

9/20/94
NATIONAL HERITAGE
FELLOWSHIP RECEPTION

PHOTOCOPY
PRESERVATION

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

September 20, 1994

REMARKS BY THE FIRST LADY
AT NATIONAL HERITAGE FELLOWSHIP RECEPTION

MRS. CLINTON: Thank you so much (inaudible), and thanks to all of you for gathering here today to honor these extraordinary people. This is a great pleasure for me because I (inaudible) although not talented myself, am very grateful for the extraordinary range of talents and abilities and skills that are brought to bear on our collective cultural life together.

It is so exciting to be a part of this National Heritage Fellows presentation because all too often our (inaudible) and those who practice them and who bring joy in their communities and are able to carry on tradition that would otherwise be lost are not recognized and acknowledged.

So I am very grateful to have been invited to be a part of this. Each of these awardees has been judged by a panel of their peers. They have been judged to be outstanding practitioners of artistic traditions that are vital parts of our nation's cultural life.

Each is inherent of the best of our cultural past, someone who has upheld the highest standards of achievement forged by generations of people who came before us. The folk arts they represent are also the cornerstone of our (inaudible).

Through their (inaudible) traditional art, the National Heritage Fellows offer us a creative vision for the future as well as reminders of our past. Their high aspirations, creativity, determination and hard work prove in the most vivid way the truth of that old saying that the strong roots bear fruits.

They also represent something which is too often overlooked and even occasionally disregarded, and that is the very rich, collective, multi-stranded traditions that make up our country and make up the arts which are so critical to the definition of who we are as a people.

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They offer us a vision of ourselves as Americans and our richness as Democratic people who are strengthened by the multitude of people who have come before and have brought their own additions to America.

The President wasn't able to join us this morning, but he has written to each of the awardees a letter that expresses his congratulations for their achievements but also adds this paragraph: "One of the greatest strengths of our nation is its rich and diverse cultural heritage. As a master traditional artist, you have met and surpassed the highest standards of excellence in your craft. Your extraordinary skills are helping to ensure that the splendid legacies of our past are preserved and carried forward for generations of Americans to come."

The President and I are grateful for each of the contributions that our honorees have made and will continue to make, and I'm hopeful that their contributions will be not only honored in this ceremony today, not only recognized in this wonderful booklet that has been put together by (inaudible) but will really be appreciated for what they represent, a way of demonstrating the diversity of our culture, even beyond that the diversity of human experience, and human aspiration that is really at the core of the American experience.

We are grateful and appreciative and thankful that they have brought these gifts to all of us. Thank you (inaudible).

(End of speech.)

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