

The President
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

2003

Dear Mr. President

It is my privilege to present to you the 2003 annual report of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

For almost forty years, the NEH has helped uphold the ideas and ideals that have made America strong by making the riches of our past accessible to millions through the best in documentary films, museum exhibitions, cultural heritage projects, teacher training, and scholarly pursuits.

I was proud to see this tradition carry on in 2003 through the continued, standard-setting excellence of core programs and grants, memorable special events, and through a bold new initiative with the power to engage, inspire, and enrich millions of Americans. On September 17, 2002—Constitution Day—you signed into law the *We the People* initiative, a sweeping series of innovative programs designed to promote the study and teaching of the American story in classrooms and communities.

At a time when standardized test scores and national poll results reflect an alarming lack of knowledge among Americans of their nation's history and culture, *We the People* is helping to restore America's national memory and equip citizens with the knowledge to safeguard our legacy of freedom. Through your leadership and the generous support of Congress, *We the People* introduced programs such as the *We the People Bookshelf*, which encouraged reading by placing free sets of classic American literature on the theme of 'courage' in five hundred libraries. The NEH's first annual 'Idea of America' essay contest challenged high school juniors to think about and explain how a significant event in our nation's history illustrates a principle of American democracy. Our inaugural Heroes of History Lecture—delivered by historian Robert Remini on Andrew Jackson—offered the public an opportunity to learn about the lives and deeds of our heroes.

In all, more than \$2 million was spent in 2003 through *We the People* grants to teachers, filmmakers, museums, libraries, and other individuals and institutions. Next year, the initiative looks to flourish even more. New programs such as the Landmarks of American History Workshops will bring hundreds of schoolteachers to the sites where history was made. There, teachers will be able to learn with scholars and take those lessons back to their own classrooms. Other programs will focus on democratizing information, by preserving endangered documents and, through modern technology, making them available to all Americans.

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We the People is in many ways a continuation of the outstanding work that comes from our core programs and grants. The NEH exists to foster the wisdom and knowledge essential to our national identity. Libraries, universities, and museums continue to preserve our most cherished documents, brittle books, and historic newspapers. To date, more than sixty-four million deteriorating newspaper pages, and more than 1,075,000 endangered volumes have been saved and microfilmed thanks to NEH grants. These are documents that Americans will eventually be able to access at their local libraries. Challenge grants help institutions such as Cincinnati's Hebrew Union College and West Texas's Scurry County Museum raise vital funds to build permanent public exhibitions and learning centers. NEH-funded television and radio documentaries earn prestigious awards and reach millions, and museums and libraries reach even more through exhibitions and educational activities. One program based on the journey of Lewis and Clark will feature exhibits and discussion groups in more than seventy-five rural communities in four states. NEH research grants, meanwhile, support illuminating scholarship and editions of the collected papers of presidents, authors, and other historic figures, including one grant this past year to publish the family correspondence of President John Adams. The NEH continues to rely on the nation's fifty-six state and territorial humanities councils to reach every corner of our nation, bringing programs of national and local interest to communities.

When President Johnson in 1966 swore in the first National Council on the Humanities, he spoke of the Endowment's import in American life, "not only in enriching scholarship, but in enriching life for all people." The world in which we live today is different from that of thirty-seven years ago. Events abroad and at home challenge us to look at issues of history, philosophy, and religion—all humanities subjects. For the ideals of democracy to be passed successfully from one generation to the next, our citizens—young and old—must know and understand the principles and practices on which our nation is built. The National Endowment for the Humanities plays a crucial role in helping ensure that this essential knowledge is passed on. It is our privilege to continue this work.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bruce Cole". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Bruce" and the last name "Cole" clearly distinguishable.

Bruce Cole
Chairman, National Endowment for the Humanities