chairman and Michael.

I was afraid that Michael was going to tell you something else that he used to insist upon when he was my research assistant, and I was doing research on George Washington Williams, and I suggested the title of it. He said, "Why don't you call that George Washington Williams by Michael Lanza as told to John Hope Franklin?" I resisted that, but I must publicly acknowledge my great indebtedness to him not only in the work he did in connection with George Washington Williams, but in connection with one or two of those revisions in From Slavery to Freedom, which I now call The New Slavery, anyway, and in so many other ways he was a kind of an ideal research assistant.

I'm thinking of a story that Henry Mencken wrote some years ago. It had to do with trying to organize a group of beggars who were in great need of a real meal, and the story goes he invited them all to a Christmas dinner. But after they straggled in off the streets--these homeless men--and sat down to the meal, then he forced them to confess their sins and to tell how laggard they'd been, how derelict they were, and he made them feel so humble that they had been brought to their senses and perhaps then were worthy of the meal.

As a former Jefferson Lecturer and a former recipient of very generous research fellowships from the National Endowment for the Humanities, and a former member of the Council, I feel now to drag me in here and to make me sing for my lunch is not unlike those hapless chaps in Mencken's story.

I do want to talk to you a little about the sort of thing I've been working on even before the NEH was so generous in support of this research, that is about what I call dissidents on the plantation, runaway slaves. I was always troubled as I read histories of slavery, histories of the South--I was always troubled by the way in which slaves were depicted by essayists, novelists, and, yes, even historians. They described them as impervious, indifferent, to the most precious thing that this country was offering, and that was freedom. The patriots were fighting for freedom, Patrick Henry was jumping up saying, "Give me liberty or give me death." Thomas Jefferson was speaking of it in the Declaration of Independence, so that particular provision or statement was drawn before it was issued. There were in later years the rewards held out to people who were slaves if they promised that they would do better or if they had performed some meritorious service, they were set free. And so freedom was held up as the ideal, most cherished gift that one could have in this country. Those blacks that were free were not allowed to associate with slaves, suggesting once more that somehow slaves would be contaminated with the virus of freedom if they so much as associated with blacks who were not slaves. And there were a whole variety of experiences and activities that people went through from day to day which indicated how very important and how wonderful slavery was. But in the face of this, so many of our historians and novelists and essayists were describing slaves as happy and content and obsequious and servile and stupid. Their desire to remain slaves was proof of their denseness and their stupidity.

I never could quite understand that, especially in view of the fact that there was this tension between slavery and freedom, and it was acknowledged by all. I couldn't understand it, either, because at specific moments when white Americans felt that they could celebrate freedom and exalt it, blacks reminded them that, if it's so good, it ought to be for everybody. The blacks told the patriots in the 1770s that very thing, and all through the nineteenth century down to the Civil War, blacks, in their conventions and their various utterances and in their newspapers and in their all-too-seldom revolts, they told them that freedom was for them as well as for others.

And, so, I wanted to know more about this tension, this contradiction, and I wanted to test the validity, indeed the veracity, of those who claimed that slaves were happy in slavery. And one of the things that compelled me to do this was that, as I did research on the northern South and southern odyssey books--not about blacks but about white people--one thing that struck me as I read the newspapers of the antebellum period was that the newspapers were crammed full of advertisements for runaway slaves, and I had to take notice of that in view of my earlier skepticism. And it became clear to me that this was an important

manifestation of a conduct that was not commonly and universally admitted by historians and others.

The most honest statement and description of what slaves were about can be found in the advertisements after they had absconded. It's in these that one can find the most graphic and accurate physical descriptions. Now, if a slave runs away, a man is not going to be romantic about his appearance. He's going to tell you precisely how he looked as well as he can remember it. He will tell you what complexion he was, he will tell you what height he was, what was his weight. He will give you clues regarding his personality--"He had a hang-down look," or "He wouldn't look you in the eye," or "He was aggressive," or "He was evasive," "He was cunning," or "He was clever," "He was sly," or "He was quick to answer questions," or "He was slow to answer questions"--all of these things. One can find also a great deal about his abilities or her personal resources, their occupation, the level of literacy--amazing how many could read and write--what their duties were on the plantation, what skills they had acquired, the kinds of things they might do, the kinds of trade they might try if they were able to pass themselves off as free persons, and those who were likely to have forged free passes and were making their way across the country posing as free people.

One also found speculations on the part of the owner as to what the motives were that impelled the slave to run away. There was the fear of being sold. The owner had found, even after the slave ran away, that the slave had been stealing, and therefore that might be a motive for his, the fear of being punished. And perhaps even more important was the desire to find their loved ones that had been sold away from them. It might be a husband, it might be a wife, it might be a child, but of course gentlemen slaves did not separate families, they said. And I found stacks in the county records, in various parts of the country--I found stacks of bills of sale of children, six, eight, ten years old, sold away from their parents. And this was frequently a cause of slaves running away, or at least in the advertisements the planters speculated that a reason for their running away perhaps was that their children had been sold down the river or somewhere else.

One also found that they were following the examples of those blacks who were free. They were running away into free black communities, and one necessarily did not run from Richmond, Virginia, to Philadelphia. One might run from Richmond, Virginia, to Fredericksburg, Virginia, or vice versa. Or one might run from Raleigh, North Carolina, to Greensboro, North Carolina, but these were considerable free black communities. And if you ran hard enough and fast enough and you got to that community, you'd slow down and act like you had always been there, and you could be free just by your conduct, and with the cooperation of those who would surround you.

So, running away becomes an important activity, too important to the runaway himself to defend or to trust others to

carry it on for him. Now, one gets into rather shaky ground here, and no one admires Harriet Tubman more than I do. But for every Harriet Tubman who theoretically organized groups of slaves and conducted them to freedom, there was that single slave who didn't know anybody, didn't know anywhere to go, but knew he didn't want to be where he was, and he left. He did not follow the gourd vine, he did not know about the underground railroad, he did not even know about the North Star, but he knew that if he left Montgomery and followed the Alabama River, the direction in which his wife had gone, he might get to Mobile or even New Orleans and find her. And so, this becomes an important activity, and it's a reflection on the stability or the instability of the plantation organization.

So they ran in any and all directions. They ran from one village to another, from one county to another, and from one city to another. The substantial increase in the numbers of free blacks between, say, 1800 and 1860 can be accounted for to a large extent through their running away. And that number was increasing in the South very significantly, as indeed it was in the North. Don't think that Philadelphia or New York City are the only communities where free blacks are increasing in number. They're increasing in New Orleans and Richmond and Montgomery and Raleigh and Richmond and even Fredericksburg, increasing all over.

Now, the likelihood of their going North is, I will argue, rather slight. They were not familiar with the North, and the North was unknown except to a relatively small number to whom had been communicated the promises of the North by conductors of the underground railroad, but those themselves were few in numbers. So I would argue that the likelihood of going South was at least as great as the likelihood of going North. And it was in the southern direction that slaves came to be known as habitual runaways. The state of Virginia that was selling its slaves south more than it was selling them in any other direction, obviously, had a printed form to assure the prospective buyers that the slaves were (1) in good health, (2) in good faith and in good mind and sound mind, and (3) that they were not habitual runaways. That was printed on the form, which suggests at least some frequency with which that problem might have arisen and, as a result, the state of Virginia was prepared to prove that these were good slaves who didn't run away every time they were purchased. Of course, as you certainly well know, if you went to the market to buy a slave or slaves and you woke up the next morning and you couldn't find the slave, that was \$1,500 or \$2,000 or \$2,500 which had gone down the drain. One had to guard against such dire eventualities.

Another thing I would argue is that slaves left the plantation to a large extent because of the unsatisfactory conditions which existed there and which they themselves understood and appreciated. The physical descriptions that one finds in runaway advertisements, for example, tell us so much about the level of violence on the plantation itself: She has so many marks on her back, or he has a brand on his arm or face; he walks with a limp; her ears are cropped; she has the marks of one

who has recovered from smallpox. But if the violence was visited upon the slave, it was also visited upon the owner. And if one can't get that in these advertisements in the newspapers, one can get it in the records of the courts, and one can get it in the plantation records as well. Slaves poisoned their owners and didn't wait to see whether the owner recovered. Slaves got into fights with their owners or overseers. One of the best examples that I know is a mistress of a slave walked up and slapped the slave for not obeying her quickly, promptly, and the slave turned around and threw her mistress on the ground and beat her to the point that she was unconscious. She was in the hospital for three weeks recovering from her wounds, and the slave, of course, ran away, but was recaptured and was put on trial. And her strongest witness, and the one that secured her acquittal, was her mistress, who on the one hand had lost face greatly as a result of being laid low by her lowly maid, and, secondly, was about to lose the services of this maid. And she assured the court that there was nothing wrong between her and her maid that she could not fix. And so she was discharged from jail in the custody of the woman who owned her.

Then there were always the vindictive slaves who just had more than they could take and were going to do something about it. At times, they visited violence on the owner or the overseer. In one instance, they decided to commit the perfect crime. They had reached the point that they could not bear the presence of the overseer, for whom slaves generally had no respect, and the view was that if you were white, you ought to be higher than an overseer, and therefore they had no respect for them. And for the overseer then to take so much authority in his own hands and to mistreat slaves was something that slaves could not stand. In this one instance in Louisiana, slaves decided that they would get this overseer and they would do it under cover of darkness, at night. And he lived alone in a cottage, and they went to the cottage and they weren't sure how far they were going to go in the punishment, but when he woke up, they said, "We've got to go all the way," and they murdered the overseer. "There's no problem. We can cover it up." And they dressed the overseer, put him on his own horse, then took him out into the woods and let him fall from the horse, then made a lot of marks all around, knocked the bushes down and everything to show the horse had gone wild, and they went on back. The next day they went to find the overseer and finally someone discovered him, and he had been thrown from his horse. They brought the coroner out and the coroner said, "Accidental death, was thrown from his horse." And there were two slaves at the plantation who said, "This is too good to be true and I don't believe, we don't think we should stay here." So they ran away.

The leaving of two of the slaves was one of the first ways in which the case was broken. The other was the brother of the overseer came to his funeral, then he stayed around a while and said, "I don't believe my brother--my brother is a good horseman--I simply don't believe he got thrown off the horse." And so he spoke to the cook in the kitchen one day and he said, "You know, I know just about all there is to know about my

brother's murder. And if you would just answer one or two questions for me, then this will be solved." Well, then she assumed that he did know, and she began to tell him what she knew about it, and then he asked more questions and he was able to piece the story together. So when the slaves who had committed this crime came in at the end of the work day, sad because so and so had been killed, to be sure, but they were making it, surviving--they were charged with murder, and, of course, they received the ultimate punishment.

But the point that I'm suggesting is that the violence is two-way, and it shows me the extent to which there was a breakdown in what I call the labor-management relations. And, of course, a real serious problem in management. Maintaining discipline, therefore, was the major task of every planter, and his whole operation would be made or broken, depending upon his success in this regard. But he might remain successful in keeping his slaves working, he was not successful, we know, in keeping them happy. He was not ever successful to the point of resting on his laurels, as it were. The very elaborate patrol system throughout the South would indicate the extent to which the slaves were suspect, the extent to which they could not be trusted, and trying to control the slaves, to discipline them, to punish them, and at times to cajole them or even to reward them, was something that tested the resources and ingenuities of the owner.

And the problem of labor-management relations became so highly refined at one point that slaves developed a practice of what they called lying out. They would go for a little trek three miles, five miles away, and simply lie out. Then they would send word back that "we will return under the following conditions. We want better food, we want better hours of work, we want better clothing, and we want to be off on Saturdays and Sundays." One plantation mistress who received this ultimatum from the slave wrote her husband, who was away at the time, and described to him the demands that they were making. This is at the height of the harvest season. And he wrote back, "Promise them anything. We've got to get the crop in. Tell the women I'll bring them new dresses, tell the men I'll bring them new pants and that we will give them better food from here on." Not every negotiation ended so happily so far as the slaves were concerned, but this lying out was widespread in practice, even if it was uneven in results.

I think it can be said, then, that running away was one of the most common and most dramatic manifestations of displeasure on the part of slaves for their lot. They did not have much in the way of arms and ammunition; they did not have even the assurances that a few personal resources would provide--for instance, money or food, animals, and so forth, although frequently they stole these items from their owner when they ran away. But they took whatever they had, sometimes only their courage and their determination, and made their run for freedom.

Some of you know Toni Morrison's Beloved in which the mother ran away with a little baby. That was all too common in various parts of the South. Some of you know too of the many songs that

were sung having to do with stealing away, that sort of thing, the dissatisfaction with the institution was widespread, and we who work in these records don't have to have much in the way of subtle sensitivities to understand that they were doing what they could to undermine the institution of slavery, even as they put on the face of satisfaction for the more naive of their owners, and even as they plotted to leave the institution, either by force or by stealth. But what is important for us to recognize is the fact that we need to take the romance out of the institution, and we can do so by looking at it for what it was--a gruesome, inhuman, unkind, savage type of pursuit of life. And if slaves were doing anything, they were trying to balance the books by destroying the institutions to the extent that they could and to the degree that they could.

Thank you very much.

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**1993 NEH Charles Frankel Prize Forum**  
Ricardo Alegria, John Hope Franklin, Hanna Holborn Gray,  
Andrew Heiskell, Laurel Thatcher Ulrich

October 7, 1993

**Sheldon Hackney:** This is a pleasure for me as one of my first acts here at the NEH to be able to preside over the awarding of these prizes. Actually, the president will give them this afternoon at the White House. But I wanted to be able to introduce them to you this morning.

As we all know, the Charles Frankel Award is the highest award offered by the National Endowment for the Humanities for advancing public understanding of the humanities, of scholarly work. The awards are also, of course, an affirmation of the fundamental importance of the humanities to the functioning of a democratic society. We had a little instruction in that the other night from Garry Wills and I will not go through his argument, but I will assert it anyway. They are important.

These awards commemorate Charles Frankel, scholar and statesman, and eloquent spokesman for the humanities. He was professor of philosophy and law at Columbia University, he served as assistant secretary of state for educational and cultural affairs, and was the founder and the first president of the National Humanities Center in North Carolina. Charles Frankel believed passionately that the study of history and literature and philosophy and the other humanistic disciplines were too important to leave merely to academics, for the humanities, of course, deal with the essential subjects of human life: the human condition, human experience, community, the meaning of individualism, duty, responsibility, justice, happiness--all those big, big questions.

I'm fond of one of Charles Frankel's definitions of the humanities: "The humanities," he wrote, "are society's efforts to place itself in the sequence of history, to examine its ideas and ideals, to study its language and its forms of behavior, to come to a critical assessment of the myths, symbols, stories, and rules by which it gives shape and direction to its life. And they are something more. They are its effort to look beyond its own parochial frontiers and to see itself against that much larger human drama and all the varieties of human nature and experience."

Or at another place--he actually said quite a lot about the humanities over a long period of time, and it's all quite eloquent. "Why should we say, with no qualifications, that the humanities teach values? What values? Whose values? Plato's or Aristotle's? John Bunyan's or Baudelaire's? Voltaire's or D. H. Lawrence's? Literature, philosophy, history do indeed expose students to a wide variety of human perspectives, but they teach no single lesson and they exemplify not a consensus on values,

but, rather, great disagreement. I think the humanities do not teach, really. They do something deeper: They exercise our emotions, they discipline them, they give us patterns of excellence against which we can measure our own achievements. They do not teach except in the deepest sense of teaching. They ask questions."

So today I am honored to present awards to five great questioners who, like Charles Frankel, have helped to bring the essential discussions of human values into the civic arena and have encouraged the public, not just students on university campuses or in our schools, though they're important, but the public to read, think, feel more deeply about the important questions that confront us as human beings.

Later today the president of the United States will recognize these five individuals. At this ceremony, we welcome them to the NEH, and we want to share some conversation with them. And what I will do is ask them each to say maybe just a word by way of letting you hear their voices and letting them hear their voices in this room, and then we will open the floor to a conversation--maybe not the big conversation, but a good conversation about whatever is on your mind.

Let us begin with Ricardo Alegria, an eminent historian and anthropologist of Caribbean culture, a particularly strong leader in the humanities in Puerto Rico, and one of the founders there of two institutes that carry forth his work. Ricardo.

**Ricardo Alegria:** During the last forty years, I have been involved in developing national pride in my country, Puerto Rico, in which we have suffered five hundred years of colonialism. And in order to try to reverse that situation, a sort of complex of inferiority of many Puerto Ricans because of the lack of knowledge they have of their own culture and roots, I have been working with the humanities. By way of archaeology I have been able to restore and excavate several archaeological sites and give to our people a better knowledge of the aboriginal culture of Puerto Rico. I have used history to obtain, by researching the Spanish archives, to obtain better information about the Spanish history and the African roots of the Puerto Rican people, and also, they have given me a lot of help in order to restore the old city of San Juan and to use it again as a very important residential and cultural area where I have developed small museums to transmit all that information on our history and culture.

**Hackney:** Thank you very much.

To his left, John Hope Franklin, from whom we heard yesterday at noon: James B. Duke Professor of History, the dean of American historians, especially history of the South, who spent some of his career at an institution called the University of Chicago.

**Hanna Holborn Gray:** That's where all the important work was done.

Hackney: John Hope, do you want to pass or say a word?

John Hope Franklin: When I was a member of the National Council on the Humanities, perhaps during the time that Hanna was also a member--we've been members of so many boards together as well as colleagues at the University of Chicago, where I was her chairman for some time--we had a saying, a few of us had a saying, that even if society isn't broke we can do a lot to improve it, and we felt that it was the humanities that could do that--not merely because we could raise questions about the nature of our society and, by raising those questions, offer ways of improving it, but also of bringing to our society the humbling as well as the reforming positions that the humanities could bring. It could bring to our society some understanding and appreciation for those things which, even if they were not a part of the rubric and discipline with which we are associated, they could nevertheless leaven and improve and strengthen the relationships of human beings with each other, whether that be in literature or in history or in philosophy, or what have you.

One of the best examples I can think of that is that my plumber in Durham, North Carolina, is a graduate in the liberal arts of the University of North Carolina. It might make him a better plumber to be such a graduate. It certainly makes him a better citizen, a better person, and one who understands the relationship between what he does every day, all day, and the larger life which, I assure you, he lives.

While I have the floor, I just want to say that one of the great influences of my life was Charles Frankel. We were friends for many years. I contributed to one of his earlier books, Issues in University Education. I gave the dedication address when he was the chair of the National Humanities Center, when he became the chair of the National Humanities Center. And it was he, I publicly confess now, who persuaded me finally to leave the University of Chicago. He called me and beseeched me and told me that I had paid my dues and that what I ought to do now was to relax, to relax by coming to the National Humanities Center and working there at my leisure, as he said, for as long as I wished. And he had some help. It was the winter of 1979 in Chicago that contributed to my decision.

Once when Charles called me, he said, "John Hope, I have one final appeal to make to you." He said, "If I get the money that I think I might be able to get to support you, will you come?" And feeling that perhaps it was way out of the question, that he didn't have any hope of getting the money, I, in a weak moment, said, "Yes." Two or three days later, he called me and said, "I've got the money." And I always had the feeling he perhaps had his hands on the money from the beginning. He said, "Let's shake hands over the phone, and then when you come down to Chapel Hill to receive an honorary degree next week, we can put everything in writing." So I went to Chapel Hill, and I did not know until I got off the plane and was about to go to the National Humanities Center, that Charles and Helen had been murdered the night before in their home in Bedford Village, New York.

And so, from that moment on, the two years I spent there and the years that I've spent since leaving there, I've always felt that what I was doing was as a result of the stimulation and inspiration which Charles Frankel gave to me and the push that he gave to me that focused more and more of my attention on my research and writing. So I'm sort of a living Charles Frankel disciple, and to the extent that I am, I believe in promoting the humanities in much the way he did. Thank you.

Hackney: Thank you very much.

Hanna Holborn Gray is also a historian--though a historian of Europe, a Europeanist--was provost of Yale and then president of the University of Chicago for fifteen years, has just left that position. I am avoiding the word "retired" because I suspect that's not in her agenda. Beyond that, she served on the National Humanities Council and has been a spokesperson for the humanities, both institutionally and sort of in public, for a long time. We served together on the Rockefeller Commission, did we not, or...

Hanna Gray: We did.

Hackney: A commission which spent almost half of its time trying to define what the humanities were, but wrote a good report anyway. So she has been long a laborer in these vineyards, and it's really a delight to have her back here at NEH.

Gray: Thank you very much. I also knew Charles Frankel, obviously not as well as John Hope Franklin did, and I have always revered Charles Frankel. I was a little astonished to learn of this underside of that fine man's character, but I really cannot improve on what Sheldon quoted him as saying and what my distinguished colleagues here have said about the humanities. So let me just make a couple of comments.

I have an odd history. When I was in college and decided to major in history, I came home and my mother said, "What are you going to major in?" and I said, "History." And she said, "Oh, no." And she said, "What kind of history?" and I said, "Intellectual history," and she said, "Oh, well, thank God, at least that's useless." As you can tell, my mother was a romantic humanist. She and my father had, in fact, met in a Sanskrit seminar, and my mother was a purist when it came to the life of learning, of scholarship, and of humanistic appreciation. And, of course, I spent an awful lot of my time trying to reassure worried parents that their children who were studying the history of art, or whatever humanistic subject in college, were indeed preparing themselves for the great game of life, if not to meet a payroll. In short, most parents are not the way my mother was, and that's why one has to spend a lot of time justifying and talking about the humanities.

I had another brief time of trying to do that when, as you may recall, in 1981, there was some question of the Endowments being eliminated, and I found myself in the extraordinary position of

being co-chair with Charlton Heston. It meant that wherever you went with your co-chair, there was a lot of attention. I was, of course, always the unidentified woman. And the issue was how to save the Endowments for the arts and the humanities after there had come into being an administration which had pledged to get rid of the Endowments of the arts and humanities. And you will recognize in the peculiarity of placing such two chairs side by side that this was in fact a nonpartisan issue, and that the importance of the Endowments was one that was recognized, then it needed some rhetoric, it needed some justification to surround it.

In thinking about the importance of the humanities, the role of the humanities, why the humanities matter, I've always been struck by a wonderful passage in, of all people, Cicero, who described his visit to Athens, and who was moved when he found himself walking on the paths which had been trod by Aristotle and Plato, by Socrates and Isocrates, by Xenophon and others. And he was overcome with the thought that he was walking those paths. And he wrote a very simple sentence to describe that. He said, "Not to know what happened before you were born is to remain always a child."

And there are two things about this passage: One, that sense not only of creating a link to the past, but of intersecting in a genuine way with the minds of the past and the notion of paths that intersect, and walking those paths as that of intellectual and emotional intersection. And, secondly, that sense that not to know what happened before you were born is to be always a child is to speak not of simply the importance of knowledge of the past, of its literature, of its artistic production, of its philosophy, of its history, but to see it as a living past which is part of the inheritance and legacy of the present, and which will go on beyond one's time, and therefore to intersect within one's generation with a much larger movement of generations, and to participate in what is the essential dialogue of civilized life, which has to do with a dialogue that goes on not only with one's contemporaries about the important questions of meaning and value, but to locate oneself within a moving tradition of thinking, with the critical understanding of that, with its reinterpretation, with gaining the kind of perspective, of judgment, of critical but also empathetic faculties that allows for that.

So, it has always seemed to me that, in taking up Renaissance studies, which is my particular field, I was similarly struck by Petrarch standing at the beginning of what was to be a new tradition of humanism, who set out by writing a letter to Cicero, and said, "Dear Cicero, here I am and I'm writing to you," which was yet another way, in that humanistic way, of reaching across what was felt to be a chasm of centuries, and of reaching into, into that same conception of a living dialogue that understands that past time is past time, and that at the same time understands how to make that past time both present and meaningful over a longer period of time. And that's why the work of this Endowment is so important. Thank you.

Hackney: Yeah, wonderful.

Andrew Heiskell spent a long career in Time, Inc., and I am not speaking lightly of that organization to say that he's not here this morning because of that distinguished career in business, but because he spent a good part of his creative energies in the last fifteen or so years on the humanities in very useful ways. He and Vartan Gregorian double-handedly saved the New York Public Library, one of the great treasures of the country. He was also the founding president and long-term president or chairman, I guess, of the President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities, serving through the decade of the '80s, most of that decade in that position getting public support for the arts and humanities. And he's done other great work in promoting educational reform throughout the country. So he comes to us as a great spokesperson also, and a laborer. Andrew.

Andrew Heiskell: Thank you. I'm not an academic. In case you didn't know it, you'll know it within the next five seconds if you listen to me. But I am a great believer in the humanities, and I have spent quite a lot of time trying to strengthen institutions that deal with the humanities, for some fairly simple reasons.

Of course, the first and most easy argument to be made for the humanities is that it is one of the best ways that we have of distinguishing ourselves from our forebears, and, goodness gracious, and we always try to make sure that that distinction is clearly made to everybody.

The other thing that always struck me about the humanities is that, on balance, it has to be the strongest force for understanding other people and for having a tolerance for people who are different from each other. I had the good fortune of being brought up in a number of different countries, where I was always the outsider, the foreigner. But, also, that experience gave me much more flexibility in terms of realizing that people are different and that that's a great thing, not a bad thing. And if you are brought up in one place, it's much more difficult to understand that, unless the humanities have really helped you to understand about other people, and I think that's what the humanities can do for our society, and should do. They're not always good, but then, as Dr. Hackney was saying, values are many and different. But, on balance, they do make for a more tolerant society. Thank you.

Hackney: Good.

Laurel Ulrich is another historian, from the University of New Hampshire, and her book, A Midwife's Tale, won the Pulitzer Prize, and it's a great honor to have her here.

Laurel Ulrich: Well, I'm very honored to be here and a little bit awed at the company that I'm in, kind of wondering how it happens that I'm here. I had a very different background from Hanna Gray, and that perhaps accounts for my response to my own work.

You can think about a snowy New Hampshire day, a historian still in her bathrobe in the top of the house, in front of a word processor, nice heat from the wood stove coming up there, with some leisure provided by a nice stipend from the National Endowment for the Humanities, writing about a seventy-year-old woman who lived two hundred years before who's out wading through snowdrifts, crossing a frozen river to bring babies into the world. You can imagine my feelings--this little voice that every once in a while would interrupt my scholarly solitariness and would say, "Ha! Living life vicariously. There she is, life of privilege, somehow writing about this marvelous heroine, Martha Ballard." And I have sometimes felt that my work as a writer and scholar was just a tremendous indulgence, kind of personal indulgence, and have had twinges of guilt once in a while when people challenge federal funds to support such activities.

But that voice speaks to me less often now because of the response to Martha Ballard's story, and I'm not talking about prizes and I'm not talking about reviews in academic journals; I'm talking about the sort of amazing experience that I've had as an academic of having my work grabbed by all sorts of people who might not normally read scholarly history, and I don't think A Midwife's Tale is an easily accessible book. It makes certain demands on people.

One of the highlights of my experience was giving a keynote address at the American College of Nurse Midwives at a convention in Phoenix, Arizona, where there were three or four thousand women. Talk about the spirit in the room! You've got all those midwives in one room. It was really tremendous. It's probably the closest thing I've ever come to giving a political speech. It's never happened. I was talking about Martha Ballard, and they would interrupt with applause. And, you know, it did something for me.

It made me realize that my work is an important work. I knew that in the classroom setting, but I know it in a better way now. That is the thing that we do as scholars and writers, and particularly those of us who work in social history. Sometimes we wonder about this. But we're providing meaning to ordinary lives. And I now am thinking about that as not living vicariously at all, but living richly and deeply, and doing very real work. And I'm very, very grateful to NEH for giving me the opportunity to make that connection to that larger world.

Hackney: Great. And how is the scripting for the documentary coming? Pretty good.  
The floor is open.

Question directed to Heiskell about being a nonacademic among academics: (Inaudible.)

Heiskell: I'm absolutely terrified.

Question: I wonder if Dr. Alegria can give us an idea of

what pre-Columbian civilizations and migrations can tell us about life today in the Caribbean, how can it inform us about the Americas?

**Alegria:** The Indians who were living in Puerto Rico and the rest of the Greater Antilles were the Taino Indians that were the first Indians to establish contact with the Europeans, and that's why they were the first ones to be totally annihilated by the invaders, by the Spaniards, and their civilization disappeared very rapidly. We have still in Spanish and in English many words of the Tainos, words that you use commonly like hammock, manioc, tobacco, canoe, hurricane--all those words are the heritage of the Taino Indians. And we in Puerto Rico maintain some elements of their food habits and language, especially words, and that's the Taino importance.

In the Lesser Antilles world, the Carib Indians, but they never reached the Greater Antilles.

**Question about where the humanities are headed:** (Inaudible.)

**Hackney:** This is the acid test.

**Gray:** What is the president's question?

**Question:** (Inaudible.)

**Gray:** I think I'd tell him to talk to John Hope Franklin.

**Franklin:** If the president should ask about the state of the humanities and where it should go from here, I think it would depend on how the president would pose the question. If he posed it, as one president did some twelve years ago, and made a place in his state of the union address about how dispensable the humanities were, then my reply to him would be, as it was at that time, when he invited me to the White House, I said I wouldn't come because I didn't think that he would understand anything I had to say.

But in a larger arena where the question is a reasonable one, and where I think the president might expect a reasonable answer, I would say that, first of all, the humanities is alive and well. It not only needs but deserves the generous support of our federal establishment so that it can flourish throughout the land and do what it needs to do, namely, to make these connections between life and our institutions and our various, diverse population that it can make, and that with all of the ideas that flourish among the humanists, institutions like this can sort them out and point to those that are most deserving support, realizing all the time that perhaps it, too, makes mistakes and, either because of lack of funds or the lack of wisdom, does not always support every worthy enterprise.

**Hackney:** He passed the test, didn't he? Even an A, I think.

**Question about core curricula:** (Inaudible.)

**Gray:** Well, I think it's one of the most difficult questions, clearly, in higher education. And, of course, core curricula don't exist in that many places, either, although there are now repentance grants being given to institutions that dissolved their curricula in an earlier time. This has always annoyed me a great deal because, if you happen to be an institution that has maintained them, you can't get a big grant of the sort that I characterize as a repentance grant.

And there is clearly an emerging interest, has been over the past decade, in restoring something more like coherence to the curriculum, and that, in turn, has led to some of the educational battles that we have. That is, if you have a total free elective system, you don't really have much argument about education because everyone does their thing. The minute you begin to talk about cores and requirements, it becomes a life-and-death question. Are you going to teach this text or that text? Are you going to do this problem or that problem? Are you gearing the course toward some contemporary concern or something else? And that's been surrounded by a good deal of politicization, which has been very unfortunate as well, both internal to the campus and externally from other pressures, but that come from off campus--not that that is new in the history of educational thinking, either. And the passion to discern what education will, in fact, mean to individual and social lives probably means not that politicization of it is a good thing, but that the commitment, actually, to thinking about it in some form is a very good thing.

I think that there has been too much mere pressure in some of this curricular discussion. I think that it is a poor thing to believe, A, that the consumer should decide on the curriculum, purely and simply, B, that the curriculum should follow simply shifts of taste or fashion.

On the other hand, there are obviously whole new bodies of knowledge and of scholarship associated with that knowledge, as, for example, in the history of women; as, for example, in the history that looks to the disadvantaged, to those without a public voice for a very long time in the world; to the patterns that Dr. Alegria is talking about; to the slaves whom John Hope Franklin has written about. And I would say that test number one for introducing into core curricula the questions that are related to a whole range of contemporary subjects ought to have to do with whether there is some body of scholarship so that there is a grounding. And there's always a little gap, I think, between the development of that and its readiness to become part of the curriculum. And I think what is sometimes lost sight of nowadays is that, in the zeal to recognize and represent topics and whole groups of people that are very well worth representing in the curriculum, there also has to be genuine knowledge. And however great the commitment to some larger outcomes of such study, that it have academic quality associated with it as well.

That, I think, would make it a lot easier to make the evaluations that you're talking about. I think core curricula have always to be reevaluated. As new subjects and new people come into that kind of teaching, they should be.

I do think it's a mistake, and I think that was the problem that existed, for example, at Stanford. They had a single course, and so every question of educational and moral and political philosophy got tied to one course. What it says is that a core curriculum shouldn't be a course--a core curriculum should consist of some grouping of approaches--and that it doesn't make a whole lot of sense to give up a thorough grounding in the traditional. You don't have to if you're also going to bring into that curriculum subjects that are newer and very well worth pursuing.

Hackney: Terrific answer. Does anybody else want to

comment on that? That really is a big question, interesting. There was great wisdom in that answer.

**Question about involving scholars in precollegiate education (Billie Gaines):** (First part inaudible.) . . . But what I'm concerned about is that the young people of this country, below the college level, never get a chance to even get embroiled in the curricular or academic connections that have to do with the concrete problems of the humanities because they're lost to us before they even get there. They may now, because their teachers and parents are concerned about their standardized test scores, their grades--they may understand the humanities from that standpoint, but this larger connection that we talk about to one's life, to one's intellect, to one's history is lost upon them. And I wonder, would you today be able to feel that you could recommend to scholars to continue to go into the schools and work with teachers and children and help get past just the academic content and the control of subject matter, and how do you feel today about recommending in today's educational milieu, whether suburban, urban, or rural, having these people help high school and elementary school teachers reconnect children to the humanities?

**Gray:** I would certainly be very much for it. And the fact that it's always imperfect and that the victories are few makes it no less worth doing, in my view. And it's not a kind of activity that one engages in once and then somehow something is changed. It's over and over. It's for each child, for each young person, for each of us needs to acquire on his or her own what it is that we can acquire. And I do think that people who are members of university and college faculties can help, and I think that the current attention is almost entirely to the crisis of science teaching in the schools and why are there not enough scientists. There needs to be a renewed attention, not just to reading and writing, however, which obviously are absolutely necessary, but what you do with reading and writing, and that means the kind of attention you're talking about, I think. Even though you're not going to win that many victories, every victory is precious.

**Ulrich:** This may be a place where I could come in with a half thought I was working on earlier, and that is, you can talk about curricula and defining cores and so on, but the delivery is the issue. And some of the discussions I've heard of this, particularly on the state level, where they decide a social studies curricula, and then, you know, what's really happening in the classroom can be tremendous variation, from something far better to hardly anything at all, and so I really like your statement.

I think scholars can go into schools and become involved with teachers and students, but that, again, sort of suggests carrying the gold from on high down into the trenches. I think that's the wrong model. I think what we need to be doing is inspiring and empowering people at whatever level of education they're working with to really be able to do their best, to pull from their resources, educational and personal, and get people excited about teaching, and I don't know that that can be handled at a bureaucratic level, but it seems to me we could sure do a lot more to support and sustain and to enrich the lives of the people who are trying to deliver this at the local level. I don't know

whether you need a scholar there to do it, but I'd really like to see us think hard about how to build those kinds of networks and those sustaining networks to people in the public schools.

We're trying in a very small way at the University of New Hampshire. It's just a tiny thing. But we had an extra teaching assistant assigned to our department, and we could have created another section of Gen. Ed. or whatever, and this was a very... We had a wonderful graduate student who'd been a public school teacher and actually had won an award from the American Association of State and Local History for an oral history project in New Hampshire. We said, what would happen if Judith had a whole year of her T.A. time to think about outreach? And she's doing such interesting things. We'll see what happens. I mean, she's trying to help us get our act together.

Franklin: I'd like to say, if I could, that I feel very heartened that we have a member of the Council with such sensitivity to this problem, and I'm not going to fret too much if there are many members of the Council like you who have this understanding of what the problem is. For one of the major achievements, it seems to me, of this Endowment is not that it finances the research of me and my runaway slaves, or even Professor Ulrich with her midwives, but that it finances institutes for high school teachers and for those members of that level of educational enterprise to become not, first, more acquainted, but, secondly, more understanding of the canon at that level and of communicating the importance of study at that level to their students. And I've been to a number of those institutes, and it is not really bringing the word from on high so much as it is reaching these people who already are in the trenches, as it were...

GAP--flip to side 2

...does more like that all over the country. What we need also are similar programs in other areas, such as in the sciences. So that I'm heartened that we still have on the Council that kind of sensitivity, and I'm heartened by what the Council is doing in this area.

Question to Ulrich about participation of scholars in public programs: (Inaudible..)

Hackney: Other than money?

Ulrich: Yeah. I mean, money. I've done a lot of that, as you probably know. And it's been some of the best and some of the worst experiences that I've had. I think what happens is a particular institution--a museum, a historical society, whatever it might be--has a really good idea, and they decide what it is they want to do. Or maybe they have just a mediocre idea, but they have to get money to support that. And in order to get money, they have to write a grant, and in order to get the grant, they have to have somebody with a Ph.D. on the grant, and they build in some consulting days. And, believe me, you said no holds barred here, I've been in some of those experiences where you know you're there just as a rubber stamp to get the money to do what they already know they're going to do, and I hate doing that. I mean, \$200, that is not going to be incentive.

In contrast, and I'm thinking of the experience right now of working on this documentary, it's a little unusual because it's my

research, although I know people who've had documentaries made on the basis of their research where quite the opposite has occurred. But in my case, there has been intimate knocking of heads together, discussing, refining, rethinking from the very beginning of the project. It's exhausting and draining, but remarkably satisfying and truly interdisciplinary to work at that level with a gifted filmmaker and a number of scholars, a panel of scholars. It's one of the most exciting things intellectually I've ever done. Now, I don't know if the film will be any good, but the consulting part of it has been quite wonderful. And I've had other experiences that way, where you really are more collaborating. You're more in on the ground floor, on the planning stages, rather than just validating. Those are projects that I think scholars can get very excited about, and it might earn their money if they're involved in those projects.

**Question about providing incentives for scholars to participate in public programs:** (First part inaudible.) . . . What about the reward system for faculty in the university so that there is some payoff, spiritual or promotional, so that that work would be encouraged?

**Hackney:** Lunch at the president's house.

**Gray:** That's an old saw about the distortions of the reward system in universities, and I'm going to fight you on this one in the sense that I think that universities exist for the purposes that they exist for, and research universities should perform research and scholarship as well as teaching. The question is the balance and not whether they should be doing both and whether the balance moves too far in one direction or another. And then the question of people's contribution to the public understanding and appreciation of the humanities and of the fruits of scholarship, that's something which not a whole lot of research university faculty I think can do very well, but they can do it. And when they do it, I don't think that they are made victims of the university system for doing it. I can think of a number of colleagues at my university who do it brilliantly and well, and where that is certainly a part of their entire record, but where in the end they do have to be judged on their teaching and scholarship.

The writing of textbooks is a great contribution to public understanding, and I think what has happened with the newer technologies and opportunities is that that whole range of possibility has expanded for intellectuals, who I think are very much interested in doing it when they have the opportunity, and I think more scientists are into it now, and so forth. But if you want to argue with me that there ought to be a numerical quotient in the tenure case for that, I don't think that's right. But I think it's great when people do it, and I think that there can be an encouragement and an atmosphere within the institution that encourages it, and in doing so, is in effect giving it a certain kind of weight, is expressing the fact that it has value, just as we do also, I think, with the involvement with the schools in our neighborhood or in teachers' institutes, of which we have an extensive program. There are all kinds of ways in which I think those things are valued. I don't think, at the same time, that what I take to be your implicit point is one I will accept.

Hackney: One last question.

Question to Alegria about multiculturalism in Puerto Rico:  
(Inaudible.)

Alegria: Well, in some cases, but we have to depart from the point of view that Puerto Rico has been a colony for five hundred years, first under Spain and then under the United States, and because of that--the education there that the people receive--they omitted, in many ways, aspects of our national culture. So it was rather recently, 1955, when we established the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture, that we began to bring to our people more information about our history and culture. Before that, everyone used to talk about only the Spanish heritage and they knew nothing about the aboriginal or the African elements, and there was in a certain way prejudice toward that type of study.

So in those experiences maybe--although here in the United States have been some changes. It was here in the United States when they initiated the study of black culture and Chicano culture that there was developed some interest in Puerto Rican culture among the hundreds of thousands--or 2 million--Puerto Ricans who live here in the United States that they began to claim in their colleges study of the Puerto Rican culture, because it is really incredible that people are in the university and they talk about the Greek civilization or Roman civilization, and they don't know anything about their African roots or their aboriginal roots, and that's what we have been doing in Puerto Rico during the last twenty years, more or less, and by way of museums to try to show the people better knowledge of themselves. We also have used documentary films, and, by way of the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture, we were able to establish about eighty cultural centers scattered all through the island at which we present lecturers and documentary films. They sponsor activities among the people, also the preservation of historical monuments.

For example, I was looking at Washington now, some of the buildings that we consider historical that are being demolished. In Puerto Rico, they used to demolish buildings because of progress. I mean, to destroy a seventeenth-century church, that was progress. And even some people wanted to demolish the whole historical section of San Juan in order to make it a small New York, and that was considered progress, too. Now we have reversed that situation in which people feel pride for their historical monuments, and they see them as part of their own national culture. At the same time, it has been good for the economy of the island because it's also a tourist attraction. So in those respects...

For example, our laws to protect historical monuments has been used here in the United States. We were the first country in which we initiated to grant tax exemption to the people who restore a building according to the regulations of the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture, and that has been used now, and I have served as an advisor in several Latin American countries to follow that situation. And here in the United States, too, a law to preserve historical monuments goes back to 1955, and we were able in that way to save many buildings that we have already restored. So, some of those experiences on a very small scale that we have

done in Puerto Rico could serve as an experience in other places.

The fact that now Puerto Ricans are very proud of their own cultural tradition--even in politics, a few years ago, the people who defend annexation to the United States used to claim that there was no such thing as a Puerto Rican culture, so they don't have to worry about that. Now they have to claim that Puerto Rico become a state, it will be a state with Spanish and Puerto Rican culture, and they have to tell that to the senators there in Congress.

**Hackney:** Brief as this conversation has been, it has left me, at least, feeling much more glad that I am doing what I'm doing. I hope that you feel the same way about doing what you're doing. And I want to thank our award recipients for bringing a bit more inspiration to us this morning, and congratulate them again on the awards and thank them for being here.

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THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

October 7, 1993

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT  
IN WHITE HOUSE PRESIDENTIAL ARTS MEDAL CEREMONY

The South Lawn

2:26 P.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much. To our distinguished honorees and all of you in the audience. I want to say a special word of thanks to Jane Alexander and to Dr. Sheldon Hackney for their leadership of our administration's efforts in the arts and humanities. (Applause.)

As a person who at various times in his life has been a frustrated writer and a frustrated musician, this is an extremely humbling event for me today. (Laughter.) But I've been getting a lot of training in humility lately. (Laughter.) I have a Vice President who humbles me all the time by all the things he teaches me about things great and insignificant -- (laughter) -- and who unlike me actually got to go on David Letterman to prove how funny he was. (Laughter.)

And I have a wife who swept the television ratings last week talking about the arcana of health care with a passion and an eloquence -- (applause). As if that weren't bad enough, USA Today had the bad grace to go out and poll the American people, and 40 percent of them said she was smarter than I am. (Laughter.) To which I reply, of course, what kind of dummy do you think I am. (Laughter.) How else would I have gotten elected President.

And just to drive this humility home -- this is the actual true part of this wonderful story -- I went to southern California last week, or the first of this week, and I was looking forward to staying in the Beverly Hilton -- it seemed like an exotic sort of place. And I showed up, and Merv Griffin, who owns it, shook hands with me, and took me up to the floor where I was staying -- there is only one person who is a permanent resident of the floor where I stayed in the Beverly Hilton -- Rodney Dangerfield -- (laughter) -- who said they had put me there because we seem to belong together. (Laughter.) And gave me 12 roses with a little respect on a gift card. (Laughter.)

I am delighted to be here to honor this year's winners of the National Medal of the Arts and the Charles Frankel Prize -- men and women whose achievements represent the enduring power of the arts and humanities and, in a larger sense, of the creative spirit in all of our lives.

Throughout history, the arts and humanities have been the cultural signature of this great nation. They have enabled Americans of all backgrounds and walks of life to gain a deeper appreciation of who they are as individuals and who we all are as a society, stirring our minds and our senses, stimulating learning and collective discourse, the arts and humanities teach us in ways that nothing else can about the vastness and the depth of human experience. They are our great equalizers. We inherit them, and we can all participate in them.

Whether or not one plays an instrument, reads poetry, learns to pirouette, or spends hours alone in a local art gallery, we all have the capacity to be moved by a song, a poem, a story, a dance, a painting. We can feel our spirit soar when we see an intriguing film, or the sudden illumination of a new idea, or an old idea put in a new way.

At a time when our society faces new and profound challenges, at a time when we are losing so many of our children, at a time when so many of our people feel insecure in the face of change, the arts and humanities must remain a vital part of our lives -- as individuals and as a nation.

For 200 years, the freedom of our artistic and intellectual imagination has contributed to the quality of our civic life. It has helped to shape American ideas of democracy, of pluralism, of tolerance. Three decades ago, President Kennedy said this: "There's a connection, hard to explain logically but easy to feel, between achievement and public life, and progress in the arts." The Jeffersonian era gave birth not only to the Declaration of Independence, but also to beautiful Monticello. The age of Lincoln produced the Emancipation Proclamation, along with the Hudson River School of Painting and the writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau and Harriet Beecher Stowe.

The first half of this century gave us universal suffrage and the empowerment of American workers, as well as Charlie Chaplin, Frank Lloyd Wright, William Faulkner, Marian Anderson and Duke Ellington.

The same unbridled energy and potent imagination that took Americans to the moon inspired rock and roll, Motown, modern dance and a new emphasis on civil and human rights.

Those of you gathered with us today are reminders that the human imagination is still the most powerful tool we have in moving forward as a civilization. You provoke our minds, you enliven our senses, endow our souls, help us to give our lives meaning. That's why public support for the arts and humanities remains essential today and for generations to come. (Applause.)

Today, we are indeed fortunate to have inspiring new leaders working in government to expand our artistic and humanistic endeavors, to carry on our heritage to future generations. I'm very proud of the work and the life that Sheldon Hackney and that Jane Alexander have lived before they came to this work. I thank them for their work here. And I tell you that we welcome all of you to give us your ideas, your suggestions and your energy as we try to move forward together.

Now it is a privilege to call forward the following recipients of the National Medal of Arts.

First, the contributions of Walter and Leonore Annenberg to American culture can literally not be overstated. The Annenbergs have enriched our appreciation of the arts through public service, publishing, and as board members of major arts institutions. They have given generously of their time and their money. And they provided among other things the magnificent portrait of Benjamin Franklin, which hangs in the Green Room at the White House -- one of the most prized possessions of this, your American home. (Applause.)

(Medal is presented.)

The legendary vocalist and bandleader Cab Calloway has had indeed a remarkable career -- one of the originators of American jazz. An enduring figure in popular music, Cab Calloway added "Hi-dee-ho" and the "scat" sound to our musical vocabulary.

And for those of us who have lived a while, we can enjoy seeing the brightness of his smile in our memories going back for decades. He is an American original, and I am deeply honored that he's here with us today. (Applause.)

(Medal is presented.)

MR. CALLOWAY: Hi-dee-ho! (Applause.) Thank you very, very much. This comes on a very, very beautiful day for me. This is my 49th wedding anniversary. (Applause.) My wife is here --. (Applause.)

Literally for decades, Ray Charles has been one of America's favorite singers. From his roots in Georgia, he became one of the first great truly American singers, one of the first to combine the dynamic energy of gospel music with rhythm and blues. His songs are indelibly etched in the hearts of millions of Americans.

I can tell you that it's a particular honor for me to give him this award today, because I suppose no singer ever had a bigger impact on my musical life than Ray Charles. I still remember over there in Constitution Hall a concert I attended on June the 24th, 1967. I was notable for being one of a few members of my race in the audience. And Ray Charles electrified that crowd so much that that night, I literally could not go to sleep until 5 a.m. in the morning -- I went out and ran three miles to get the energy out. And I still remember to this day the date of the concert. That is testament to the enduring impact of this phenomenal American original. (Applause.)

(Medal is presented.)

Our next honoree, I believe, is part of the only brother-sister team ever to receive this great award. Bess Lomax Hawes has played a major role in the American folk movement since the 1940s as a singer, a teacher, a composer, an author of articles and books that help bring the folk arts into the lives of countless Americans. At a time when our native folk arts are largely lost to millions of our younger people, she has performed an invaluable service to our nation in helping us to remember who we are and how we got here. (Applause.)

(Medal is presented.)

You know what she said? She said, I wish all the beautiful artists I've recorded and seen across the years in this country were here to receive this award for me. They were the inspiration for what I did. Thank you. (Applause.)

Poet and educator, Stanley Kunitz has spent a life opening America's eyes and ears to poetry. He makes the ordinary become extraordinary, the everyday become timeless and significant. He was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry in 1959, and his works grace us still.

Welcome, Stanley Kunitz. (Applause.)

Robert Merrill has been acclaimed by critics as one of the great natural baritones of the century. He's appeared in 787 performances at the Metropolitan Opera over a 31-year operatic career. He's also sung on Broadway and many solo recitals and on television. And all of us who have ever heard him sing wish, as I tried to persuade him to do today, that this would be the 787th performance. (Laughter.) He turned me down, but I still think we should give him the medal.

Mr. Robert Merrill. (Applause.)

(Medal is presented.)

Arthur Miller has given our nation some of the finest plays of this century. His character, Willy Loman in "Death of a Salesman," caught the public's imagination by conveying the tension and drama of a common man's life. In "The Crucible," he focused on issues of conscience by probing the Salem witch trials of the late 17th century. He won the Pulitzer Prize for Drama in 1949. The thing that has always impressed me about him was the continuing energy he has brought to his work over such a long period of time, seeming forever young with something always new to say. Please welcome Arthur Miller. (Applause.)

(Medal is presented.)

Robert Rauschenberg is one of America's most innovative artists whose remarkable works have been displayed in museums and galleries around the world, and who has really helped to transform our notions of contemporary art. Modern art is often inaccessible to a lot of people who don't go to art galleries and often don't understand it. I have personally been impressed by how many people I know who don't count themselves as connoisseurs, who have seen and been moved by the works of our next honoree, Robert Rauschenberg. (Applause.)

(Medal is presented.)

He's also a pretty good comic. I said it's great to see you here today. He said, oh, I'll show up for this anytime. (Laughter.)

Lloyd Richards has devoted his career to promoting theater in America. As Dean of the Yale School of Drama and Artistic Director of the Yale Repertory Theater, he has trained some of our nation's finest young talents, many of whom have turned into our finest, not so young talents, helping to make for him a remarkable legacy for which we are all grateful, Lloyd Richards. (Applause.)

(Medal is presented.)

Well, I got another little lesson in humility back there. He said, you both have said some nice things today; and then he looked at me and he said, and you did something for stand-up comedy also. (Laughter.) And then he said, well, at least you didn't set it back. (Laughter.)

William Styron's haunting works, including "Lie Down in Darkness," "The Confessions of Nat Turner," and "Sophie's Choice" capture our history and character with a passion and insight few others have ever achieved. His compelling prose as a fiction writer and essayist has won him readers around the world -- those of us who anxiously await each new word.

I can tell you that as a young southerner, the impact of "The Confessions of Nat Turner" on me was truly stunning. And I can say that for a whole generation of us who had never quite found words to give expression to many of the things we had imagined until we read the works of William Styron. (Applause.)

(Medal is presented.)

Paul Taylor has been one of our nation's preeminent dancers and choreographers for more than three decades. And I might say, he looks as if he could outdance most of us in this country still today. His more than 80 works explore the richness, the complexity of the American character, and graphically demonstrate the

deep undercurrents of human relations in a way few other choreographers have ever been able to do. Please join me in welcoming Paul Taylor. (Applause.)

(Medal is presented.)

Since coming to this country in the 1930s, Billy Wilder has helped to transform the American motion picture industry. As a writer, director and producer, his name attached to many classics of American film. He's won six Academy Awards and millions of fans. And, perhaps most important, he's given us a lot of moving movie moments. If you've never laughed at a funny Billy Wilder picture, you have never laughed. (Laughter.) Mr. Billy Wilder. (Applause.)

(Medal is presented.)

Now, it is my great honor to introduce the winners of the Charles Frankel Prize. Ricardo E. Alegria is an historian and anthropologist who has dedicated his career to the study and public appreciation of Caribbean culture. I'm glad to see so many of his supporters from his native Puerto Rico today, and I thank him for coming this long way to be with us. Mr. Alegria. (Applause.)

(Award is presented.)

In a 50-year career as a writer and a teacher, historian John Hope Franklin has been a leading scholar of African-American studies and an active voice in the social transformation of America. He's won nearly 100 honorary degrees. He's served on the National Council of Humanities. His writings have illuminated his subject for a whole generation after generation of young readers. I was once one of them -- a reader, and young -- reading John Hope Franklin.

And I'd like to say that one of the great moments of our 1992 campaign was when John Hope Franklin came on one of our bus trips with us; and Al Gore and Tipper and Hillary and I sat and had a chance to visit with him, and really learn something from a man who has mastered the mystery of America. John Hope Franklin. (Applause.)

(Award is presented.)

Hanna Holborn Gray has had a truly remarkable career. She served for 15 years as President of the University of Chicago, where she became a highly visible and widely acclaimed advocate for higher education. She has been honored for her scholarship, her words and her work in many ways, especially in receiving the Presidential Medal of Freedom, our country's highest civilian award. She deserves greatly the award she receives today. Hanna Gray. (Applause.)

(Award is presented.)

After a distinguished career as Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Time Incorporated, Andrew Heiskell was appointed founding chairman of the President's Committee on Arts and Humanities in 1982. As a leader in promoting the Arts and Humanities, he energetically, and I echo energetically, persuaded cultural leaders and business executives to support cultural activities and institutions. He filled a void in American life at a time when we need him. And today we thank him for that. Andrew Heiskell. (Applause.)

(Award is presented.)

There are a lot of funny people. He said, all this and dinner, too? (Laughter.)

Historian Laurel T. Ulrich has introduced both scholarly and public audiences to the lives of ordinary people in New England's past. Her recent book "A Midwife's Tale: The Life of Martha Ballard, Based on Her Diary," won the 1991 Pulitzer Prize for History, among other honors.

Now that I have become President, perhaps I can say this with greater authority than would otherwise be the case -- we often times tend to see our history too much through the lives and works of the famous and not enough through the remarkable lives of the people who are not famous. She has made a truly significant contribution to our understanding of our roots. And for that we thank her.  
(Applause.)

(Award is presented.)

And now I have one last special honor, and that is to present to Congressman Sidney Yates the Presidential Citizens Medal for his exemplary deeds of service in the area of arts and humanities. The last time Congressman Yates was here for an occasion at the White House, it happened to be on the day he and his wife were celebrating their 58th wedding anniversary. And today, we honor him for that many years, and more, of dedication to our common cause. Congressman Yates, please come forward. (Applause.)

(Medal is awarded.)

Again, let me thank the honorees for being here today, thank all of you in the audience who have come to support them and to support the arts.

Before we go, I just can't resist saying this. Just before I came out here, I learned today that a great American writer and a friend of Hillary's and mine's, Tony Morrison was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature today. (Applause.) I hope that in the years and struggles ahead we will work hard together to keep the arts and humanities alive and flourishing -- not just here in the nation's capital or in the cultural capitals of this great land, but in every community and in every neighborhood.

Remember, all the people we honor today were once in an ordinary community in an ordinary neighborhood living only with the imagination they had that brought them to this day and this honor. We have to find that imagination and fire it in the children all over America.

Thank you all and God bless you. (Applause.)

END

2:55 P.M. EDT

## Introduction of Sheldon Hackney 10/16/93

When the news first appeared that Sheldon Hackney was to be nominated as chair of NEH, in February I think it was, my first response was that this sounded like an admirable choice. There were other strong candidates for the chairmanship, some of whom were from the humanities councils, and so there was also a touch of disappointment I must confess.

But as I came to know Sheldon Hackney in those intervening months, first hand and in looking at his accomplishments, I came to see that the choice of Mr. Hackney was inspired.

Let me say just a few words about who he is. He is one of the foremost Southern historians of his generation, and his study of Alabama progressivism has won national acclaim. Mr. Hackney is a son of the South, and he was drawn early to Southern history while an undergraduate at Vanderbilt in the mid-1950s, where the tradition of the Fugitive poets and the Agrarians remained still vital. He chose to study under C. Vann Woodward whose own scholarship was transforming Southern historiography. What makes a historian great is the vision she brings to the task, and what moved Sheldon Hackney in these early years of his career--and stayed with him as an academic leader--was his commitment to equality, freedom, and human dignity, and a bedrock belief in treating all people with decency.

Mr. Hackney became president of the University of Pennsylvania in 1981, and served there until his recent appointment to NEH. His achievements at Penn were extraordinary and wide ranging.

During his tenure as president, Mr. Hackney helped lead a reform in curriculum that elevated undergraduate teaching to the highest plane in the university's mission. Mr. Hackney's own example is noteworthy here, for throughout his time at Penn, he continued to teach courses in American history.

He also led a five-year fund raising campaign that has broken records in higher education. His successes will help Penn continue its traditions of supporting the highest quality research and scholarship into the 21st century.

Also during his term as Penn president, Mr. Hackney helped found the West Philadelphia Alliance, a collaborative initiative involving Penn with its neighboring West Philadelphia community that is helping to bring the university's resources and expertise to the city's most disadvantaged residents: medical care for those without any, educational services for schools in crisis, learning opportunities for the city's teachers, programs for children and adults, continuing education for struggling businesses, and more. This accomplishment alone shines like a

beacon in higher education and reminds us that education's highest calling is service to human kind.

Research, teaching, and service: these are the models held up as the ideal in higher education. Mr. Hackney's career is living proof that ideals also can become realities.

If you've read Mr. Hackney's Senate testimony given in June, if you've followed the reports of his doings and sayings in the newspapers, if you've heard his recent radio interviews, then you know that Mr. Hackney has ideas about the humanities that truly can make a difference in this society. He believes that the humanities are transforming: transforming inwardly in one's own life, outwardly in how we live our lives together, and intellectually, in the questions that we bring to life. Not surprisingly, the language of partnership seems to come naturally to Sheldon Hackney, because he's always been interested in the big picture, in getting results, and because he's much more interested in spending his time looking at things that hold us together, not tear us apart.

With a sense of excitement in knowing that we will be going forward together, councils and the NEH, it gives me the greatest pleasure to present to you the Chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities, Sheldon Hackney.

Remarks of Sheldon Hackney  
Federation of State Humanities Councils  
1993 National Humanities Conference  
October 17, 1993  
Washington, D. C.

Just two days ago I was anxiously watching a C-Span call-in program featuring one of the less supportive Members of the House of Representatives, as the reauthorization of the NEH/NEA/IMS was being debated on the floor. Those occasions are always frustrating, especially when the unfriendly voices are making most of the noise, but I became particularly dismayed by one caller from a large, distant state who asserted that the NEA and NEH provided nonessential activity that could be dispensed with, given the budgetary pressures of the moment. Garbage collectors, this eloquent caller argued, do an essential service for society. If they were to quit doing it for a short period of time, it would be inconvenient and we would notice it; if they quit doing it for a lengthy period, society would be in crisis.

So far, so good. My hat is off to the garbage collectors. I recognize that they do as much for the quality of life as the perfume manufacturers and the EPA combined. The caller went on to say, however, that the arts and humanities are different from collecting garbage. They are entertainment, and when times get tough society could forego such frills, AND NO ONE WOULD EVEN NOTICE.

My heart sank. My spirits descended into a profound depression. Leave aside for the moment the substance of the discussion about whether the humanities are worth the seventy cents per person per year that the federal government now spends, and forget for the sake of argument the 25% of our population that can not read books for enjoyment or self-improvement, or the additional 25% that do not read books. Fortunately, the House in the end made the right judgment and voted for the reauthorization without any damaging amendments. The Senate awaits. Meanwhile I will be haunted by that caller's spiritually barren view of life, one that apparently has only two realms: the material realm of food, shelter, and creature comforts, and the frivolous realm of entertainment.

That is the measure of our task, friends. I am sad to report that there are Americans who have been untouched by the humanities, who are therefore living lives that are needlessly cramped and limited. There are people who have not had their life put into new perspective by a museum exhibit on Ancient Egypt or Mayan civilization. There are those who have not found new understandings of our past, and therefore also of our present, from a conversation with Lincoln or Jefferson or Twain in the Chautauqua tent. They have not discovered new meanings in common human experiences by reading and discussing A Thousand Acres and King Lear at the local library. Their emotional world has not been dramatically expanded by watching "The Civil War" on

television. Those whose troubled lives may have lead to incarceration have missed the opportunity to have their lives redirected by studying an August Wilson play while in detention. There are those among our fellow citizens whose lives have not taken on fresh significance by being situated in the great sweep of history or located amidst the global variety of cultures. They have not felt the energizing new identity that comes from discovering oneself through the oral history of the local community, to suddenly see oneself as the subject of history rather than its object. They do not know the satisfaction of core values reexamined and reaffirmed. They will not miss the humanities because they do not have them. This is a poverty of the spirit and of the imagination that a great nation ought not to view with complacency.

The most important thing we can do for our country in our roles at the NEH and the state humanities councils is to expand the participation of Americans in the humanities. That is my highest priority for the NEH, and the NEH can not accomplish that goal without you. Nor, I would venture, can you fulfill your promise without a healthy and helpful NEH. I propose, therefore a partnership.

I think of the task of NEH as being to support three important and interrelated functions: the creation of new knowledge, the translation of knowledge into curricula and

educational experiences, and the participation of citizens in humanities activities in ways that enrich their lives. In the long run, these three functions are mutually supportive; the vitality of each depends on the vitality of the others.

Even though I have been on the job only two months, I have a clear sense of what my priorities must be. First, the NEH must do everything it can to support research of the sort that will yield new knowledge and perhaps even new ways of thinking about ourselves and our societies. Second, there is a need to create a public sphere in which Americans can discuss questions of great importance above the level of public policy, a sphere in which all voices can be heard and in which questions of basic values and national identity and purpose can be addressed, a sphere that will encourage a conversation that bridges all the barriers that separate us from each other. Third, and of utmost importance, we need to extend the benefits of participating in the humanities to more Americans. The humanities are for everyone. As the slogan of National Arts and Humanities Month has it, "There's something in it for you."

Though I mention it third, the expansion of participation in the humanities is the most important task facing us, and this "us" includes the state humanities councils as well as the NEH and other organizations and institutions active in the humanities. I can not reach my goals without your help. So, I am

here to sing a song of partnership, to invite you to join a chorus in multipart harmony on which the soul of America might soar to new heights.

I know that this will not be easy, and I know that I do not now have all the solutions to the problems that I have discovered thus far in my conversations around the humanities community. I am very aware that there are some tensions in our relationship, frictions undoubtedly made more irritating by the happy fact that the needs and opportunities we see exceed our resources. It should not be otherwise. I am also aware that there are many different points of view among us about what might make our relationship more mutually profitable. It may be true that some amount of tension has been deliberately built into our symbiotic relationship, but I am determined to put our partnership on sound footing.

As a first step, I will therefore create a consultative group to give me comprehensive advice about how to structure our relationship. In setting up this advisory group, I will seek the counsel of Jamil Zainaldin, whose advice and friendship I have come to value and enjoy, and of course I would want active participation from the Board of the Federation. I would also welcome letters and phone calls from anyone in our world who has a thoughtful observation or opinion either about how to reach a consensus or about the substance of the issues we will be

discussing.

The purpose of the consultative process would be to review every aspect of the relationship between the NEH and the state humanities councils. It would include but not be limited to the following: discretionary funding, including the exemplary awards that some people like and others don't; the matter of accountability, both the what and the how; the eligibility of state humanities councils to compete for awards in divisions of the NEH other than the State Program Division; the when, where, and whether for orientation meetings run by the NEH for new chairs and new board members of state humanities councils; the general division of labor between the NEH and the state humanities councils; and other areas of opportunity that might yield to cooperative efforts between the NEH and the state humanities councils. I promise you that I will take whatever advice I get very seriously because I am not opposed to change and I am eager to solve as many of the problems in our relationship as possible. You should know, too, that Carol Watson, the Director of State Programs, is enthusiastically in accord with this initiative.

I mention some of the tensions that have existed in the past between the agency and the Councils by way of indicating my awareness of them. However, I think it far more critical, and much more beneficial, for us to focus on the fact that we are

together part of a battle which must be faced in concert. The challenge which lies ahead for us is not about the tenor of our relationship, but it is about the far more important goal of increasing the breadth and vitality of the humanities in our broad-based American culture. We must never lose sight of the fact that our common mission must focus on making real the contribution that the humanities offer to the American spirit.

The NEH has itself begun a process of strategic planning internally. Our joint external effort will be a useful and powerful adjunct to that internal process. I would encourage each state humanities council that has not recently gone through a disciplined effort to reexamine its mission, and its program in relation to that mission, to do so. It is worth the pain and suffering.

As I have said publicly, I am interested in making a case for higher levels of investment by the federal government in humanities activities, but in the short run resources are going to be constrained. We need to stretch existing dollars as far as they will go and to get the most impact for each dollar spent. As part of that general effort, I hope that each state humanities council would work hard at raising money in the state to support its programs.

Because resources are scarce, this is certainly a time when

Benjamin Franklin's admonition to his Revolutionary comrades is appropriate, "We must all hang together or, most assuredly, we will all hang separately." We can only be successful if we work together.

The reward for a job well done together is that we will one day rank right up there with garbage collectors in the minds of the American public as being essential to the health of the republic. Perhaps, then it will be clear that beauty and meaning are as fundamental to human existence as food and shelter, which is why we find the human story drawn by prehistoric people on the walls of their caves, why the earliest implements discovered by archaeologists have clearly been shaped with an eye toward beauty as well as utility, why the quest for the divine is instinctively at the center of the human drama. When all of that is commonly understood, it will indeed be the sweet smell of success!

Sheldon Hackney

Remarks by NEH Chairman Sheldon Hackney, Indian Treaty Room,  
October 27, 1993

It is a pleasure to see all of you here tonight.

Welcome to this magnificent room, one that is so richly steeped in art and architecture and which has witnessed so many important events in the history of our nation. This room is the perfect venue for a celebration of the arts and of the humanities.

Three weeks ago, on a glorious autumn afternoon, the President and the First Lady honored 18 outstanding Americans for their distinguished, lifelong contributions in the arts and humanities. Millions of people all over the world have been made incalculably richer by their talent, their scholarship and tireless philanthropy.

The beauty of the day was made that much more spectacular when the President announced that he had just been informed that Toni Morrison had been awarded the Nobel Prize for literature.

It was a day for the President, on behalf of the nation, to thank all those individuals who help us become more aware, more knowledgeable, wiser, and make our lives richer. The President and the First Lady helped kick off a month-long celebration of the arts and of the humanities.

But as we look forward, we cannot forget from where we came. The National Endowment for the Humanities, after all, by its very definition, places great import on the study of history and how that study can direct the present. For example, in matters of public policy, we often turn to the wisdom of the founding fathers to guide our affairs of state.

I am therefore most pleased that we have in our midst today

two men who are our founding fathers, the men who were responsible for the creation of the National Endowments for the Arts and Humanities and the Institute for Museum Services. I am speaking, or course, of Senator Claiborne Pell and Senator Edward Kennedy. Their intellect, imagination, and vision created the original documents which have guided the arts, humanities and museum services for over twenty five years. Senators, we salute you.

Every time we witness the creation of new knowledge, encourage an individual to begin an intellectual pursuit or ignite widespread American participation in humanities activities, the importance of your work is reaffirmed. The academic world is greatly indebted to you for all that you have accomplished. No celebration of the humanities and the arts would be complete without acknowledging your founding role.

I am very grateful to both of you - and to you Senator Simpson - for your counsel and guidance through my confirmation process. I would, however, pose one question to you, Senator Pell. And that is - and I am speaking as a former Administrator at Princeton University - I noticed when I was in your office that the clapper from the famous bell tower at Princeton is mounted in your office and I was wondering how it has come to hang there?

[PELL SPEAKS]

To all the others gathered in this room tonight who labored so tirelessly during National Arts and Humanities month, we raise our glasses to you in salute as well. Thank you for your fine efforts. Thank you for making the celebration a great success.

Remarks by Sheldon Hackney  
Mississippi Council on the Humanities  
Jackson, Mississippi  
October 28, 1993

I am delighted to be here in Mississippi to pay tribute to one of the nation's most successful Humanities Councils by joining it in recognizing two citizens, Peggy Prenshaw and Ed Bishop, who have distinguished themselves through exemplary public service in promoting the humanities.

I believe so deeply in the transforming power of the humanities for individual lives, in the benevolent effect of the humanities on the community, and in the desperate need of our country for the sort of "big conversation" about our basic values and identity as a society that the humanities can foster, that I could not resist the invitation to join you and to say a word about civic virtue, as your own program termed it, or what might also be called community duty.

Voluntary service of the sort we honor tonight can be an individual expression of that sense of mutual obligation that holds society together. Americans in particular, given our frontier heritage and the emphasis in our culture on self-reliance, have trouble figuring out where the claims of self stop and the claims of others begin.

We find ourselves now at a particular historic juncture that renders problematic our sense of nationhood, the notion of what

it means to be American. The "new world order," full of hope for the spread of freedom though it is, seems thus far to have primarily unleashed the violent forces of communal, sectarian, religious, racial, national, and ethnic animosities. At just this time, a new sense of pride in American cultural pluralism has created a "politics of recognition" in which previously excluded groups insist upon the recognition of the legitimacy and equality of their group as a group before its members will be able to exercise their individual rights of citizenship.

In reaction, there has arisen a "politics of difference," full of distressed voices decrying the overemphasis of differences in American society and worrying about the loss of a sense of American unity. Demographics, domestic social movements, and world events conspire to produce a dangerous level of anxiety, and a worrisome amount of uncertainty about who we are as a nation and where we are going.

My thesis is that the sense of self as an individual and the sense of self as a social being are mutually dependent. The stonger the one is, the stonger the other will be as well. You can not be true to yourself unless you are true to others. You can not fully know who you are as an individual unless you understand the meaning of your multiple social identities and how they fit together.

This is a complicated and not very welcome message for our

narcissistic age. Worse yet, the discussion that we need can not be had because our wired-for-mass-communications society is vulnerable to the polarizing entertainments of Howard Stern or Beavis and Butthead as a substitute for honest thought, sound bite slogans instead of real ideas.

Robert Hughes in his best-selling book, The Culture of Complaint, complains about the rhetoric of victimhood on the Left and the shrill, irresponsible libertarianism on the Right. Victimhood denies the possibility of individual action and choice, while libertarianism denies the reality of social forces that impinge powerfully on individual lives, and especially on the lives of members of groups that are targets of discrimination. To ignore the malevolent effect of such social forces is to camouflage the need for collective action and mutual responsibility.

Hughes himself is in the middle somewhere, as am I and probably most of you. There, in the middle, Hughes seems to say, is to be found a sane and moral stance. I agree -- but how do we find it?

I begin with the notion that a little guilt is not a bad thing. Remember the crack that Woody Allen made as Broadway Danny Rose when asked by Mia Farrow, while they were discussing their contrasting philosophies of life, if he believed in God. "No," Allen replied, "but I believe in guilt."

He went on to explain his view that life was to have fun, sure, but it also included suffering. By extension, this curious comment implies that we are not simply pleasure-maximizing creatures, and to behave as if we are is to miss the meaning of life, to doom ourselves to an earthly hell of loneliness and guilt. We are all God's children and we are responsible for each other. We draw our meaning from the intricate texture of mutual obligations that bind us together in communities of various kinds. It is the violation of the obligations to others or to some moral standard that produces guilt.

Now, guilt is a powerful emotion; used in moderation, it is a force for the good. It causes us to recognize our sins of omission and commission, and it should move us to act in some fashion on that recognition. Philip Rieff reminds us in his book, The Triumph of the Therapeutic, that there is nothing in psychoanalytic theory that attempts to obliterate guilt, though there is a central purpose of distinguishing "guilt on the one hand and a [false] sense of guilt on the other, between responsibility for an offense committed and fantasies about offenses intended or merely imagined. . . ." The Freudian popularizers in the Age of Aquarius and the "me decade" have conveniently blurred that distinction so that the goal of modern life has become good living, tension free self-actualization in harmony with one's deepest self and the cosmos, rather than the good life in the moral sense. Guilt is the enemy of therapeutic Nirvana.

I have always been fascinated by the sense of guilt apparently felt frequently by combat veterans. They are tormented by the feeling of somehow having survived at the expense of their friends who did not. The random action of the battlefield spared them and not their comrades, and they are able to see no moral basis for the drastically different fates. This is an example of an inappropriate sense of guilt rather than authentic guilt, but it is also moving testimony to the often unspoken allegiance we should feel for each other. It is the essence of both our humanity and our spirituality. It is the thing that makes human community possible.

Extreme conditions bring out the best or the worst in us, and they also frequently reveal deep truths. Primo Levi, the Italian scientist and writer who died not long ago powerfully demonstrates this phenomenon in his book, Survival in Auschwitz, which he wrote immediately following the end of World War II, the last eleven months of which he spent as a prisoner in that Nazi chamber of horrors. His last book, published posthumously, also deals with his experiences in "the lager", and reveals that he spent much of his life obsessed with the task of ringing some meaning out of that inhuman experience and his own lingering sense of guilt, even though he was the victim.

In Survival in Auschwitz, through language that is clinical and sparse, Levi noted that a distinction was made in the camp, in the lager, between those who were strong enough to survive and

those who were too weak or were doomed to extermination for some other reason. There were terms for each category. He called them the "drowned" and the "saved."

"This division is much less evident in ordinary life; for there it rarely happens that a man loses himself. A man is normally not alone, and in his rise or fall is tied to the destinies of his neighbors; so that it is exceptional for anyone to acquire unlimited power, or to fall by a succession of defeats into utter ruin. Moreover, everyone is normally in possession of such spiritual, physical and even financial resources that the probabilities of a shipwreck, of total inadequacy in the face of life, are relatively small. And one must take into account a definite cushioning effect exercised both by the law, and by the moral sense which constitutes a self-imposed law; for a country is considered the more civilized the more the wisdom and efficiency of its laws hinder a weak man from becoming too weak or a powerful one too powerful.

"But in the larger things are different."

Umberto Eco, the Semiotics scholar who wrote The Name of the Rose, the intriguing and complex detective story set in a Medieval monastery, writes in Postscript to "The Name of the Rose", "After all, the fundamental question of Philosophy (like that of psychoanalysis) is the same as the question of the detective novel; who is guilty?"

The answer is both simple and profound: we are all guilty. We are guilty for acts of omission perhaps more than for acts of commission, omissions that allow the bonds of community to atrophy, that permit the cynical exploitation of public position for private gain, that tolerate large segments of the community being left to live alienated and impoverished lives cut off from any meaningful participation in the community or any real hope for the future.

The solution is straightforward, though difficult. Each of us must recognize the communal dimension of our individual lives. Using guilt as a guide, we must be moved to act in whatever ways are available to us as citizens to nurture the ties that bind us together in a single moral economy.

If we do not, Bosnia and Somalia and Azerbaijan and Northern Ireland will be our metaphor; and our sense of self, both individual and collective, will be impoverished.

The humanities can inform our efforts to define and reaffirm the values that we share, across all the ethnic, racial, gender, religious and linguistic divisions, the values that bind us together in a single society, the values that create one people out of many -- E Pluribus Unum. That conversation will help us to know who we are as a nation and who we are as individual Americans.

Remarks by Sheldon Hackney  
Woman's National Democratic Club  
November 1, 1993

I went last week to talk to a group of members of Congress about the National Endowment for the Humanities, and I began by saying that I thought the public was in a nasty mood. I saw heads nod all around the room. As soon as they could get the floor, they related anecdotes about constituents not only unhappy but expressing it in ways that were offensive and insulting beyond the experience of this set of public servants.

In yesterday's Washington Post, Henry Cisneros is quoted as saying, "The public is very angry and volatile and almost unpredictable in race after race." Kevin Phillips, elsewhere in the same newspaper, wrote about voter hostility toward elites of all kinds, about popular opposition to NAFTA as being a matter suspicious locals versus arrogant globals who are out of touch with mainstream America, and about ethnic and racial tensions throughout the country.

A couple of weeks ago (October 17, 1993) The New York Times published a feature article by William Grimes entitled "Have a #!&\$! Day" about the rising tide of incivility engulfing the country. From Howard Stern to Beavis and Butthead, we are assaulted daily by countless acts of public rudeness. Among the cultural roots of this phenomenon, Mr. Grimes focuses on cultural diversity. "New Yorkers have never been terribly civil," he

quotes a professor of the humanities at Cooper Union as saying, "but it never had an ideological edge, which it now has." Mr. Grimes goes on to quote the same professor approvingly in his critique of "the new tribalism": "If we have fundamentally different values and assumptions, there's no reason to believe we can transcend them in the political arena. . . . Multiculturalism argues that persuasion is irrelevant." [expand]

Incivility and ethnic conflict are related to each other and both are the result of long-term and complex factors at work in America that have eroded our sense of national solidarity and have raised doubts about the meaning of being American. The causal factors are worthy of a separate analysis, but my purpose here is to point to this festering problem of Americanism and the need for a national conversation about what our motto, E Pluribus Unum, means.

As of now, we have a few academics working quietly away at the problem and talking mainly to each other, and a handful of public intellectuals throwing sound bite slogans at each other. From one direction we hear, "There has been entirely too much emphasis on difference lately, too much attention being paid to what separates Americans from each other, and not enough focus on what we share." From the other direction we hear, "Yes, but there are still disadvantaged groups in America whose members will never feel equal or really part of America until their group is recognized in some way as being legitimate and equal." There

is, of course, some truth to both of these assertions.

In his best-selling book, The Culture of Complaint, Robert Hughes complains about the rhetoric of victimhood on the Left and the rhetoric of pure individualism on the Right. Victimhood denies the possibility of individual action and choice, while pure individualism denies the reality that one's gender or one's ethnic or racial or religious identity not only affects the way one behaves but affects the way one is treated by society, so pure individualism denies the need for collective action and mutual responsibility. Robert Hughes is located somewhere between these two positions, as am I and I suspect most of you. Somewhere in the middle is a sane and moral stance.

We find ourselves, however, caught in a dilemma. All of our legal rights are universal in nature and apply equally to all citizens as individuals. Yet, we know that racial, ethnic, gender and religious discrimination exists, and that group identities are real factors in our lives. Ethnic politics has been a staple on the American political scene for more than a hundred years and is still very much present in our system. The dilemma is that our legal rights are for individuals, but our politics are for groups.

That this is more than an academic argument is clear if one recalls the furor stirred up by proposals for bilingual education or Afrocentric curricula in schools, or the controversial court

decisions to remedy past discrimination in voting rights cases by requiring redistricting so as to guarantee the minority community representation on the legislative body. In each of these cases, and others you can probably think of yourselves, our public authorities seem to be conferring official status on some particular cultural group. Large parts of the public sense that this form of particularism is a problem in a system based on universal values of individual rights. It is one thing to believe that we must respect the pluralism of America, but it is something quite different to argue that some groups have powers or privileges that members of other groups don't have.

The humanities do not have an answer for this dilemma, but they can inform the discussion that desperately needs to take place. It should be a national conversation that includes all points of view and as many citizens as possible, and it must be a real conversation in which people listen to each other and try to understand other points of view.

I have for myself a beginning and tentative answer to the question of how to define American pluralism, but I would not insist that it is the right answer for everyone. I believe it is much more important that the discussion take place than that anyone agree with my answer, but I can outline it here.

The most important thing that we share as Americans is a belief in our political system, in the values that are enshrined

in the Constitution, and in the open democratic system for determining who makes the laws and enforces the laws that should flow from those principles. This shared belief is the single most important social cement that we have.

Second, in the "land of opportunity", we believe in equal economic opportunity for individuals. We know that we do not provide perfect equality of opportunity, but it is an ideal that we hold dear, and we have provided historically enough opportunity to keep individual hope alive and to maintain faith in the ideal.

Third, we have a history that belongs to all Americans, not just to those whose ancestors were here before the Revolution. That history is a proud one, but it has some dark spots and we must accept those imperfections as well as the glories. [expand on this] Most importantly, it is a history of finding solutions, of rising to historical challenges, and of finding ways to transform particular interests into the national interest.

Beyond these three fundamental sets of values, there are certain precepts that might help as we go through the discussion of what it means to be American. The traditional way of handling American cultural differences has been to think about a public sphere and a private sphere. In the public sphere only universalistic rules apply and only individual rights are legally protected. In the private sphere, particularism can operate, our

birthright group identities can be given voice and form. This distinction still goes a long way in sorting out conflicts of values.

Beyond this simple beginning, I believe we need to develop a sense of national identity that is shared by virtually everyone. We need also to develop a toleration of those values that remain in conflict. We need also to understand that group identities may not be permanent, so we need to leave them room to change and develop. [expand on this]

Most important, I believe that there is an American identity that is larger than our individual particular cultural identities and that it is inclusive of all those particular identities. The reinforcing relationship between the universal and the particular is an enriching feature of our national identity. We need to be clearer about what that relationship is. Then we will know that even if America sings with many different voices, those voices will sound harmoniously around a shared theme, and we will be once again confident in our ability to bring one people out of many.

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ADDRESS BY:

SHELDON HACKNEY, CHAIRMAN

NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES

MODERATOR:

GIL KLEIN

BODY:

MR. KLEIN: Good afternoon and welcome to the National Press Club. My name is Gil Klein, I am vice president of the club and a national correspondent for Media General Newspapers, writing for the Richmond Times Dispatch, the Tampa Tribune, and the Winston-Salem Journal.

I'd like to welcome club members and their guests in the audience today as well as those of you who are watching on C-SPAN or listening to this program on National Public Radio, or the Global Internet Computer Network.

Before introducing our head table I would like to remind our members of some upcoming speakers. On Thursday, November 11, Bobby Knight, Indiana University basketball coach, will discuss academic standards for athletes. That fits right in with today's program. (Laughter.)

On Tuesday, November 16, Yitzhak Rabin, the prime minister of Israel, will talk about peace in the Middle East. And on Wednesday, November 17, the inventor of Barney, Sheryl Leach, will discuss kids and television, and Barney himself will make an appearance. (Laughter.)

Other upcoming luncheon speakers include violence against women expert Catharine MacKinnon, the president of Harrah's Casinos Phil Satre, U.S. Surgeon General Joycelyn Elders, FBI Director Louis Freeh, and TV producer Norman Lear.

For the convenience of our audience, transcripts and audio and videotapes of this luncheon are available. The transcripts will be available for fax transmission within two hours. The transcripts or tapes may be ordered by calling 1-800-500-9911, and please note that's a new number from the one we used to give out here.

If you have any questions for our speaker, please write them on the cards provided at your table and pass them up to me, and I will ask as many as time allows.

I'd now like to introduce our head table guests, and ask them to stand briefly as their names are called.

From your right, Peggy Roberson of the national desk of Hearst Newspapers; Amy Schwartz, editorial writer for the Washington Post; Everett Fly, member of the board of the Federation of State Humanities Councils; Karl Tufano (sp), news editor of Newsday; Kathy Kiely, Washington bureau chief of the Houston Post and a member of the board of governors of the National Press Club; Lucy Durr Hackney, the wife of today's speaker. Skipping over our speaker for a moment, we have Reginald Stuart, assistant news editor of Knight-Ridder Newspapers and chairman of the National Press Club's Speaker's Committee; Alicia Juarrero, professor at Prince George's Community College and member of the National Council of the Endowment for the Humanities; Cheryl Fields, associate managing

Federal News Service, NOVEMBER 10, 1993

editor of the Chronical of Higher Education and a member of the National Press Club's Speaker's Committee who arranged today's luncheon; Steve Goldstein of the Philadelphia Inquirer; and finally, Kenneth Eskey, columnist for the Scripps-Howard Newspapers. (Applause.)

Also I'd like to thank staff members Melissa Bender, Pat Thornsberry and Melanie Aboul-McDermott (sp) and Jeff Tarbell for organizing today's luncheon.

Our speaker today, Sheldon Hackney, the newly appointed chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities. Mr. Hackney comes at us at a time when the culture wars are still waging across America. For Mr. Hackney, who controls \$180 million in federal grants for historical research, museum development and other cultural institutions that preserve the record of human development, deciding how to interpret American history is more than an academic exercise. He can put his money where his mouth is.

On his road to this position, Mr. Hackney became embroiled in a couple of the skirmishes of a cultural war. Certainly before the end of his 12 years as president of the University of Pennsylvania, two incidents that should have been of minor importance were splashed all over the nation. One was when black students stole 14,000 copies of an independent student newspaper, the Daily Pennsylvanian, because they were angered by the paper's treatment of racial issues. The other was a fracas that arose when a white student shouted, "Shut up you water buffaloes," to black students making noise outside his room. Suddenly conservatives were lambasting Hackney for not standing up for the rights of free expression. He was labeled the Pope of political correctness. Perhaps I should address you as His Holiness. (Laughter.)

Mr. Hackney easily won confirmation but the attacks left some scars. After spending a lifetime promoting free expression, he admitted to being hurt a little by the charges.

A native of Birmingham, Alabama, Mr. Hackney was turned on to history by two high school teachers. He earned a bachelor's degree at Vanderbilt University and studied under the renowned southern historian C. Van Woodward at Yale, where he earned his doctorate. He made a contribution to the study of southern history as a professor at Princeton, and soon moved to administration, first as Princeton's provost, then as president of Tulane University, and finally leading the University of Pennsylvania.

But now that he's settled in at his desk at the National Endowment, he says he's putting all of the controversy behind him. His primary message, he says, is the joy of knowledge. He wants to start a national conversation about what are America's core values. Who are we as a people? Do we have a single heritage or a multiple heritage? What is justice in a pluralistic society?

Mr. Hackney, if you can begin to find answers to those questions, you will have done the nation a great service. So let the national conversation begin.

Ladies and gentlemen, please join me in a warm Press Club welcome for Mr.

Sheldon Hackney. (Applause.)

MR. HACKNEY: Thank you very much. (Applause)

I appreciate that welcome very much and the introduction, I must say, which was kinder than my other introductions to Washington. (Laughs.)

I had intended, of course, to slip into town unnoticed and to take up this new task at the National Endowment for the Humanities, but fate would not have it quite that way. But I am there now and enjoying it a lot.

I am honored to be at the National Endowment for the humanities. I think it is a good job for me. I remember being called soon after the president's intention to nominate me was announced, by my brother from Birmingham, and he said what a thrilling thing it was, how terrific, a perfect job, now what does the NEH actually do? (Laughter.)

And I have been facing that question, but as I go around in my new capacity as

Federal News Service, NOVEMBER 10, 1993

the chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities, the most troublesome question that I get, and the one that is most difficult to answer, is simply the question of what are the humanities and why do we need them? Well, let me say a word about that. What we think of ourselves, what we see as admirable behavior, what we think it means to be human, what we recognize as the human condition, what we learn from human experience and human thought, what we accept as the purpose of life, what we define as a just society, what we decide that we owe to each other, what we understand as how the world works are not simply matters of idle curiosity but fundamental determinants of our existence. The humanities, I think, matter. They are important to everyone. They are so important that the federal government needs to foster their development and ensure their broad availability. That, I believe, is the genius of the vision of Senator Claiborne Pell, and Senator Jacob Javits, and Senator Edward Kennedy, and President Lyndon Johnson and other founders of the National Endowment for the Humanities in 1965 and it has been the inspiration, the nurturers of that vision in the succeeding 28 years.

What we think determines what we do, and what we think, even what we think about the values that we hold dear, will be enormously improved if it is informed by knowledge and disciplined thought, by the study of history and philosophy and literature and religion. That is what Maya Angelou had in mind in her inaugural poem last January, when she rephrased George Santiano; history, despite its wrenching pain, cannot be unlived, but is faced with courage, need not be lived again.

The same theme was struck by President Clinton in his dedication of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in April. There, after enumerating some of the evil forces that are loose in the world, that threaten civilization with brutality, just as the NAZIs once did, the president exhorted us all to be vigilant against the falsifiers of history. With them we must all compete for the interpretation and the preservation of history, of what we know and how we should behave.

Well, I have begun with these powerful sentiments because I believe that I am joining a very distinguished tradition at the NEH, at a particularly critical juncture in the nation's history, when the benefits of the humanities are especially important. Let me explain.

Last week, Mark Shields in his newspaper column reminded us of the current cynicism of the American public, or more precisely, the lack of confidence that the public has in the national government to handle our domestic problems adequately. One can think of a lot of reasons for the public to be in an anxious mood these days, but as Mr. Shields points out, the decline in public confidence began more than two decades ago, some time in the 1960s.

My own understanding of this worrisome phenomenon is (held ?) by realizing that it is not simply the national government that has slipped in the estimation of the American public, but public confidence in all American institutions has declined. I used to, as a university president, to take a smidgen of perverse pleasure in the fact that universities ranked higher in the public's estimation than our chief tormentors, the Congress and the press. But the grim truth is that levels of confidence in institutions of American life rise and fall together. And the secular trend line for more than the last two decades has been down.

Just before the election a week ago, Kevin Phillips wrote about voter hostility towards elites of all kind, about popular opposition to NAFTA as being a matter of suspicious locals versus arrogant globals who were out of touch with mainstream America, and about ethnic and racial tensions throughout the country. The off year elections confirmed this diagnosis of anger and volatility in the public mood. Why the cynicism? Why the insecurity? Why the alienation?

Federal News Service, NOVEMBER 10, 1993

The short answer is that the new geopolitical forces of the still evolving new world order and the newly visible economic forces of the global marketplace are battering a society whose bonds of social cohesion have been loosening for a quarter of a century or more.

This isn't really the place to try to explain in great detail the fundamental economic, demographic and social forces that have an atomizing effect on society, but those forces are real and they have been acting over a very long period of time.

In addition, the basic confidence and optimism thought to be embedded in American national character were dealt a severe blow or a series of severe blows in the early 1970s by the loss of the war in Vietnam, the disgrace of the presidency in the Watergate scandal, the economic shock of the Arab oil embargo which was perhaps the first painful message that our economy was vulnerable to development and decisions in the world economy in a way that we had no control over.

Enter this condition of attenuated solidarity, the politics of difference has introduced another lever of fragmentation. During the very turbulent decade of the 1960s, almost all the values and the verities of middle class life were challenged by the counter culture, leaving the domain of values a contested territory.

The cultural consensus of the 1950s, what everyone thinks of it, was destroyed in that process. And we have not yet fully developed a new consensus.

In addition, the successful civil rights movement provided a paradigm for progress through protest, movements on behalf of groups, other groups that had been excluded from full participation in American life. Here I am thinking of women, of gays and lesbians, the handicapped, native Americans, Latinos, and to some extent Asian-Americans. All those groups adopted the paradigm of progress through protest.

Then, the collapse of the Soviet system, while lifting our spirits and hopes for the spread of human freedom, has also unleashed pent up, ancient animosities. Around the globe we see conflict and violence sewing misery along the fault lines of race, religion, language and ethnicity, just the sorts of divisions being brought to our attention by the politics of difference and by the increasing cultural diversity of our population.

As the insecurities of a rapidly changing world are luring Americans and others around the world into clutching and reasserting their parochial identity, Americans must wonder if Bosnia and Azerbaijan are just previews of our own future.

Several weeks ago the New York Times published a feature article by William Grimes entitled "Have a, expletive deleted, Day" about the rising -- if you want the exact quotation it is pound sign, percentage sign, exclamation point, and sign, dollar sign and exclamation point. There is some sort of speech code at the Times, I am sure. (Laughter.) You're a little slow. (Laughter.) This article, which I think is a fine article, is about the rising tide of incivility that seems to be engulfing the country. From Howard Stern to Beavis and Butt-Head, we are assaulted daily by countless acts of public rudeness. Among the cultural roots of this phenomenon, Mr. Grimes focuses on cultural diversity. New Yorkers have never been terribly civil, he quotes a professor of the humanities at Cooper Union as saying, but it never had an ideological edge which it now has.

Mr. Grimes goes on to quote the same professor approvingly in his critique of the new tribalism. If we have fundamentally different values and assumptions, there is no reason to believe we can transcend them in the political arena.

Multiculturalism argues that persuasion is irrelevant.

Well, small wonder that reasonable voices have lately been saying that we have

Federal News Service, NOVEMBER 10, 1993

been paying too much attention to our differences and not enough attention to the things that hold us together.

From the other direction, however, we continue to hear assertions of what Charles Taylor, the philosopher, refers to as the politics of recognition, the notion that there are still disadvantaged groups in America who's members will never feel equal or really part of America until their group is recognized in some way as being legitimate and equal. There is truth in both of these positions.

We find ourselves caught in a dilemma. All of our legal rights are universal in nature and apply equally to all citizens as individuals. Yet, we know that racial, ethnic, gender and religious discrimination exist, and that group identities are real factors in our lives.

Ethnic politics has been a staple in the American political scene for more than 100 years and is still very much present in our system. The dilemma is that our legal rights are for individuals, but our politics are for groups. Now that this is more than an academic argument, is clear if one recalls the hand-to-hand combat of school board battles involving such issues as bilingual education or Afrocentric curricula, the dispute over the literary canon at the college level, or the court decisions seeking to remedy past patterns of discrimination in voting rights cases by requiring redistricting or changes in the form of local government so as to guarantee the minority community representation in the legislative body.

In each of these cases and others that you can probably think of yourselves, public authorities are being asked to confer some sort of official status on a particular cultural group. Large parts of the public sense that this form of particularism is a problem in a system based on universal values of individual rights. Simply saying that everyone must respect everyone else's ethnic identity, therefore does not solve the problem. Yet a solution must be found if we are to recapture a confident sense of shared values that will let us deal with the divisive public policy issues with a common goal in mind. What is needed in our country is nothing short of a national conversation about this difficult and troubling dilemma. All of our people, left, right and center, have a responsibility to examine and discuss what unites us as a country, about what we share as common American values in a nation comprised of so many divergent groups and beliefs.

For too long we have let that which divides us capture the headlines. Current public debate is little more than posturing, bombarded by slogans and epithets, points and counterpoints, our thoughts are polarized into rapid fire exchange of sound bites. In this kind of argument one is either right or wrong, for them or against them, a winner or a loser. Real answers are the casualties of such drive-by debates.

In this kind of discussion there is no room for complexity and ambiguity, there is no room in the middle. Only the opposite polls are given voice. That may be good entertainment, but it is a disservice to the American people. It only reinforces lines of division and does not build toward agreement.

I want to change the rules of engagement for this national conversation. This is to be a national conversation open to all Americans, a conversation in which all voices need to be heard, and in which we must grapple seriously with the meaning of American pluralism. It is a conversation that is desperately needed, and I believe that the National Endowment for the Humanities can stimulate and facilitate that discussion.

The NEH, of course, will not bring answers, but we will bring questions. To be sure, the NEH has other important tasks, as the single most important source of support for the humanities in American life, receiving approximately 9,000 applications a year, and dispensing \$150 million through about 2,000 grants,

Federal News Service, NOVEMBER 10, 1993

we have a major role to play in assisting in the creation of new knowledge, translating that knowledge in the humanities into educational experiences both formal and informal, and in extending the reach of the humanities through programs that embrace many more Americans, so that they may benefit from the transforming power in the humanities, in their everyday lives.

We will continue to support individual scholars, both in the academy and outside. We will continue to bring high school and college teachers together on university campuses for summer seminars that refresh and reinvigorate them. We will continue to support programs in museums and libraries, and archives where our cultural heritage is preserved, and used for public programs, and made available for study. We will continue to fund excellent programs through the mass media, such as Ken Burns' documentary on the Civil War and Henry Hampton's series on The Great Depression. And we will work with renewed enthusiasm with state humanities councils to enlist more Americans in humanities activities, be it reading and discussion groups, or to talk -- or communities recording and telling their own story, connecting individuals and groups to the broader context of human experience so that they become the subjects of history rather than its objects.

With some of our time and energy, however, and a little bit of our money, we will conduct a national conversation. I have been very pleased to discover that numerous programs sponsored by the state humanities councils, have already started people talking to each other and with each other about who we are as a nation and what holds us together. The projects have taken many forms. Small town residents and farmers gathering under Chataqua tents in North Dakota or Wyoming, exploring American democracy and the ideas of Thomas Jefferson. Citizens in Florida meeting to explore the search for the common good. Californians reading and discussing serious essays on the topic of longing for community, dream or nightmare. Or hundreds of Iowans meeting to explore religious pluralism in a program called Faith and Politics, American Pluralism Can We Live Together.

I am encouraging the Federation of State Humanities Councils and the individual state councils to intensify their pursuit of this theme and to explore it in programs of their own devising. I will set aside a modest but significant amount of money for an endowment-wide initiative that can respond to competitive proposals from all around the country, from state councils, from libraries, museums and archives, from schools and colleges and universities, from centers and institutes.

I am also delightfully aware that a number of scholars from various disciplines and many different points of view, have been talking and writing about this subject of the national conversation for the last three or four years. The MacArthur Foundation has agreed to be an early partner in this enterprise, by bringing together a group of these already engaged scholars to talk to each other. And out of that small discussion and others that are already taking place at the local level, we will gain some insights into various aspects of this subject, into how to phrase the questions productively, into what sorts of materials stimulate the most fruitful discussions, and into the range of possible answers.

I imagine that after some experience, we should be able to conduct this conversation through mass media formats. This really is an exciting undertaking for the NEH and for the country.

Now my own notion of the meaning of American pluralism is still evolving, and in a case is certainly not prescriptive. Yet, it might help if I sketch for you some of the elements of it here.

My answer has as its preface a belief that there is an American identity, that it's different from the identities of any one of the ethnic groups that

Federal News Service, NOVEMBER 10, 1993

comprise the American population, that is inclusive of all of those particular identities and that is available to everyone who is an American. It is an identity that has been shaped by the buffeting and melding of individuals and groups in North America over the last 300 years.

I believe that the most important thing that we share as Americans is a belief in the political system, in the values that are enshrined in the Constitution, and in the open democratic system for determining who makes and who enforces the laws, and that laws should be consistent with those principles.

Further, in this land of opportunity, we believe in equal economic opportunity for individuals. We know that we do not perfectly provide equal opportunity, but it is an ideal that we hold dear, and we have historically provided enough opportunity to keep individual hope alive and to maintain faith in the ideal. We also have a history that belongs to all Americans whenever their ancestors happen to have migrated to these shores. That history is a proud one, but it has some dark spots and we must come to terms with those imperfections as well as the glory.

I am, for instance, a white Southern male, but I claim as part of my own story the experiences of Italians, and Irish, and Jews coming into America through Ellis Island in the late 19th and early 20th century, and the experience of African Americans who lived in the South, with my ancestors, and saw it from a very different point of view. Or more recently, the experience of South Asians and Latinos coming into a more mature country.

My story should be their's as well, and we all possess together the national story, the resultant of many different vectors, the story of our being able to find solutions, to rise to historical challenges, and find ways to transform particular interests into the national interest.

Beyond these individual building blocks, there are a few precepts that might help us as we go through the discussion about what it means to be American. The traditional way of handling cultural differences has been to think about a public sphere and a private sphere. In the public sphere, only universalistic rules are legitimate and only individual rights are legally protected. In the private sphere, we can give voice and form to our birth right identities without being any less American. This distinction still goes a long way in sorting out the conflicts between the universal and the particular. Indeed, if there is no distinction between the public and the private, all values would be up for political adjudication and that is not a system that I find very attractive. One of the factors causing the current sense of urgency about this subject is the feeling that the public or political sphere has been encroaching on the private sphere. Let your culture be your politics, the cultural radicals of the 1960s chanted. All politics are personal and all personal relationships are political assert some contemporary activists. Where in all of this are the ordinary virtues that we ought to be able to expect from each other? Perhaps they can emerge from the big conversation.

It also helps to realize that all ethnic groups have permeable boundaries and that the meaning of any particular identity will change over time. What it felt like to be a white Southerner in 1865 is different from what it felt like in 1950, and it is different still again today. What it means to be a Jew in America is different today from what it was in 1940. History has a way of changing who we think we are.

This subject is elusive but it is very important. If the conversation works well we will stake out some common ground, and by doing that we will make it possible to celebrate more fully the variations among us that play against each other and reinforce each other to produce a dynamic national identity.

As President Clinton said in a different context at the dedication of the Holocaust Memorial Museum, we must find in our diversity our common humanity.

Federal News Service, NOVEMBER 10, 1993

We must reaffirm that common humanity, even in the darkest and deepest of our own disagreements. In that spirit, I am looking forward to this conversation among the American people. In that spirit I challenge you in the press to help focus the attention of the American people on this quest for the meaning of E Pluribus Unum.

Thank you. (Applause.)

MR. KLEIN: Thank you very much, Mr. Hackney. We've got quite a few questions, but I certainly invite you to think up some real tough ones and send them up here. The first question is --

MR. HACKNEY: Don't worry --

MR. KLEIN: We could get into southern agrarian reform in the 1890s if we want to use up another few minutes here.

The first question was, would you characterize the Perot-Gore meeting of last night -- (laughter) -- as a drive-by debate, a monument to insurability, or both? Does this sort of show hurt the "national conversation" of which you speak? (Laughter.)

MR. HACKNEY: Well, I was out last night, didn't get a chance to watch. So the only thing I know is what I read in the papers and I'm not sure that's an adequate basis on which to pass judgment. (Laughter.)

MR. KLEIN: Did anybody see that fastball go by here? (Laughter.)

Okay, next question. Your predecessor, Lynne Cheney, in her last presentation here delivered a report that lambasted universities for being narrow in their approach, that they have been taken over by liberal thought police who were not allowing a wide range of debate and scholarly research in departments, especially like history. Do you agree with her or where do you come down on that?

MR. HACKNEY: Well, I worked for 12 years to try to get control of the debate at Penn and never succeeded. (Laughs.) So actually, more seriously, I think that free speech is alive and well on college campuses across the country. This is a debate about what the reality is, not about what the values should be.

I think we all -- I hope that we all agree that academic freedom is precious to us as a nation and to the health of universities. That freedom is still being protected on college campuses. There are always pending threats to that, and I would agree that there are worrisome intellectual forces that might threaten some of the intellectual progress, and perhaps even some of the free speech on college campuses. I do not think they are in control, I hope they will never become in control. So I will watch the scene from Washington to see what happens in the future. I did my bit while I was there.

MR. KLEIN: The historian, Arthur Schlesinger, wrote that Afro-centric education is an actually detrimental force moving the country toward political apartheid. Do you agree -- where do you come down on Afro-centric education? Is that something that you would like to promote or not?

MR. HACKNEY: Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., is one of those reasonable voices that I had in mind in the talk. He is worried that we have placed too much emphasis on differences and not enough on our similarities and what we share, and in that I do agree with him.

Afro-centric education means so many different things to different people that I think it's not very useful to try to respond in general. Educationally, it does make a lot of sense to try to reach people educationally in what -- through a subject that they respond to automatically. I became a southern historian -- I look back and now realize -- because I was interested in finding out who I was. I think that is something that we all share, especially in the late teenage years as we're coming to maturity. When we're having our identity crisis and trying to define who we are as individuals and what sort of person we want to be, we need to know more about who we are and where we come from. It is

Federal News Service, NOVEMBER 10, 1993

natural to try to -- to want to explore those roots. So in that sense of Afro-centrism, I think it is quite useful. But there may be other senses in which I would not agree that it is a good thing to base a curriculum around.

MR. KLEIN: This questioner would like to know would you consider withholding NEH grants to any institution that does not unequivocally support free speech issues; for example, that is slow to condemn the trashing of controversial student newspapers?

MR. HACKNEY: No, the -- I think the criteria for NEH grants should be the quality of the grant itself, in what it promises to do for the American people. I don't think any sort of muzzling is in order.

MR. KLEIN: How do you think the nation's public institutions -- cultural, educational, civic -- should deal with the rise in America's Hispanic population? Where do you come down on the debate over bilingual education?

MR. HACKNEY: (Chuckles.) Actually, I am not an expert in bilingual education, so I really can't comment fruitfully. I mentioned it in my talk because it is an example of a debate that has been raging and that is being fought out basically on the evidence about the educational effects or with them, of using bilingual education in order to reach children and educate them, but on the notion of what is American. It is a great example of how we need to have the discussion first about what it means to be American before subjects like bilingual education can really be faced on their merits.

MR. KLEIN: Do you really expect the national conversation to engage the American people and how will you reach the people in Peoria?

MR. HACKNEY: (Chuckles.) That's a question that I take to have really two different parts -- or at least, in my mind, there is a format question or a matter of how do we reach people actually, physically? How do we get them together to talk about this? And maybe a prior question about are the -- are people going to be interested?

I have talked to a lot of small groups. I've talked to a group of congressmen about two weeks ago, I've talked to a group of foundation heads, I've talked to members of Jenielle Pendleton's (sp) Federation of State Humanities Councils about this. I've talked to a number of other groups, and simply mentioning the need for this national conversation, their conversation takes off, and I'm left behind. They want to talk about the substance of this. So I think there is no -- if the question is phrased properly, and if the surroundings are appropriate, I think it is a conversation that that American people are dying to have. The question about how -- this is a nation of, what, 250 [million], 260 million people. How do you engage them all? Well, clearly we can't do that all at the same time.

My own notion is that the subject is sufficiently volatile so that we want to make sure that we know how to phrase it productively, how to get the kind of conversation going that we want to have going; a serious conversation in which ideas are exchanged and people's positions are at least available for changing during the conversation.

So I think face-to-face meetings at the local level throughout the country are a good way to begin. We will learn from those meetings, and then we can take what we learn there about how the discussion goes to perhaps have electronic town meetings or have a panel program, like the old Fred Friendly programs, in which a panel of people responds to an interlocutor who is well versed in the subject and presses them about what they mean in their position on what it means to be an American. There are ways to do that through mass media, but I would think that the mass media would be -- not be a first step, but perhaps the second or the third step.

MR. KLEIN: I have a son in the fifth grade and I have seen what has happened to American history education, at least at the elementary school level, that it's

Federal News Service, NOVEMBER 10, 1993

been watered down. In studying Virginia history, they got all the way up to maybe the American Revolution before the year ended because they had so many things they had to cover that were not there when I was there. Do you see a need to overhaul historical education in the elementary and secondary levels?

MR. HACKNEY: It would be a blessing. This is something on which I have opinions that have nothing to do with the NEH. I'll give you my prejudices.

MR. KLEIN: Good.

MR. HACKNEY: We do have a problem in the teaching of history in this country, and I believe it does need some attention because I believe history is one of the disciplines that gives one a sense of place and time and who one is, and it is not simply one damn thing after another. It really -- it is -- (laughter) -- it is best told and taught as a story. As a story, it is gripping and riveting and automatically interesting, and we can place ourselves in it and relate to it, and it shouldn't be a list of names and dates and battles and elections. There are problems also in history, and I think as students get older and more sophisticated, they get much more interested in the why questions of history and using the why questions: Why did the Civil War occur? Why, indeed, did the South lose or why did the North win? The North -- see! The Union! (Laughter.) I mean, those are really interesting questions, and you need to know something before you can answer them. And if you tease the students with the question and get them interested in the question, then they want to go learn what they need to know in order to answer the question. That's, I think, maybe the best approach.

Now, there is one thing that the NEH is doing that is in this area, and that is working with scholars across the country and with various historical organizations to create some national standards for history for the schools. And this will be -- is part of the Goals 2000 effort. I think it is a tricky thing to devise national standards, but we are doing it in a very collegial way and I think a consensus has developed on the American history standards, and that's something I'm very pleased about. Secretary Riley is very enthusiastic about such standards not only in history but in other fields, and the NEH is cooperating by leading the effort to provide or establish standards in several fields, including history and a few others.

MR. KLEIN: You had said at an interview -- following up on this -- that you had two history teachers in high school who really turned you on to this and that they were just using the old roll-down maps. What was it in their teaching method that connected with you?

MR. HACKNEY: That is a good question because all they had was a chalk board and these old musty, oily, roll-down maps. I found the maps fascinating for some reason. But they talked history as an interesting story and they were also quite demanding. They were known as very tough teachers, so there was a bit of a challenge to see how well one can do in their classes. But they also clearly cared about their subject. They were enthusiastic about it and they conveyed that enthusiasm for the subject to their students. Being in their class was fun, it was challenging, it was interesting, never boring; you could never go to sleep there because they were always about to call on you to ask you what you knew. All those teaching techniques they had, these old fashioned teaching techniques. They were very good at those.

MR. KLEIN: Why is it so hard for the American people and Congress to understand what the humanities are? What can be done to promote understanding of the importance of humanities in American life?

MR. HACKNEY: I have just tried to do some of that. (Laughter.) But it is an interesting question. You notice that, when the Congress authorized or created the endowment in 1965, they wrestled with the question of what the humanities are, how you define them. And they settled not for trying to define the

Federal News Service, NOVEMBER 10, 1993

humanities, but simply listing the disciplines. And in every authorization since that time, you will find not a definition of the humanities, but a list of disciplines that are included. And it's not an inclusive list. It is a suggestive list of the humanities. And there are other things that you can study that aren't listed that have humanities content. Science. There is a way to do science that has humanistic content.

It is a very difficult subject. I was part of the Rockefeller Commission on the Humanities in the 1979-80, and we spent -- distinguished people sitting around a table talking about the humanities and gathering data. We spent fully six months of that one-year project arguing about how to define the humanities. And I came away thinking that it really wasn't very productive to try to do that. So I've tried to avoid it. I do have a shorthand definition of my own that I use in my own thinking, which is that the humanities are those things that cause people to think about the big questions -- who they are as humans, where their place in the world is, what the purpose of life is -- all those big questions -- what the human condition is and so on. You can do that through literature. You can do that through the study of history. You can do that through the study of philosophy and the study of a lot of other things. But that basically is what it is.

MR. KLEIN: Just recently, in the past couple of years, we had the 500th anniversary of Columbus. We had Jefferson's 250th birthday, I believe. In both cases, both men were kind of redefined, not necessarily positively. Do you think that this trend is going too far, that we're looking -- we're trashing our old heroes too much? Is there not some value to keeping national icons?

MR. HACKNEY: Yes, but -- I agree that there is some value in having heroes, but one can't fence in the truth. You really have to pursue it. If unpleasant facts are discovered about someone that we take to be hero, then one simply can't suppress them. You have to build it into an interpretation of their character. And one hopes that there is a judgment about historical figures that is rounded and considered and appropriate. That is a subject for discussion. In the case of the quincentennial of the discovery of America, which became very controversial, I felt that was a bit of a shame that we did not have a chance to understand, to study again, to revisit, and to celebrate the history of this hemisphere because it became so controversial. Actually, that is one of the things that had in mind when thinking about the need for this national conversation about who we are. Had we more shared values -- that is, had we a deeper shared understanding of what American pluralism is -- I think we would not have gone through that pretty divisive discussion about how to celebrate the quincentennial, because we would have a shared sense of what is appropriate and how different parts of the population fit into that celebration.

MR. KLEIN: This questioner wants to know how much money will the new -- will the National Endowment spend to fund the National Conversation Program. Will you be asking the administration and Congress to fund it with additional appropriations?

MR. HACKNEY: No. There is -- I will not be asking for more money. I will be asking for more money all the time, but not for this. This will come out of funds that now exist in the public programs. We're still arm-wrestling a bit about how much it should be, but it will be a big six-figure number in the public programs area. And I'm looking forward to that. It should be enough to make possible activities at the local level that are significant. But it should not be so large as to distort our program effort in general, because that program effort is so important in its own right that I don't want to do that.

MR. KLEIN: This questioner wants to know, do you think there's a revitalization of religion going on in America? If religion, like humanities in your definition, also makes people think about the big issues, is there a place for

it in this national conversation? And is there a place for teaching about history -- religion in a historical context?

MR. HACKNEY: Absolutely. My own sense is that there is an increase in the interest of Americans in religion. I saw that on the university campus at the University of Pennsylvania. More students were more active in religious organizations. And I'm thinking here not simply of the rise of the religious right, which is a political phenomenon, but in a more broad-spread resurgence of interest in the spiritual aspects of life in general.

There certainly -- the study of religion is a humanities discipline, and I would think that it has a firm place right in the middle of this national conversation and in everything that the humanities do and what the NEH does -- a legitimate subject.

MR. KLEIN: What would you say to conservatives who have said they will be watching your performance at NEH for evidence of liberal political bias? (Laughter.)

MR. HACKNEY: I take my position to be a position of public trust. I am responsible for the funds that are appropriated by the Congress and made available by the president. I expect some scrutiny. I would hope that it is fair. I am quite willing to be judged by what the NEH does when I am the chairman -- while I am the chairman. I am looking forward to that. So I don't take that as a dire threat at all, as long as it's a fair scrutiny. (Applause.)

MR. KLEIN: This questioner begins with an assertion which I do not know whether it's true or not. It appears President Clinton is more interested in the arts and humanities than any president in recent history. What collaboration or support do you and the other endowments have with the administration?

MR. HACKNEY: I'll leave aside the introductory clause and say that the president and the first lady are interested in the arts and the humanities. They made this very evident in October when they declared October to be National Arts and Humanities Month or, as we like to say at the NEH, National Humanities and Arts Month. (Laughter.) And they had a wonderful ceremony on the South Lawn of the White House at which the National Medals of Art were awarded and the Frankel Prizes in the Humanities were awarded by the president. And there was a dinner -- a gala dinner that night, the first formal dinner in the White House since last January, which I think indicates very clearly how important the first family thinks the arts and the humanities are for America.

They happen to be busy people. I would like to get them more involved in the activities that we are stirring up here in Washington and around the country, but we will be asking for their help, and we have been assured that we will get it.

MR. KLEIN: This questioner asks, could you say something about the National Endowment of the Humanities and the National Science Foundation collaboration?

MR. HACKNEY: Ah, maybe there -- I have some colleagues who are here who might be able to speak to that more generally. We have an interesting collaboration with the National Science Foundation which both agencies are putting up some of their money to promote the study of the sciences. In our case it's the sciences with something of a humanistic bent because science is at the base of our high tech civilization our high tech economy, certainly, and of our lives. So we want to understand how science is done, how it affects our lives. So it is a very useful cooperation and some evidence that there are ways in which the NEH can multiply the effects of its very slender tax dollars that are appropriated to have a bigger impact on the American public than it would otherwise, by cooperating with other federal agencies and with foundations, and with other private organizations outside of government. So I am very pleased with the NSF collaboration and we will be continuing that.

MR. KLEIN: A real parochial issue. I understand that you are working on a

Federal News Service, NOVEMBER 10, 1993

major program to preserve newspapers in the United States, something that we certainly appreciate because we don't like them all being thrown away as fish wrappers the next day. (Laughter.) Can you tell us a little bit about what you're doing and why is there a need to preserve newspapers?

MR. HACKNEY: After the late 19th century, newspapers were printed on acid paper. They are extraordinarily brittle. In the research that I did on Alabama in the late 19th century, I used newspapers that were really falling apart in my hands as I turned over the pages. We are losing the national patrimony, the national heritage, if you will, in information about American history, both in the newspapers and in brittle books.

We have large projects going in both areas that involve microfilming, books and newspapers, two separate projects, actually, to try to preserve them. The digital world is coming and we now have some projects going that are exploring digital technology to see what it can contribute to the preservation effort. There is a national plan now that is being followed by the NEH and by other -- by major libraries and organizations to preserve, to make sure that we preserve the right books as we preserve books that need preserving. The newspaper project has been going on for longer, George, and 46 states are participating in the newspaper project. And all of the colonial imprints are on microfilm and microfiche?

Q (Off mike)

MR. HACKNEY: The focus is on 19th century papers if you did not hear that, but it's a wonderful way in which the NEH can contribute in an invisible way. I mean nobody every knows about this, but if we are not active in this area, then the books and the newspapers and other documents that are in our archives and libraries, in museums, will not be there in 10 years or 20 years, or 30 years for use by the public and for use by scholars. So it's very important.

MR. KLEIN: Before asking the last question, I would like to present you with this certificate of appreciation for appearing here, and of course a National Press Club mug, which I am sure you will like to put in the family archives.

MR. HACKNEY: Will indeed. (Laughter)

MR. KLEIN: And the last question is which is doing more to undermine American civilization, Beavis and Butt-head or the Simpsons? (Laughter.)

MR. HACKNEY: That's a hard choice. I think Beavis and Butt-head and the Simpsons are symptomatic of something that we were actually talking about a bit here at dinner, that is we are living in a communications environment which has had effects that we can recognize, and a lot of effects that we have not yet defined.

We are wired for instantaneous communication all across the country. That is so much so that the thirst for analysis and for the exchange of repartee is degraded a bit as it were, so rapid.

I tend to look at Beavis and Butt-head not as a cause but as a symptom and we're trying to get at the cause here through the national conversation.

MR. KLEIN: Thank you very much.

Just before we close I'd like to remind you that transcripts now are available along with tapes, audio and video, at the National Press Club library, or by calling 1-800-500-9911.

And Mr. Hackney, thank you very much for being here. I appreciate it.

(Applause.)

END

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE-MDC: November 10, 1993

**"Beyond the Culture Wars"**  
**by Sheldon Hackney**  
**Chairman, National Endowment for the Humanities**  
**National Press Club**  
**November 10, 1993**

What we think about ourselves, what we see as admirable behavior, what we think it means to be human, what we recognize as the human condition, what we learn from human experience and human thought, what we accept as the purpose of life, what we define as a just society, what we decide we owe to each other, what we understand as the way the world works are not simply matters of idle curiosity but fundamental determinants of our existence. The humanities matter. They are important to everyone.

They are so important that the federal government needs to foster their development and insure their broad availability. That is the genius of the vision of Senator Claiborne Pell and Senator Jacob Javits and Senator Edward Kennedy and President Lyndon Johnson and the other founders of the National Endowment for the Humanities in 1965, and it has been the inspiration of the nurturers of that vision in the succeeding twenty-eight years. What we think determines what we do, and what we think (even about the values we hold dear) will be enormously improved if it is informed by knowledge and disciplined thought by the study of History and Philosophy and Literature and Religion.

That is what Maya Angelou had in mind in her inaugural poem last January when she rephrased George Santayana: "History, despite its wrenching pain,/ Cannot be unlived, but if faced/ With courage, need not be lived again." The same theme was struck by President Clinton in his dedication of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in April. After enumerating some of the evil forces loose in the world that threaten civilization with brutality just as the Nazis once did, the President exhorted us all to be vigilant against the falsifiers of history, "With them we must all compete for the interpretation and the preservation of history, of what we know and how we should behave."

I begin with these powerful sentiments because I believe that I am joining a distinguished tradition at the NEH at a particularly critical juncture in the nation's history when the benefits of the humanities are especially important. Let me explain.

Last week (November 3, 1993) Mark Shields in his newspaper column reminded us of the current cynicism of the American public, or more precisely the lack of confidence that the public has in the national government to handle our domestic problems adequately. One can think of a lot of reasons for the public to

be in an anxious mood these days, but as Mr. Shields points out, the decline in public confidence began more than two decades ago, sometime in the 1960s.

My own understanding of this worrisome phenomenon is helped by realizing that it is not simply the national government that has slipped in the estimation of the American public, but that public confidence in all American institutions has declined. I used to take a smidgeon of perverse pleasure as a university president in the fact that universities ranked higher in the public's estimation than our chief tormentors, the Congress and the press, but the grim truth is that levels of confidence in the institutions of American life rise and fall together, and the secular trend line for more than the last two decades has been down.

Just before the election (October 31, 1993 in the Washington Post), Kevin Phillips wrote about voter hostility towards elites of all kinds, about popular opposition to NAFTA as being a matter of suspicious locals versus arrogant globals who are out of touch with mainstream America, and about ethnic and racial tensions throughout the country. The off-year elections confirmed this diagnosis of anger and volatility in the public mood.

Why the cynicism? Why the insecurity? Why the alienation? The short answer is that the new geopolitical forces of the still evolving "new world order," and the newly visible economic forces of the global marketplace are battering a society whose bonds of social cohesion have been loosening for a quarter of a century or more. This is not the place to try to explain in detail the fundamental economic, demographic and social forces that have an atomizing effect on society, but they are real and they have been acting over a long period of time. In addition, the basic confidence and optimism thought to be embedded in American national character were dealt severe blows in the early 1970s by the loss of the war in Vietnam, the disgrace of the presidency in the Watergate scandal, and the economic shock of the Arab oil embargo which was perhaps the first painful message that our economy was vulnerable to developments and decisions in the world economy over which we had no control.

Into this condition of attenuated solidarity, "the politics of difference" have introduced another lever of fragmentation. During the turbulent decade of the 1960s, almost all the values and verities of middle-class life were challenged by the counterculture, leaving the domain of values a contested territory. The cultural consensus of the 1950s was destroyed in the process, and we have not yet fully developed a new consensus.

In addition, the successful civil rights movement provided a paradigm of progress through protest. Movements on behalf of other groups that had been excluded from full participation in

American life (women, gays and lesbians, the handicapped, native Americans, Latinos, and to some extent Asian Americans) adopted that paradigm.

Then, the collapse of the Soviet system, while lifting our spirits in hopes for the spread of human freedom, has also unleashed pent up ancient animosities. Around the globe we see conflict and violence sowing misery along the fault lines of race, religion, language and ethnicity -- just the sorts of divisions being brought to our attention by the politics of difference and by the increasing cultural diversity of our population. As the insecurities of a rapidly changing world are luring Americans and others into clutching and reasserting their parochial identities, Americans must wonder if Bosnia and Azerbaijan are previews of our future.

Several weeks ago (October 17, 1993) The New York Times published a feature article by William Grimes entitled "Have a #%!&\$! Day" about the rising tide of incivility engulfing the country. From Howard Stern to Beavis and Butthead, we are assaulted daily by countless acts of public rudeness. Among the cultural roots of this phenomenon, Mr. Grimes focuses on cultural diversity. "New Yorkers have never been terribly civil," he quotes a professor of the humanities at Cooper Union as saying, "but it never had an ideological edge, which it now has." Mr. Grimes goes on to quote the same professor approvingly in his critique of the "new tribalism": "If we have fundamentally different values and assumptions, there's no reason to believe we can transcend them in the political arena. . . . Multiculturalism argues that persuasion is irrelevant."

Small wonder that reasonable voices have lately been saying that we have been paying too much attention to our differences and not enough attention to the things that hold us together. From the other direction, however, we continue to hear assertions of what Charles Taylor refers to as "the politics of recognition," the notion that there are still disadvantaged groups in America whose members will never feel equal or really part of America until their group is recognized in some way as being legitimate and equal. There is truth in both of these positions.

We find ourselves caught in a dilemma. All of our legal rights are universal in nature and apply equally to all citizens as individuals. Yet, we know that racial, ethnic, gender and religious discrimination exists, and that group identities are real factors in our lives. Ethnic politics has been a staple on the American political scene for more than a hundred years and is still very much present in our system. The dilemma is that our legal rights are for individuals, but our politics are for groups.

That this is more than an academic argument is clear if one recalls the hand-to-hand combat of school board battles involving such issues as bilingual education or Afrocentric curricula, the dispute over the literary canon at the college level, or the court decisions seeking to remedy past patterns of discrimination in voting rights cases by requiring redistricting or changes in the form of local government so as to guarantee the minority community representation on the legislative body. In each of these cases, and others you can probably think of, public authorities are being asked to confer some sort of official status on a particular cultural group. Large parts of the public sense that this form of particularism is a problem in a system based on universal values of individual rights. Simply saying that everyone must respect everyone else's ethnic identity therefore does not solve the problem.

Yet, a solution must be found if we are to recapture a confident sense of shared values that will let us then deal with divisive public policy issues with a common goal in mind. What is needed in our country is nothing short of a national conversation about this difficult and troubling dilemma. All of our people - left, right and center - have a responsibility to examine and discuss what unites us as a country, about what we share as common American values in a nation comprised of so many divergent groups and beliefs. For too long, we have let that which divides us capture the headlines. Current public debate is little more than posturing. Bombarded by slogans and epithets, points and counterpoints, our thoughts are polarized in the rapid-fire exchange of sound bites. In this kind of argument, one is either right or wrong, for them or against them, a winner or a loser.

Real answers are the casualties of such drive-by debates. In this kind of discussion, there is no room for complexity and ambiguity. There is no room in the middle. Only the opposite poles are given voice. This may be good entertainment, but it is a disservice to the American people. It only reinforces lines of division and does not build toward agreement. I want to change the rules of engagement for this national conversation.

This is to be a national conversation open to all Americans, a conversation in which all voices need to be heard and in which we must grapple seriously with the meaning of American pluralism. It is a conversation that is desperately needed, and I believe the National Endowment for the Humanities can stimulate and facilitate the discussion. The NEH will not bring answers, but we will bring questions.

To be sure, the NEH has other important tasks. As the single most important source of support for the humanities in American life, receiving approximately 9,000 applications per year and dispensing \$150 million in about 2,000 grants, we have a major role to play in assisting in the creation of new knowledge, translating knowledge in the humanities into educational

experiences both formal and informal, and in extending the reach of humanities programs to embrace many more Americans so that they may benefit from the transforming power of the humanities in their everyday lives.

We will continue to support individual scholars both in the academy and outside; we will continue to bring high school and college teachers together on university campuses for summer seminars that refresh and reinvigorate them; we will continue to support programs in museums and libraries and archives where our cultural heritage is preserved, used for public programs, and made available for study; we will continue to fund excellent programs through the mass media, such as Ken Burns' documentary on the Civil War and Henry Hampton's series on the Great Depression; and we will work with renewed enthusiasm with state humanities councils to enlist more Americans in humanities activities, be it reading and discussion groups or chautauqua or communities recording and telling their own story, connecting individuals and groups with the broader context of human experience so that they become the subjects of history rather than its objects.

With some of our time and energy, however, and a little bit of our money, we will conduct a national conversation. I have been pleased to discover that numerous programs sponsored by state humanities councils have already started people talking to each other about who we are as a nation and what holds us together. The projects have taken many forms: small town residents and farmers gathering under chautauqua tents in North Dakota or Wyoming exploring American democracy and the ideas of Thomas Jefferson; citizens in Florida meeting to explore "The Search for the Common Good," Californians reading and discussing serious essays on the topic of "Longing for Community: Dream or Nightmare"; or hundreds of Iowans meeting to explore religious pluralism in a program called "Faith and Politics: American Pluralism, Can We Live Together?"

I am encouraging the Federation of State Humanities Councils and the individual state councils to intensify their pursuit of the theme and to explore it in programs of their own devising. I will set aside a modest but significant amount of money for an Endowment-wide initiative that can respond to competitive proposals from around the country -- from state councils, from libraries, museums and archives, from schools, colleges and universities, from centers and institutes.

I am also delightfully aware that a number of scholars from various disciplines and many different points of view have been thinking and writing about the subject of this national conversation over the past two or three years. The MacArthur Foundation has agreed to be an early partner in this enterprise by bringing together a group of these already engaged scholars to

talk to each other. Out of that small discussion, and others that are already going on at the local level, we will gain some insights into different aspects of the subject, into how to phrase the questions productively, into what sorts of materials stimulate the most fruitful discussions, and into the range of possible answers. I imagine that, after some experience, we will be able to conduct this conversation through mass media formats. This is an exciting undertaking for the NEH and for the country.

My own notion of the meaning of American pluralism is still evolving, and in any case is certainly not prescriptive, yet it might help for me to sketch some elements of it here. My answer has as its preface a belief that there is an American identity that is different from the identities of any one of the ethnic groups that comprise the American population, that is inclusive of all of them, and that is available to everyone who is American. It is an identity that has been shaped by the buffeting and melding of individuals and groups in North America over the last three hundred years.

I believe that the most important thing that we share as Americans is a belief in our political system, in the values that are enshrined in the Constitution, and in the open democratic system for determining who makes and enforces the laws, and that the laws should be consistent with those principles.

Further, in the land of opportunity, we believe in equal economic opportunity for individuals. We know that we do not provide perfect equality of opportunity, but it is an ideal that we hold dear, and we have historically provided enough opportunity to keep individual hope alive and to maintain faith in the ideal.

We also have a history that belongs to all Americans, whenever their ancestors happened to have migrated to these shores. That history is a proud one, but it has some dark spots, and we must come to terms with those imperfections as well as the glories. I am a white southern male, but I claim as part of my own story the experiences of Italians and Irish and Jews coming into America through Ellis Island in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, and the experiences of African Americans who lived in the South with my ancestors and saw it from their own point of view, or more recently the experiences of South Asians and Latinos. My story should be theirs as well, and we all possess together the national story, the resultant of many different vectors, the story of our being able to find solutions, to rise to historical challenges, and find ways to transform particular interests into the national interest.

Beyond these fundamental building blocks, there are certain precepts that might help us as we go through the discussion of what it means to be American. The traditional way of handling

cultural differences has been to think about a public sphere and a private sphere. In the public sphere only universalistic rules are legitimate and only individual rights are legally protected. In the private sphere, we can give voice and form to our birthright identities without being any less American. This distinction still goes a long way in sorting out the conflicts between the universal and the particular.

Indeed, if there is no distinction between the public and the private, all values would be up for political adjudication, and that is not a system I find very attractive. One of the factors causing the current sense of urgency about this subject is the feeling that the public or political sphere has been encroaching on the private sphere. "Let your culture be your politics", the cultural radicals of the 1960s chanted. "All politics are personal, and all personal relationships are political", assert some contemporary activists. Where in all of this are the ordinary virtues that we ought to be able to expect from each other? Perhaps they can emerge from the conversation.

It helps also to realize that all ethnic groups have permeable boundaries, and that the meaning of any particular identity will change over time. What it felt like to be a white Southerner in 1865 is different from what it felt like in 1950 and it is different again today. What it means to be a Jew in America is different today from what it was in 1940. History has a way of changing who we think we are.

The subject is elusive, but it is very important. If the conversation works well, we will stake out some common ground, and by doing that we will make it possible to celebrate more fully the variations among us that play against each other and reinforce each other to produce a dynamic national identity. As President Clinton said in a different context at the dedication of the Holocaust Memorial Museum, "We must find in our diversity our common humanity. We must reaffirm that common humanity, even in the darkest and deepest of our own disagreements."

In that spirit, I am looking forward to this conversation among the American people. In that spirit, I challenge you to help focus the attention of the American people on this quest for the meaning of E Pluribus Unum.