

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

Dear Mr. President:

It is my privilege to present to you the 2004 annual report of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

For almost forty years, the NEH has helped make 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 2004 through our core programs and through the expansion of the *We the People* initiative. The initiative began in 2002 in order to help strengthen the teaching, study, and understanding of American history and culture. 2004 saw the initiative grow significantly, awarding its first *We the People* Bookshelf grants to five hundred libraries across the country and offering a new program for teachers called Landmarks of American History.

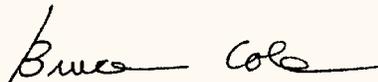
Because libraries serve as beacons of learning in schools and communities, the Bookshelf program provided a set of fifteen classic books for young people on the topic of courage to be used in library programming. The *We the People* Bookshelf enabled younger readers to examine the meaning of courage through the stories of real and fictional characters who demonstrated personal courage when faced with difficult situations in uncertain times.

Seventeen Landmarks of American History brought more than two thousand teachers to historic sites for weeklong summer workshops in 2004. From walking across the Edmund Pettus Bridge to studying the Constitution at Mount Vernon to exploring Pearl Harbor, teachers learned about significant American events at the places where history

was made. Under the guidance of scholars, teachers from around the country spent a week of intense study and returned to their classrooms in the fall with renewed excitement and understanding of American history.

*We the People* also opened new opportunities for the state humanities councils to expand their excellent work as the vanguard in the effort to enhance public understanding of our history and culture. In 2004, each of the fifty-six councils received NEH special funding to support designated *We the People* projects, ranging from programs marking the fiftieth anniversary of *Brown v. Board of Education* to the bicentennial of the Lewis and Clark Corps of Discovery. With the state councils, NEH is committed to improving historical and civic literacy throughout the nation.

The humanities have a great responsibility: to provide the tools of citizenship and building blocks of the good and examined life. Too many Americans, especially young people, have been deprived of these tools. This is a challenge that we need to meet and best. Our history must be preserved and passed on. We cannot expect that a nation which has lost its memory will keep its vision. And we cannot neglect the great democratic imperative: to give each generation a brighter light, a broader perspective, and an enriched legacy with which to face the future.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bruce Cole". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Bruce Cole  
Chairman, National Endowment for the Humanities