

# Creative America

**A REPORT TO THE PRESIDENT**  
**by the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities**

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## Dear President Clinton,

I am honored to transmit *Creative America*, the report of your President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities, concerning the system of support for cultural life in the United States today.

When you appointed the President's Committee, you asked us to prepare a report "articulating the fundamental and intrinsic values of the arts and the humanities" and describing the "cultural sector" and its contributions to American life.

As you requested, this report will summarize "what we know about trends in private funding and earned income that contribute most of the financial support" for cultural organizations. The report also addresses "the role of the federal government in the arts and the humanities." Finally, as you charged us, our report makes recommendations for "strengthening support for the arts and the humanities in the United States."

*Creative America* reflects the consensus of the members who serve on the President's Committee. Not every member agrees with every recommendation, but most of us are in accord with the main thrust of our analysis and with the suggestions we offer.

The members of our Committee approached this task with some common convictions. We affirm that a healthy cultural life is vital to a democratic society. We believe that a great nation must invest in its cultural development and preservation, just as it supports scientific discovery and protects natural resources.

America possesses rich "cultural capital" — an array of cultural institutions, traditions, and creative men and women who produce works of art and scholarship. Our citizens write, explore ideas, make art, celebrate their diverse cultures, and express themselves in uniquely American voices. The achievements of our artists and scholars are admired around the world.

To prepare this report, the President's Committee surveyed the size and scope of the lively arena of American culture. We define that arena broadly

to embrace the multiple expressions and explorations that appear in the amateur, non-profit and commercial cultural worlds.

We found the commitment to support cultural activities a clear indicator of vital communities. We studied how cultural organizations are supported and asked what resources exist to encourage artists and scholars. Where traditional cultures still live, we found much to learn from observing how culture forms the basis of community life and is transmitted through generations.

America's cultural life shows remarkable signs of strength and vigor; it also displays many symptoms of stress.

Millions of Americans now have more opportunities to engage in cultural experiences than ever before. Especially over the last thirty years, the public and private sectors have combined resources to preserve cultural traditions, seed a flowering of cultural organizations across the nation, and prompt the creation of new American works of scholarship and art. For the past ten years, however, cultural organizations have been buffeted by several factors: an uneven economy, stagnating private contributions, and cuts in federal and some state support.

The members of the President's Committee undertook this report at a time of federal budget reductions and debate over the role of government in the nation's life. The history of private and public support for the arts and the humanities demonstrates that the United States has developed a complex, interdependent system of support that includes contributions from individuals, private foundations and corporations; from federal, state and local governments; and from the imaginative ways in which organizations and individuals earn income.

The President's Committee strongly asserts that this interdependent system of support for culture must be valued and strengthened, not denigrated and dismantled.

The portion of our cultural life preserved and produced through non-profit organizations cannot survive in the marketplace alone; it requires both public and private investment.

The findings and recommendations we transmit to you today represent a prescription for strengthening the system of support for the arts and the humanities in our country, a system we must sustain if our cultural institutions are to survive and our artists and scholars to thrive.

With these recommendations, we call upon you, Mr. President, and your administration, on Congress and other elected officials as well as on civic and corporate leaders and individual Americans, to work together to keep our cultural investment strong.

As you lead our country into a new century and the next millennium, you will also have a unique opportunity to lead a celebration that will enable our citizens to understand the past and to imagine the future. Our report proposes a Millennium Initiative to involve all Americans in preserving our cultural heritage and in appreciating creativity through the arts and the humanities.

We urge using the milestone of the millennium as a gateway to the future, strengthening cultural life in the United States by taking these major actions:

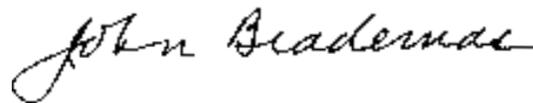
- A national initiative to renew American philanthropy for the arts and the humanities, and for other charitable purposes;

- An assessment of the nation's preservation needs and a plan to protect our cultural legacy;
- A public-private partnership to digitize cultural materials to make them available through new technologies;
- A series of measures to strengthen education in the arts and the humanities;
- An investment in national leadership through gradual increases in funding for the grant-making cultural agencies to reach a level of spending equal to \$2 per person by the year 2000;
- A White House forum on enhancing knowledge of other countries and cultures, including international cultural and educational exchanges.

Members of the President's Committee believe that the actions we recommend for a Millennium Initiative will help sustain our cultural legacy and harness the creativity of Americans for a new century of hope and promise.

Mr. President, we are honored to have been invited to serve on the President's Committee and we stand ready to work with you to make real the recommendations we offer in *Creative America*.

Sincerely,



John Brademas, Chairman  
*President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities*

