

Remarks by

Lynne V. Cheney

Chairman, National Endowment for the Humanities

Laconia, New Hampshire

January 31, 1992

It's a great pleasure to be here with you tonight. In the years since I've been chairman of the Endowment, I've had a number of opportunities to visit your wonderful state. We have many grantees here: Saint Anselm, Dartmouth, the University of New Hampshire, Shaker Village, Franklin Pierce College, Mills College, Strawberry Banke Museum, the Currier Gallery of Art, the Hood Museum of Art, the University Press of New England, your fine state humanities council--and then, of course, Ken Burns, the producer of "The Civil War" and, most recently, "Empire of the Air," We are very proud of all these grantees, and I know you are as well.

I also get to see New Hampshire from Washington, and you should be very, very proud of the fine Republicans you've had represent you there. Judd Gregg is your outstanding governor now, of course, but Dick and I got to know him and Kathleen when Judd was serving in the House, and he was a fine representative, serving the citizens of the second district so well--as Bill Zeliff is serving the citizens of the first district now. And in Warren Rudman you have, as you well know, one of the most distinguished members of the United States Senate, and with Bob Smith joining him recently, you can be sure that New Hampshire's interests are being very effectively represented.

So it's a pleasure to be with a group so discerning in the people they elect to office. And I'm especially gratified to be here on the occasion of your Lincoln Day dinner. I have to confess that I really do enjoy Lincoln Day dinners. I love getting together with my fellow Republicans so we can talk about how good we are--because we are very, very good.

My husband Dick likes Lincoln Day dinners too, but as Secretary of Defense now he doesn't do political events. I know he'd like to be remembered to you, though. It's always good to be remembered, especially in a state as important as New Hampshire.

Being here with you tonight gives me a chance to talk a little bit about the remarkable times we have just been through. Last year at this time, the air war in the Gulf was just two weeks old. In another three and a half weeks, the ground war would start; and when I think back on those events of a year ago, I think first--and I know you do too--of those wonderful young men and women who served in Operation Desert Storm and helped us remember just how great this country is. Those young people were black and white and brown and every other color human beings can be; and they were there as Americans, first and foremost as Americans, bright and well trained Americans. And they were there to roll back aggression

as Americans before them have done--and as Americans after them will be called on to do. And those young men and women made us feel very good about this great land of ours: the United States of America.

And when I think back on those events of a year ago, I remember--and I know you do too, President Bush and the determination he brought to resisting aggression. And the skill he brought to organizing a coalition of more than thirty nations to oppose Saddam Hussein. And the experience he brought to securing the support of the United Nations and the Congress to oppose a near-nuclear dictator's ambitions to dominate the world's supply of oil.

We are very, very fortunate that George Bush was elected President in 1988. If the Democrats had won, where would Kuwait be today? Where would Saudi Arabia be? I think we all know. They would be under the dictatorship of Saddam Hussein.

We Republicans have many Presidents of whom we can be proud. Lincoln, whose memory we honor tonight. Lincoln, the preserver of the Union. But we have had remarkable Presidents in our own time, too. Think what the last five Republicans have done: Eisenhower, Nixon, Ford, Reagan, Bush--all resisted communist imperialism. All kept our nation's defenses strong.

And because we have had such leadership we have in the last year witnessed one of the most astonishing events in human history: the break-up of the Soviet empire. The yoke of communism, William Safire estimates, has been lifted from a quarter billion people in the last year; the threat of communism from a third of a billion Europeans.

A year ago, if someone had told you and me that in January, 1992, there would be no more Soviet Union, we could scarcely have believed them. But that is exactly what has happened, and strong Republican Presidents from Dwight Eisenhower to George Bush deserve credit. It is entirely fair, I think, for us to ask whether the presidencies of George McGovern and Michael Dukakis would have brought liberty to the millions of people that Soviet communism oppressed.

The world is still a dangerous place. We should make no mistake about it. There is great instability in the former Soviet Union--and some 30,000 nuclear weapons. There are ruthless people in power in various parts of the globe--and others who wish to be. We cannot withdraw from the world. We cannot turn inward, as some in our own party have suggested. Nor can we afford amateur hour at the White House--which is exactly what the slate of Democrat candidates for the Presidency offers. We were very, very lucky to elect George

Bush as our President in 1988, and we need to elect him again in 1992.

And not--let me emphasize--not just because of foreign policy. I know you've heard this charge that the Bush administration doesn't have a domestic agenda. I think the President pretty well laid that to rest in his State of the Union speech last Tuesday. He set out his strategy for encouraging investment, for making it easier for people to invest money and create new products, new industries, and--most of all, most important-- new jobs. And set forth his strategy for clearing away obstacles to growth--high taxes, high regulation, red tape, and wasteful government spending.

The power of America, the President said, rests in a stirring but simple idea: That people will do great things if only you set them free.

This is a Republican idea: freeing people up so they can make the economy work. Getting rid of the excess regulation that hinders growth for example. Stopping the regulatory overkill that causes the credit crunch that all too many of you are familiar with. Letting people keep more of the dollars that they earn from their investments in homes and farms and

businesses. Free people up. Empower them to spur our economic recovery.

This is a powerful idea, freeing people up; and I have seen it working up close in the domestic area I know most about, and that's education. You know, I have often been a pessimist about our schools. At the National Endowment for the Humanities we have sponsored a number of surveys that have shown that our schools haven't been doing a very good job of teaching subjects like history. A few years ago, one of the surveys we sponsored showed that two-thirds of the seventeen year olds in this country can't say, within a fifty-year time span when the American Civil War occurred. Another of our surveys was of college seniors--young men and women about to get their college degrees. Forty percent of them couldn't place the Civil War in the correct half century; thirty percent couldn't identify our enemies in World War II; thirty percent couldn't tell Churchill's words from Stalin's. On one part of the college senior survey, students were asked to say, true or false, whether certain phrases and sentences were in the United States Constitution. On that section, twenty-five percent of our college seniors identified Karl Marx's favorite phrase--"From each according to his ability, to each according to his need:--as being in the United States Constitution.

Not long ago I was in Korea, and I visited a school, as I often do. And I had the opportunity to ask 51 Korean seventeen-year-olds the same question that American seventeen-year-olds and college seniors had been asked about the Civil War. Now, remember, two-thirds of the American high school students couldn't answer the question correctly. Forty percent of the college seniors didn't know the answer. And in the Korean classroom, fifty out of fifty-one students got the answer right.

And history, of course, is not the only problem. A few weeks ago, I heard from a math professor at the University of Wisconsin who has been studying entrance exams in different countries. High school students who enter the University of Tokyo as literature majors, the professor told me, pass exams that require a knowledge of mathematics much more sophisticated than that required of college students transferring in to the California Institute of Technology. Everyone acknowledges that graduate education in subjects like mathematics and science is the finest in the world in the United States, but in many instances our schools and colleges and universities are failing to produce students for these graduate schools. The chairman of the Chemistry Department at George Washington University recently told me that for the first time in his memory, not one

of the graduate students in the chemistry department is American-born.

Our schools are in trouble, and we have known for a very long time what the sources of some of our troubles are. All too often our students don't have teachers who know history or math or chemistry well enough to teach effectively and to inspire students to want to know more, to learn more, to pursue these subjects. And it's not the teachers themselves who are at fault. Almost always they want to know more. They want to be effective teachers. But we make it very hard for them.

You know how we do it. We force them when they're in college to take hours and hours of courses in education. And all too often these courses are not useful. They have very little to do with what teachers in the classroom need to know. And it has been this way for a very long time. I remember when Dick and I were first married. We were at the University of Wyoming and Dick had a part-time job reading to a blind man who wanted to be a teacher. And I would listen to Dick read these inane textbooks into a tape recorder. Once, I remember, he read a whole chapter on how long cheerleaders' skirts should be. This was the sort of thing the man who wanted to become a teacher had to learn--and it was a waste of his time.

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Well, as I say, this has been going on for years. For decades, colleges and departments of education have had a mortal lock on the teacher certification process. People haven't been free to choose another way--until recently. And now, in a growing number of states and localities, there is another way, an alternative way to become a teacher. New Jersey and Texas have the plans I'm most familiar with. They are open to people who have a bachelor's degree in the liberal arts--a degree in history or math or chemistry. These people become teachers by working in the classroom with master teachers, and when they study how-to-teach it's not in some abstract way that has nothing to do with what actually happens

in schools, it's in connection with their time in the classroom. Alternative certification plans have proved themselves effective. They are producing excellent teachers. And they are giving colleges and departments of education reason to get better. That's what competition does. There have always been good people within those colleges and departments, but there was no reason for anyone to listen to their ideas about how better to prepare teachers. Now those good people are empowered, because future teachers have choices. They have been set free.

The President has made alternative certification a centerpiece of his plans for education reform. And he not only wants to free future teachers up, to give them choices. He wants to free parents up, to give them a choice about where their children go to school. This idea has so much going for it. First of all, it works. There are places where choice plans have been in effect for a time, and we can see what the results have been. District 4 in East Harlem is one example. There's been a choice plan in place there now for more than a decade. Before it started, District 4 regularly came in 32nd out of 32 New York school districts in its test scores. Choice hasn't been a miracle. District 4 isn't first in its test scores, but they do regularly come in about sixteenth, and that's quite an achievement.

Choice works because it gives schools reason to get better. Like alternative certification, it brings the dynamic of competition into education, and by doing so encourages improvements in all areas, from teachers and textbooks, to standards and expectations.

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But despite the resistance of congressional Democrats, choice is an idea that is spreading like wildfire, an idea that's being instituted in states and localities across the nation. It not only works, it has the idea of equity behind it. There are a lot of people in this country who have always had choice about their children's schools, people who can afford to buy houses in the best school districts, people who

can come up with private school tuitions. What's good enough for some of us, I say, should be good enough for all of us.

Still, there are some people suspicious of choice. Isn't it possible, they ask, that some parents will make bad choices? And the answer is probably yes. Some people will choose the school with the best football team rather than the school with the best academic program. But I'm willing to trust that this won't happen often. Remember the President's words? "People will do great things if you set them free." They'll make the right choices, especially if you give them the information they need to make good choices.

And that brings me to the last part of the President's education agenda that I want to talk about tonight: testing, assessment. As all of you who have children know, we have a lot of tests in this country--but what you may not know is of how little use most of them are. A few years ago, A doctor in West Virginia, Dr. John Cannell did a great service for all of us by pointing out what many of our standardized tests really measure--and what they don't measure. Dr. Cannell noted that a lot of the youngsters coming into his office didn't seem particularly energetic or well-spoken, but when he would ask their mothers how the children were doing in school, the mothers inevitably reported that the children were testing

"above average." How could this be? the good doctor wondered. How could all these children be above average? When Dr. Cannell looked into it, what he found was that most standardized tests don't compare students taking the test today. Instead, they compare today's testtakers with students who took the test five, seven, even ten years ago--and during the intervening years teachers have been teaching to the test, and so, of course, children are doing better.

With this system of testing in place, Dr. Cannell discovered, it is possible for every state in the Union to report that its students were performing "above average." This phenomenon has come to be known as "the Lake Woebegone Syndrome." You know, Lake Woebegone, where all the men are handsome, all the women are strong, and all the children, above average.

Another test I know you are all familiar with is the SAT. Now this is an interesting exam, because what it does is deliberately avoid testing anything students might have learned in school. The SAT doesn't care if students know when the Civil War occurred. In fact the test makers would throw out any question that would give an advantage to students who might know this information. I have tried to explain the SAT to people in other countries, and they are completely mystified by

it. They say: You mean you send your children to school for twelve years, and then you avoid seeing if they have learned anything? Unfortunately, that is exactly what we do. And, unfortunately, by doing it, we send a very strong message to our children that what their teachers are trying to teach them isn't very important.

We need a new system of assessment in this country, achievement tests that will let parents and policymakers know which schools do best, achievement tests that will tell teachers which students are learning and which are not. We need a national system of achievement tests that will let students know that what their teachers are trying to teach them is very, very important. And the President has brought all of his considerable consensus-building skills to bear on achieving such a system. Remember Desert Shield and Desert Storm and the way he built support for them? Now, on education, he's working with the governors of the fifty states. He's encouraged the Congress to consider how important national achievement testing is, and just last week, a national council consisting of the President's representatives and governors and congressmen and educators recommended that the nation move ahead with a system of nationwide achievement tests. Not federal achievement tests, mind you. Nobody wants the federal government making up a set of tests for everybody. But children in New Hampshire

and Wyoming and California ought to be tested on what they've learned, maybe on very different tests. But then those different exams should be compared to see if they are all meeting the same high standards. You should be able to tell if an A in New Hampshire means more or less than an A in California.

Every other industrialized nation has such a system of nationwide achievement tests, and our children deserve such a system.

You know, when the Democrats say that President Bush doesn't have a domestic agenda, I think what they are really saying is that he doesn't have their domestic agenda. And thank goodness for that. What the President wants to do is help us to help ourselves, free us up to do good. And when I think about education, a subject I know a lot about, I see that he has been remarkably effective. Our schools still have many problems, but the President has brought the full weight of the White House to bear on those problems, and we are now seeing basic structural changes. Alternative certification. Choice. A system of national achievement testing. These are revolutionary changes that make it very possible for us to be positive about the future.

In the end, though, whether our schools are able to perform effectively and our children are able to learn as much as they need to know--in the end, these things depend on factors outside our schools as well as within. Remember that school in Korea I told you about? The one where 50 out of 51 students knew when the Civil War occurred? As I was leaving the school, I was given a gift that I think helps explain some of that student success. It was a wooden pencil cup, and it had four Chinese characters burned into it. The first one said, "Honor your father and mother," the second said, "Love your country," the third said, "Work hard in the daytime," and the fourth said, "Read at night." The students at Kyongbok High School are growing up in an environment that emphasizes family and country, hard work, and learning. And these aren't just Confucian values, they're American values; and our own kids--every American child--should live and breathe them every day.

And these are the values, of course, that the President and Mrs. Bush exemplify. We see these values when they are with their children and grandchildren. We see these values when they are reading to other people's children and grandchildren. They are fine and decent people, George and Barbara Bush. We are very, very lucky to have had them in the White House this first Presidential term--and let's be sure to keep them there for a second four years.

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Montgomery County, Maryland

February 27, 1992

What an honor to be here tonight with such as fine members of Congress as Connie Morrella. I must say that the people of Montgomery County certainly are discerning in their choice of a Representative. It's a pleasure to be here with all of you, and I'm especially gratified to be with you on the occasion of your Lincoln Day dinner. I have to confess that I really do enjoy Lincoln Day dinners. I love getting together with my fellow Republicans so we can talk about how good we are--because we are very, very good.

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Choice works because it gives schools reason to get better. Like alternative certification, it brings the dynamic of competition into education, and by doing so encourages improvements in all areas, from teachers and textbooks, to standards and expectations.

The idea of choice isn't new. I remember when Dick and I first went to Washington in the late 60s, there were a few people talking about it, but they were generally dismissed as dreamers. But now we have a President behind this idea, a President who has given choice a central place on his education agenda. Democrats in Congress have been resisting it. Just a few weeks ago, they managed to defeat an administration amendment to the education bill that would have set up demonstration projects in which parents could choose either public or private schools for their children.

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And that brings me to the last part of the President's education agenda that I want to talk about tonight: testing, assessment. As all of you who have children know, we have a lot of tests in this country--but what you may not know is of how little use most of them are. A few years ago, A doctor in West Virginia, Dr. John Cannell did a great service for all of us by pointing out what many of our standardized tests really measure--and what they don't measure. Dr. Cannell noted that a lot of the youngsters coming into his office didn't seem particularly energetic or well-spoken, but when he would ask their mothers how the children were doing in school, the mothers inevitably reported that the children were testing

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and Wyoming and California ought to be tested on what they've learned, maybe on very different tests. But then those different exams should be compared to see if they are all meeting the same high standards. You should be able to tell if an A in New Hampshire means more or less than an A in California.

Every other industrialized nation has such a system of nationwide achievement tests, and our children deserve such a system.

You know, when the Democrats say that President Bush doesn't have a domestic agenda, I think what they are really saying is that he doesn't have their domestic agenda. And thank goodness for that. What the President wants to do is help us to help ourselves, free us up to do good. And when I think about education, a subject I know a lot about, I see that he has been remarkably effective. Our schools still have many problems, but the President has brought the full weight of the White House to bear on those problems, and we are now seeing basic structural changes. Alternative certification. Choice. A system of national achievement testing. These are revolutionary changes that make it very possible for us to be positive about the future.

In the end, though, whether our schools are able to perform effectively and our children are able to learn as much as they need to know--in the end, these things depend on factors outside our schools as well as within. Remember that school in Korea I told you about? The one where 50 out of 51 students knew when the Civil War occurred? As I was leaving the school, I was given a gift that I think helps explain some of that student success. It was a wooden pencil cup, and it had four Chinese characters burned into it. The first one said, "Honor your father and mother," the second said, "Love your country," the third said, "Work hard in the daytime," and the fourth said, "Read at night." The students at Kyongbok High School are growing up in an environment that emphasizes family and country, hard work, and learning. And these aren't just Confucian values, they're American values; and our own kids--every American child--should live and breathe them every day.

And these are the values, of course, that the President and Mrs. Bush exemplify. We see these values when they are with their children and grandchildren. We see these values when they are reading to other people's children and grandchildren. They are fine and decent people, George and Barbara Bush. We are very, very lucky to have had them in the White House this first Presidential term--and let's be sure to keep them there for a second four years.

Remarks by

Lynne V. Cheney

Chairman, National Endowment for the Humanities

Ashbrook Center for Public Affairs

Ashland University
Ashland, Ohio

April 1, 1992

Usually a long time passes between the time I receive a speaking invitation and when I actually have to deliver the speech, and, inevitably, a few weeks or months before the scheduled date, some poor person from the organization that invited me to speak will be assigned the task of finding out what I'm going to speak about. And I say some poor person because usually my office gives them the runaround. The reason is that I don't know what I'm going to talk about until I write the speech, and like most people I wait until the last minute to do that. So at some point when everyone's frustrations are high--the poor person's because he or she can't get an answer, me because I don't have an answer, and my secretary because she is caught in the middle--about that time I make up a topic just to calm everyone down.

In this instance, I said, "Tell them I'm going to talk about academic freedom," but when I sat down to write this speech, I realized that what I perceive to be a very serious threat to academic freedom today is caught up in other matters, with other problems plaguing our universities.

The idea that our universities have serious problems is a fairly new one. When I first came to the Endowment almost six years ago, there was a widespread feeling across the nation that while our schools might not be performing as well as they should, our colleges and universities were institutions we could point to with pride. Then came Alan Bloom, followed by a flood of books and articles about how higher education has lost its way. Liberals as well as conservatives have been speaking out--Eugene Genovese, Page Smith, and C. Vann Woodward, as well as Dinesh D'Souza, and Roger Kimball, and what they have had to say seems to have struck a chord. A Harris poll fielded last August showed a sharp drop in public confidence in those running our colleges and universities. Only 21 percent expressed high confidence--the lowest percentage by far in the twenty-five years Harris has been conducting the survey. In the interests of fairness, let me point out that this is not as low as Congress, Wall Street, or the people who run political campaigns, but it is right down there with television news.

The litany of complaints coming out of all the books and articles is by now a familiar one: faculty members who don't teach, students who don't learn; and, perhaps most serious of all, politics everywhere from the scholarly journals to the classroom. Now I know there are people who think these charges have been exaggerated, and certainly they do not exist with the same intensity at every institution; but the problems are

very real--and very hard to solve. If one focuses on a single institution and discovers that insufficient emphasis is being paid to teaching, it's very hard to blame the faculty there--or even the administrators. They are all caught up in a reward system that encompasses all of higher education, a reward system that encourages research--that makes research central to status for both colleges and universities. Now there are, to be sure, teachers who devote themselves to their students. There are institutions that emphasize teaching. But in a system that has made research central to status, these tend not to be the teachers or the institutions with the most prestige.

The most obvious result of this is a lot of second-rate teaching. The goal of full-time faculty is all too often to get out of the classroom, to turn teaching over to someone else, graduate students or part-timers. Necessary stints in the classroom are made more palatable by focusing them on the professor's publication interests rather than the student's intellectual needs. It is not uncommon to find undergraduates who have read very little literature studying the latest literary theories. In one section of an introductory political science course offered at a university near Washington, DC, students who have probably never read the most basic works of political science are spending their time watching such films as "Do The Right Thing," "Platoon," and "The Times of Harvey Milk."

There are good people on our campuses, teachers who despair about this situation, but they frequently find themselves powerless to change it. Even if they could institute a core curriculum, a series of broad-based courses that would give students the foundation they need for a lifetime of learning--even if they were able to do this, who would help them teach such courses? It is not in the interests of faculty members whose careers advance through narrowly focused research to spend time teaching a broad survey of European civilization--or Islamic civilization or Asian or any other.

So the primacy of research on our campuses results in a lot of second-rate teaching. This has helped undermine the public's faith in higher education.

And the primacy of research has also resulted in a lot of second-rate research. A few years ago, I visited a state university in the east, and the assistant professor who drove me around confessed that what he really loved doing was teaching. He knew that's where his talents lay. People generally do like to do what they're good at. But if the assistant professor wanted to stay at the university, he had to publish; and so he was forcing himself to do it, he told me, even though he was fully aware that what he was producing wasn't all that great.

Multiply his story a thousand times, and it becomes clear why our library shelves--and budgets--are groaning under the weight of scholarly publications that nobody reads. In a recent study, a researcher found that up to 41 percent of the articles published in the biological sciences remained uncited in the five years after they were published. In the social sciences, this rate of uncitedness rose to 75 percent, and in the humanities, I am sorry to say, to 98 percent.

There is, of course, excellent research being done today, some of it aimed at a more thorough knowledge of groups and cultures that scholarship has not heretofore paid sufficient attention. I think of Henry Louis Gates's black periodical literature project, for example, or the work on collecting and publishing the papers of notable American women such as Jane Addams and Frances Willard. Just last month, I had the opportunity to visit in Guatemala with Arthur Demarest, the director of a project on Maya culture that the National Endowment for the Humanities is funding. The Demarest project is helping revolutionize our understanding of how the Maya lived. Indeed, the knowledge of how Maya agricultural practices permitted large populations to thrive in the tropical rain forest for centuries may well prove useful to those living in the Guatemalan lowlands today.

American scholars are doing important work, and the media cover their efforts. The public can read about Arthur Demarest's project, for example, in the New York Times and the Los Angeles Times; but they can also read in newspapers from one end of the continent to the other about the goings-on at the annual conventions of the Modern Language Association, one of the largest scholarly organizations, where papers are presented on such topics as "Jane Austen and the Masturbating Girl" and "Is Alice Still in Phallus Land?" Making scholarship seem as shocking and titillating as possible does little to help convince people that the scholarly enterprise is worth supporting.

None of this, however, damages the reputation of our colleges and universities as much as does the politicized classroom. Over the past few years, we have heard a lot about this subject. It is a part of the "political correctness" syndrome, a topic that has received a great deal of attention lately. Political correctness has received so much attention that there has even begun to be a backlash against all the articles and books on the subject: Conferences are being held, organizations formed, a rash of proclamations issued declaring that PC does not now and never has existed.

But even as some people are declaring PC not only dead but never to have lived, others on our campuses are making it

clear that teaching is being politicized as never before. At the most recent Modern Language Association convention, a professor at the University of Texas at Austin presented a paper describing "the task of the politically committed cultural worker in today's university" while another professor from the University of California at San Diego urged her fellow professors to "disrupt our students' ideas of inevitable capitalism." A faculty member from Columbia University felt obliged to issue warnings that awareness of cultural difference might be useful to American business. Her nightmare was that businesses such as Coca-Cola might become more effective at marketing their products if they became more knowledgeable about how different societies work. She urged her assembled colleagues to find ways of teaching about cultural difference that could not be appropriated by what she called "late capitalism."

In the last few years, people intent on using the curriculum and the classroom to advance a political agenda have become very frank about their purpose. In an article in Harvard Educational Review, a professor at the University of Wisconsin insists that professors like herself should be very open about their intention "to appropriate public resources (classrooms, school supplies, teacher/professor salaries, academic requirements and degrees) to further various 'progressive' political agendas." This professor describes a

class she teaches at the University of Wisconsin called innocuously enough "Curriculum and Instruction 607," but it has an anything but innocuous purpose. Students are taught to demonstrate in Curriculum and Instruction 607--and then they actually demonstrate, as the professor describes it, "by interrupting business as usual (that is social relations of racism, sexism, classism, Eurocentrism, as usual) in the public spaces of the library mall and administrative offices." All this, and students get three hours credit, too. Which is certainly a marked change from when I was at the University of Wisconsin in the 1960s. Students demonstrated then, but nobody ever thought of giving them credit for it.

Writing in a recent issue of College English, the publication of the National Council of Teachers of English, a professor at California Polytechnic at San Luis Obispo makes clear that there is no longer any question of whether to use the classroom for political purpose. The only question is how most effectively to do so. Strategies must be calibrated, he writes. One should not try to reeducate students at an elite university in the same way as at a community college. At his own middle-class institution, he suggests the following strategy:

The best starting point is to challenge [students'] conditioned belief in their freedom of choice and

mobility within American society by bringing them to a critical awareness of the constrictions in their own class position. They can be exposed to sources [showing] the gross inequities between the upper class and themselves; the odds against their attaining room at the top; the way their education has channeled them toward mid-level professional and social slots and conditioned them into authoritarian conformity. [They can be exposed to sources showing] their manipulation by the elites controlling big business, mass politics, media and consumership, in large part through the rhetoric of public doublespeak.

This faculty member is intent on converting his students to his own view. He has no intention of introducing them to other perspectives. He wants students to share his conviction that our society is closed and class-ridden and that they are victims of it. And he is doing this under the guise of teaching them how to write.

Such an approach to teaching--and the ethic it implies--could hardly be more different from the way faculty members have traditionally viewed their responsibilities in the classroom. And it represents as well an entirely new attitude toward students and their rights. It used to be thought that they had what the American Association of University Professors

calls "freedom to 'learn.'" They did not come to the college or university to be indoctrinated in the views of their professors. They came to learn about a variety of views on a host of subjects. They came to test their own thoughts against the great ideas of the ages, to challenge those ideas, contest them, and ultimately, enlightened by the contest, to discover what they believed.

Students who find themselves in a classroom where the professor has a political purpose are unlikely to have this kind of experience. For one thing, debate between student and professor is by nature an unequal affair. For there to be a genuine clash of viewpoints, professors must be motivated by a spirit of generosity toward students. They must be willing, for example, to take students' incompletely formed ideas and flesh them out so that they are sufficient for the contest. It is hard to imagine the professor I quoted a moment ago, the one who wants his students to view themselves as victims of big business and consumership, helping students who want to make a case for free markets.

A student at Mount Holyoke, troubled at finding herself in a politicized classroom, wrote a protest article in a campus newspaper. The professor's response was, without any advance warning to the student, to leave class early one day so that the student's classmates could tell her what they thought of

her article. Angry student activists took turns condemning the student's actions and berating her views--all in the finest tradition of a kangaroo court.

A student at Oberlin describes a similar incident in a campus newspaper there:

In a course I took last year a maverick student said he agreed with a Supreme Court justice's view that a particular affirmative action program would unconstitutionally discriminate on the basis of race. During the next few minutes a couple of students vehemently objected. One raised her voice significantly, the other began to yell at him. In the following fifteen minutes, the professor did not speak; instead, he took other volunteers. Almost all of these students jumped on the bandwagon, berating the one maverick student. The professor gave him one more chance to speak. By this time the student was quite flustered and incoherent.

The student describing this incident notes, "The class learned that bringing out such controversial views would carry a high social cost. They would be less likely to repeat the 'error' of their fellow student." A student at Wesleyan University offers the following description of classroom life today:

The classroom used to be the one place where anything went. There used to be a dialogue. If you said something ridiculous people would take you apart on the merit of your argument. Now the accusations are things like: 'That's typical white male thinking.'

An emerging theme in feminist writing is how to "break down [student] resistances." When students object to having their composition class read only feminist essays, when they object to never hearing an opposing point of view, the feminist professor should never for a moment--or so the thinking goes--grant that such objections have any validity. Instead she should regard them as evidence of how deeply embedded the students' sexism is. She should regard their objections as affirmation of the necessity of continuing to press her political views upon them. Student protest, as a feminist professor at Tufts University describes it, is "the sign that I am doing my job. It swims along beside my ship, like a familiar fish: there it is again, so I must be on course." Writes a feminist professor at William Patterson College in New Jersey, "The quantity and quality of the resistance I provoke from my students early in the course is the way to measure my success as a teacher." It is small wonder that students soon learn not to argue.

Now I've been objecting to politics in the classroom long enough to predict some of the responses to this speech. There are always politics in the classroom, the professors I've been quoting will say. Your politics, Mrs. Cheney, or our politics; and we've decided to teach ours. But what about truth? I ask. Isn't that what universities are supposed to be pursuing? Isn't education about learning to look at all sides of the question and to weigh evidence impartially and thus to decide what is true? And that question will be regarded as so naive it might even get a laugh. Truth is an illusion--don't you know, Mrs. Cheney? It's an illusion constructed by some in order to control others. As for impartiality--well, that's impossible. No one can be impartial, so there is no sense in trying.

One of the clearest statements of these ideas that I have come across recently is by two historians at the University of Pennsylvania. "We are all engaged in writing a kind of propaganda," they declare, ". . . Rather than believe in the absolute truth of what we are writing, we must believe in the moral or political position we are taking with it. . . . Historians should assess an argument on the basis of its persuasiveness, its political utility, and its political sincerity." We cannot know the truth, in other words, so we should forget about the pursuit of it. Forget about it in

scholarship, forget about it in the classroom, forget about it in life--and advance whatever is politically useful.

Well, I say that this is nonsense. The fact that we are not omniscient doesn't mean we should abandon the quest to know as much as we can. The fact that we may never achieve total objectivity doesn't mean we should stop striving for it. To abandon truth and embrace political expedience as a guide for judgment and action is to enter the world of George Orwell's 1984, the world where two and two make five--if it's politically useful.

Now I suspect that some of you will try to tell me that I'm overworrying the subject of politics on campus. I've had people say to me: "Look, Mrs. Cheney, since the center and right control most of society, what does it matter if the left controls the English departments?" But there are some important distinctions to be made here. Frankly, I don't care what the politics of people teaching in our English departments or any department are. And I don't think any of us should care about that. What does concern me is the classroom being used for political proselytizing no matter what the viewpoint--and not because many conversions happen. A few, perhaps, but my impression is that most students are not affected politically. The price they pay is intellectual. They are deprived of opportunity to engage in the free and open exchange of ideas

that should characterize education. They are deprived of opportunity to know wherein the real excitement of learning lies.

Those of you here today who are in mathematics or science or engineering might suspect that my words have nothing to do with you. It is true that the ideas and practices I have been speaking about are centered in the humanities. But they are heading your way. I recently came across an article on feminist science which postulated that the concept of objectivity was "a parochial one, influenced by a particular ideology about gender." A book called The Science Question in Feminism talks about the sexist meanings of scientific activity. Newton's discoveries, for example, can be read as presenting a view "[of] nature as a woman indifferent to or even welcoming rape." Which leads the author to ask, "Why is it not as illuminating and honest to refer to Newton's laws as 'Newton's Rape Manual' as it is to call them 'Newton's Mechanics?'"

Politicized teaching is also making its way into our schools. Consider an example that Arthur Schlesinger cites: the 11th-grade American history curriculum of New York State which declares that there were three influences on the United States Constitution: the antecedent colonial experience, the

European Enlightenment, and the Haudenosaunee political system. Observes Schlesinger:

Whatever influence the Iroquois confederation may have had on the framers of the Constitution was marginal; on European intellectuals it was marginal to the point of invisibility. No other state curriculum offers this analysis of the making of the Constitution. But then no other state has so effective an Iroquois lobby.

As Albert Shanker of the American Federation of Teachers and others have noted, the Portland Baseline essays, used as the basis of Afrocentric curricula across the country, contain similar myths. The Egyptians, who are said to be a black people, developed the theory of evolution, according to the Baseline Essays. They also understood quantum mechanics and flew around in full-size gliders.

One of the saddest parts of these misguided efforts is that they discredit good multicultural curricula. And there are some excellent ones. I think of the new history/social science framework in California which makes clear at every level how this nation has been enriched by men and women of diverse backgrounds and cultures. But ill-conceived multicultural curricula are so spectacularly ill-conceived that they throw the whole enterprise under a cloud.

The idea that what should be taught should be determined by something other than historical evidence is not limited to our colleges and universities. The idea that an objective sifting and weighing of facts is not important has even begun to make its way into popular culture. I watched Oliver Stone being interviewed the other day, and someone asked him how his film "JFK" differed from propaganda. He couldn't think of any distinction between the two--and the fact that he couldn't did not seem to trouble him greatly.

Ideas are powerful, and those that emanate from our colleges and universities carry a special authority. That is why it seems to me particularly important that we have a free and open discussion of the relationship between knowledge and politics. There are good people on our campuses trying to initiate these discussions, but they often find themselves marginalized, and they need support. It is very important that some of our nation's most eminent academic leaders have begun to speak out: I think of Yale's Benno Schmidt, Harvard's Derek Bok, and distinguished scholars like Stanford's John Searle, Howard University's Frank Snowden, and Yale's C. Vann Woodward.

Those of us off-campus need to make our concerns known as well. When it is time for us to help our children choose a college, we should ask hard questions about which campuses not only allow but encourage a diversity of opinion. When it comes

time for us to make contributions as alumni, we should ask how well the college attended is doing at making sure all sides of controversial issues are heard. Those who serve on boards of trustees should encourage discussions of academic freedom of both faculty and students.

We need to talk as well about ways of restoring teaching to the position of honor it deserves. As I try to understand why the idea of using the curriculum and the classroom as instruments of political transformation has had such appeal in recent years, I have to wonder if the low regard into which teaching has fallen isn't part of the explanation. Human beings like to feel that what they do is important, and if we devalue teaching as intellectual work, perhaps we should not be surprised when faculty members try to make it matter in other ways.

I came across an essay recently that brought home for me the importance of speaking out when one sees something wrong happening. The author was a professor of women's studies who had encountered certain feminist orthodoxies--such as the idea that academic standards represent male values and women should not be judged by them. The writer of the essay noted that for a long time she had hesitated to speak out because she didn't want to risk hurting feminism or women's studies, but then one day she realized that if no one speaks out, nothing gets

better. She put it this way, "Everything that one tolerates that one shouldn't inevitably returns." These are wise words, wise for all of us. And I thank you for giving me a chance to speak out today.

123

Remarks by

Lynne V. Cheney

Chairman, National Endowment for the Humanities

Ohio State University

Columbus, Ohio

April 2, 1992

Usually a long time passes between the time I receive a speaking invitation and when I actually have to deliver the speech, and, inevitably, a few weeks or months before the scheduled date, some poor person from the organization that invited me to speak will be assigned the task of finding out what I'm going to speak about. And I say some poor person because usually my office gives them the runaround. The reason is that I don't know what I'm going to talk about until I write the speech, and like most people I wait until the last minute to do that. So at some point when everyone's frustrations are high--the poor person's because he or she can't get an answer, me because I don't have an answer, and my secretary because she is caught in the middle--about that time I make up a topic just to calm everyone down.

In this instance, I said, "Tell them I'm going to talk about 'the university of tomorrow,'" but when I sat down to write this speech, I realized that whether our universities thrive in the next century is going to depend on how successfully we address the problems they have today, and so what I really want to focus on are present difficulties, problems our universities face today.

The idea that our universities have serious problems is a fairly new one. When I first came to the Endowment almost six years ago, there was a widespread feeling across the nation that while our schools might not be performing as well as they should, our colleges and universities were institutions we could point to with pride. Then came Alan Bloom, followed by a flood of books and articles about how higher education has lost its way. Liberals as well as conservatives have been speaking out--Eugene Genovese, Page Smith, and C. Vann Woodward, as well as Dinesh D'Souza, and Roger Kimball, and what they have had to say seems to have struck a chord. A Harris poll fielded last August showed a sharp drop in public confidence in those running our colleges and universities. Only 21 percent expressed high confidence--the lowest percentage by far in the twenty-five years Harris has been conducting the survey. In the interests of fairness, let me point out that this is not as low as Congress, Wall Street, or the people who run political campaigns, but it is right down there with television news.

The litany of complaints coming out of all the books and articles is by now a familiar one: faculty members who don't teach, students who don't learn; and, perhaps most serious of all, politics everywhere from the scholarly journals to the classroom. Now I know there are people who think these charges have been exaggerated, and certainly they do not exist with the same intensity at every institution; but the problems are

very real--and very hard to solve. If one focuses on a single institution and discovers that insufficient emphasis is being paid to teaching, it's very hard to blame the faculty there--or even the administrators. They are all caught up in a reward system that encompasses all of higher education, a reward system that encourages research--that makes research central to status for both colleges and universities. Now there are, to be sure, teachers who devote themselves to their students. There are institutions that emphasize teaching. But in a system that has made research central to status, these tend not to be the teachers or the institutions with the most prestige.

The most obvious result of this is a lot of second-rate teaching. The goal of full-time faculty is all too often to get out of the classroom, to turn teaching over to someone else, graduate students or part-timers. Necessary stints in the classroom are made more palatable by focusing them on the professor's publication interests rather than the student's intellectual needs. It is not uncommon to find undergraduates who have read very little literature studying the latest literary theories. In one section of an introductory political science course offered at a university near Washington, DC, students who have probably never read the most basic works of political science are spending their time watching such films as "Do The Right Thing," "Platoon," and "The Times of Harvey Milk."

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Such an approach to teaching--and the ethic it implies--could hardly be more different from the way faculty members have traditionally viewed their responsibilities in the classroom. And it represents as well an entirely new attitude toward students and their rights. It used to be thought that they had what the American Association of University Professors

calls "freedom to learn." They did not come to the college or university to be indoctrinated in the views of their professors. They came to learn about a variety of views on a host of subjects. They came to test their own thoughts against the great ideas of the ages, to challenge those ideas, contest them, and ultimately, enlightened by the contest, to discover what they believed.

Students who find themselves in a classroom where the professor has a political purpose are unlikely to have this kind of experience. For one thing, debate between student and professor is by nature an unequal affair. For there to be a genuine clash of viewpoints, professors must be motivated by a spirit of generosity toward students. They must be willing, for example, to take students' incompletely formed ideas and flesh them out so that they are sufficient for the contest. It is hard to imagine the professor I quoted a moment ago, the one who wants his students to view themselves as victims of big business and consumership, helping students who want to make a case for free markets.

A student at Mount Holyoke, troubled at finding herself in a politicized classroom, wrote a protest article in a campus newspaper. The professor's response was, without any advance warning to the student, to leave class early one day so that the student's classmates could tell her what they thought of

her article. Angry student activists took turns condemning the student's actions and berating her views--all in the finest tradition of a kangaroo court.

A student at Oberlin describes a similar incident in a campus newspaper there:

In a course I took last year a maverick student said he agreed with a Supreme Court justice's view that a particular affirmative action program would unconstitutionally discriminate on the basis of race. During the next few minutes a couple of students vehemently objected. One raised her voice significantly, the other began to yell at him. In the following fifteen minutes, the professor did not speak; instead, he took other volunteers. Almost all of these students jumped on the bandwagon, berating the one maverick student. The professor gave him one more chance to speak. By this time the student was quite flustered and incoherent.

The student describing this incident notes, "The class learned that bringing out such controversial views would carry a high social cost. They would be less likely to repeat the 'error' of their fellow student." A student at Wesleyan University offers the following description of classroom life today:

The classroom used to be the one place where anything went. There used to be a dialogue. If you said something ridiculous people would take you apart on the merit of your argument. Now the accusations are things like: 'That's typical white male thinking.'

An emerging theme in feminist writing is how to "break down [student] resistances." When students object to having their composition class read only feminist essays, when they object to never hearing an opposing point of view, the feminist professor should never for a moment--or so the thinking goes--grant that such objections have any validity. Instead she should regard them as evidence of how deeply embedded the students' sexism is. She should regard their objections as affirmation of the necessity of continuing to press her political views upon them. Student protest, as a feminist professor at Tufts University describes it, is "the sign that I am doing my job. It swims along beside my ship, like a familiar fish: there it is again, so I must be on course." Writes a feminist professor at William Patterson College in New Jersey, "The quantity and quality of the resistance I provoke from my students early in the course is the way to measure my success as a teacher." It is small wonder that students soon learn not to argue.

Now I've been objecting to politics in the classroom long enough to predict some of the responses to this speech. There are always politics in the classroom, the professors I've been quoting will say. Your politics, Mrs. Cheney, or our politics; and we've decided to teach ours. But what about truth? I ask. Isn't that what universities are supposed to be pursuing? Isn't education about learning to look at all sides of the question and to weigh evidence impartially and thus to decide what is true? And that question will be regarded as so naive it might even get a laugh. Truth is an illusion--don't you know, Mrs. Cheney? It's an illusion constructed by some in order to control others. As for impartiality--well, that's impossible. No one can be impartial, so there is no sense in trying.

One of the clearest statements of these ideas that I have come across recently is by two historians at the University of Pennsylvania. "We are all engaged in writing a kind of propaganda," they declare, ". . . Rather than believe in the absolute truth of what we are writing, we must believe in the moral or political position we are taking with it. . . . Historians should assess an argument on the basis of its persuasiveness, its political utility, and its political sincerity." We cannot know the truth, in other words, so we should forget about the pursuit of it. Forget about it in

scholarship, forget about it in the classroom, forget about it in life--and advance whatever is politically useful.

Well, I say that this is nonsense. The fact that we are not omniscient doesn't mean we should abandon the quest to know as much as we can. The fact that we may never achieve total objectivity doesn't mean we should stop striving for it. To abandon truth and embrace political expedience as a guide for judgment and action is to enter the world of George Orwell's 1984, the world where two and two make five--if it's politically useful.

Now I suspect that some of you will try to tell me that I'm overworrying the subject of politics on campus. I've had people say to me: "Look, Mrs. Cheney, since the center and right control most of society, what does it matter if the left controls the English departments?" But there are some important distinctions to be made here. Frankly, I don't care what the politics of people teaching in our English departments or any department are. And I don't think any of us should care about that. What does concern me is the classroom being used for political proselytizing no matter what the viewpoint--and not because many conversions happen. A few, perhaps, but my impression is that most students are not affected politically. The price they pay is intellectual. They are deprived of opportunity to engage in the free and open exchange of ideas

that should characterize education. They are deprived of opportunity to know wherein the real excitement of learning lies.

Those of you here today who are in mathematics or science or engineering might suspect that my words have nothing to do with you. It is true that the ideas and practices I have been speaking about are centered in the humanities. But they are heading your way. I recently came across an article on feminist science which postulated that the concept of objectivity was "a parochial one, influenced by a particular ideology about gender." A book called The Science Question in Feminism talks about the sexist meanings of scientific activity. Newton's discoveries, for example, can be read as presenting a view "[of] nature as a woman indifferent to or even welcoming rape." Which leads the author to ask, "Why is it not as illuminating and honest to refer to Newton's laws as 'Newton's Rape Manual' as it is to call them 'Newton's Mechanics?'"

Politicized teaching is also making its way into our schools. Consider an example that Arthur Schlesinger cites: the 11th-grade American history curriculum of New York State which declares that there were three influences on the United States Constitution: the antecedent colonial experience, the

European Enlightenment, and the Haudenosaunee political system. Observes Schlesinger:

Whatever influence the Iroquois confederation may have had on the framers of the Constitution was marginal; on European intellectuals it was marginal to the point of invisibility. No other state curriculum offers this analysis of the making of the Constitution. But then no other state has so effective an Iroquois lobby.

As Albert Shanker of the American Federation of Teachers and others have noted, the Portland Baseline essays, used as the basis of Afrocentric curricula across the country, contain similar myths. The Egyptians, who are said to be a black people, developed the theory of evolution, according to the Baseline Essays. They also understood quantum mechanics and flew around in full-size gliders.

One of the saddest parts of these misguided efforts is that they discredit good multicultural curricula. And there are some excellent ones. I think of the new history/social science framework in California which makes clear at every level how this nation has been enriched by men and women of diverse backgrounds and cultures. But ill-conceived multicultural curricula are so spectacularly ill-conceived that they throw the whole enterprise under a cloud.

The idea that what should be taught should be determined by something other than historical evidence is not limited to our colleges and universities. The idea that an objective sifting and weighing of facts is not important has even begun to make its way into popular culture. I watched Oliver Stone being interviewed the other day, and someone asked him how his film "JFK" differed from propaganda. He couldn't think of any distinction between the two--and the fact that he couldn't did not seem to trouble him greatly.

Ideas are powerful, and those that emanate from our colleges and universities carry a special authority. That is why it seems to me particularly important that we have a free and open discussion of the relationship between knowledge and politics. There are good people on our campuses trying to initiate these discussions, but they often find themselves marginalized, and they need support. It is very important that some of our nation's most eminent academic leaders have begun to speak out: I think of Yale's Benno Schmidt, Harvard's Derek Bok, and distinguished scholars like Stanford's John Searle, Howard University's Frank Snowden, and Yale's C. Vann Woodward.

Those of us off-campus need to make our concerns known as well. When it is time for us to help our children choose a college, we should ask hard questions about which campuses not only allow but encourage a diversity of opinion. When it comes

time for us to make contributions as alumni, we should ask how well the college attended is doing at making sure all sides of controversial issues are heard. Those who serve on boards of trustees should encourage discussions of academic freedom of both faculty and students.

We need to talk as well about ways of restoring teaching to the position of honor it deserves. As I try to understand why the idea of using the curriculum and the classroom as instruments of political transformation has had such appeal in recent years, I have to wonder if the low regard into which teaching has fallen isn't part of the explanation. Human beings like to feel that what they do is important, and if we devalue teaching as intellectual work, perhaps we should not be surprised when faculty members try to make it matter in other ways.

I came across an essay recently that brought home for me the importance of speaking out when one sees something wrong happening. The author was a professor of women's studies who had encountered certain feminist orthodoxies--such as the idea that academic standards represent male values and women should not be judged by them. The writer of the essay noted that for a long time she had hesitated to speak out because she didn't want to risk hurting feminism or women's studies, but then one day she realized that if no one speaks out, nothing gets

better. She put it this way, "Everything that one tolerates that one shouldn't inevitably returns." These are wise words, wise for all of us. And I thank you for giving me a chance to speak out today.

97C

Opening Remarks

by

Lynne V. Cheney

Chairman

National Endowment for the Humanities

Conference on Role of Intellectuals & Writers

Rutgers University

Newark, New Jersey

April 9, 1992

One of the great pleasures of my job is seeing projects the NEH has helped make possible come to fruition, and this conference promises to be one of the finest. Writers and intellectuals have played a key role bringing liberty to the newly free states of Central and Eastern Europe, and I speak on behalf of many Americans, I know, when I say how inspiring we find your courage and how uplifting your example is to us. In the early 1980s, I met with a mathematician in Moscow, a Jew who several years before had applied for an exit visa from the Soviet Union. And as soon as he had, he had been fired from the university and put to work tending a furnace. He wanted to leave, and he wanted the state to know he wanted out, and he was willing to pay the price for that--but his son, a brilliant boy, he said, could not be admitted to the university because of his father's wanting to leave the USSR. And when he spoke about his son, he wept.

I've since heard similar stories from scholars in Hungary and Czechoslovakia. The defense ministers from both countries--whom I've come to know for personal reasons--are intellectuals who would not pay homage to Marxist orthodoxy. And they paid for refusing to knuckle under. One worked for

years as a window washer; the other as a surveyor. And I am always awe-struck as I hear these stories to think that these people did not know how the tale would end. They did not know that revolution would come. Their defiance might well have meant a lifetime in which the intellectual training in which they had invested so much would be wasted.

Last December I had opportunity to visit with academics in Budapest and Prague, and I was especially struck by my conversation with Radim Palous, the rector of Charles University. Palous has two Ph.D.s. His first is in philosophy; but he found it impossible to work as a non-Marxist philosopher, and so he got a second Ph.D., this one in chemistry. "There is no Marxist-Leninist view of sulfuric acid," he told me. But still he couldn't quite rest himself. He became involved in the Charter '77 movement and had to leave the university. He was assigned work as a coal stoker, but in private he continued to teach. Students came to his apartment to hear non-Marxist views. "I think I shall never in my life have such audiences [again]," he told me. "The students weren't there to get degrees or qualify for professors. They were there because they wanted to learn."

Dr. Palous and other academics I have visited with in Central Europe spoke about how they hope to learn from academics in this country about the ways that free societies

finance their universities and govern them. Intellectuals in the U.S. have much to learn as well from our colleagues in newly free states. We have become very cavalier in our thinking about what the end and aim of intellectual life should be. Many in the humanities have thrown over the idea that the goal should be the pursuit of truth. Truth is simply an illusion, they say, created by some in order to gain power over others and the proper goal of education is social transformation, political transformation. To that end, there are things we mustn't let students say, topics neither they nor we should explore, and certain correct attitudes that we should use the classroom to inculcate. Now I don't want to make too much of this today. Political correctness, as this American phenomenon has come to be known, does not begin to compare with the repression that occurred in states dominated by the Soviet Union. It is an attempt to impose an orthodoxy on a much smaller scale with penalties that are slight compared to what intellectuals in Eastern Europe have experienced. But it is all the same an orthodoxy--a set of ideas that inhibit free inquiry, and I think we should look to your experience and see the dangers that lie that way. I have yet to meet, let me say by way of conclusion, an intellectual who paid the price of setting himself against Marxist orthodoxy who doubts that there is truth or who doubts that there is objective reality or who has the slightest doubt that pursuing truth is what education should be about. I asked Radim Palous what the role of the university in a democracy should be. "To educate," he said.

I pointed out that many in the U.S. hold a different view. They would argue that truth doesn't exist, that only perspectives do, and that the job of scholars is to explore different perspectives. And Palous replied: "To be educated we must understand the truth. And that means literally to stand under it. It is above us, not we above it."

All of us have much to learn from one another, and I am very pleased that the NEH could help make this conference possible today.

SECRETS OF SUCCESS

COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS
DUQUESNE UNIVERSITY
PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA

MAY 9, 1992

Graduates, parents, faculty members, and guests--it's a great pleasure for me to be here today and to join with you in celebrating this occasion. My own daughter graduated a few weeks ago, so I feel as though I have a great deal in common with the parents in this audience.

And I also feel I have something in common with the graduates. I know that young people today often look for role models, people who have succeeded in ways they want to succeed. Well, let me just say that people in their forties look for role models, too; and I'd like to tell you I have found mine. You all know who she is: Her name is Sandra Day O'Connor. What you don't know is why she's my role model. It has nothing to do with her being a Supreme Court Justice. It doesn't even have anything to do with her being a thoroughly nice person. No, the reason Sandra Day O'Connor is my role model--and this is going to make all of you very happy--the reason she is my role model is that she has perfected the art of giving short commencement speeches.

Not long ago, Justice O'Connor gave a commencement speech that lasted just five minutes. I'm not sure I can tie that record, but in an attempt to live up to it, I'm going to make just five points today. I'm going to talk about five traits

that are pretty widely shared among successful people that I've observed--and offer them to you as you head off into new worlds and new lives.

One secret of success, I have observed, is to act as if you know what you're doing. Now, I suspect this point doesn't need much elaboration. I have found college seniors to be pretty well-practiced at acting as if they know what they're about. They have a remarkably high degree of self-confidence--which in the case of my own children I have felt an absolute motherly obligation to lower from time to time--but not too much. Watching Douglas MacArthur operate, Franklin Roosevelt observed that you should "never underestimate a man who overestimates himself." There's wisdom there--as well as a jab at MacArthur--and all of this coming from a President who demonstrated a thing or two in his time about acting confidently.

Take your self-confidence with you as you move to the next stage of your life. It will help you, even though you're a beginner, to behave with assuredness, to act as if you know what you're doing. And that is a key to success. But there's a second secret--one that goes right along with the first--and that is to know what you're doing. Sooner or later, you'll be tested. You'll have to make decisions and live with results that will show how hard you've worked, how much you've learned,

how much you are to be respected. True expertise, orchestra conductor Victoria Bond observed not long ago in the New York Times, "is the most potent form of authority." Those are words worth remembering. When your chance comes along to make the music, you will find it a very good thing, indeed, to know the notes.

A third rule for success I would offer you is this: Have a place to stand. Archimedes theorized he could move the world with a big enough lever--but he needed a firm place to stand the fulcrum. We all need that firm place--that base of conviction from which to act. I know that college has been a time when you've been encouraged to ask a lot of questions, and that is a crucial part of the examined life which Socrates thought the only kind worth living. But having questioned and doubted, it is also important to arrive at some answers and beliefs.

Find that base of conviction that will give you direction, that place to stand from which you try to move the world. That's the third secret of success I would offer you, and the fourth is to be aware--and respectful--of where other people are standing. Let me tell you a story I heard not long ago. It was about a British naval commander, Roger Wilson, let's call him, who was sailing her majesty's yacht with the Prince and Princess of Wales on board. Commander Wilson, so

the story goes, saw lights ahead, bearing straight down on the yacht. So he signalled: "Please yield." But the lights kept coming. "No, you please yield," they signalled back. The commander tried again: "Please yield." And again, the negative answer: "No, you please yield," So the commander decided to pull rank. "I am commander Roger Wilson of her majesty's yacht, I have the Prince and Princess of Wales on board, and by royal decree, I order you to yield."

And back flashed the answer: "I am John Smith, and I have been in charge of this lighthouse for fifteen years."

You will encounter some immovable objects in your lifetime. Some movable ones, too, of course. The crucial thing--no matter how exalted you might become--is to be clear-sighted about the difference. Having a healthy estimate of yourself can be a fine thing--unless it keeps you from a realistic estimate of others. I mentioned Douglas MacArthur at the beginning of this speech, and if you've studied history as much as I hope you have during your time at this fine university, you'll remember that his career ended when he tried sailing into a lighthouse named Harry Truman.

The last secret of success I'd offer--and the most important one--is this: Know what success is. It may be connected with fame and fortune, but it well may not be. It

almost certainly will be connected with work that you love, work that involves you deeply quite apart from whatever rewards it may bring.

How do you discover what that work is for you? With intensity of effort, I would suggest, because knowledge of what that work is will grow out of learning what you do well. And there is no way to be sure of your capacities except by testing yourself, pushing yourself. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy whole might," wrote Thomas Carlyle, a man who thought long and deeply on the subject of meaningful work.

And how will you know when you have found work you love? One symptom is that you will lose track of time. You'll look at your watch and wonder where the hours have gone, at your calendar and wonder what happened to the week. And that loss of time sense is symbol as well as symptom. We are time-bound creatures, but meaningful work can make us forget our mortal limitation--because it helps us transcend it.

Whether we create sonnets or families, make machines or harvest crops, work takes on meaning for us when we feel it to be a part of something that endures. Whether we undertake the business of business or scholarship or nations, work becomes beloved when it joins us with something larger than ourselves, something worthy that extends beyond us. Willa Cather put it

this way: "That is happiness; to be dissolved into something complete and great."

And it is also success--or at least the most critical element of it I know. Photographer Margaret Bourke White once called her beloved work "a trusted friend, who never deserts you." And because you will never want to desert it, it is an energizing source like no other, getting you out of bed before dawn, inspiring you late into the night. There may be people in this world who become the very best at what they do who do not love their work--but I have never met them nor can I imagine from where they derive the commitment, day after day, that excellence demands.

There are many things that those of us on the podium wish for you as you set forth from this fine school. Indeed, you have many blessings already--this joyous occasion, proud parents, good friends, teachers who have cared for you and will continue to.

To all of these, let me add my blessing. May you find success. May you discover the work you love--and prosper in it.

SECRETS OF SUCCESS

COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS

UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO LAW SCHOOL

SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

SUNDAY, MAY 17, 1992

Graduates, parents, faculty members, and guests--it's a great pleasure for me to be here today and to join with you in celebrating this occasion. My own daughter graduated a few weeks ago, so I feel as though I have a great deal in common with the parents in this audience.

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(105)

Helsinki

June

I am very grateful for the opportunity to address the distinguished delegates of this important organization. I should probably begin by saying a word about what it is that the National Endowment for the Humanities does. There is confusion on this point, I must confess, even in the United States. I find out about this confusion periodically when I look closely at how my mail is addressed. Not long ago, I received a letter addressed to the National Endowment for the Amenities.

Now that is a very interesting piece of confusion: a good Freudian slip, psychologists might say, since it has an important element of truth in it. The fields of study, such as history, literature, and philosophy, that my organization nurtures have brought people great pleasure through the ages. St. Augustine once said that the only reason to philosophize was in order to be happy.

But disciplines like history are important for other reasons as well, and I try to make the case for them as often as I can since in these days of great interest in international economics and global competitiveness, these fields of study are often overlooked. Everyone understands instantly why mathematics and science are important to national and

international well-being, but the role of subjects like history and literature is easy to overlook.

I usually begin making the case for the humanities in terms of their personal value. Reading history, to choose just one example, gives the individual an added perspective on life. It helps make us aware of other ways of doing things, other ways of managing our lives, our businesses, our governments; and encourages us to consider why we are proceeding as we are. This added perspective makes life richer for us. A wise man named Charles Frankel once explained it this way: "Imagine," he said, "watching a sporting event without knowing the rules and the lore of the game. Then imagine how much richer and fuller one's experience of the event if he or she knows the rules and the lore. Knowledge of the humanities," said Frankel, a philosopher who served for a time in the U.S. Department of State, "similarly enriches our experience of life."

The enlarged perspective that makes the humanities personally rewarding also has obvious professional value. A friend of mine who runs the editorial page of a major American newspaper recently hired a young woman who had majored in classics for her special assistant. "Why a classics major?" I asked my friend. "Why not someone in, say, journalism." "Because," my friend answered, "I wanted someone working for me

who knows that the things that are happening now aren't happening for the first time in human history."

So the humanities have personal value and professional value. They also have great civic importance. It is through the humanities that we remind ourselves of the ideas and ideals that matter to us. It is through subjects like history that we remind ourselves of values we have in common no matter how different might be our heritages. This is a topic of special interest to us in the United States right now as we daily become a more heterogeneous nation. And I suspect that this is a topic of special interest to this group as you try to find the ties that will bind the many diverse nations of Europe.

We have become aware in the United States that we have not always told the story as we should have. We have not emphasized sufficiently the role that women have played or the important contributions made by people from Latin America, Asia, Africa, and the Middle East, as well as from all parts of Europe. We are beginning to teach our children these stories now; but even as we do, we find ourselves faced with a new challenge. What underlying theme makes all of these stories one story? The motto of our nation is e pluribus unum: out of many, one. With a country as diverse as the United States--or with a continent as diverse as Europe--it is easy to see from whence the pluribus comes, but what about the unum?

There have been many people giving thought to this in the United States of late. Perhaps none of our states has been as challenged by ethnic and racial diversity as California has, and it is there that one of the most admirable places has been developed for teaching about the United States as both many and one. A new framework for the study of history and the social sciences that has been written for California makes clear the important contributions that people from every part of the globe have made to our history and culture and it emphasizes how all of those people in all their diversity are joined together by a certain ideal: namely, a belief in freedom and equality. Despite all the different cultures from which we have come, there is this single creed that binds us. It derives, the California framework tells us, from the language and values found in the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights. Its themes are echoed in patriotic songs that urge us to let "our good be crowned with brotherhood from sea to shining sea" and to "let freedom ring (from every mountainside)." The creed that binds us can be found in such orations as Martin Luther King, Jr.'s speech in which he proclaimed his dream "that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal . . . This will be the day," King said, "when all of God's children will be able to sing with new meaning, 'My Country, 'Tis of Thee, Sweet Land of Liberty . . .'"

The story of democracy--how it has emerged, what has threatened it, and what has sustained it--is, it occurs to me, the stuff out of which can be made not only a common national story, but a common international one, and it is hard to imagine a more appropriate time to begin this effort. We are about to celebrate the 2500th anniversary of the first democratic institutions. Twenty-five hundred years ago in Greece, the idea of democracy was first given shape and form, and all these centuries later we, the heirs of that noble idea, can see it rising up around the world. What a fitting moment for all of us to understand this as the theme that unites us. Indeed, what a fitting moment for this conference to recognize that an appreciation of and encouragement of democratic institutions is crucial in achieving real security.

These ideas are, of course, easier to talk about than they are to put into action. One discovery we have made in the United States is that if we wish to teach a history that is more inclusive, that tells all the stories that should be told, and emphasizes as well the heritage of democracy we share, we must spend more time teaching history. It must be part of every student's education every year--which is a considerably greater commitment to history in the schools than we have been used to making. And it is not only in the schools that we must expend effort. We must constantly seek for ways to reach the citizenry at large. The National Endowment for the Humanities,

mindful of President George Bush's emphasis on lifetime learning, encourages study of the humanities through organizations like museums and libraries. We support television productions that will help people better understand the past. One of the productions that I am extremely proud to point to as an NEH-funded series is Ken Burns's "The Civil War," an eleven-part television project which brought to millions of people a greater knowledge of this most crucial time in the history of the United States.

One of the characteristics of "The Civil War" television series that made it such a success was its inclusion of diverse points of view, and as we work on curricula for our schools--as we work to develop frameworks that will tell our children the story of both pluribus and unum, many and one--this is an important point to remember. We cannot impose the story from on high, we can only--if we want it to be widely accepted--build it through consensus. In California, working paper after working paper was prepared on the framework for the study of history and the social sciences and then more papers became the subject of public hearings where people talked and complained and sometimes shouted at one another--but eventually there was consensus. And then the process of debate started all over again as private publishers submitted drafts of textbooks that could implement the curriculum. People of Islamic faith complained that their story was incompletely

told. Jewish people said that Judaism was not presented in a sufficiently dynamic way. African Americans said that the textbook drafts did not convey the rich culture which developed even when most people of African descent were enslaved. And I do not mean to give you the idea that these were cool and dispassionate debates; they were fierce--and they were necessary. No one thinks that the textbooks that were finally adopted are perfect, but everyone agrees that they are better than what they replaced; and everyone has the satisfaction of knowing that he or she had opportunity--real opportunity--to influence them. There is also the sense--and this is a very important point--that the textbooks that have been adopted now are not the last word. The story they tell can and will be told even more satisfactorily in the future.

The contentious and sometimes painful process of developing consensus about what to teach the next generation underscores the essential role that free speech and free inquiry play in democracy and in the building of modern nations. What we in the United States have learned--and it is a lesson sufficiently difficult so that we have constantly to keep reminding ourselves of it--is that free speech and free inquiry must be protected, especially when people are making points that we find unpleasant. So long as people are only saying things that are agreeable, free speech is very easy. The challenge is to protect it, indeed to nurture it, when it

is not agreeable. Many of you have recently emerged from regimes where ideologically inconvenient facts and ideas were suppressed, and as you write your new histories, I hope the story of that suppression will become an important part of what you tell. It will help all of us better tolerate the annoyances that follow from free speech if we have reminders of the damage to souls and psyches caused when people are not free to pursue their insights and pass them along. It is important that all of us remember the scholars like Radim Palous, now the rector of Charles University in Prague, who for years was banned from the university because he refused to let Marxist ideology drive his teaching and research.

During the years when many of you could not speak the truth in free and open fashion, many people in the United States worked to preserve for you the possibility of someday being able to do so. Many of your underground publications--various kinds of samizdat literature--have been preserved in American libraries. The National Endowment for the Humanities recently sponsored a conference at Rutgers University in New Jersey on changes in Central Europe, and one of the people who attended that conference, Eda Kriseova of Czechoslovakia, told of her discovery of the American effort to preserve dissident writings: When she first received an exit visa in 1988, she visited Harvard's library. She was shown to a computer terminal where she typed in the words "Czech

underground literature." Much to her amazement, the computer responded and asked for more specific information. She typed in her own name and the computer promptly reported that the library had copies of some of her samizdat manuscripts. "I burst into tears," Kriseova reported to those at the New Jersey conference. "I felt like Robinson Crusoe," she said, "whose message in the bottle had washed up on the shore."

American scholars--with funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities--have been working on a number of projects to research into the history of Central and Eastern Europe for all scholars. Perhaps most notable is an effort at Harvard University headed by Dr. Patricia Grimsted. Dr. Grimsted is working on archival directories for repositories in Warsaw, Kiev, Moscow, and St. Petersburg. These finding guides will be of use to scholars of all nations as the world begins to develop a more accurate picture of history that has for decades been hidden.

The humanities, as I said at the beginning of my remarks, have an important role to play in nation building: they can serve as the civic glue that binds people together no matter how different their heritages. And, as I hope will become increasingly clear in the years ahead, the humanities also have a role to play in building a more secure and peaceful world.

I would like to thank the distinguished members of this group for setting aside a portion of your busy agenda for me.

0426G

SECRETS OF SUCCESS

COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS
THOMAS AQUINAS COLLEGE

Santa Paula, California

June 6, 1992

Graduates, parents, faculty members, and guests--it's a great pleasure for me to be here today and to join with you in celebrating this occasion. My daughters graduated from college not too long ago, so I feel as though I have a great deal in common with those of you in the audience.

And I also suspect I have something in common with the graduates. I know that people about to begin their careers or begin preparation for them often look for role models, people who have succeeded in ways they want to succeed. Well, let me just say that people who are already in their careers look for role models, too; and I'd like to tell you I have found mine. You all know who she is: Her name is Sandra Day O'Connor. What you don't know is why she's my role model. It has nothing to do with her being a Supreme Court Justice. It doesn't even have anything to do with her being a thoroughly nice person. No, the reason Sandra Day O'Connor is my role model--and this is going to make all of you very happy--the reason she is my role model is that she has perfected the art of giving short commencement speeches.

Not long ago, Justice O'Connor gave a commencement speech that lasted just five minutes. I'm not sure I can tie that record, but in an attempt to live up to it, I'm going to make just five points today. I'm going to talk about five traits that are pretty widely shared by successful people that I've observed--and offer them to you as you set off into new worlds and new lives.

Now, a few of you out there may be saying to yourselves: "Success? She's going to talk about success? I just want to know how to get a job!" But you will get jobs--all of you, each and every one. You have more opportunities lying before you than most people in the world have ever even been able to imagine. There's been a lot of nay-saying about this country lately, and we have been through some hard times, and we do face challenges, no doubt about it. But for all the challenges, we are still the land of opportunity; we are still the place where people from all over the world come who want to dream big dreams; we are still the place where people can move up, no matter how far down they might start. I don't know your stories, but I suspect there are a lot of you in this graduating class who are first in your family to receive a college degree, as I was in mine. I don't know your stories, but I suspect some in this class have stories to tell like one I read recently. It was about a young man named Stephen Smith who received his law degree last week from the University of

Virginia's law school. He grew up in Anacostia--one of Washington, D.C.'s, toughest neighborhoods. He grew up poor and had to combat poverty. He is black and has to fight racism. But he graduated last week, getting his law degree, one of the top ten students in his class.

We are the land of opportunity, and I have been blessed to meet some marvelous people who are the most dramatic proof of that: Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, who was born in Cuba and now represents Miami in the U.S. House of Representatives; Wendy Gramm, a woman of Korean heritage who now heads the Federal Trade Commission; Colin Powell, born in the South Bronx and now one of our nation's most admired figures.

And as I have watched these people and other leaders in our society and in the world, I have observed that there are certain traits they have in common, characteristics they share; and one of them is that they always act like they know what they're doing. Now I suspect I can pass this secret of success on to you without much elaboration. I have found college seniors to be pretty well-practiced at acting as if they know what they're about. They have a remarkably high degree of self-confidence--which in the case of my own children I have felt a certain motherly obligation to lower from time to time--but not too much. Watching Douglas MacArthur operate, Franklin Roosevelt observed that you should "never

underestimate a man who overestimates himself." There's wisdom there--as well as a jab at MacArthur--and all of this coming from a President who demonstrated a thing or two in his time about acting confidently.

Take your self-confidence with you as you move to the next stage of your life. It will help you, even though you're a beginner, to behave with assuredness, to act as if you know what you're doing. And that is a key to success. But there's a second secret--one that goes right along with the first--and that is to know what you're doing. Sooner or later, you'll be tested. You'll have to make decisions and live with results that will show how hard you've worked, how much you've learned, how much you are to be respected. True expertise, orchestra conductor Victoria Bond observed not long ago in the New York Times, "is the most potent form of authority." Those are words worth remembering. Your chance will come along to make the music, and when that happens you will find it a very good thing, indeed, to know the notes.

A third rule for success I would offer you is this: Have a place to stand. Archimedes theorized he could move the world with a big enough lever--but he needed a firm place to stand the fulcrum. We all need that firm place--that base of conviction from which to act. I know that college has been a time when you've been encouraged to ask a lot of questions, and

that is a crucial part of the examined life which Socrates thought the only kind worth living. But having questioned and doubted, it is also important to arrive at some answers and beliefs.

Find that base of conviction that will give you direction, that place to stand from which you try to move the world. That's the third secret of success I would offer you, and the fourth is to be aware--and respectful--of where other people are standing. Let me tell you a story I heard not long ago. It was about a British naval commander, Roger Wilson, let's call him, who was sailing Her Majesty's yacht with the Prince and Princess of Wales on board. Commander Wilson, so the story goes, saw lights ahead, bearing straight down on the yacht. So he signalled: "Please yield." But the lights kept coming. "No, you please yield," they signalled back. The commander tried again: "Please yield." And again, the negative answer: "No, you please yield." So the commander decided to pull rank. "I am Commander Roger Wilson of Her Majesty's yacht; I have the Prince and Princess of Wales on board, and by royal decree, I order you to yield."

And back flashed the answer: "I am John Smith, and I have been in charge of this lighthouse for fifteen years."

You will encounter some immovable objects in your lifetime. Some movable ones, too, of course. The critical thing--no matter how exalted you might become--is to be clear-sighted about the difference. Having a healthy estimate of yourself can be a fine thing--unless it keeps you from a realistic estimate of others.

The last secret of success I'd offer--and the most important one--is this: Know what success is. It may be connected with fame and fortune, but it well may not be. It almost certainly will be connected with work that you love, work that involves you deeply quite apart from whatever rewards it may bring.

How will you find what that work is for you? Some of you may know already. Some of you may have already discovered what is for you the most satisfying work you can undertake with your new degree. But if you don't know yet, let me suggest that the way to find out is by doing whatever tasks come along as well as they can be done. People learn what is satisfying not by doing the job at hand half-heartedly and dreaming about what comes next, but by doing what there is to do now well--as well as possible. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might,"* Scripture tells us. Test yourselves. Push yourselves. Find out what you are good at. That's the way to discover work you love. And how will you know when you've

found it? One symptom is that you lose track of time. You'll look at your watch and wonder where the hours have gone, at your calendar and wonder what happened to the week. And that loss of time sense is symbol as well as symptom. We are time-bound creatures, but meaningful work can make us forget our mortal limitation--because it helps us transcend it.

Whether we create sonnets or families, make machines or harvest crops, work takes on meaning for us when we feel it to be a part of something that endures. Whether we undertake the business of business or scholarship or nations, work becomes beloved when it joins us with something larger than ourselves, something worthy that extends beyond us. Willa Cather put it this way: "That is happiness; to be dissolved into something complete and great."

And it is also success--or at least the most critical element of it I know. Photographer Margaret Bourke White once called her beloved work "a trusted friend, who never deserts you." And because you will never want to desert it, it is an energizing source like no other, getting you out of bed before dawn, inspiring you late into the night. There may be people in this world who become the very best at what they do who do not love their work--but I have never met them nor can I imagine from where they derive the commitment, day after day, that excellence demands.

There are many things that those of us on the podium wish for you as you set forth from this fine school. Indeed, you have many blessings already--this joyous occasion, proud parents, good friends, teachers who have cared for you and will continue to.

To all of these, let me add my blessing. May you find success. May you discover the work you love--and prosper in it.

* Ecclesiastes 9:10

0419G

MULTICULTURALISM DONE RIGHT

Remarks by

Lynne V. Cheney, Chairman
National Endowment for the Humanities

Rice University
Houston, Texas
August 19, 1992

Multiculturalism is one of the most provocative words around today. In some school districts, it's a fighting word. Even people who are completely sympathetic to the idea that students should learn about the diverse men and women who have contributed to the history of this nation and the world often react negatively when multiculturalism comes up. Many of them feel that the word has been hijacked in the same way that the word feminism has been hijacked. Just as there are many people who believe fully in the principle of equal opportunity for women who hesitate to call themselves feminists because of the meaning some extremists have given to that word, so are there people who feel uncomfortable advocating multicultural education because of the ideas and practices of some who call themselves multiculturalists.

But we are a multicultural society. We, more than any other country, are a nation made up of many people from many nations and cultures. Multiculturalism is part of the American identity, and so it should be part of what is taught in our schools, colleges, and universities. But it has to be done well. Otherwise, there is going to be significant--and righteous--resistance to it. What I'd like to do this morning

is talk about how we can do multiculturalism right. I'd like to suggest three principles that should underlie all of our efforts.

The first principle is to tell the truth. Nothing so energizes the opponents of multiculturalism--as well it should--as myths, half-truths, and even untruths being brought into the curriculum. An example that historian Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., often cites is from the eleventh grade American history curriculum in New York state. According to the curriculum guide, students are to be taught that there are three foundations for the Constitution of the United States: Enlightenment thought, colonial experience, and the Haudenosaunee political system--that is, the Iroquois confederation. This is not an idea accepted by reputable historians, any more than are some of the notions put forward in Afrocentric curricula: that Egypt was a black nation, for example, or that the ancient Egyptians discovered evolution thousands of years before Darwin.

A distortion common to multicultural curricula in colleges and universities as well as in schools is the idea that Western civilization and the United States, in particular, are the most racist, sexist cultures ever to exist. And that simply isn't true. We have our faults, to be sure. We have a long way to go before we shall have truly realized the ideals

on which this nation was founded. But in the course of history and in the context of the world, our record of achieving equality of opportunity for minorities and women is hard to match. And our progress continues. The number of black college graduates doubled between 1980 and 1990. Women are now the majority in our colleges and universities. One would never know these things, however, from reading some of the books used to teach about this country. I came across one recently called Racism and Sexism--a required text in some colleges--that leaves the impression that no nation had ever been so benighted as ours; and if we hope to save ourselves, the textbook suggested, we simply have to abandon capitalism.

This is nonsense, and we can't teach nonsense. Truth has to be the lodestar of education. Indeed, it is the force of truth that has made us move toward multicultural curricula in the first place. Anyone who looks at the textbooks we used in the schools twenty-five years ago in light of recent scholarship about women and minorities will recognize instantly that most of us grew up with an incomplete understanding of American history. If you ask anyone forty or older who Harriet Tubman was, very few will know. Ask any recent high school graduate, however, and he or she is likely to know. Eighty-four percent of the seventeen-year-olds who participated in an Endowment-funded survey a few years ago could identify Harriet Tubman. They knew who she was because she is in the

textbooks and the curricula now. Our schools have changed, and it is the desire to have our children understand the truth of the past that has brought about such changes. The same principle should guide the changes we make in the future.

Education is about the pursuit of truth, and one of the characteristics of multiculturalism gone wrong is that it turns education into something else--a procedure for making people feel good, for example, a way of building self-esteem. A few years ago, a now-notorious multicultural curriculum in New York stated its goal to be raising the self-esteem of minority children--and lowering the self-esteem of children of European origin. It's easy to see how you can get from such a starting point to a curriculum that portrays Western civilization as corrupt and non-Western cultures as paragons of virtue. Turning education into therapy invites distortion and half-truth into the curriculum.

Education is not about self-esteem. It is about learning to seek evidence, to evaluate information, to weigh conflicting opinions. It is about seeking the truth--and there is nothing more important to keep in mind if we want to do multiculturalism right.

A second principle: Multicultural education has to be about more rather than less, more for everyone rather than less

for anyone. As we begin to teach parts of the past that we overlooked before, we simply have to have more time to teach it. Given the lack of emphasis there has been on historical study over the years, this is not as great a difficulty as it might seem. Many students have had only a single year of history in high school. Many have had only the most perfunctory contact with the study of history during all of elementary school. There should have been more all along, but now we have particularly compelling reason to include more history--and that is that we are trying to teach more, not only the history we used to teach, but the history we now know we overlooked.

California provides us with a model of how this can be done. The new California Framework for the Study of History and the Social Sciences puts history into the schools almost every year. It includes ancient history, which had almost disappeared. Students learn about ancient Egypt and the African kingdom of Cush. They study the foundation of Western ideas as they learn about the Ancient Hebrews and Greeks. They learn about ancient India and China, study the fall of Rome and the growth of Islam. They study the Americas; and as they make their way to the modern world, they study the United States of America in particular. They learn about George Washington and Thomas Jefferson and Susan B. Anthony and Sojourner Truth. They learn about Native American tribes and the Hispanic roots

of the Southwest, about Asian immigration to California, Scandinavian immigration to Minnesota, and Irish immigration to Massachusetts. They learn more than any of us ever did, and that is exactly the way multiculturalism should work.

Last February a woman I know provided me a perfect example of how it shouldn't work. February is black history month, as you all know, and she was saying that her daughter's school in suburban Virginia had done a good job of using the occasion to teach black history. Her child knew about figures from the past, African-Americans, that she had never learned about; and that was a good thing. But she further reported that when she asked her daughter whose birthdays we celebrate on Presidents' Day, the child had absolutely no idea. It is important that our young people know about Marcus Garvey and W.E.B. DuBois, but they should also know, all of them, about the way George Washington and Abraham Lincoln changed the world.

When multicultural education becomes less for some people, they will object, and quite understandably. There has been a bitter dispute about making the curriculum in Brookline, Massachusetts, more multicultural. Those who are objecting support the idea that students should learn that our society is a pluralistic one. They support the idea that students should learn about societies besides the one they live in. But they

also think that students should learn about this society and its roots in Western civilization, and so they became irate when they were told that an AP European history course of longstanding was being cancelled because it did not fit with a multicultural agenda. And why should anyone be surprised by that reaction?

Similarly a few years ago, Stanford University decided to make its freshman requirement more multicultural and began by reducing the number of required texts in Western civilization from fifteen to six. Dante went over the side. Homer went over the side. And many people got up in arms--not because they objected to students reading important books from other cultures, but because they saw no reason they should stop reading the most important texts of the West. At Columbia University, by contrast, the core curriculum is being extended so that students will continue to read the great works of Western civilization, as they always have, and study as well major world traditions outside the West. They will continue to read Dante and Homer and now have opportunity to study Confucius and Mencius too. Here, multiculturalism is more rather than less.

Doing multiculturalism in this fashion will build support for change; but even more important, it is the soundest way to proceed educationally. Students can't be expected to

understand other cultures if they are ignorant about the one in which they spend their lives. And they will not understand the culture in which they live unless they study it in rigorous and coherent fashion. I am amazed at how often I come across colleges and universities that have ethnic studies requirements but no American history requirement, or ones that have third-world requirements but no first-world requirement. There seems to be an assumption that students will learn about the United States and Europe by osmosis. But, of course, they don't. A young man who works for me enrolled not long ago in an American history course at a Washington area university. He soon found out that the professor intended to focus exclusively on the history of oppression in the United States. The course was to be a victim's history, so to speak; and so the young man asked the professor if they couldn't study "the other side" as well, to which the professor responded that there was no need for that: Students in the class had already had at least eighteen years to learn the other side.

But students don't casually acquire a knowledge and understanding of history. A few years ago, the National Endowment for the Humanities sponsored a survey of what college seniors know about history, and there were some amazing gaps in their knowledge. More than 40 percent could not identify when the Civil War occurred; 25 percent couldn't locate Columbus's voyage within a half-century. About the same percentage could

not distinguish Churchill's words from Stalin's or Karl Marx's thoughts from the ideas of the United States Constitution.

Multicultural education done right means requiring the study of traditional history as well as of newer scholarship, and let me suggest that it ought also to entail foreign language study. I am amazed at how often I come across colleges and universities that pride themselves on their multicultural agenda but have no foreign language requirement. If the goal is to encourage understanding of how other people view the world, what better way than to become proficient in another language? It takes hard work and planning to develop curricula that encourage foreign language study. It takes hard work and planning to provide a coherent plan of learning that gives students a foundation in both this culture and others. It takes hard work and planning to make multicultural education be about more rather than less, but that principle should nonetheless underlie our efforts.

A last point this morning, a third principle for doing multicultural education right: It must be about what we share as well as about what sets us apart. Here the curricular guidance in place in New York and California are a study in contrasts. The one in New York emphasizes repeatedly that history is a matter of "multiple perspectives." There is no single truth of history that we share, in other words, but

simply different "takes" on the past, different versions of the American story that depend on a person's ethnic, racial, or religious background. Albert Shanker of the American Federation of Teachers has called this idea "dangerous," and certainly it is destructive to teach young people that race and ethnicity are barriers to any kind of shared understanding.

The California curriculum, on the other hand, emphasizes a common ground on which we can all stand. It demonstrates that there is no incompatibility between recognizing the contributions that men and women of diverse backgrounds have made to this country and seeking a truth we can all share. Our common story is, in fact, a multicultural one. Our common truth is about people from Africa, Asia, Europe, and every part of the globe being joined together by belief in equality and freedom. There is an American creed, the Californian Framework points out. Its language and values are drawn from our founding documents: the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, the Bill of Rights. Its themes are echoed in our patriotic songs, in "America the Beautiful," which imagines our good being crowned with brotherhood, and in "America," which envisions freedom ringing from every mountainside. The American creed is found in the great speeches and orations that all our children should know: in Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, in Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I have a dream" speech.

This is what multicultural education should be, and it is a wonder that in many schools we have gotten so far away from this idea. It is, after all, what most parents want. A 1991 poll in New York State found that 88 percent of African Americans, 87 percent of Hispanics, and 70 percent of whites agreed that schoolchildren should be taught "the common heritage of Americans."

Multicultural education should be about what we share as well as about what makes us different from one another, and one characteristic we all have in common is that we are individuals. It is also true that we are members of groups, but that is not--or should not be--the source of our views on social and personal and political matters. They derive from our individuality and not from the continent of our ancestors' origin. We enrich ourselves if we understand the customs that grow up among groups and the traditions with which they mark their lives, but we are impoverished if we go on mistakenly to assume that everyone who is a member of a racial or ethnic group should think like every other member of it--and only like every other member of it. We are impoverished if we think we can learn only from people who look like us. My daughters should be able to learn and draw inspiration from Frederick Douglass just as he was able to learn and draw inspiration from the noble orators of Greece and Rome.

It is important that our children learn to understand the various cultures that make up this country and the world. But it is also important that they learn to regard themselves and others as individuals--unique individuals--neither defined by nor judged according to the groups to which they belong, but blessed with the capacity and freedom to define themselves and to be judged, as Martin Luther King, Jr., dreamed his children would be judged, by the content of their characters not the color of their skin.

TELLING THE TRUTH
REMARKS BY
LYNNE V. CHENEY
CHAIRMAN
NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES

BEFORE THE
NATIONAL PRESS CLUB
WASHINGTON, DC

SEPTEMBER 24, 1992

TELLING THE TRUTH

I KNOW IT'S HARD TO BELIEVE IN SEPTEMBER OF AN ELECTION YEAR THAT THERE IS ANYTHING GOING ON IN THE COUNTRY BESIDES AN ELECTION. BUT, IN FACT, MILLIONS OF STUDENTS HAVE GONE OFF TO COLLEGE THIS MONTH AND ARE BEGINNING OR CONTINUING AN EXPERIENCE THAT CAN BE ONE OF THE GREAT INTELLECTUAL ADVENTURES OF LIFE. STUDENTS TODAY HAVE THE POSSIBILITY OF LEARNING ABOUT SCIENTIFIC WONDERS THAT WERE SCARCELY THOUGHT OF WHEN THEIR PARENTS WENT TO SCHOOL. IN THE HUMANITIES THEY CAN EXPLORE HISTORY THAT HADN'T BEEN WRITTEN WHEN MANY OF US WERE IN COLLEGE--THE HISTORY OF THE AMAZING EVENTS THAT HAVE CHANGED THE WORLD IN OUR LIFETIME--THE HISTORY OF YEARS, INDEED, OF CENTURIES, BEFORE OUR LIFETIMES THAT WE UNDERSTAND MORE FULLY NOW, THANKS TO RECENT SCHOLARSHIP.

IN MANY WAYS, THIS IS A VERY GOOD TIME TO BE A COLLEGE STUDENT; BUT IN OTHER WAYS, IT IS NOT. PARTICULARLY IN THE HUMANITIES, OUR COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES ARE SUFFERING FROM AN IDENTITY CRISIS THAT KEEPS EDUCATION FROM BEING AS OPEN, AS FREE AND EXPANSIVE, AS IT SHOULD BE. SPEECH CODES AND POLITICAL CORRECTNESS ARE SYMPTOMS OF THE PROBLEM, BUT IT GOES MUCH DEEPER. IT GOES TO THE HEART OF WHAT TEACHING AND

LEARNING SHOULD BE, TO THE CORE OF WHAT EDUCATION IS ABOUT; AND THIS IS WHAT I'D LIKE TO SPEND SOME TIME TALKING ABOUT TODAY.

IN ORDER TO UNDERSTAND WHAT HAS HAPPENED, I THINK IT IS USEFUL TO GO BACK TO THE IDEA ON WHICH OUR COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES WERE FOUNDED. THEIR AIM, THEIR GOAL, THEIR END WAS TRUTH; THEIR ACTIVITY, SEEKING THE TRUTH. THAT'S WHAT FACULTY MEMBERS WERE TO DO IN RESEARCH, WHAT THEY WERE TO TEACH STUDENTS HOW TO DO IN THE CLASSROOM. "THE UNIVERSITY FUNCTION IS THE TRUTH FUNCTION," JOHN DEWEY DECLARED AT THE TURN OF THE CENTURY, AND AT COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES ACROSS THE COUNTRY, YOU CAN SEE THIS AIM ENSHRINED IN MOTTOS: "TRUTH" AT HARVARD, "LIGHT AND TRUTH" AT YALE AND INDIANA UNIVERSITIES, "WHATSOEVER THINGS ARE TRUE" AT NORTHWESTERN. AT COLORADO COLLEGE, WHERE I WENT TO SCHOOL, PALMER HALL, THE MAIN CLASSROOM BUILDING, HAS A HUGE INSCRIPTION ABOVE THE ENTRANCE: "YE SHALL KNOW THE TRUTH AND THE TRUTH SHALL MAKE YOU FREE."

THIS IS HOW IT USED TO BE, BUT THE IDEA OF SEEKING THE TRUTH HAS FALLEN ON HARD TIMES. I RECENTLY RECEIVED AN ALUMNI BULLETIN FROM COLORADO COLLEGE INFORMING ME THAT NOWADAYS THE WORDS INSCRIBED ABOVE PALMER HALL ARE "LIKELY TO PROVOKE A SMILE," NOT BECAUSE THEY CALL UP WARM MEMORIES, BUT BECAUSE THEY ARE SO HOPELESSLY NAIVE. A STUDENT FROM AMHERST WHO

WORKED FOR ME THIS SUMMER TOLD ME THAT WHEN HE INTRODUCED THE IDEA OF TRUTH INTO DISCUSSION IN A CLASS, HIS PROFESSOR CALLED HIM A PHILISTINE. THE INSULT WAS DELIVERED CHEERFULLY ENOUGH SO THAT THE STUDENT DIDN'T HAVE TO CONCLUDE THAT HE WAS A COMPLETE BARBARIAN, JUST THAT HE WAS UNTUTORED, A YOUNG PERSON WHO HADN'T HAD A CHANCE TO LEARN THAT THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS TRUTH.

NOW, IN FACT, THE TRUTH QUESTION HAS NOT BEEN ANSWERED ONCE AND FOR ALL. PHILOSOPHERS HAVE SPENT LIFETIMES CONSIDERING HOW WE KNOW AND WHAT WE KNOW, AND WHILE SOME HAVE ENDED UP THOROUGHGOING SKEPTICS, OTHERS HAVE CONCLUDED THAT TRUTH IS ALIVE AND WELL. IT IS NOT ALWAYS EASY TO DISCERN. IT IS NEVER POSSESSED IN FULL: HUMAN BEINGS ARE NOT OMNISCIENT. BUT PEOPLE LIKE MY SUMMER INTERN WHO HAVE THE IDEA THAT THE PURSUIT OF TRUTH IS WHAT EDUCATION IS ABOUT DO HAVE POWERFUL ARGUMENTS ON THEIR SIDE.

BUT NONE OF THIS GETS THEM MUCH RESPECT WHEN THEY RUN INTO THE THINKING THAT IS FASHIONABLE TODAY, PARTICULARLY IN THE HUMANITIES. THERE IS NO TRUTH, SO THE THINKING GOES. EVERYTHING WE THINK IS TRUE IS SHAPED BY POLITICAL INTEREST; WHAT WE THINK IS TRUE IS REALLY ONLY A TOOL FOR ADVANCING THE POWER OF THIS GROUP OR THAT ONE. AND SO WHEN IT COMES TO

KNOWLEDGE, SINCE WE CAN'T AVOID POLITICS, WE MIGHT AS WELL EMBRACE IT--AND INCORPORATE AGENDAS THAT WILL ADVANCE OUR VIEWPOINT INTO SCHOLARSHIP AND TEACHING.

NOW, I KNOW THIS IS A SOMEWHAT CONVOLUTED IDEA. WHEN I EXPLAINED IT TO SOMEONE THE OTHER DAY, THEY SAID, "WELL, THAT WILL NEVER SELL." BUT LET ME ASSURE YOU THAT IT HAS. IT HAS BECOME ENORMOUSLY INFLUENTIAL IN THE HUMANITIES. HERE ARE TWO HISTORIANS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA. THEY WRITE, AND I QUOTE:

WE ARE ALL ENGAGED IN WRITING A KIND OF PROPAGANDA. . . . RATHER THAN BELIEVE IN THE ABSOLUTE TRUTH OF WHAT WE ARE WRITING, WE MUST BELIEVE IN THE MORAL OR POLITICAL POSITION WE ARE TAKING WITH IT. . . . HISTORIANS SHOULD ASSESS AN ARGUMENT ON THE BASIS OF ITS PERSUASIVENESS, ITS POLITICAL UTILITY, AND ITS POLITICAL SINCERITY.

IT'S NOT FAITHFULNESS TO THE PAST THAT MATTERS, IN OTHER WORDS, BUT POLITICAL USEFULNESS IN THE PRESENT. IT'S NOT WHETHER AN HISTORIAN HAS READ WIDELY AND THOUGHT DEEPLY, IT'S NOT WHETHER HE OR SHE HAS HONESTLY EVALUATED AS MUCH EVIDENCE AS POSSIBLE--NO, WHAT IS IMPORTANT IS WHETHER THE STORY TOLD EFFECTIVELY ADVANCES THE PROPER AGENDA. WHEN I READ THINGS

LIKE THIS--AND IN MY JOB, I COME ACROSS THEM OFTEN--I AM REMINDED OF GEORGE ORWELL'S, 1984, WHERE TWO AND TWO CAN MAKE FIVE--IF IT'S POLITICALLY USEFUL.

BUT WHAT I'M TALKING ABOUT IS NOT A FUTURISTIC NOVEL, BUT A LINE OF THOUGHT THAT IS--RIGHT NOW--HAVING GREAT IMPACT IN THE HUMANITIES. SINCE THERE IS NO TRUTH--THE ARGUMENT GOES--SINCE ALL KNOWLEDGE REFLECTS POLITICAL INTEREST, FACULTY MEMBERS ARE PERFECTLY JUSTIFIED IN USING THE CLASSROOM TO ADVANCE POLITICAL AGENDAS. IT IS THIS RATIONALE THAT ACCOUNTS FOR SPEAKERS AT LEARNED CONVENTIONS DISCUSSING SUCH TOPICS AS (AND I QUOTE FROM THE MOST RECENT MODERN LANGUAGE ASSOCIATION MEETING) "THE TASK OF THE POLITICALLY COMMITTED CULTURAL WORKER IN TODAY'S UNIVERSITY." NOT "THE TASK OF THE SCHOLAR IN TODAY'S UNIVERSITY," NOT "THE TASK OF THE TEACHER," BUT "THE TASK OF 'THE POLITICALLY COMMITTED CULTURAL WORKER.'" IT IS THIS RATIONALE THAT ACCOUNTS FOR A SPEAKER AT THE MOST RECENT COLLEGE ART ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE WARNING HER FELLOW FACULTY MEMBERS NOT TO TEACH WOMEN ARTISTS SUCH AS MARY CASSATT AND BERTHE MORISOT, BECAUSE THEY FREQUENTLY PAINTED WOMEN AND CHILDREN AND THUS "REINFORCE PATRIARCHAL THOUGHT."

NOW PROFESSORS HAVE ALWAYS HAD BIASES. I REMEMBER I HAD SOME VERY GOOD ONES WHO DID. BUT THEY DIDN'T HAVE THE IDEA

THAT THE GOAL OF TEACHING WAS TO GET STUDENTS TO ADOPT THEIR BIASES. TODAY I OFTEN RUN ACROSS STATEMENTS THAT QUITE FRANKLY ASSERT THIS TO BE THE PURPOSE OF TEACHING. A PROFESSOR AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN, WRITING IN HARVARD EDUCATIONAL REVIEW, URGES HER FELLOW PROFESSORS TO BE OPEN ABOUT THEIR INTENTION TO "APPROPRIATE PUBLIC RESOURCES (CLASSROOMS, SCHOOL SUPPLIES, TEACHER/PROFESSOR SALARIES, ACADEMIC REQUIREMENTS AND DEGREES) TO FURTHER VARIOUS 'PROGRESSIVE' POLITICAL AGENDAS." AND SHE DESCRIBES A COURSE SHE HAS TAUGHT, CALLED, INNOCUOUSLY ENOUGH, "CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION 607," IN WHICH STUDENTS LEARN HOW TO CONDUCT POLITICAL DEMONSTRATIONS--AND THEN CONDUCT THEM IN THE LIBRARY MALL AND ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES OF THE UNIVERSITY. FOR THESE EFFORTS, STUDENTS RECEIVE THREE HOURS CREDIT.

NOW AS AN ALUM OF THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN, I AM COMPLETELY AWARE THAT POLITICAL DEMONSTRATIONS ARE A LONGSTANDING TRADITION THERE. THEY WERE A DAILY--INDEED, ALMOST AN HOURLY EVENT WHEN I WAS A GRADUATE STUDENT AT MADISON IN THE LATE 1960S. BUT THE IDEA THAT STUDENTS WOULD GET THREE CREDITS FOR DEMONSTRATING--THAT IS AN INNOVATION.

IN A RECENT ISSUE OF COLLEGE ENGLISH, A PUBLICATION OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH, A PROFESSOR FROM CALIFORNIA ADVISES UNIVERSITY TEACHERS TO VARY THE POLITICAL

STRATEGY THEY USE IN THE CLASSROOM TO SUIT THE INSTITUTION. ONE SHOULD NOT TRY TO REEDUCATE STUDENTS AT A HIGHLY SELECTIVE UNIVERSITY, HE SAYS, IN THE SAME WAY AS AT A LESS SELECTIVE INSTITUTION. AT HIS OWN MIDDLE-CLASS UNIVERSITY, THE PROFESSOR WRITES, HE CHALLENGES STUDENTS' BELIEF THAT THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA OFFERS THEM FREEDOM OF CHOICE AND THE CHANCE TO GET AHEAD. HE SHOWS THEM, IN HIS ENGLISH CLASS, "THE ODDS AGAINST THEIR ATTAINING ROOM AT THE TOP; THE WAY THEIR EDUCATION . . . HAS CHANNELED THEM TOWARD A MID-LEVEL PROFESSIONAL AND SOCIAL SLOT AND CONDITIONED THEM INTO AUTHORITARIAN CONFORMITY."

NOW, STUDENTS ARE NOT POTTED PLANTS; AND THEY WILL, SOMETIMES, COMPLAIN WHEN THIS GOES ON IN THEIR COURSES. OFTEN THE COMPLAINTS I COME ACROSS ARE ABOUT FEMINISM IN THE CLASSROOM--AND, INDEED, NOT LONG AGO I CAME ACROSS AN ARTICLE THAT BEGAN WITH A COMPILATION OF SUCH OBJECTIONS. THEY WERE FROM STUDENTS WHO WERE TAKING FIRST-YEAR COMPOSITION AND INTRODUCTORY LITERATURE COURSES.

ONE STUDENT WROTE, "I FEEL THIS COURSE WAS DOMINATED AND OVERPOWERED BY FEMINIST DOCTRINES AND IDEALS." WROTE ANOTHER, "I FOUND IT VERY OFFENSIVE THAT ALL OF OUR READINGS FOCUSED ON FEMINISM." NOW, IN LISTENING TO THESE STUDENT OBJECTIONS,

REMEMBER THAT THESE STUDENTS WERE NOT TAKING A WOMEN'S STUDIES COURSE. THEY WERE ENROLLED IN FRESHMAN COMPOSITION OR IN AN INTRODUCTORY LITERATURE CLASS. "[THE TEACHER] CONSISTENTLY CHANNELS CLASS DISCUSSIONS AROUND FEMINISM," WROTE ANOTHER STUDENT. "[SHE] DOES NOT SPEND TIME DISCUSSING THE COMMENTS THAT OPPOSE HER BELIEFS. IN FACT, SHE USUALLY TWISTS THEM AROUND TO SUPPORT HER BELIEFS."

WHEN I ENCOUNTERED THE ARTICLE THAT BEGAN WITH THESE COMPLAINTS, I WAS FRANKLY HEARTENED. HERE WAS A PROFESSOR, I THOUGHT, WHO IS LISTENING TO STUDENTS, SOMEONE WHO UNDERSTANDS THAT THEY MIGHT WELL COMPLAIN WHEN A COURSE THAT IS SUPPOSED TO BE ABOUT HOW TO WRITE IS TURNED INTO A COURSE ABOUT HOW TO OVERCOME PATRIARCHY. BUT I DIDN'T HAVE TO READ FAR BEFORE I REALIZED THAT THE PROFESSOR HAD NO INTENTION OF EXPLORING WHETHER THE STUDENTS' OBJECTIONS HAD MERIT. TO HER, THEY WERE SIMPLY EXHIBIT A, EVIDENCE OF WHAT FEMINIST PROFESSORS HAVE TO PUT UP WITH. TO HER, THE STUDENT COMPLAINTS WERE SIMPLY A STARTING POINT FOR DISCUSSING THE "RESISTANCE" THAT MUST BE OVERCOME "IN ORDER TO GET OUR STUDENTS TO IDENTIFY WITH THE POLITICAL AGENDA OF FEMINISM."

THE IDEA THAT PROFESSORS SHOULD BE IMPERVIOUS TO STUDENT COMPLAINTS ABOUT POLITICIZED TEACHING IS INCREASINGLY COMMON IN

FEMINIST WRITING. IN FACT, THE MORE STUDENTS OBJECT, SOME FEMINISTS ARGUE, THE MORE EVIDENCE IT IS THAT THE FEMINIST PROFESSOR IS DOING HER JOB. AS A NEW JERSEY PROFESSOR WRITES, "THE QUANTITY AND QUALITY OF THE RESISTANCE I PROVOKE FROM MY STUDENTS EARLY IN THE COURSE IS THE WAY TO MEASURE MY SUCCESS AS A TEACHER."

SO, IT CAN BE HARD TO WIN IF YOU'RE A STUDENT. COMPLAIN ABOUT THE PROFESSOR HAVING A POLITICAL AGENDA AND THAT WILL BE TAKEN AS EVIDENCE OF HOW MUCH YOU NEED THAT AGENDA. ARGUE, AND THE CONSEQUENCES CAN BE WORSE. THE PROFESSOR NOT ONLY HAS THE POWER OF THE GRADE, HE OR SHE ALSO HAS THE POWER TO DETERMINE WHETHER DEBATE IN THE CLASSROOM WILL BE ALLOWED TO DESCEND INTO DIATRIBE, THE POWER TO DECIDE WHETHER STUDENT ACTIVISTS, FOR EXAMPLE, WILL BE ALLOWED TO BERATE AND HUMILIATE A FELLOW STUDENT WHO DARES TO RUN AGAINST THE POLITICAL CURRENT. A STUDENT IN OHIO WRITES:

IN A COURSE THAT I TOOK LAST YEAR A MAVERICK STUDENT SAID HE AGREED WITH A SUPREME COURT JUSTICE'S VIEW THAT A PARTICULAR AFFIRMATIVE ACTION PROGRAM WOULD UNCONSTITUTIONALLY DISCRIMINATE ON THE BASIS OF RACE. DURING THE NEXT FEW MINUTES A COUPLE OF STUDENTS VEHEMENTLY OBJECTED. ONE RAISED HER VOICE SIGNIFICANTLY,

THE OTHER BEGAN TO YELL AT HIM. IN THE FOLLOWING FIFTEEN MINUTES, THE PROFESSOR DID NOT SPEAK; INSTEAD, HE TOOK OTHER VOLUNTEERS. ALMOST ALL OF THESE STUDENTS JUMPED ON THE BANDWAGON, BERATING THE ONE MAVERICK STUDENT. THE PROFESSOR GAVE HIM ONE MORE CHANCE TO SPEAK. BY THIS TIME THE STUDENT WAS QUITE FLUSTERED AND INCOHERENT.

THE STUDENT DESCRIBING THIS INCIDENT NOTES, "THE CLASS LEARNED THAT BRINGING OUT SUCH CONTROVERSIAL VIEWS WOULD CARRY A HIGH SOCIAL COST. THEY WOULD BE LESS LIKELY TO REPEAT THE 'ERROR' OF THEIR FELLOW STUDENT."

NOW, LET ME BE CLEAR. THERE ARE MANY FINE TEACHERS IN OUR COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES WHO WOULD NOT DREAM OF USING THEIR CLASSROOMS THIS WAY. THERE ARE MANY WHO ARE DEEPLY TROUBLED BY WHAT THEY SEE HAPPENING, AND SOME OF THE MOST EMINENT AMONG THEM HAVE SPOKEN OUT. IN HIS 1991 PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS TO THE AMERICAN HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION, WILLIAM LEUCHTENBURG DECLARED, "I . . . FIND TOTALLY REPUGNANT ANY EFFORT . . . TO IMPOSE FAVORED ORTHODOXIES ON THE CLASSROOM." PROFESSOR JAMES DAVID BARBER OF DUKE HAS DECLARED, "WHAT'S GOING ON IN UNIVERSITIES NOW THREATENS EVERYTHING THAT A UNIVERSITY IS SUPPOSED TO BE ABOUT. . . . STUDENTS MINDS ARE SUPPOSED TO BE TRAINED, NOT CONVERTED POLITICALLY."

BUT THERE ARE ALSO MANY, PARTICULARLY IN THE HUMANITIES, WHO SEE THE POLITICAL TRANSFORMATION OF THEIR STUDENTS AS A PERFECTLY PROPER GOAL. HOW EFFECTIVE THEY ARE IN ACHIEVING THIS GOAL IS A MATTER OF DEBATE. STUDENTS ARE PRETTY RESILIENT. I RECENTLY CAME ACROSS AN ACCOUNT OF ONE MALE STUDENT ADVISING ANOTHER ON HOW TO SUCCEED IN A FEMINIST CLASSROOM. "PRETEND TO BE A MALE CHAUVINIST," THE ADVICE WENT, "THEN HAVE A CONVERSION. YOU'RE BOUND TO GET AN A."

BUT EVEN WHEN MINDS ARE NOT CHANGED, STUDENTS PAY A PRICE. THEY DO NOT EXPERIENCE HOW EXCITING A GENUINE CLASH OF OPINIONS CAN BE OR HOW STIMULATING A REAL ENGAGEMENT WITH IDEAS. THESE ARE SOME OF THE MOST IMPORTANT IDEAS THAT COLLEGE YEARS HAVE TO TEACH, AND IN POLITICIZED CLASSROOMS, STUDENTS DO NOT LEARN THEM.

WHETHER OUR COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES DEFINE THEMSELVES AS INSTITUTIONS THAT AIM TO DISCOVER TRUTH MAKES A GREAT DEAL OF DIFFERENCE TO STUDENTS, AND IT ALSO MAKES A GREAT DEAL OF DIFFERENCE TO SOCIETY AS A WHOLE. IDEAS DO HAVE CONSEQUENCES. THESE IDEAS HAVE CONSEQUENCES.

LOOK AT MUSEUMS, FOR EXAMPLE. INCREASINGLY IN THE PROFESSIONAL JOURNALS, ONE READS THAT MUSEUMS MUST HAVE AN

"ENGAGED" ROLE. "THE POLITICAL DIMENSION OF OUR MISSION AND RELATIONSHIP TO OUR AUDIENCES MUST . . . BE AGGRESSIVELY ADDRESSED," A SMITHSONIAN OFFICIAL WROTE RECENTLY. ANYONE WHO VISITED "THE WEST AS AMERICA," A 1991 EXHIBIT AT THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART, HAS SEEN THE RESULT OF THIS LINE OF THINKING: AN EXHIBITION THAT MADE NO PRETENSE OF OBJECTIVITY AS TIME AND AGAIN IT PROCLAIMED THE ART OF WESTWARD EXPANSION TO BE NOTHING MORE THAN ROMANTIC PROPAGANDA, COVERING OVER RACISM, SEXISM, AND THE DEPREDATIONS OF CAPITALISM. A 1992 SMITHSONIAN EXHIBITION CALLED "ETIQUETTE OF THE UNDERCASTE" ADVOCATED A VIEW OF THE UNITED STATES AS A SOCIETY SO CLASS-RIDDEN THAT THOSE BORN AT THE BOTTOM CAN NEVER HOPE TO MOVE UP. "UPWARD MOBILITY," ANNOUNCED MATERIALS ACCOMPANYING THE EXHIBITION, "IS ONE OF OUR MOST CHERISHED MYTHS." AT A DISCUSSION HELD IN CONJUNCTION WITH THIS EXHIBIT, ONE PANELIST CALLED ON ARTISTS TO "BELONG TO ACTIVIST ORGANIZATIONS . . . AND DEVELOP FORMS THAT ARE APPROPRIATE VEHICLES FOR REVOLUTIONARY IDEAS."

OLIVER STONE'S JFK IS AN EXAMPLE IN FILM OF HISTORY BEING DISCONNECTED FROM THE IDEA OF TRUTH. STONE IGNORED INFORMATION THAT CONTRADICTED HIS THESIS AND CREATED FICTIONAL CHARACTERS AND SITUATIONS TO SUPPORT IT, ALL IN THE NAME OF WHAT HE CALLED HIS "INTERPRETATION OF HISTORY." STONE SPOKE HERE AT THE PRESS

CLUB SOME MONTHS AGO, AND SOMEONE ASKED HIM HOW HIS ART WAS DIFFERENT FROM PROPAGANDA. STONE'S REPLY--THAT HE DIDN'T KNOW HOW TO ANSWER THAT QUESTION--WAS LESS REMARKABLE THAN THE FACT THAT HE SEEMED RELATIVELY UNPERTURBED AT BEING UNABLE TO DRAW A DISTINCTION.

OFF-CAMPUS AS WELL AS ON, THE VIEW IS GAINING CURRENCY THAT REALITY IS NOTHING MORE THAN DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES ADVANCED BY DIFFERENT PEOPLE IN ORDER TO PROMOTE THEIR INTERESTS, AND ONE VIEW OF THIS DEVELOPMENT IS THAT IT'S INEVITABLE AND WE OUGHT TO SIT BACK AND ENJOY IT. A RECENT ARTICLE IN ROLLING STONE BY JON KATZ ANNOINTED THE PERSPECTIVAL APPROACH TO REALITY "NEW NEWS," AND CONTRASTED IT WITH "OLD NEWS," THE KIND THAT VALUES OBJECTIVITY. WROTE KATZ, "CONSUMERS CAN HAVE A BALANCED DISCUSSION WITH EVERY SIDE OF AN ISSUE NEUTRALIZING THE OTHER, OR THEY CAN TURN TO SINGERS, PRODUCERS AND FILMMAKERS OFFERING COLORFUL, DISTINCTIVE, OFTEN FLAWED BUT FREQUENTLY MORE POWERFUL VISIONS OF THEIR TRUTH. MORE AND MORE, AMERICANS ARE MAKING IT CLEAR WHICH THEY PREFER."

BUT OTHERS ARE LESS SANGUINE ABOUT THIS DEVELOPMENT, SOME EVEN SEEING IT AS A THREAT TO DEMOCRACY: HOW CAN A SELF-GOVERNING PEOPLE SURVIVE IF THEY REJECT EVEN THE POSSIBILITY OF OBJECTIVE STANDARDS AGAINST WHICH COMPETING

CLAIMS AND INTERPRETATIONS CAN BE MEASURED? WHAT WE NEED URGENTLY IN THIS COUNTRY, ANTHROPOLOGIST MARVIN HARRIS WRITES, IS A REAFFIRMATION THAT THERE ARE TRUTHS ON WHICH WE CAN AGREE. "THE ALTERNATIVE," HE WRITES, "IS TO STAND BY HELPLESSLY AS SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS TEAR THE UNITED STATES APART IN THE NAME OF THEIR 'SEPARATE REALITIES,' OR TO WAIT UNTIL ONE OF THEM GROWS STRONG ENOUGH TO FORCE ITS OWN IRRATIONAL AND SUBJECTIVE BRAND OF REALITY ON ALL THE REST."

I HAPPEN TO THINK THAT HARRIS HAS THE STRONGER ARGUMENT. WHEN I LOOK AT CURRICULA IN SOME OF OUR ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS--AND THE STATE OF NEW YORK IS THE BEST EXAMPLE HERE--AND SEE THE IDEA BEING ADVANCED THAT THERE IS NO COMMON TRUTH, MERELY DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES THAT ARE DETERMINED BY RACE AND ETHNICITY, THEN I FIND HARRIS'S POINT PARTICULARLY PERSUASIVE. IF WE TEACH OUR CHILDREN THAT THERE IS NO TRUTH TO WHICH THEY CAN ALL SUBSCRIBE, NO COMMON GROUND ON WHICH THEY CAN ALL STAND TO ADJUDICATE THEIR DIFFERENCES, THEN AREN'T WE SETTING THEM AGAINST ONE ANOTHER? AREN'T WE, TO USE ARTHUR SCHLESINGER'S WORD, ENCOURAGING THE "DISUNITING" OF AMERICA? AND WHEN I LOOK AT OUR CAMPUSES, I FIND HARRIS'S POINT VERY STRONG, BECAUSE THERE THE SCENARIO HE POSITS HAS IN SOME WAYS ALREADY WORKED ITSELF OUT. THERE, IN THE HUMANITIES, AT LEAST,

THERE OFTEN IS A DOMINANT ORTHODOXY--AND AN IMPOVERISHMENT OF INTELLECTUAL LIFE AS A RESULT.

I'VE HAD THE OPPORTUNITY OVER THE PAST FEW YEARS TO MEET WITH SCHOLARS IN OTHER COUNTRIES, AND THEY ARE AMAZED THAT SCHOLARS IN THIS COUNTRY WOULD WILLINGLY RECONCEIVE THE PURPOSE OF EDUCATION AND MAKE POLITICS RATHER THAN TRUTH ITS GOAL. THE IDEA IS PARTICULARLY ASTONISHING TO SCHOLARS WHO ARE JUST EMERGING FROM SOCIETIES WHICH IMPOSED AN ORTHODOXY ON INTELLECTUAL WORK. ONE OF THEM, RADIM PALOUS, IS NOW THE RECTOR OF PRAGUE'S CHARLES UNIVERSITY, BUT UNTIL A FEW YEARS AGO, HE WAS WORKING AS A COAL STOKER. PALOUS HAS TWO PH.D.S, BUT HE HAD BEEN UNWILLING TO FOLLOW ALONG WITH MARXIST IDEOLOGY AND SO HE HAD BEEN DISMISSED FROM THE UNIVERSITY AND ASSIGNED TO MANUAL LABOR. BUT NOW HE IS A RECTOR, AND I ASKED HIM TO DESCRIBE FOR ME THE ROLE OF THE UNIVERSITY IN A DEMOCRACY. "TO EDUCATE," HE ANSWERED, "IN THE SENSE THAT PLATO TALKED ABOUT; TO DRAW STUDENTS OUT FROM THE DARK TO THE LIGHT; TO MOVE FROM CLOSURE TO OPENNESS, TO AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE TRUTH--WHICH IS SOMETHING THAT CANNOT BE CHANGED."

I OBSERVED THAT THERE ARE MANY ON UNIVERSITY CAMPUSES IN THE UNITED STATES WHO HOLD A DIFFERENT VIEW, WHO ARGUE THAT TRUTH DOESN'T EXIST, THAT ONLY PERSPECTIVES DO. TO WHICH

PALOUS RESPONDED, "TO BE EDUCATED WE MUST UNDERSTAND THE TRUTH. AND THAT MEANS LITERALLY TO STAND UNDER IT. IT IS ABOVE US, NOT WE ABOVE IT."

PALOUS'S WORDS TAKE ON PARTICULAR ELOQUENCE BECAUSE OF THE PRICE HE HAS HAD TO PAY FOR LIVING BY THEM, BUT THE PRICE FOR NOT LIVING BY THEM CAN ALSO BE HIGH. HAVING TO MOLD IDEAS TO FIT PRESCRIBED IDEOLOGIES IS DEMEANING TO INDIVIDUALS AND DAMAGING TO SOCIETIES. BEING ABLE TO PURSUE THE TRUTH WHEREVER IT MAY LEAD IS ONE OF THE BLESSINGS OF LIBERTY--AND ONE OF DEMOCRACY'S GREATEST STRENGTHS.

LET ME, PLEASE, BEFORE I ABANDON THIS PODIUM, THANK THE NATIONAL PRESS CLUB FOR ENCOURAGING DEBATE ON ALL SORTS OF ISSUES, FROM PRESSING MATTERS OF FOREIGN AND DOMESTIC POLICY TO QUESTIONS THAT HAVE PERSISTED THROUGH AGES--SUCH AS WHETHER TRUTH EXISTS AND WHETHER WE HAVE A DUTY TO PURSUE IT.