

**PHOTOCOPY  
PRESERVATION**

**FIRST LADY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON**  
**REMARKS AT THE PRESENTATION OF "CREATIVE AMERICA"**  
**THE PRESIDENT'S COMMITTEE ON THE ARTS AND HUMANITIES**  
**WASHINGTON, D.C.**  
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Thank you John. I want to thank you and all the members of the President's committee for the time and hard work you have invested in preparing this report; for devising a thoughtful and practical blueprint for strengthening America's cultural life, and for helping all of us recognize the vital role the arts and humanities play in our own lives and in the life of our democracy.

As this report shows, the creative forces that give life to the arts and humanities can be found everywhere, within every single person in America. These creative forces touch our lives everyday, sometimes without our even knowing it. They have inspired Nobel-prize winning novels as well as submissions to high school literary magazines. They have guided the brushes of the painters celebrated in major art galleries as well as the needles of quilters who sell their works at county fairs. And they are as much behind a symphony's Mozart festival as they are behind a young person's first piano recital. The arts and humanities belong to all of us and the best of America's culture should be made available to all our citizens.

These rich expressions of creativity are no less than the expressions of our great democracy. For 200 years, the freedom that is at the heart of our democratic system has unleashed the spirit of Creative America. It has spurred us to say and write and draw what we think, feel and dream. It has inspired us to celebrate through dance, in songs, in paint and on paper the story of America -- of who we are, where we have been, and what we hope to be. And through all of these activities encompassed by the arts and humanities, our democracy, in turn, is nurtured, strengthened, made more resilient.

And as we prepare for a new century -- and a new millennium -- the arts and humanities are more essential than ever to the endurance of our democratic values of tolerance, pluralism and freedom. At a time when so much is happening to change the way we work and live, the way we relate to one another and the way we relate to the rest of the world, we cannot fully understand the past, nor envision the future we need to pursue without the arts and humanities.

That is why we must do everything we can to strengthen our support for the arts and humanities in the coming years. The President and I are very excited about the Millennium Initiative described in this report. The approach of a new millennium and a new century presents us with a wonderful opportunity to celebrate the past two centuries of our collective American journey, to raise awareness about the importance of the arts and humanities in our lives, and to examine the ideas, values and experiences that can shape our future.

When we look back at the past 1,000 years and try to understand the defining events, ideas, and movements of past civilizations, of what it was like to live in a certain age, we often rely on the paintings, sculptures, books and other writings created by the men and women of

those times.

So it is imperative for all of us living at the end of the twentieth century to encourage the creation and preservation of works that will serve as our own unique legacy for future generations. The President is eager to lead this initiative and will call upon all citizens, local communities, state governments, federal agencies and private sector partners to create Millennium programs that reflect and celebrate our cultural heritage. As we have over the past four years with performances, new art acquisitions, and rotating sculpture exhibits, the President and I will continue to showcase outstanding examples of American art and scholarship at the White House.

We must encourage communities to identify and preserve their local traditions, history and folk creations. We must inspire the commercial and non-profit organizations that produce or own much of our cultural material to take steps to preserve their holdings. And we can support efforts to ensure that America's cultural resources are made more widely available on the Internet -- so that a child growing up in some of our most isolated communities can take a virtual tour of our finest museums and libraries.

As this report has noted, the arts and humanities in America depend on a dynamic network of support that is very unique to our country. The arts and humanities depend on partnerships between government agencies, private foundations, corporations, non-profit organizations and individual benefactors to nurture talent and bring the creative achievements of our best artists and artisans to as wide an audience as possible. The arts and humanities could never thrive, much less survive, on support from just one of these sources. That is why all of us must do our part and work to renew America's philanthropic spirit.

And government must take a leadership role in making sure that all Americans have opportunities to develop their own talents and take part in the artistic and intellectual life of our nation. For children, especially those living in some of our most depressed neighborhoods, federal, state and local support of the arts and humanities, as well as the strengthening of arts and humanities programs in our schools, are critical. For these children, exposure to the world of arts and ideas can literally mean the difference between lives of accomplishment and lives of hopelessness and failure. As the President's committee showed last Spring in another report called "Coming Up Taller," arts and humanities education can offer children safe and productive alternatives to crime, violence, gangs, and drugs, transporting them beyond the bounds of their difficult circumstances.

I am reminded of how the opportunity to explore and develop creative potentials can change a child's life each time I see a pair of painted park benches in my office. They are the gifts of the students of Gallery 37, an organization started by President's Committee member Maggie Daley in Chicago that nurtures the artistic and creative talents of children of all backgrounds. Through apprenticeships in such fields as architecture, jewelry-making, bookbinding, and painting, the children have blossomed in so many ways. One child literally found his voice at Gallery 37. When he first joined the program, he refused to speak to other students or instructors. But in time, the eagerness to talk about his art not only moved him to speak, it also spurred him to critique the work of his peers.

I had a similar experience when I visited the Manchester Craftsmen's Guild in Pittsburgh, an organization supported by both the National Endowment for the Arts and private donations. At the Guild, founded by a dynamic man named Bill Strickland in one of Pittsburgh's most troubled neighborhoods, I met children whose lives had been transformed by their participation in ceramic art and photography programs. When they spoke of their experiences at the Guild and of their newly discovered love for the arts, it wasn't difficult to hear the excitement in their voices or see the hope in their eyes. The Guild had given these children, whom many schools had been labeled "at-risk," much more than the skills to shape clay or develop pictures. It gave them the confidence to finish school, to go to college, and to pursue their dreams.

We also need to bolster our great humanities institutions -- our libraries, museums, universities and research centers -- to ensure that all Americans have opportunities for lifelong learning. They are the catalysts and the incubators for so many of the great ideas that have kept our democracy strong -- and moving forward.

So let us all work together to keep the arts and humanities alive and well in the future and in the public domain. We must continue investing in the arts and humanities -- in the values we claim to honor, in the imaginations and spirit of our people, and in the cultural traditions that have sustained and strengthened our democracy.

The arts and humanities are not a luxury, but a necessary part of life. As the President said in his State of the Union, "Our economy is measured in numbers and statistics, and it's very important. But the enduring worth of our nation lies in our shared values and our soaring spirit." Let us all work to ensure that America remains the world's beacon of liberty and creativity in the next millennium and for all time.

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