

**Phi Theta Kappa
Denver, Colorado
March 30, 2001**

William R. Ferris, Chairman
National Endowment for the Humanities

I am always nervous when I speak after showing the video about our exciting work at the National Endowment for the Humanities because I have to follow the wonderful voice of its narrator, Morgan Freeman.

I am deeply honored by your invitation to speak here today.

We shared that video this past Monday at the Kennedy Center when Arthur Miller, our nation's greatest living playwright, gave NEH's Jefferson Lecture.

In the course of his talk on "Politics and the Art of Acting in America" Miller told a story about the celebrated American showman, P.T. Barnum.

Barnum once staged a sideshow at his barn in Bridgeport, Connecticut, where he exhibited a bearded lady and a two-headed calf. His customers were so amazed by the exhibits that they stood and watched for hours. No new customers could get in, and Barnum wasn't making any money.

He solved that problem, according to Miller, by putting up a big sign that read, "THIS WAY TO THE EGRESS" with an arrow pointing to a door.

People who didn't know this fancy word meant "Exit" thought an "egress" must be pretty wonderful, so they marched through the door and found themselves outside, making room for new customers.

Now I can't promise you the kind of show Barnum had. In fact, when I work with community colleges, I am the one who is having too much fun to leave. That was true when I spoke at your Faculty Scholars Conference a few years back. It was true when I attended your Honors Institute at Bryant College in Providence, Rhode Island.

And I am certainly enjoying myself today--especially when I see that the theme for this year's Honors Study topic is "Customs. Traditions. Celebrations."

What are our customs? What are our traditions? What do we celebrate? Those are vital questions for the humanities.

When we discover the answers, we will know what defines us as a community.

One hundred and forty two years ago O.J. Goldrick set up a one-room log cabin school where he spent a year teaching the children of gold miners in a place

that would become Denver, Colorado.

For his year's teaching, Goldrick received \$250, and I have no hesitation telling this group that he was underpaid.

I recently heard a story about three people who died on the same day and went to Heaven. St. Peter says, "Contrary to what you've heard, admission to Heaven is decided by income and what you did with your life.

The first man says, "I made about \$200,000 a year--I was a doctor."

"Good," St. Peter says. "Here's your white robe."

The second man says, "I only made about \$100,000 a year, St. Peter. Dentistry's getting tougher."

"That's fine. Here's your robe."

The third person says, "You'll never admit me--I could barely make ends meet."

St. Peter says, "Oh, what'd you teach?"

It is an American tradition to underpay educators--and it is a tradition that must change.

Phi Theta Kappa is an organization of unusual students. Your average age is 30. You have been out in the world. You know what an education means--and how a good teacher can change your life.

Education shapes lives and has profoundly shaped America. As we enter the second century of the Community College Movement, we take pride in what you have achieved, and we look forward to what you will achieve, particularly in the field of the humanities.

My field.

So, I am honored that you have invited me to discuss the issues that you face.

I learned about those issues last fall when I chaired an NEH Colloquium on the Humanities in Community Colleges.

I listened to deans, teachers, scholars and students, and I learned a lot. I learned about teaching loads and about the importance of archives in tribal colleges. I learned about the challenges of research, curriculum, and distance learning.

I learned about changes that have occurred over the past 100 years since the first public community college opened in Joliet, Illinois. I learned about how our nation's 1,132 community colleges educate 45% of American students in higher education.

I learned about the future for you and for us in Washington who want to be your partners.

At that colloquium Frank Falcetta described his community college campus in Lowell, Massachusetts.

All of us learned in American history that the town was founded by a member of the Lowell family about whom it was written:

And this is good old Boston
Home of the Bean and the Cod
Where the Lowells talk to the Cabots
And the Cabots talk only to God

In the 19th century Lowell was a mill town where the descendants of English settlers hired entire families of Irish immigrants to work in textile mills.

Today, there are still a lot of immigrants in Lowell. But they are not from Great Britain or Ireland. Lowell has the nation's second largest settlement of Cambodian-Americans - almost a third of the city. And it has the largest group of Americans born in Sierra Leone in the nation.

As I listened to Frank Falcetta talk about Lowell, I thought about similar changes that are happening everywhere in America.

Today, I want to talk about those changes because they have changed and will continue to change Community Colleges.

My message to you today is that through the humanities community colleges will not simply adjust to such change, they will lead it.

We clearly see this change reflected in the 2000 Census. We see it in New York City where the Hispanic population is now larger than the African-America population.

We see it in California, the first mainland state in which the white population has dipped below 50%.

Over the next half-century the United States will become a majority non-white country. Our population will gain about 131 million people, 90% of whom we now call "minorities."

African Americans will increase 83%.

Native Americans 95%.

Hispanics 258%.

Asians 267%.

Among children younger than 5, we will have more minority than white children by 2030.

The general trend is indisputable.

This change is a development of profound importance to the entire world. On a planet driven by suspicion of the "other," nowhere else do we find such a rich sampling of the world's population who are citizens of a single nation.

Can we achieve harmony? Can we ensure that every citizen has equal access to opportunity? Can we show the world that this country can achieve a society that embraces all its citizens?

The change in America's makeup is paralleled by an equally profound change in our economy.

We do not need sophisticated analysis to see what is happening. Just sit in your hotel lobby and watch as people talk on cell phones the size of a deck of cards--or go back to your room and use your laptop to check e-mail.

Ours is a world in which 1.5 billion e-mails cross international boundaries each day--we send more e-mails now than the Post Office delivers letters. And for every dollar we spend on books, we spend three on software.

More than half the homes in America now have computers--80% of them with Internet access. When we last changed Presidents, about 3 million Americans were online. Now about 100 million are.

Wherever you look, nouns now begin with e. Business-to-business e-commerce was about \$336 billion last year. It is projected to be over \$6 trillion by 2005.

And in 2005 about half of America's workers will either work for information technology companies or use technology in a way that is essential for their job.

What does this mean for community colleges?

Let me outline the wrong lesson people have drawn.

It goes like this.

We need an educated workforce in order to compete. Students need the best computer skills in the world to match workers in Europe and the Pacific Rim countries. History and philosophy are all very well-- but they are luxuries. Let's devote all our energies to technical training that will qualify students for jobs.

Now, that argument is not totally wrong.

We do need an educated workforce. Students do need technical training - and they certainly need jobs.

This challenge will shape the role of community colleges in the years ahead.

At our colloquium last fall Constance Carroll of San Diego Mesa Community College reminded us that in higher education today 3 out of 10 students are underrepresented or ethnic minorities. In community colleges the figure is about 4 in 10.

And in her state, affected sooner than the rest of the nation by Asian, African and Hispanic immigration - it is almost 6 in 10.

This makes sense. Since World War II when 60,000 women and 70,000 African-Americans used the GI Bill to go to community colleges, your institutions have shouldered the burden of educating those who have been excluded elsewhere.

In the America of the next decade, your role will be even more critical. Where will the children of those now streaming in from Thailand, the Philippines, Mexico, and Sierra Leone study? Where are the schools for graduates of inner city schools in Washington, New York City, San Diego?

Many of these students will study at community colleges, and we must be sure they have the skills to get jobs when they graduate. Certainly community colleges must be and will be in the forefront of erasing the "digital divide" in which students from affluent homes are 3 times as likely to have Internet access as those who are poor - or minority.

But it is wrong to argue that technical training is all they need.

At our NEH Colloquium one speaker after another warned about the danger of dead-ending "students in entry-level jobs." We must forever change the stereotype of community colleges as "where you get your car fixed."

You offer so much more.

How can we hope to secure America's future without firmly grounding students in our history, our literature, in the philosophies that have guided us as a nation?

Your students are complex people who hunger to be full participants in the cultural and social lives of their country.

We cannot secure our communities if schools are content to provide graduates only with a credential. To create an America in which people of many races and cultures live together, we must find a cultural common ground.

And by this, I do not mean only reading the canon of books scholars call "great."

As a graduate student in English who wanted to teach, I loved ballads and folk tales. I wondered why Ph.D.s in English could not also study literature written by folk artists.

Then a professor told me "You can study things close to home in the field of folklore."

As a result, I did get a degree in folklore. I found that you could have a rich and full life studying blues singers and quiltmakers in the Mississippi Delta as well as Wordsworth and Keats.

I believe that we must study and understand the everyday life of America if we are to truly know this country.

One way to do this is through the study of our regions.

What study of the American West would be complete without a thorough understanding of the role of women in settling the frontier? What study of the south would be complete without a knowledge of the role of race?

Community colleges must prepare students for both the technological revolution and the cultural revolution.

Both are happening before our very eyes.

I see it at Prince Georges Community College where NEH helped launch the Bluebird Blues Festival--I actually spoke and sang there a while back with blues singer R.L. Burnside whose musical soundtrack now opens the HBO hit show *The Sopranos*.

I see it in the way NEH works with the American Association of Community Colleges to strengthen foreign languages and American studies.

I see it in the interns we have at NEH--interns like Barbara Wolf, from Houston Community Colleges Southwest who led a Phi Theta Kappa drive there to establish lending libraries for inner city areas. Barbara will be at NEH this summer, and we look forward to being enriched by her insight and energy.

I saw it in Jackson, Mississippi, the day Phi Theta Kappa's Center for Excellence opened with NEH support.

I see it in the way your Leadership Development Studies program has grown and is now offered on 350 campuses.

I see it in the way Phi Theta Kappa used NEH support to develop their Faculty Scholar Conference.

One professor at Broom Community College in New York said the conference "dramatically changed my teaching style and enriched my science classes by incorporating the humanities." When I heard that, I knew we had done something right.

But we must do more.

A community college movement cannot truly serve its community unless it serves the entire community.

NEH wants to be your partner in strengthening distance learning so students can learn without setting foot on your campus. At a time when half the nation's 200,000 community college teachers are over 50--and when over a million elementary school teachers are scheduled to retire within a decade, NEH wants to provide a strong background in humanities for the next generation of teachers.

The study of our past has come a long way in my lifetime. As recently as 1962, the President of the American Historical Association criticized young historians because they were - in his words, "products of the lower middle-class or foreign origins, and their emotions ... get in the way of historical reconstructions."

His remarks remind me of the time Franklin Delano Roosevelt was invited to speak by the Daughters of the American Revolution. He started his speech, "Greetings, my fellow immigrants."

American history is not only the history of those whose ancestors came from Europe.

We are also blessed by those brought in chains through the treacherous middle passage from Africa. We are blessed by those who came from Asia to work on

railroads. We are blessed by those who came from the Iberian peninsula, following the routes of explorers from Spain and Portugal. We are blessed by those who came over the land bridge across the Bering Straits and then spread to every part of the Americas.

From all of those who came before us, we have learned.

Each of you members of Phi Theta Kappa have learned from your teachers. And now the next generation will learn from you.

Martin Luther King once spoke about Rip Van Winkle, who went to sleep in the days of King George and woke in the days of George Washington. "Rip slept through a great revolution," he said, warning us not to sleep through the civil rights revolution.

Well, America, born in revolution, is in the middle of two more: one technical, the other cultural.

Both revolutions offer us incredible opportunity. And for the newest Americans, community colleges will open the door to that opportunity.

To do so, you must ground your students in history, in literature, in philosophy. That is what makes both a person and a community whole.

So move boldly ahead with your study of "Customs, Traditions and Celebrations."

Focus on this topic in each of your 10,000 chapters and in the seminars now scheduled on 300 campuses.

Use the topic in your satellite seminar series.

In this way you will make make sure that no one sleeps through the revolutions of this century.

You will make sure that the newest Americans both know our past - and have the tools to shape our future.

And, unlike P.T. Barnum's customers, your students will pass through the door to opportunity.

Thank you.

**House Interior Appropriations Subcommittee Hearing
Written Testimony by NEH Chairman William R. Ferris
April 4, 2001**

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

I am deeply honored to appear before this committee as the Chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities. I come before you today in support of the Administration's appropriation request of \$120,504,000 for fiscal year 2002. I look forward to working closely with Chairman Skeen, Congressman Dicks, individual members, and committee staff in pursuit of our common goal: to use the humanities to their greatest good in fostering among our citizens a deeper understanding of their cultural heritage.

We are eager to work closely with the Administration and with this committee to continue the agency's efforts on behalf of the American people. In particular, knowing that educational reform is a high priority of the President, in FY 2002 the Endowment will pursue with renewed vigor its ongoing efforts to improve the quality of teaching and learning in the humanities in the nation's schools and colleges. The Endowment's plans and priorities are also aligned with the President's interest in promoting community-building and in encouraging all citizens to advance their knowledge and understanding of the nation's history and culture. I know that these are also interests of members of this committee.

The Endowment will be able to accomplish many good things for the American people with the \$120.5 million we are requesting for the next fiscal year. This funding will allow us to continue to nourish humanities teaching and learning in the nation's schools and colleges; preserve and increase the availability of cultural and intellectual resources; provide opportunities for Americans to engage in lifelong learning in the humanities; foster humanities research and scholarship; and strengthen the institutional base of the humanities. Our FY 2002 budget will also enable us to strengthen our recent efforts to engage new voices and perspectives in the humanities. In short, with the funds we are requesting we will continue to bring creativity and fresh thinking to all our programs and endeavors.

Before outlining our plans for FY 2002, I would like to pause for a moment to consider the entire three-and-a-half decades of the agency's service to the American people. Indeed, it seems that at NEH the past, present, and future are always equally in our thoughts. I mention the past not only because the range and scope of our work encompasses the whole of human history, but also because we have recently taken stock of the Endowment's own history as the federal government's premier source of support for the humanities. Our just-published retrospective, *Rediscovering America: Thirty-five Years of the National Endowment for the Humanities*, highlights numerous NEH-supported books, museum exhibitions, seminars for teachers, and documentary films that

have provided the nation's citizens with significant new opportunities to deepen their understanding of the humanities. In his foreword to the book, Stephen Ambrose, the distinguished military historian and scholar of the Lewis and Clark expedition, reminds us why this work is important: "The humanities are about people," observes Mr. Ambrose, "where they came from. Who they are and how they got that way. Where they are going. The humanities are central to our understanding of ourselves and all other human beings." We can think of no more fitting way to describe the central role the humanities play in our lives.

We are grateful to Stephen Ambrose for his eloquent words. Over the decades, the importance of the Endowment's mission in support of the humanities has been similarly acknowledged by a broad range of Americans: by members of Congress, including, especially, members of this committee; by Presidents and their Administrations; by educators and scholars; by business and philanthropic leaders; by educational and cultural institutions and organizations; and, most importantly, by the American people.

As you can see, I am quite proud of the Endowment's record of achievement since our founding in 1965. My primary purpose in coming before you today is to describe the exciting work we are now doing and are planning to do in the coming year. Among the many notable NEH programs that benefit citizens all across the nation, I call your particular attention to the following:

- Regional Humanities Centers. Under this special competition NEH is funding the creation of regional centers where American traditions and cultures can be explored in the context of place. At each center, a wide array of activities will use the humanities to explore the region's distinctive culture. In the initial phase of the Regional Humanities Centers competition, which took place in the fall of 1999, NEH used \$1 million in funding raised from nonfederal sources to award 20 planning grants in ten regions. In FY 2002, we will begin the next phase of this initiative by awarding an implementation grant to a competitively selected institution in each region.
- Online encyclopedias on the history and culture of each state in the nation. NEH has recently established a new program of grants to support the creation of digital, online encyclopedias on the history and culture of each U.S. state, territory, and the District of Columbia. This program is being conducted in cooperation with the state humanities councils across the nation. Once these individual state encyclopedias are established and fully operational they will serve as invaluable reference works for students, teachers, and other citizens. I am pleased to report that we have just awarded planning grants to the first 18 states under this new grant opportunity. Planning grant applications from many other states are anticipated at the next deadline in July. At our FY 2002 request level, we

will begin awarding major implementation grants for these online encyclopedias

- Summer seminars and institutes for schoolteachers and college and university faculty. Our time-tested and widely acclaimed seminars and institutes help humanities teachers revitalize their knowledge and understanding of the subjects they teach. This summer's roster of NEH seminars and institutes covers a broad range of important topics, including "Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition: From the Pacific Ocean to St. Louis in 1806," "The Gothic Cathedral as a Mirror of Medieval Culture," "American Indian Literature and Narrative," and "Jamestown and the Formation of an American Culture." Teachers from all across the nation will be attending these and other sessions this summer.
- Great American books for the nation's public libraries. Last year the Endowment formed a partnership with the Carnegie Corporation of New York, The Library of America, and the American Library Association in a special grant program--Millennium Projects for Public Libraries--to help small and financially strapped public libraries enrich their core collections of American literature and history. Just last month we awarded 293 grants to public libraries across the nation, providing each institution with a 50-volume set of the most recent books published in The Library of America series. Some of the libraries across the country that will be receiving their collection of books include the Eunice Public Library and the Bosque Farms Public Library in New Mexico; the Jenkins County Memorial Library in Sylvania, Georgia, and the Ochopee Regional Library System in Vidalia, Georgia; the Caviglia-Arivaca Library in Tucson, Arizona; and the Spencer Public Library in Spencer, New York. The smallest of these libraries will also receive additional NEH support to enable them to offer related educational programs in their communities. We hope to announce as many as 500 additional awards to public libraries early this summer.
- Extending the reach of NEH's programs and projects. As Chairman of NEH, it is my highest priority to bring the benefits of the humanities to every American. The central component of this effort is the series of recently established NEH outreach programs, collectively called Extending the Reach, that are encouraging grant applications from states, institutions, and communities that have neither participated in nor benefited as fully as others from Endowment programs and activities. The initiative consists of two types of grant opportunities: First, grants to states or jurisdictions that either have received relatively few awards in recent years or have low per capita funding from NEH; and second, grants to historically black colleges and universities, Hispanic-serving institutions, and tribal colleges and universities. To date, the Endowment has made over 200 grants and awarded more than \$2.7 million in grant funds in support of this effort.

- Innovative humanities projects employing new electronic technologies. In recent years NEH has been in the forefront of efforts to promote the use of digital technology in humanities education, public programming, and research. Our award-winning portal to the World Wide Web, EDSITEMent, is providing teachers, students, and parents with access to over one hundred of the best humanities resources on the Internet. Produced in cooperation with the WorldCom Foundation and the Council of the Great City Schools, the site now links users with more than 100 humanities websites on such diverse subjects as the Congress, George Washington, and Martin Luther King, Jr.-sites chosen for their outstanding intellectual quality, superior design, and classroom impact-and features a search engine, lesson plans, and in-class and take-home activities. Similarly, our Schools for a New Millennium program is helping teachers and schools become more proficient in using new electronic humanities materials. As Chairman Skeen is aware, one of the grants we have made through this program was awarded to the Pueblo of Laguna Middle School in Laguna, New Mexico. This grant will support studies in Laguna culture, language, and history, as well as comparative world mythology.
- Engaging and informative television and radio documentaries. Recent NEH-supported programs broadcast on public television and radio include Ken Burns's 19-hour *Jazz*, which dominated the public airwaves earlier this year; *Napoleon*, producer David Grubin's intriguing portrait of the French leader; *Scottsboro: An American Tragedy*, which was nominated for a 2001 Academy Award for Best Documentary Feature; *George Wallace: Settin' the Woods on Fire*, an award-winning account of the controversial former governor of Alabama; and the radio series *Lost and Found Sound: An American Record*, which won the George Foster Peabody Award, one of broadcasting's highest honors. NEH has also entered into a partnership with the Corporation for Public Broadcasting in support of an innovative program of "Digital Parallel Production Grants" that are encouraging filmmakers to use computer technology to design digitally enhanced television programs in the humanities.
- Explorations of family history. The Endowment's My History is America's History project is encouraging Americans to explore, document, and share their family histories and to consider how these histories fit into the larger American story. This project consists of a comprehensive guidebook, featuring practical advice on exploring family history, and a website, which is serving as a rich and dynamic resource for family historians and scholars alike. Each of the nation's more than 16,200 public libraries has received two copies of the guidebook. In addition, 85,000 copies have been distributed nationwide by state humanities councils, the Federation of Genealogical Societies, the National Council of Negro Women's Black Family Reunion, National History Day, 4-H Clubs, and other educational, youth, and citizen organizations.

- Research projects that advance our knowledge and understanding of the humanities: The Endowment provides the major source of support for advanced research and scholarship in the humanities. With this support our grantees are able to publish hundreds of books and articles that advance our understanding of the humanities, many of which have won Pulitzer Prizes and other prestigious national awards. NEH-supported projects are increasingly producing their results in electronic formats, such as interactive World Wide Web sites or searchable databases on CD-ROM. Such innovative applications of computer technology in humanities research will continue to be encouraged through NEH's grant-making programs. In FY 2002, we also plan to re-establish a discrete grant category for scholarly editing projects, such as the collected papers of U.S. presidents and other significant historical and literary figures.
- Strengthened partnerships with the state humanities councils. With annual funding from NEH, the state humanities councils are able to provide high quality humanities programs to virtually every Congressional district throughout the nation. In recent years NEH has made a special effort to involve the 56 councils in the work of the Endowment. The new online state encyclopedias program was developed in partnership with the councils, with the councils being asked to take the lead in developing plans for each state's encyclopedia. Similarly, the Extending the Reach grant program that is targeted at the 15 states and jurisdictions was developed in consultation with the councils in the affected states. We view the Councils as essential agents in advancing the work of the humanities nationwide.

Almost all of the foregoing projects and programs are integral parts of our agency-wide Rediscovering America initiative, which is encouraging Americans to discover anew the nation's history and culture and preserve its rich heritage for the benefit of future generations. We believe the American people are well served by-and can take great pride in-these and other NEH-supported projects. With the cooperation of this committee, we hope to continue this tradition of excellence in FY 2002 and beyond.

Many of the projects I have just described benefit significantly from nonfederal funding leveraged through the Endowment's matching programs. Indeed, since NEH's inception, more than \$1.24 billion has been generated by our Challenge Grant program, which requires \$3 or \$4 in gifts for every NEH dollar awarded to a humanities institution. Another \$360 million has been raised in one-to-one matches for specific humanities projects supported by our other grant programs.

The budget justification we will submit to Congress next week describes in detail our plans for FY 2002. With funding of \$120.504 million, the agency will be able to support a broad array of grant activities, including a number of

special emphases that address emerging needs and opportunities in the humanities. I would like to draw your particular attention to several key features of our request:

- Preserving the nation's recorded sound heritage. In FY 2002, the Endowment will encourage the development of projects to preserve and increase the accessibility of endangered sound recordings, particularly recordings of such music genres as folk, jazz, and the blues. For over a century, this music has been recorded on such unstable media as wax cylinders, aluminum disks, vinyl, and tape. NEH will encourage institutions to develop a range of projects designed to produce national cataloging standards, best practices for reformatting endangered materials, the education and training of persons responsible for the care of these collections, and the digitization of nationally significant collections.
- Digitizing historic U.S. newspapers. For more than two decades, the Endowment has spearheaded a state-by-state effort to locate and catalog all newspapers published in America since 1690. As part of this effort, 61 million pages of historically important newspaper pages have also been microfilmed, pages that would otherwise have been lost to the ravages of time. In FY 2002 NEH will offer support for projects that will convert microfilmed newspapers into digital files. These files will then be made freely accessible via the Internet to teachers, students, scholars, and other readers.
- Commemorating the Lewis and Clark expedition. In anticipation of the 2003 bicentennial of the Lewis and Clark expedition, in FY 2002 the Endowment's Public Programs division will support planning grants for regional projects that will explore the history and ramifications of the expedition. This effort will build upon previous awards to develop projects related to the expedition. NEH's grants will also complement the many bicentennial activities being planned by individual state humanities councils located in states along the route of the explorers.
- Assisting institutions in preserving and interpreting local history: In FY 2002, the NEH Challenge Grants program will encourage applications from institutions that play a central role in the preservation and interpretation of local history. The focus will be on smaller institutions that seek to strengthen their humanities resources in local history and to encourage new or increased donations from nonfederal sources.
- Strengthening teaching and learning in the humanities in the nation's schools and colleges: In addition to the traditional array of programs to enhance teaching and learning of the humanities among the nation's schools and colleges, the Endowment's core education programs will feature a number of special emphases in FY2002. Humanities Scholars in

Residence grants, for example, will be provided to schools in Extending the Reach states to support visits by humanities scholars and master teachers. Humanities Teacher Leadership grants will encourage participants in summer seminars and institutes to disseminate the results of their work to other teachers and schools. And support will be provided for proposals to develop content-rich and engaging humanities materials for use in after school programs for young people.

When I first appeared before this committee three short years ago, I expressed my hope that when my work at NEH was finished, the "humanities" would be an everyday word to millions of Americans. It was also my expressed desire that every American would learn of the important work of the Endowment and that they would come to believe that they are better off for having this important agency working on their behalf to advance the nation's educational and cultural well-being. As you can see by the projects and programs I have described in this testimony, we have made great progress in pursuit of these goals. Moreover, recent Congressional action in support of the agency suggests that there is strong bipartisan support for NEH on Capitol Hill and among the American people. But I need your help to help sustain this important work. By approving our budget request for FY 2002, you will make it possible for us to continue our efforts to bring the benefits of NEH to millions of Americans.

As small as NEH is in comparison to most other agencies, it is still the single largest source of funding for the humanities in the United States. While I will continue to work actively to secure non-federal support for our programs and initiatives, we must not underestimate the critical nature of the federal role in helping the humanities grow and thrive throughout the United States.

In closing, I would like to return once again to the words of historian Stephen Ambrose, who has said: "For myself, I can't imagine living in America without NEH. The proper study of mankind is man. The National Endowment for the Humanities makes that study possible." I ask your assistance in helping us to continue this important work.

**Popular Culture Association/American Culture Association
Philadelphia, PA**

April 12, 2001

William R. Ferris, Chairman

National Endowment for the Humanities

It was Mark Twain, that icon of popular culture who once wrote about a sermon that began so well that as he listened he vowed to put ten dollars in the collection plate. After ten minutes he decided it would be 20 dollars. After a half hour he cut it back to 10 dollars--and by the time the plate came around--he stole five dollars from it.

No collection plate, today. In fact at NEH, it is our job to give you money. We're proud of that. We should do more of it, don't you think?

(AFTER RESPONSE) So do I.

But I do have a kind of sermon. We southerners are used to preaching. It's not about the relationship of man to God, though. It's more about our relationship to each other.

I can't think of a more appropriate audience. For why do we study our culture? Essentially, it is to learn about ourselves. What do we value? What do we abhor? What gives us pleasure--and why? What bores us to death?

This has been my life work--and yours.

We meet on what's considered an important day in American history. Lincoln was killed on April 12. FDR died on this day. The Russians sent the first man into space on April 12, 1961.

I notice that the strongest wind ever recorded in history also came on April 12--231 miles per hour.

I trust nothing coming from this podium will equal it.

There's nothing wrong with remembering these dates. Lincoln and Roosevelt deserve to be remembered.

But there is so much more to the study of history than the dates of famous battles or the deaths of Presidents. On those other April 12ths, millions of people, went to work in mills and factories or working the land. They sang songs, and played guitars. They went to school and read books.

To understand them we need to the fabric of their lives.

That is why I decided early in my life that the study of culture is not just the study of Elizabethan poets enshrined in anthologies. It is a blues singer in the Delta. A quilt-maker. Or a muletrader--and one of the most rewarding experiences I have had was a book recording the experiences of a man named Ray Lum who sold and traded horses and mules throughout the rural south in the first half of the 20th Century. His stories told us a lot not just about mules but about us.

So do you. History is not just James Madison - it is Jimi Hendrix. Music is not just Gilbert and Sullivan. It is Lieber and Stoller. Literature is not just Dylan Thomas but Bob Dylan.

A few years ago I was talking to a Grocers' Association in Washington. I think they were a little startled when I told them I didn't think you could really understand southern culture without having read about--and tasted--moon pies.

That is why the *Encyclopedia of Southern Culture* which I helped edit, carried entries on Moon Pies--and Goo-Goo clusters and Coca-Cola.

All help us understand America--and ourselves.

(HOLD UP COKE CAN) Look at this Coke can. To some it is a convenient way to get a drink. To some, it is a symbol of wasteful use of natural resources--though this one has a recycling label. To some it is the epitome of technological innovation. To some it is a sign of American cultural imperialism.

You can not only see the universe in a grain of sand. You can see America in a soda can. And that is why I appreciate the work you do.

So it amazes me that there are those who still scoff at the study of popular culture--or who say, "All this study is very well, but why should government fund it? Let popular culture compete in the marketplace of ideas."

Government is a vital player in the marketplace of ideas--whether it is subsidizing a study on infectious disease, or ways to get astronauts to Mars, or charting the human genome.

You who study history whether of long ago or yesterday, study the cultural genome of the human species.

And so, when NEH funds a museum exhibit ... or a discussion in a library ... scholarly research ... or a Ken Burns documentary ...aren't we operating in the great tradition of American government?

Of course we are. And NEH does that on a budget of about \$115 million a year

- about a dollar for each American family. Americans spend forty times that amount each year taking cabs.

I think the arguments about studying popular culture - or funding it - are easily rebutted.

There is a more serious battle about our work, though. It goes to the very value of the humanities.

I talked about this a few weeks ago when I spoke at the conference of Phi Theta Kappa. That's the honor society of the schools that educate half of all students in higher education: community colleges.

Community colleges have to battle the stereotype that they are purely places to learn a trade - "where you get your car fixed," one professor described it. And so they even more than universities, have to fend off those who would skimp on support for the humanities.

The argument they--and we--face, goes like this. We are in the middle of a technical revolution. It is the Information Age. Students need the best computer skills in the world to match workers in Europe and the Pacific Rim countries. History, philosophy, literature--that is all very well--but they are luxuries. Let's devote all our energies to the technical training that can get students jobs.

Now, that argument is not all wrong.

We do need an educated workforce. Students do need technical training--and they sure do need jobs.

And I don't want to minimize the technical revolution. It is real.

This is a world in which 1.5 billion e-mails cross international boundaries each day--we send more e-mails now than the Post Office delivers letters. And for every dollar we spend on books, we spend three on software.

More than half of American homes now have computers--80% of them with Internet access. When we last changed Presidents, about 3 million Americans were online. Now about 100 million are.

Everywhere you look, nouns now begin with e. Business-to-business e-commerce was about \$336 billion last year. It is projected to be over \$6 trillion by 2005.

And in that year about half of American workers will either work for Information technology companies or use it in a way essential for their job.

But it is demeaning to argue that the next generation needs technical training any more than a firm grounding in humanities.

Almost 40 years ago, JFK gave a speech at Syracuse University in which he talked about that. He quoted a mother who had written to the Headmaster at Eton saying, "Don't teach my boy poetry, he's standing for Parliament."

No, no, Kennedy said, arguing that statesmen needed a broad education. He cited people like Thomas Jefferson, who could "calculate an eclipse, plan an edifice, try a cause, break a horse, dance a minuet, play the violin."

Or Thomas Hart Benton, Missouri's first Senator, whose obituary described him as one who quote Roman Law or Greek philosophy or Adam Smith "with a readiness that was surprising."

Kennedy was right.

How can we hope to have the new Americans build a new America without a firm grounding in our history, our literature, in the philosophies that have-- imperfectly--guided us?

Students are not statistics on an employment graph. They are complex people, who hunger to be full participants in the cultural and social lives of their country.

We must prepare students for the technological revolution--and for the cultural, philosophical and psychological revolutions that accompany it.

Science tells us how to clone. The humanities help us answer the question: should we clone? Technology allows you to e-mail an article to your editor. The humanities tell you what should be in that article. Technology can get an astronaut to Mars. The humanities equips us to know whether it is worth doing.

We cannot create a great civilization if schools are content to provide graduates only with the technical. Especially in a century when America is moving to a multiracial society - by 2030 a majority of American children will be nonwhite--we cannot afford to ignore the insights offered by a careful study of culture.

If we want to create an America in which people of so many races and cultures live together, we need a cultural common ground

And in that study, we cannot create a divide between so-called high art and what Dwight McDonald used to argue was "kitsch."

For like civilizations that trade back and forth, all artists learn from each other.

You show us how the blues got to Tin Pan Alley, and how 19th Century harmonies influence ragtime. You show us the connections of pulp fiction and cinema and the impact of comic books on Faulkner (yes, they did.)

I remember someone Robert Penn Warren once called his best student at Yale. For a long time he wrestled with an allegorical novel about Moby Dick. But now Dave Milch co-produces and writes *NYPD Blue*, in which characters wrestle with their own white whales. And his scripts fuse classical literary values--character, unflinching honesty--with the cop show format millions love.

The study of popular culture gives us insight into the connections fused between past and present, between art forms, between the mediums.

It also gives us insight into the concerns of those who criticize the globalization of American culture.

They worry about a world in which the popular culture of America infuses itself too much into other civilizations.

This is by no means a trivial concern. No matter how attractive American songs are to teenagers in Australia or Africa, human beings cannot discard the traditions of their communities without losing something. Every human being needs a sense of place. The spread of American culture must be a way to enrich other regions of the world, not to eviscerate what they hold dear.

There is no doubt that American songs, plays, novels, technology, clothes have spread around the world.

Is it really a danger to have a McDonalds or Ben & Jerrys a few blocks from the Kremlin, and Ben & Jerry's ice cream, or Bruce Springsteen t-shirts worn by youngsters in Nepal?

If we study popular culture as you do, we see something else: the influence of other cultures on us.

I was reminded about that a few weeks ago, during one of the great annual cultural events of our civilization.

The Academy Awards.

We had one film that used computer animation to recreate ancient Rome. We had another where characters spoke so much Chinese we needed subtitles--and a third where we needed subtitles for the Spanish.

The fact is, popular culture today is in the midst of an explosion of ways that integrate past and present, local and global. We are learning from and being

influenced by each other. To study the most mundane aspects of our daily lives is to reveal the indelible fingerprints of our largest issues.

And to ignore such study impoverishes our understanding of our culture and ourselves.

And so at NEH we fund a project in Oklahoma documenting the history of American rodeos. And a project in St Louis to help preserve antique radio and television equipment essential to our understanding of broadcasting.

The American Film Institute is trying to catalog every feature film produced in the United States during the Fifties. And we are trying to help them.

Over the years Studs Terkel produced some incredibly revealing interviews for radio. We are making sure the Chicago Historical Society can preserve and catalog those for scholars. And in San Francisco we are helping the Film Arts Foundation plan a three-part TV series about African American music from Reconstruction to the Civil Rights Movement.

Is there much that is gauche about the Miss America pageant? Sure. But studying it tells us a lot about America. And so, we are helping a woman in Vermont produce a 90-minute film on its history. She is exploring the change in popular images of American women through that history and I look forward to seeing it.

American Jews played a large role in shaping American popular entertainment in the Twentieth Century. We are helping the Jewish Museum in New York put together a multimedia traveling exhibit about that.

You know, one of the great virtues of the Internet is that people have created websites about so many fascinating things. You can do a search for popular culture and never want to shut down your computer. There is a particularly charming one about Burma-Shave signs.

You know--those signs that if you were born before 1960 you used to wait for in the back seat while your parents took you somewhere on vacations, with one line per sign:

If you think
She likes your bristles
Walk bare-footed
Through some thistles.
Burma Shave.

Or:

Diplomacy is
To do and say
The nastiest things
In the nicest way.

Hm. Sounds like that writer lived in Washington.

Studying outdoor advertising tells us a lot about America--what we needed, what we bought (not always the same thing), and how we traveled.

We are helping with one such project at Duke University. I don't know if it includes Burma-Shave signs. But I look forward to seeing the results.

You know, late in the 19th Century there was an inspirational speaker from Philadelphia named Russell Conwell--maybe somebody here's studied him. Conwell made his entire career delivering one speech, called "Acres of Diamonds."

He delivered it almost 6000 times. Those were the days when people went to speeches for entertainment.

Clearly Conwell never posted his text on the Internet.

His message wasn't too different from mine, today. Starting with a story about a man who looked for diamonds all his life, never realizing there were acres of them on property he owned, he urged people to find wealth in their backyards.

I urge people to realize that to understand American history you don't have to live in Washington. You find it in a Burma-Shave sign. A can of Coke. A muletrader's stories.

You know, one of the privileges of having my job is that you get to support the work you most admire. And recently, I had the privilege of hosting our Jefferson Lecture--America's highest award in the Humanities.

It went to Arthur Miller. I wish you could have been there.

He didn't pull any punches. In fact he excoriated the work of a number of people in the audience. I didn't agree with everything he said. But it isn't the business of government to honor only those who agree with us.

We honored him for what he has produced, and today, I find myself thinking about that wonderful scene in *Death of a Salesman* where Willy's wife says to her sons, so contemptuous of Willy: "Willy never made a lot of money. His name was never in the paper. But he's a human being, and a terrible thing is happening to him. So attention must be paid."

In a sense, isn't that the work of the people in this room?

You are not preserving our memory of the rich or famous. You proclaim the worth of knowing how all of us lived. Attention must be paid.

And I am confident that there will come a day when people look back on our time, and they will be interested in why people drank Coke from a can, and what they liked about NYPD Blue, and even what Burma Shave was. They'll want to know not just who lived -- but how.

You will have helped tell them. Because of you, they will know not just who lived but why we lived that way. They will learn about us--and learn about themselves.

So, I salute your work, accomplished in libraries, and quiet offices and - these days - on the Internet. I urge you to keep on researching, writing, publishing, taping.

And applying to NEH for money.

For I pledge that as long as I'm involved, government wants to be a partner.

It's the right thing to do.

And since I began with Mark Twain, let me something else he said: "Always do the right thing. It will gratify some--and astonish the rest."

Thank you for astonishing us with your insights into America.

**Organization of American Historians
Los Angeles, CA
April 26, 2001**

William R. Ferris, Chairman
National Endowment for the Humanities

I am always nervous when I speak after watching that film because I know I have to follow the wonderful voice of Morgan Freeman.

When Mark Twain gave his first lecture, his knees were shaking so much his friends didn't think he could speak.

He began by saying, "Julius Caesar is dead, Shakespeare is dead, Napoleon is dead, Abraham Lincoln is dead, and I am far from well myself."

Twain later became an accomplished lecturer. During one lecture tour he got a haircut at a barbershop from a barber who did not recognize him.

"Mark Twain's going to lecture tonight," the barber said. "I suppose you'll go."

"I guess so," Twain said.

"Got a ticket?"

"Not yet."

"Then you'll have to stand. Everything's sold out."

"How annoying," Twain said. "I always have to stand when that fellow lectures."

Since this is an audience of historians, I am sure half of you are wondering whether I have a credible source for those stories.

And the other half of you know I don't.

But I can vouch for one thing: I am honored to be here.

And I can vouch for the accuracy of another story.

It is the story of Henry Minor, a surgeon in General Lee's Army of Northern Virginia. Shortly after Appomattox, Dr. Minor left his camp in Virginia, and walked home to Mississippi.

He walked the whole way, writing in his diary each night. He had witnessed terrible pain and suffering in the war, operating in makeshift hospitals without

anesthesia after some of the bloodiest battles in human history. He later wrote that his final trip south was the most frightening experience of all.

I am not talking about Cold Mountain.

Henry Minor was an ancestor of mine. I know his tale because my family kept the diaries and letters that he wrote.

Why begin with him?

When I read his diary, I get a sense of his daily life, and it helps me understand why, a hundred and fifty years later, I act as I do.

You provide that same understanding for our national family, for all Americans. By animating the history of our country, you give each of us insight into ourselves. And NEH is an important partner in that process.

As you well know, over the past 35 years dozens of historians have served on our National Council, including John Hope Franklin (a former OAH president), Mary Beth Norton, Ramon Gutierrez. Historians on our current National Council include Ed Ayers, Ira Berlin, Pedro Castillo, Evelyn Edson, Don Fixico, Nathan Hatch, and Vicki Ruiz. Our annual Jefferson Lecture has featured numerous historians, from C. Vann Woodward (another former OAH president) in the early years to Bernard Bailyn and James McPherson in more recent times. NEH's national Humanities Medals have honored distinguished historians such as Edmund Morgan (former OAH president), Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, and Stephen Ambrose. And, most importantly, historians figure prominently in scholarly work that is the lifeblood of the humanities. For books they produced with NEH support historians have earned 9 Pulitzer Prizes and 17 Bancroft Prizes.

In this new century, our partnership is leading us in exciting new directions as we confront profound changes that face both American historians and other humanists.

I want to talk about those changes and what they mean for all of us.

Change is certainly nothing new for historians. Over the past four decades you have witnessed dramatic change in your field.

In 1962, the President of the American Historical Association criticized young historians because they were - in his words, "products of the lower middle-class or foreign origins, and their emotions ... get in the way of historical reconstructions."

His remarks remind me of Franklin Roosevelt's speech to the Daughters of the American Revolution. Roosevelt greeted his audience with, "My fellow

immigrants."

Thanks to you, we increasingly understand that American history is not only the story of those whose ancestors came from Europe.

American history also embraces those brought in chains through the treacherous middle passage from Africa. It embraces those who came from Asia to work on railroads. It embraces those who came from the Iberian peninsula, following the routes of explorers from Spain and Portugal. And it embraces those who came across the Bering Straits and spread to every part of the Americas.

Over the last four decades, you have helped us rediscover American history in exciting new ways.

Your work has not been without controversy. Peter Novick writes eloquently about history movements of our lifetime--New Left, black, ethnic, feminist--movements that some hold responsible for the "fragmentation" of historiography.

Eric Foner shows how, to the contrary, each new generation of historians deepens our understand of America.

You create what Foner calls "a collective self-discovery about the nature of our society."

Our society is in the midst of radical change.

We see this change in New York City where the Hispanic population is now larger than the African-American population.

We see it here in California, the first mainland state where whites are the minority.

We also see it in Lowell, Massachusetts, where the descendants of English settlers hired entire families of Irish immigrants to work in textile mills.

There is still a large population of immigrants in Lowell. But they are not from Ireland or Great Britain. Today Lowell has the nation's second largest settlement of Cambodian-Americans--almost a third of the city. And it is home to the nation's largest group of Americans born in Sierra Leone.

During the next half-century the United States will become a majority non-white nation. Our population will increase about 131 million people, 90% of whom what we now call "minorities."

African Americans will increase 83%--and Native Americans 95%.

Hispanics 258%.

Asians 267%.

Among children younger than 5, white children will be a minority by 2030.

This change will have a profound impact on the entire world. Has there ever been such a rich mix of the world's population gathered together within a single nation?

This change in America's population is paralleled by an equally dramatic change in our economy.

Some might look at the collapse of high-tech stocks in the last few months and declare that the Information Revolution is over.

This is a time that reminds us of Woody Allen's definition of a stockbroker as: "someone who invests your money--until it's all gone."

To understand what is happening with technology, you need only sit in the hotel lobby and watch guests talking on cellphones the size of a deck of cards--or go back to your room and use your laptop to check e-mail.

This is a world in which 1.5 billion e-mails are sent each day--we send more e-mails now than the Post Office delivers letters. And for every dollar we spend on books, we spend three on software.

More than half our homes now have computers - 80% of them with Internet access. When we last changed Presidents about 3 million Americans were online. Now about 100 million are.

Everywhere you look, nouns now begin with e. Business-to-business e-commerce totaled \$336 billion last year. It's projected to be over \$6 trillion by 2005.

And in 2005 about half of the American workers will either work for Information technology companies or will use technology on their job.

What does this mean for historians?

One of our staff at NEH is getting a doctorate in History, and she recently reflected on how the Internet shapes her study.

She pointed out that while some feared the Internet might spell the death of

books, it has actually made it easier for her to find books. The internet has also created new communities of scholars around the world through chat rooms.

Technology is clearly influencing historiography. Ed Ayers, for example, has just finished his latest book on the Civil War. His research was largely based on primary sources gathered from his "Valley of the Shadow" website. That website, incidentally, was funded by NEH and now is featured on Edsitement, our portal website for K-12 teachers that is funded by the WorldCOM Foundation.

How can we harness this new technology to best serve your needs as historians?

In an increasingly multiracial America, we can use these new tools to confront the complexity of American history.

As a southerner, I am defined by that region's history, a history beautifully explored by David Blight in his new book, *Race and Reunion*, and by Eric Foner in his fine review of Blight's book in the *New York Times*.

Blight argues that a desire to reconcile the North and the South led American historians to downplay the importance of slavery.

Blight reminds us of Confederate cavalry officer Colonel John Mosby's statement that "The South was my country....But the South went to war on account of slavery."

In an America in which every citizen should understand the principles set forth in the Constitution, historians like David Blight and Eric Foner help us distinguish between myth and reality in the American memory.

As we ride through change with our feet planted on the twin steeds of technology and demography, there is a temptation in higher education to argue that:

Students need computer skills to match workers in Europe and the Pacific Rim countries. History and philosophy are all very well--but they are luxuries. We should devote our energies to technical training that can get students jobs.

We do need an educated workforce. Students do need technical training--and they certainly deserve jobs.

But it is demeaning to argue that technical training is all they need.

How can the next generation build a strong nation if they are not grounded in our history, in our literature, in the philosophies that have shaped America?

If we want to create an America in which people of many races and cultures live together, we must build a cultural common ground. And to do this we must make sure that our schools do not shortchange the humanities.

This fight will be waged school by school. Victory will be measured by how much a school appropriates to buy books for its library;

By the number of full-time faculty members it hires in history;

By whether the school puts a computer on your desk.

While NEH may not help in all those areas, we are proud of what we are doing with you. Our partnership with American historians is beautifully demonstrated at this meeting. Your Friday session about "On-Line Approaches to Teaching U.S. Women's History" features two projects with NEH funding.

Another Friday session on "Regional and Local Encyclopedias" features comment by Helen Aguerra from NEH, who will highlight our On-line State Encyclopedias initiative.

On Saturday, projects with NEH support are featured in the session on "Cultural Encounters and Transformations in the Colonial Midwest."

There are many other sessions that feature papers done with the support of NEH fellowships and summer stipends. I am especially proud of the summer institutes that we fund each year. Last summer we supported an institute on "Early Slave Cultures in the Tidewater/Chesapeake and Carolina Low Country" at Prince Georges Community College and another on "Women's Rights" at Ohio State.

This summer the University of Texas at San Antonio will host "Derrumbando Fronteras/Breaking Boundaries"- an Institute that will integrate Mexican American and Latino Literature and Cultures into the secondary curriculum.

Add to these projects others that we fund at universities around the country-- museum exhibits, library discussion programs, preservation of historic books and newspapers, and partnerships with businesses like Sara Lee who underwrite our Jefferson Lecture which this year featured the distinguished American playwright Arthur Miller.

I interviewed Arthur Miller about *The Crucible*, a play that deepens our understanding of two episodes in American history, one in the Seventeenth Century, the other in the 20th. Miller recalled that he was discouraged by the angry reaction his play provoked when it was first performed, but that privately he was happy to have dealt with "issues that everybody was worried about."

Miller's knowledge of history clearly enriched his understanding of what his play could achieve.

Arthur Miller is not the only American writer who bridges history with fiction. Ernest Gaines's *Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman*--a book I have often taught--was inspired by the author's reading of slave narratives, and the novel is sometimes mistakenly read as an oral history.

Sometimes the tide flows from the other direction when classic history texts are written by historians who are inspired by fiction. C. Vann Woodward once told me that he turned to history after first considering a career as a novelist--and he kept a picture of William Faulkner on the wall above his desk.

Joseph Ellis, whose work NEH has also supported, was recently asked why he included Aaron Burr among the seven "founding brothers" in his book which just won the Pulitzer Prize.

He answered "I wanted to begin with the duel because it's a great story designed to catch the reader's attention. More importantly, Burr is the anti-hero."

Spoken like a true novelist and a good historian because success in both professions depends on finding compelling stories about our history.

Similar bridges between American history and folklore have been built through the fine work of Charles Joyner, Larry Levine, and Leon Litwack, who draw on blues, spirituals, sermons, and folktales to document black history.

And Ira Berlin has allowed Freedmen to tell similar stories through eloquent letters like that of Hannah Johnson, mother of a black soldier in the 54th Massachusetts Infantry who on July 31, 1863 wrote President Lincoln, "I have but poor edication but I never went to schol, but I know just as well as any what is right between man and man....When you are dead and in Heaven, in a thousand years that action of yours will make the Angels sing your praises I know it."

History, literature, folklore, and many other fields of the humanities are increasingly joined at the hip. Together they constitute the fabric of our culture, and they are best understood when their many threads are interwoven.

At NEH we help you weave beautiful new patterns into this fabric. We help you create knowledge, deepen understanding, and enrich our culture.

Your work is a pearl of great price.

Realizing that your field is American history, I remind you that Winston Churchill had an American mother as I recall his debate in the House of Commons with Stanley Baldwin, the British Prime Minister.

"History will say the right honorable gentleman was wrong in this matter," Churchill said. "I know, because I will write the history."

As Churchill reminds us, historians have the final word. Like the African Griot, you are our nation's singer of tales, and your story will be remembered when others are forgotten.

William Faulkner once remarked that "In the South the past is never dead. It is not even past." From King George to George W., you deepen our understanding of each era of American history. You are midwife to the American memory.

As we travel new roads, you provide direction and meaning to the journey. You shape it in the classroom. You shape it in library carrels.

At NEH we believe deeply in the rigorous scholarship you do on the American experience. Your work as historians is essential to the health of our nation. We ignore American history at our peril, whether that history be embedded in the many volumes written by this distinguished audience, or in the worn diary of a surgeon walking a few miles each day on his long journey home from Appomattox.

Thank you.

**Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and Museum
April 27, 2001**

William R. Ferris, Chairman
National Endowment for the Humanities

I am honored to speak at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and I want to thank Mark Burson both for the leadership he brings our nation as director of the Library and for giving me the opportunity to discuss the work of the National Endowment for the Humanities with you.

This is not the first time I have joined friends in paying tribute to President Reagan. A few weeks ago I attended a ceremony sponsored by the Ronald Reagan Library and the Heritage Foundation in Washington to celebrate the christening of a new aircraft carrier, the *USS Ronald Reagan*.

At that program Senator Jesse Helms spoke eloquently about how he first met Ronald Reagan in North Carolina when he was running for President. Senator Helms also reminded us of the enduring impact of Ronald Reagan's ideas on our nation and on the world.

Senator Helm's remarks reminded me of how Ronald Reagan first touched my life as a child growing up on a farm in Mississippi in the 50s. My grandmother lived on the farm and owned the first television I ever saw. Each week my parents allowed my brother, three sisters, and me to watch two programs they felt appropriate for children--the Walt Disney Show and the General Electric Theatre. Two Californians--Walt Disney and Ronald Reagan--hosted the programs, and I will never forget President Reagan's weekly reminder to viewers that "At G.E., progress is our most important product." His message foreshadowed the leadership that he would bring the world in the years that have followed.

Shortly after your Library's recent Washington tribute to President Reagan, Nancy Reagan wrote to a number of us who attended the program and described her emotions as she christened the *USS Ronald Reagan* in Newport News. "As I stood there ready to christen the ship, I thought of Ronnie and all that he has given our nation and the world." And she added a poignant thought about this library, "I know my husband wants his ideas to be preserved and passed down to future generations."

I want to pause a moment to salute Nancy Reagan for her amazing leadership. In the South we would call her a "steel magnolia" because she mixes grace and elegance with strength and endurance. Her story and that of all our nation's First Ladies is showcased at Mary Regula's First Ladies Museum in Canton, Ohio, and their First Ladies Website, a resource that we feature on NEH's EDSITEment website for K-12 teachers throughout the nation.

I thought about those words as I came here today because they capture a common vision that unites the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and the National Endowment for the Humanities.

In 1982 President Reagan told the leaders of the nation's research libraries, "We must never forget that it is the humanities - their study, their preservation, and their growth that provide the intellectual underpinnings for our values as a civilization." President Reagan continued, "I want to take this occasion to express my personal commitment to the humanities and to reaffirm the Administration's support of the National Endowment for the Humanities....Our administration has shown that it can use its limited resources to support the basic disciplines and essential activities of the humanities. It also has shown that through example and encouragement the federal government can attempt to stimulate increased private sector giving for the support of the humanities. We believe that such federal activity is appropriate, for the humanities are crucial to the vitality of our Nation's educational and cultural life and the maintenance of our civilization."

As you know, NEH is an independent federal agency headquartered in Washington, DC. We make grants to support research, education, and public programs in the humanities throughout the nation.

The NEH reflects a deep-rooted, Jeffersonian belief that the future of our republic depends upon a knowledgeable citizenry. The humanities help us understand who we are and how our history shapes us as a nation and as a people.

Just as your support for this presidential library helps preserve the ideas and legacies of President Reagan, so too the NEH, through its grants, helps libraries across America preserve our records, our books, and our artifacts that tell the American story. NEH's public face is known to all Americans through television documentaries such as Ken Burns' series on Jazz and the Civil War. And we have provided on-going support for the PBS series American Presidents which features televised biographies of 20th century presidents, including FDR, Eisenhower, LBJ, and Ronald Reagan.

I thought you might find a brief video narrated by Morgan Freeman interesting because it provides an overview of our work, and I want to share this video with you now.

This video captures the many ways NEH helps create a sense of community in America. I want to talk for a few minutes about this sense of community and ask you to consider how we can sustain it as a nation in the face of rapid changes--changes you are experiencing here in California more acutely perhaps than in any other part of the country. Faced with such change the humanities can weave strong and powerful bonds that can link all Americans.

As a nation, we need to find a cultural common ground, and the humanities can help provide that meeting place of the mind. The NEH, as Morgan Freeman's eloquent voice reminds us, helps every day to both preserve the legacies of the past and to build the America of tomorrow.

And for this good work, we need partners like those of you who helped create the Reagan Library, and who continue to support its important work.

At the NEH we build private sector partnerships with the corporate community, with foundations, and with individual donors. Thanks to these partnerships, we are harnessing new technologies to share the humanities with all Americans.

Our My History is America's History project encourages every American to learn more their family's stories and to create pathways from that personal experience to the larger public histories of communities, regions and the nation. I hope you will visit the My History website at www.myhistory.org to learn more about how you can preserve our family's history.

When I teach folklore classes, I love to remind my students of an African proverb that says, "When an old man or woman dies, a library burns to the ground." It is with a sense of urgency that we are working to gather family history from our elders while there is still time.

EDSITEment is another web-based project that offers online resources for teaching English, history, art history and foreign languages. EDSITEment features a powerful search engine to help teachers, parents and students find humanities information quickly. It is a joint project of the NEH, the Council of the Great City Schools, WorldCom Foundation, and the National Trust for the Humanities.

Neither of these projects would exist without the generous support of our private sector partners. I also want to tell you about another exciting new initiative that is enlisting partners throughout the nation on behalf of the humanities.

We are creating 10 regional centers that will dramatically increase support for the humanities. In fact, we have already raised \$1 million from individuals and foundations to underwrite twenty planning grants for our Regional Centers Initiative, and we recently received 2.5 million from the Knight Foundation--the largest gift in our 35 year history--to help launch these Centers. I know from my own experience at the University of Mississippi, where I directed the Center for the Study of Southern Culture, that regional centers can serve as a powerful force in their community.

These university-based centers will increase overall giving to the humanities. They will draw on the sense of place and pride that inspires local giving and will

help build strong communities. The Regional Centers Initiative will support 10 dynamic centers, and they will significantly strengthen the regional universities where they will be housed.

We can better understand their potential if we think of them as partners with the nation's system of presidential libraries. Just as the National Archives in Washington works in cooperation with a dispersed set of presidential libraries, so too the NEH, by helping to create and strengthen these regional humanities centers, will reach out to other partners in their communities. Just as presidential libraries like the Reagan Library serve both a scholarly and a public educational role, these 10 regional centers will support research while they also forge ties to local schools and communities throughout their region.

President Bush, like President Reagan, believes deeply in the importance of family, community, and civil society, and these beliefs are reflected in our programs at NEH. As we deepen understanding of our regions and the communities in which we live, we strengthen the fabric of family, community and civil society within America.

I am personally drawn to this work because of my long interest as a scholar in the study of family and community. The overall theme of our programs at NEH is "Rediscovering America," a theme that reflects my strong personal commitment to the American family and my belief that every American's "sense of place" is defined by their community.

My efforts at NEH to strengthen the bonds of family, community, and civil society through the humanities are in keeping with both President Reagan and President Bush's belief that we must strengthen our nation at the level of family and community. Like the Reagan Library, NEH serves the nation by preserving America's ideas and values for generations to come.

Thank you.

**American Council on Learned Societies
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
May 4, 2001**

William R. Ferris, Chairman
National Endowment for the Humanities

Thank you John for your kind introduction. I first want to commend John for his extraordinary leadership as President of the American Council of Learned Societies. Over the past five years John has more than doubled the ACLS endowment from \$23 million in 1996 to \$47 million in 2002. John, we are all indebted to you for your support of scholarship in our nation.

I want to pause for a moment to mention three of your members who died this past year. Frederick Cassidy, Maynard Mack, and Geoffrey Marshall were dear friends whom I knew and respected, and they will be sorely missed.

It was 1912, and Thomas Edison was excited.

Celluloid film had made motion pictures possible. The inventor of the light bulb had introduced an improved version of the movie projector, advertised as "Thomas Edison's latest marvel." Movie houses were springing up around the country.

And Edison announced he was going to produce 6000 films "to teach the 19 million school children in the . . . United States to do away entirely with books."

Today we have to be careful about holding Edison to the excesses of his enthusiasm. But we must acknowledge that Edison invented many of the tools we still use in scholarship--the light bulbs we use to read, the recording devices we use to hear. Each new generation of technology influences the work of the serious scholar.

It helps us research and transmit the rich, complete sum of human knowledge.

And so, in an age when people think the PC will mean the death of books, we celebrate more than ever those who have their names on books, on monographs, on articles and films, and what we call cyber research. In John D'Arms's apt phrase, you "labor in common cause" to advance "the communal life of learning."

At NEH, we are partners in that common cause.

That is to be expected. It was an ACLS recommendation that led to the creation of NEH in 1965.

Over the years, individual scholars who have done research with the help of

NEH fellowships or summer stipends have produced more than 2,500 books. They have won 11 Pulitzer Prizes. The latest is Joseph Ellis, who wrote "The Founding Brothers." Ellis won a fellowship to do research on early American history more than a quarter of a century ago--but he still lists that NEH fellowship on his CV, and I am happy to claim him as part of the NEH family.

The question of support for culture is a long-standing one. A few years ago, John D'Arms opened an article by asking "Who have been the patrons--the Maecenates and the Medici, the Pierpont Morgans and the Paul Mellons--of the humanities during the past 25 years."

John appropriately reminds us that the great imaginative artists, the rigorous scholars, those who spend their lives uncovering the mysteries of our heritage ... always need patrons. When we read about Leonardo Da Vinci, one of the striking things is how his life was dominated by the need for a patron--whether Lorenzo de Medici, or the Sforzas in Milan, or Cesare Borgia, or Francis I of France. That same can be said of James Joyce, William Faulkner, and Zora Neale Houston.

Thankfully, there are still individuals of great wealth who support art and scholarship.

These days, government provides that support, also. It would be tempting for those of us at NEH to imagine ourselves as heirs to the great patrons. But the fact is, the money we dispense is public money. Those of us who are privileged to serve at NEH are well aware of the difference.

Our work is informed by one unwavering belief: that nothing we support can be successful without rigorous scholarship.

The best people to decide on the scholarships we fund are scholars. We believe in peer review. We know that if we bring five scholars into a room, they will give us wise counsel, counsel that determines how we dispense our funds.

Do I wish there was more money?

I do. Sometimes I feel a little like Costello in that old Abbott and Costello routine. Abbott asks him, "Lou, if you had \$50 in one pocket and \$100 in the other, what would you have?"

Costello says, "Somebody else's pants."

I do wish we had deeper pockets at NEH. I would love to have \$120 billion instead of \$120 million. But then we would be the Department of Transportation.

The humanities is not a monolith, in which ideas remain unchanged from generation to generation. Younger scholars will always disagree with older ones. Methods change. What seems incontrovertibly true to one generation seems incontrovertibly false to the next.

Over the last three decades, we have not been immune to deep division about the very nature of scholarship.

Francis Oakley writes perceptively about the rise of multicultural and gender studies, and the politicization of humanities departments.

Professor Oakley describes what he calls the "erosion" of the humanities.

Academic departments have responded to the need for multicultural, globalization, and gender studies, by adding new courses, not by discarding the traditional ones.

As John D'Arms suggests, these changes contribute to understanding. "Few would wish to deny the demographic and political realities that have given rise to some of the best multicultural scholarship, or would seriously question the value of rigorous and sympathetic study of the history and aesthetic expressions of previously subordinated groups."

There is and will always be a need for rigorous, disinterested scholarship and NEH will always support such scholarship.

We support excellence.

Do we take John's phrase--"demographic realities" into account? Certainly.

By 2050 this country will be 47% nonwhite. By 2030, there will be more minority children in America than white children. I recently spoke with Pauline Yu in Los Angeles. As you know, Pauline is Dean of Humanities and Professor of East Asian Languages and Cultures at UCLA. She reminded me that today there are 200 languages and dialects spoken in Los Angeles.

In a country where we must fuse many cultures and races into one America, we cannot ignore the contributions and culture of any part of our nation.

In an increasingly multicultural America there is far greater need for serious scholarship. How better to analyze the vastly different interpretations of our wars, of slavery, of policies ranging from education to immigration? Who better than scholars can look long and hard at both contemporary and historic issues.

As we enter the Information Age, there are those who would diminish the very importance of the humanities themselves. Their arguments come, in part, from

the excitement over the Internet.

More than half of American homes now have computers--80% of them with Internet access. When we last changed Presidents about 3 million Americans were online. Now about 100 million are.

Everywhere you look, nouns now begin with e. Business-to-business e-commerce was about \$336 billion last year. It is projected to be over \$6 trillion by 2005.

And in that year half of American workers will either work for information technology companies or use technology in a way essential for their job.

As we ride through change with our feet planted on the twin steeds of technology and demography, there is a temptation in higher education to argue that students need computer skills to match workers in Europe and the Pacific Rim countries. History and philosophy are all very well, some argue, but they are luxuries. We should devote our energies to technical training that can get students jobs.

We do need an educated workforce. Students do need technical training--and they certainly deserve jobs. But it is demeaning to argue that technical training is all they need. How can the next generation build a strong nation if they are not grounded in our history, in our literature, in the philosophies that have shaped America?

If we want to create an America in which people of many races and cultures live together, we must build a cultural common ground. And to do this we must make sure that our schools do not shortchange the humanities.

We must rededicate ourselves to three things: that the new technology is a means, not an end ... that humanities are essential to a great civilization ... and that we cannot have a rich cultural life without supporting the scholarship on which humanities rests.

This is our mission at NEH.

The evidence is everywhere.

You see it in the work Joseph Carter is doing at the University of Texas in Austin, synthesizing 25 years of research into the rural life of Greece and Rome.

You see it in Leah Ceccarelli's work at the University of Washington for a project titled "Motivating Scientists to Cross Intellectual Borders"--she is studying three texts by Dobzhansky, Shrodinger, and E.O. Wilson--texts that

have stimulated new interdisciplinary fields in the sciences.

Or John Kincaid at Lafayette College in Pennsylvania, who is studying 8,200 constitutional cases in state courts governing three core elements of democracy: consent, representation, and transparency.

All are working with NEH support.

As you well know, great scholarship is not only the work of individuals. It also manifests itself in the work of collaborative ventures like the Walt Whitman Hypertext Archive headed by Ed Folson at the University of Iowa, which will reproduce electronically the complete 22-volume NYU University Press edition of Whitman's collected writing. It will also make available many of Whitman's letters and early poems discovered since the Collected Writings volumes were published.

There are also literary editions and translation projects that are complex, take years and involve private foundations, schools, individual donors--and NEH.

While applications of computer technology to the humanities are increasingly common, they only hint at future possibilities. Every discipline--from genetics to geography--has been profoundly transformed by computer technology. In the humanities, applications are primarily directed toward communication, dissemination, and access. The recent report of our NEH Working Group on Humanities, Science, and Technology applauds the use of digital technologies for "projects that create new approaches to studying the humanities."

Ed Ayers, for example, has just finished his latest book on the Civil War. His research was largely based on primary sources gathered from his "Valley of the Shadow" website. That website was funded by NEH and now is part of ESDITement, our portal website for K-12 teachers, that is funded by the WorldCom Foundation. Ed's use of technology in his scholarship is redefining what we think of as the humanities pipeline through which new research enters the classroom and public venues.

Technology is still in its infancy. We must be aware of its limitations - and take advantage of its incredible resources as it develops.

At NEH we are moving aggressively to take advantage of new technology tools that will enhance the role of the humanities in American life. Like you, we are developing on-line applications for all our programs--the One-Book. All publications are on line. We average about two million hits each month on our website, with forty thousand of those visitors downloading our program guidelines. We are also trying to address rising costs of scholarship. In FY 2001 we raised the award level of our year-long fellowships from \$30,000 to \$35,000. Next year we will raise it again to \$40,000.

We fund the work of individuals. We help teams of scholars. We help create major reference works - dictionaries, historical atlases, encyclopedias. We help American archaeologists excavate the physical evidence of older cultures

We do not act alone. We are part of a team, and we are honored to be able to work with each of you.

It is interesting to read Whitman's account of Washington, walking outside the White House at night, seeing the brilliant gas lights of the portico, and watching the cattle droves in the streets of the city.

On Inaugural Day, in 1865 he wrote that he saw President Lincoln returning from the Inaugural ceremony "in his plain, two-horse barouche. . .his little boy of ten years" beside him. Whitman wrote that President Lincoln "look'd much worn and tired."

It is interesting to imagine it, Lincoln, looking at Whitman, the bearded, middle-aged man on the street, and perhaps recognizing him.

Certainly neither of them could imagine that 135 years later Whitman's poems would be anthologized - and the anthology would include a poem about seeing President Lincoln riding by in his carriage.

We can not see perfectly into the future. But we know one thing. If we are to make decisions about where to go, we are better off with a knowledge of where we have been.

That is what you do. In your research, in your analysis, in your imaginative works, you provide us all with an understanding of our times--and thus, ourselves.

I salute you for enriching our lives.

I urge you to continue to hold the standards high for scholars.

Just as Gutenberg's great technological invention produced new ways of disseminating scholarship . . . just as Edison helped light our evenings and show us moving images and let us hear voices people thought could never be preserved . . . we are still discovering new tools to convey the fruits of scholarship.

Throughout all these changes what endures is the insight, dedication and unwavering commitment to expanding knowledge that characterizes your work.

Whether we read it, listen to it, or watch it, I look forward to working with you

as we seek to uncover our past...to gain insight into the present ... and to become more capable of facing the future.

Civil War Preservation Trust Annual Conference
Herndon, Virginia
May 6, 2001

William R. Ferris, Chairman
National Endowment for the Humanities

It is a special pleasure to be here this morning and to share in the dialogue that you have had over the last four days about the preservation of America's Civil War heritage. I want first to say how impressed I am with the work of your President, Jim Lighthizer. As you well know, Jim brings a vision to the Trust that is unique. The strength of his leadership is clear when we consider that during this past year he both retired the Trust's six million dollar debt and acquired over 2,000 acres of land connected to Civil War battlefields for your organization. I have long admired Jim and Trust board members such as Ruff Fant, Paul Bryant, and Rosemary Williams who are absolutely committed to preserving both Civil War history and its battle sites.

Your work with the Civil War touches me on a very personal level. I grew up on a farm 15 miles southeast of Vicksburg, Mississippi, where one of our nation's greatest Civil War military parks is located. As a child I knew little about the park's significance. Years later I began to understand the symbolic importance that the park held for my own past and for the region that I call home. Civil War stories are familiar in my family, stories such as that of Henry Minor, a surgeon in General Lee's Army of Northern Virginia. Shortly after Appomattox, Dr. Minor left his camp in Virginia, and walked back home to Mississippi. He walked the whole way, writing in his diary each night. Dr. Minor had witnessed terrible pain and suffering in the war, operating in makeshift hospitals without anesthesia after some of the bloodiest battles in human history. But he later wrote that his final trip south was the most frightening experience of all.

I am not talking about Cold Mountain. Henry Minor was an ancestor of mine. I know his tale because my family kept the diaries and letters that he wrote. When I read his diary, I get a sense of his daily life, and it helps me understand why, a hundred and fifty years later, I act as I do.

My great, great grandmother Seraphina Flowers was a young mother during the Civil War. Her two sons, Oliver and Grey, were captured and imprisoned in the federal prison at Rock Island, Illinois. When they became ill, Seraphina requested permission to visit and nurse them in prison. She was allowed to pass through Union lines and nursed both her sons and other prisoners who were ill back to health. She then returned to her home in Vicksburg where several months later a large wardrobe arrived by boat that had been made by the prisoners in their shop and sent to her in appreciation for her support.

These stories have been told in each generation of my family. As a southerner, I struggle with the meaning of the Civil War and the ongoing controversies

over its symbols, symbols that are emotionally charged for so many of our citizens. William Faulkner once remarked that "In the South, the past is never dead. It is not even past." The Civil War is without question the most significant event in our nation's past. As we educate the public about the Civil War, we build a better future for all our citizens. Time and knowledge help us to gain perspective on the Civil War and to find meaning through the healing that history allows.

I commend the members of the Civil War Preservation Trust for organizing this gathering and for your efforts to preserve both Civil War battlefields and the documents and artifacts related to this great conflict. The Trust's mission to educate the American public about the Civil War and to forge a personal connection to history for all citizens is a mission that we share at the National Endowment for the Humanities. There are clearly significant parallels between your vision and our own at NEH.

As you know, both our organizations seek to "preserve memory" for future generations. Like you, at NEH we deeply believe in the importance of historical memory. And, like you, we believe that memory is best preserved when we both save and interpret historic artifacts—from battlefields to letters, diaries, and photographs.

Our Preservation and Access Division has helped microfilm thousands of American newspapers. Many of these newspapers offer a revealing portrait of American culture during the Civil War, and they are indispensable to historians who want to learn about the daily life of citizens in both small towns and large cities during the Civil War. They highlight local events that are often omitted in history books, and they help us remember the "Private Ryans" of the Civil War.

Both as a Southerner and as an American, I am especially proud of NEH's support of Civil War projects. As history, as drama, as literature, and as media, the Civil War continues to capture the imagination of each new generation of artists and scholars. It inspires them to wrestle with this powerful moment in our collective past.

Humanities projects on the Civil War that are produced with NEH support significantly deepen public understanding of the work that you do in preserving Civil War sites. As you know, NEH played a major role in funding Ken Burns' historic documentary on the Civil War. In addition, Ken Burns drew heavily on historic letters, diaries, and photographs that NEH has also helped preserve. A guide at a Civil War battlefield recently spoke about how Burn's film has enriched his work. Since the airing of the Burns film, the guide has noted that his visitors have a far greater knowledge and interest in the Civil War.

The Ken Burns documentary is a historic accomplishment by an exceptionally talented filmmaker. An equally impressive, comprehensive history of the Civil

War is James McPherson's Pulitzer Prize winning *Battle Cry of Freedom*, a study that was supported with an NEH fellowship. James McPherson also delivered our 2000 Jefferson Lecture, the highest honor bestowed on a scholar in the humanities. You are also familiar with Jim because of his strong commitment to the preservation of Civil War battlefields. We are particularly proud of our support for Civil War projects that use new digital technology to increase public access to Civil War history. A prime example of such a project is Edward Ayers' website, "The Valley of the Shadow: A Digital Archive of Northern and Southern Community Life in the Civil War." This website features an incredible number of documents and artifacts from two communities—one in the North, the other in the South--during the Civil War. In addition, Ed has just finished his latest book on the Civil War using research largely based on primary sources gathered from his "Valley of the Shadow" website. This website was funded by NEH and is featured on Edsitement, our portal website for K-12 teachers that is privately funded by the WorldCOM Foundation.

Many important new resources on the Civil War are currently being developed with NEH support, and I would like to highlight a few of these projects for you. John McClymer at Assumption College is creating a website that will offer teaching materials in three areas of American history, one of which is the Civil War.

Jacob Greenberg, a high school teacher in Columbia, South Carolina is developing a book on "Confederate Jews in the Midlands of South Carolina: Their Role in the Civil War." Until now--apart from Judah P. Benjamin--historians have been largely silent on the role of Jewish Americans in the Civil War. Thanks to Mr. Greenberg's work, their voices will be heard.

Women contributed greatly to the Civil War, and we have funded a number of significant studies that deal with their role in the war. The titles of some of these projects are: "Elizabeth Van Lew and Mary Elizabeth Bowser, Spies for the Union in Civil War Richmond", "A Woman's War: Southern Women, Civil War, and the Confederate Legacy", "Anna Dickinson's War: Political Discourse and Gender in Civil War America", and "A Wound of One's Own: Women Writers and the American Civil War"

The African American experience during the Civil War and Reconstruction is increasingly important to the American public. We recently funded a fascinating project on the subject of "Black Sailors in the Civil War" that will expand our understanding of the diverse ways that African Americans participated in the war.

NEH also supports scholars who edit the papers of figures who played leading roles in the Civil War. These papers will dramatically enhance the interpretative work that you do with battlefields. Through these papers the public will learn about the personal lives and first hand experiences of major Civil War figures.

We are encouraging the compilers of these editions to place their primary documents on the web so that the public will have greater access to them. NEH has provided important support to the Ulysses S. Grant Association for work on the Papers of Ulysses S. Grant; to Rice University for work on the Papers of Jefferson Davis; and to the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency for work on the Legal Papers of Abraham Lincoln.

I also want to briefly mention two major initiatives under way at NEH that will have a significant impact on your work with Civil War battlefields. This fall we will launch 10 regional humanities centers in regions throughout the nation. These centers will be vitally interested in your work and in the possibility of using Civil War battlefields as teaching resources for teachers and students in the five-state regions in which each is located.

We are also creating on-line encyclopedias that will serve as portals to the rich history and culture of each state, territory, and the District of Columbia. We recently made seventeen planning grants to state humanities councils, three of which are in Virginia, Alabama, and Florida. These encyclopedias will treat the Civil War extensively and will provide important links to your resources at the Civil War Preservation Trust. Modeled on the Handbook of Texas, which NEH funded earlier, these encyclopedias will provide humanities resources that will enrich education, cultural tourism, and economic development at the state level.

As we review this rich harvest of Civil War projects that NEH supports, it is clear that the Civil War Preservation Trust and the National Endowment for the Humanities share a common vision. The need to secure our nation's memory of the Civil War and to share that memory with all Americans is a goal that can and will be achieved through our joint efforts. I congratulate you for your leadership in this noble cause, and I look forward to working closely with each of you in the future.

Commencement Address
University of California, Santa Barbara
June 16, 2001

Chairman William R. Ferris

Congratulations!

You are now college graduates--or as Bill Cosby says, people who have lost four years starting real life.

I'm honored by your invitation. One of the advantages of being a commencement speaker late in the season is that you can get advice from others. Garrison Keillor had a few pieces of advice.

Don't blow into the microphone. Like this.

(BLOWS INTO THE MIKE)

Don't talk longer than eight minutes, which is all students can stand. Oh, and tell a story exemplifying "confidence ...self-reliance, and bravery."

I'll try.

Of course, just about everybody also recommends congratulating you, which I have already done. But there are other people I'd like to congratulate. . . Your parents.

Being a parent makes you realize how hard parents work. It is not just that they paid tuition, or bought you clothes. It is that they did harder things, like make sure you turned off the TV and did homework, or not let you download Snood.com. Your achievement is--in part--their achievement. And I think they deserve some applause.

(LEADS APPLAUSE)

Now, one thing I noticed in looking at other commencement speeches: people can't resist giving advice.

I can't either--in the seven minutes I have left.

I don't expect you to remember much of it.

I don't remember much about my commencement speakers.

Why are so many of them totally unmemorable?

It is not all the speaker's fault. First, your attention is elsewhere. You are anxious to walk across this stage, get your diploma, see your family--or some people that mean more to you than your family.

Second, the advice we give you is pretty traditional. Life is a challenge, we say. Follow your dream. Make a difference.

You already know these things. If you are like I was, graduating in 1964, you have a lot of questions about the future. It is not likely you will find the answers in a commencement speech.

After all, just because we speakers have lived longer than you doesn't mean we have answers.

I like the story I heard recently of the elderly man from Los Angeles who is driving up Route 1. He gets a call on the carphone from his wife.

She says, "Frank, watch out. There's a report on the news that some car's on Route 1 driving the wrong way."

He says, "Not one car. Hundreds of 'em."

Just because you've lived a long time doesn't mean you are going the right way.

But after four years at NEH--the national source of America's support for the humanities ... at this commencement in which you are getting degrees in the humanities .. there are a few things I hope you remember.

Especially in California. You know, W.C. Fields used to say that when the world comes to an end, he wanted to be in Cincinnati --because everything gets there ten years late.

California is just the opposite. You get things early. In fact, California is already experiencing the two major revolutions that will affect the United States over the next half century.

The first, is the information revolution.

You know this. California is the state of Silicon Valley. We are at a school where students get annoyed at home because they miss the high-speed Internet connection you have on campus. You know that nobody is about to close the Information Highway.

In fact, this is a world in which 1.5 billion e-mails cross international boundaries each day--we send more e-mails now than the Post Office delivers

letters. For every dollar we spend on books, we spend three on software. More than half of American homes now have computers--80% of them with Internet access. Forecasters project business-to-business e-commerce will be more than \$6 trillion by 2005.

And by that year, half of American workers will either work for information technology companies or use it in a way essential for their job.

Technology has changed the way we think, learn, do business.

That change dovetails with another.

Here again, California sees it first.

You recently became the first mainland state where the white population dipped below 50%.

What is happening here will happen all over America.

Over the next half-century the United States will become a majority non-white country. We project the United States population will increase about 131 million people, 90% of whom will be what we now call minorities.

African Americans will increase 83%--and Native Americans about 95%.

Hispanics? 258%.

Asians? 267%.

Among children younger than 5, minority children will outnumber white children by 2030.

On a planet driven by suspicion of the other, have we ever had such a rich mix of the world's population gathered in a single nation?

Can we achieve harmony? Can we ensure that every group has equal access to opportunity? Can we show the world that this country, built partly on the backs of black slaves, can sustain a society that includes all?

What does all this mean for the humanities?

Two things.

First, there are those who will tell you the humanities have to take a back seat to technology.

The argument goes like this: we must give our students the skills to match workers in Europe and the Pacific Rim countries. History and philosophy are all very well, but they are luxuries.

For students it sounds like this: don't major in history or English. You can't make a living that way.

It demeans students to argue that technical training is all you need. If we want to build an America in which people of many races and cultures live together, we must build a cultural common ground. To do this we must make sure the schools do not shortchange the humanities.

Secondly, there is the debate about what we call the "canon" - the accepted list of great works, mostly by white men in western countries, that have appeared on humanities reading lists for generations.

There are those who question the value of regional studies. They sniff at those who study popular culture or folk culture. They look on the trend to include African and Asian writers on reading lists as a threat.

We all acknowledge the importance of Homer, Shakespeare, Dickens, and Faulkner. Our studies should also embrace folklore, the oral tradition of tales and songs which is the seedbed of great literature. Our earliest texts--the *Illiad*, the *Odyssey*, and *Beowolf* were first performed orally by epic bards. Without the folktales of the South you could not have a William Faulkner. Without jazz and the blues, you would not have Ralph Ellison.

Where would Chinua Achebe be without the rich body of myth in Nigerian folklore? Or Aaron Copland without country music?

Folk culture is vital, constantly changing art form.

In a country that will welcome new citizens from every culture on this planet, it is particularly important that we create not an insular culture but an inclusive one.

Yes, if you are Jewish it is easy to see a shock of recognition in a Philip Roth novel. If you are from Mississippi it is easy to respond to Faulkner. But if we are to craft one nation out of immigrants from Mexico, China, Bangladesh and Nigeria, we must make the intellectual leap that comes when we explore the literature of our neighbors?

I believe America's voice will be enriched by the changes in store.

And I am confident that it will be enriched by the contributions you will make as you choose careers.

Some of you may think there is one moment when you decide what that career will be. Maybe you are waiting for inspiration to strike--and worried that it hasn't come yet.

Relax. Your parents are still waiting to see what they will do as grown-ups. They just don't confess it to you.

But they are sitting here as surprised as could be that twenty-two years have passed since the eight-pound bundle appeared that turned out to be you. There are a lot more wonderful things in store for them - and for you.

And in mapping out your future you will be helped by what you have learned on this campus.

For Santa Barbara has a tradition of its own.

It is a tradition that teaches not one right way but a way to think.

It is a tradition that teaches you not what goals to achieve but how to achieve your goals.

And if it hasn't been a place that can answer all your questions--well, no place can do that. You have learned something more important.

You've learned how to look for those answers.

By looking back.

By looking inside yourself.

By trying on somebody else's shoes.

You have done two essential things: first, get a grounding in the humanities, and second, become grounded not just in the traditional canon, but in the larger one, enriched by people from every continent on this planet.

As is so often true about California, you have already done what the rest of America must do.

And in honor of the folk tradition that is at the root of the humanities... and in honor of the parents I've learned to appreciate, I'll sing a little bit of a Delta blues song I learned decades ago.

(PICKS UP GUITAR. TUNES.)

Definitely not part of the canon.

But it reflects what your parents are thinking. "Baby, don't go."

(SINGS SOME STANZAS)

Good luck!