



"I want our students learning
art and music and science and poetry...
and all the things that make an education worthwhile."

BARACK OBAMA, FEBRUARY 9, 2008

OBAMA NATIONAL ARTS POLICY COMMITTEE

A MESSAGE FROM GEORGE STEVENS, JR. AND MARGO LION Co-Chairs of the Obama Arts Policy Committee

We want to urge all of our friends in the arts community to help us ensure that on November 4th Barack Obama is elected President of the United States.

Barack Obama has demonstrated the creative imagination and the political acumen to bring forth the kind of change our country needs. We have watched him over the past year and a half show thoughtful judgment and inspire confidence in these especially difficult times. And we are certain his election will send a signal to people everywhere that America is moving forward in a way that respects the differences between us while honoring our shared hopes for the future.

We were thrilled when Barack Obama asked us in May of 2007 to chair the Arts Policy Committee for his campaign. His decision to create such a committee was unique in this election cycle. The committee engaged artists, cultural leaders, art educators and arts advocates to explore and better understand the major issues confronting the arts in this country, and to advise Barack as he developed his policy positions.

We are therefore pleased to be able to present the attached "Arts Policy Fact Sheet" which provides a summary of the actions needed in order to significantly advance the arts in America, and to ensure the arts and creative resources of this country play a role in addressing the many pressing problems and opportunities we face as a nation.

We encourage you to circulate the Obama Arts Policy Fact Sheet to all of your colleagues and friends. This is our chance to have Washington hear our message and include support of the arts in a new vision for the future.

Finally, donations to compete in the battleground states will have a decisive role in the outcome -- so please give, and ask your friends to contribute whatever they can in the last month of this historic journey.

To find out more about how to get involved with the campaign in your area, please visit www.BarackObama.com

We also invite you to join the official online group of arts advocates who support Obama at: <http://my.barackobama.com/page/group/CreativeAmericaforObama>

BARACK OBAMA: A CHAMPION FOR THE ARTS

Our nation's creativity has filled the world's libraries, museums, recital halls, movie houses, and marketplaces with works of genius. The arts embody the American spirit of self-definition. As the author of two best-selling books – *Dreams from My Father* and *The Audacity of Hope* – Barack Obama uniquely appreciates the role and value of creative expression.

A PLATFORM IN SUPPORT OF THE ARTS

Reinvest in Arts Education: To remain competitive in the global economy, America needs to reinvigorate the kind of creativity and innovation that has made this country great. To do so, we must nourish our children's creative skills. In addition to giving our children the science and math skills they need to compete in the new global context, we should also encourage the ability to think creatively that comes from a meaningful arts education. Unfortunately, many school districts are cutting instructional time for art and music education.

Barack Obama believes that the arts should be a central part of effective teaching and learning. The Chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts recently said "The purpose of arts education is not to produce more artists, though that is a byproduct. The real purpose of arts education is to create complete human beings capable of leading successful and productive lives in a free society."

To support greater arts education, Obama will:

EXPAND PUBLIC/PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS BETWEEN SCHOOLS AND ARTS ORGANIZATIONS:

Barack Obama will increase resources for the U.S. Department of Education's Arts Education Model Development and Dissemination Grants, which develop public/private partnerships between schools and arts organizations. Obama will also engage the foundation and corporate community to increase support for public/private partnerships.

CREATE AN ARTIST CORPS: Barack Obama supports the creation of an "Artists Corps" of young artists trained to work in low-income schools and their communities. Studies in Chicago have demonstrated that test scores improved faster for students enrolled in low-income schools that link arts across the curriculum than scores for students in schools lacking such programs.

PUBLICLY CHAMPION THE IMPORTANCE OF ARTS EDUCATION:

As president, Barack Obama will use the bully pulpit and the example he will set in the White House to promote the importance of arts and arts education in America. Not only is arts education indispensable for success in a rapidly changing, high skill, information economy, but studies show that arts education raises test scores in other subject areas as well.

SUPPORT INCREASED FUNDING FOR THE NEA:

Over the last 15 years, government funding for the National Endowment for the Arts has been slashed from \$175 million annually in 1992 to \$125 million today. Barack Obama

supports increased funding for the NEA, the support of which enriches schools and neighborhoods all across the nation and helps to promote the economic development of countless communities.

PROMOTE CULTURAL DIPLOMACY:

American artists, performers and thinkers – representing our values and ideals – can inspire people both at home and all over the world. Through efforts like that of the United States Information Agency, America's cultural leaders were deployed around the world during the Cold War as artistic ambassadors and helped win the war of ideas by demonstrating to the world the promise of America. Artists can be utilized again to help us win the war of ideas against Islamic extremism. Unfortunately, our resources for cultural diplomacy are at their lowest level in a decade. Barack Obama will work to reverse this trend and improve and expand public-private partnerships to expand cultural and arts exchanges throughout the world.

ATTRACT FOREIGN TALENT: The flipside to promoting American arts and culture abroad is welcoming members of the foreign arts community to America. Opening America's doors to students and professional artists provides the kind of two-way cultural understanding that can break down the barriers that feed hatred and fear. As America tightened visa restrictions after 9/11, the world's most talented students and artists, who used to come here, went elsewhere. Barack Obama will streamline the visa process to return America to its rightful place as the world's top destination for artists and art students.

PROVIDE HEALTH CARE TO ARTISTS:

Finding affordable health coverage has often been one of the most vexing obstacles for artists and those in the creative community. Since many artists work independently or have non-traditional employment relationships, employer-based coverage is unavailable and individual policies are financially out of reach. Barack Obama's plan will provide all Americans with quality, affordable health care. His plan includes the creation of a new public program that will allow individuals and small businesses to buy affordable health care similar to that available to federal employees. His plan also creates a National Health Insurance Exchange to reform the private insurance market and allow Americans to enroll in participating private plans, which would have to provide comprehensive benefits, issue every applicant a policy, and charge fair and stable premiums. For those who still cannot afford coverage, the government will provide a subsidy. His health plan will lower costs for the typical American family by up to \$2,500 per year.

ENSURE TAX FAIRNESS FOR ARTISTS:

Barack Obama supports the Artist-Museum Partnership Act, introduced by Senator Patrick Leahy (D-VT). The Act amends the Internal Revenue Code to allow artists to deduct the fair market value of their work, rather than just the costs of the materials, when they make charitable contributions.

OBAMA NATIONAL ARTS POLICY COMMITTEE

George Stevens, Jr.
Arts Policy Committee
Co-Chair
Writer, Director; Producer;
Founder of the American Film
Institute

Margo Lion
Arts Policy Committee
Co-Chair
Broadway Producer, Margo Lion,
Ltd.; Adjunct Professor, Tisch
School of the Arts, New York
University

Sonia Tower
Arts Policy Committee
Co-Convener
Arts Management Advisor,
Ovation TV; former Vice
President, Americans for the Arts;
former Municipal Arts Agency
Director, City of Ventura; former
Arts Program Officer, Community
Foundation

Michael C. Dorf
Arts Policy Committee
Co-Convener
Partner, Adducci, Dorf, Lehner,
Mitchell & Blankenship, P.C.;
Adjunct Full Professor, School
of the Art Institute of Chicago;
Council Member, Illinois
Humanities Council

Jennifer Ahn
Managing Director, The Film
Foundation

Peggy Amsterdam
President of the Greater
Philadelphia Cultural Alliance

Arnold Aprill
Founding and Creative Director,
Chicago Arts Partnerships in
Education

Anne Ashmore-Hudson, Ph.D.
Chair, DC Commission on The
Arts and Humanities

Shawnee Barton
Visual Artist, Teacher; Arts
Advocate; Facilitator, Arts &
Creative Industries for Obama

Andre Bishop
Artistic Director, Lincoln Center
Theater

Moe Brooker
Visual artist, educator; Professor,
Chair, Basics Department, Moore
College of Art and Design;
Chair of the Philadelphia Art
Commission; taught; Parson
School of Design, NY, Cleveland
Institute of Art, Pennsylvania
Academy of the Fine Arts

Ralph Bryan
Chairman of the Board, La Jolla
Playhouse; Member, National
Council for the American Theater;
Broadway producer, Latitude Link

Isaac Butler
Freelance Theatre Director and
Producer

Michael Chabon
Author; Screenwriter; Columnist;
Short Story Writer; 2001 Pulitzer
Prize for Fiction

Chuck Close
Painter, Photographer, Printmaker

Richard J. Cohen
MN State Senator; Chair of Senate
Finance Committee, Founder of
State Senate Pro-Choice Caucus
and Legislative Arts Caucus;
former Public Defender

Curt Columbus
Artistic Director, Trinity
Repertory Company; former
Associate Artistic Director,
Steppenwolf

Cathy Crain
President, Cincinnati Opera
Board of Trustees; Board Member,
Cincinnati Fine Arts Fund;
former Vice President Investments
and Chairman, Charitable
Endowments National City Bank

Alexander D. Cray
Former Executive Director of the
Civittella Ranieri Foundation;
former chief of staff, National
Endowment for the Arts

Kareem Dale
President, Board of Directors,
Black Ensemble Theatre; Principal,
The Dale Law Group

Gordon J. Davis
Founding Chairman, Jazz at
Lincoln Center; former President,
Lincoln Center; Co-Founder
Central Park Conservancy;
Board member Studio Museum
in Harlem; Partner, Dewey &
Leboeuf LLP

Melissa Dean
Artist, teacher and graphic
designer

Diana Denley
Theatre Director, Producer, Actor,
Founder & Artistic Director
Shakespeare Globe Centre
Australia

Aaron P. Dworkin
Founder & President, The Sphinx
Organization; 2005 MacArthur
Fellow; 2005 National Governors
Award; Violinist & Author; Board
Member of Walnut Hill School,
Artserv Michigan; Advisory
Board, Avery Fisher Artist
Program

Teri J. Edelstein
Principal, Teri J. Edelstein
Associates Museum Strategies;
museum policy consultant; author;
former deputy director The Art
Institute of Chicago, former
director Mount Holyoke College
Art Museum

Peter Ellenstein
Artistic Director, William Inge
Center for the Arts; extensive
performing arts experience in
creation and management

Alexander Ewing
Former Chancellor of North
Carolina School of the Arts

Alan Fletcher
President and CEO, Aspen Music
Festival and School; former head
of the school of music, Carnegie
Mellon; former Provost and Senior
Vice President, New England
Conservatory

Christine Forester
Business/Marketing Consultant

Julia Fryett
Curator, Mugrabi Collection;
Steering Committee, Young
Benefactors of Americans for the
Arts; Founder, Student Advocates
for the Arts, Duke University

Kiff Gallagher
Founder and CEO, Music
National Service Initiative
and MusicianCorps; Singer-
songwriter; Fmr President of
Social Venture Network; Fmr
legislative staff, White House
Office of National Service; Fmr
Program Officer, Corporation for
National Service

Patty Gerstenblith
Professor, DePaul University
College of Law; Director of the
Center for Art, Museum and
Cultural Heritage Law

Wendy Goldberg
Communications executive;
contemporary art collector

Scott Goodstein
External Online Director, Obama
for America

Agnes Gund
President Emerita of The Museum
of Modern Art (MoMA),
Chairman of MoMA International
Council; Chairman, Mayor's
Cultural Affairs Advisory
Commission, City of New York;
Founder and Trustee, Studio
in a School; Boards: The Frick
Collection, The Foundation
for Contemporary Arts, P.S. 1
Contemporary Art Center, and
Socrates Sculpture Park; Honorary
Trustee, The Cleveland Museum
of Art, Independent Curators
International and the Museum of
Contemporary Art, Cleveland

Marj Halperin
Communications management
consultant; former President &
CEO, League of Chicago Theatres

Phil Hanes
Former CEO, Hanes Companies;
Boards: Kennedy Center,
Smithsonian American Art
Museum, Business Committee
for the Arts, American Symphony
Orchestra League, UNCUSA,
Winterthur Museum, Arena Stage;
a founder, National Endowment
for the Arts, Americans for the
Arts; NEA Chairman's Award
(1966, 2005), Natl. Govs. Arts
(1982); Natl. Medal of Arts
(1991); Author

Joan Harris
Chairman, Irving Harris
Foundation; Trustee, Chicago
Symphony; Trustee, Juilliard
School; Trustee, Chairman, Harris
Theater for Music and Dance;
Life Trustee, Aspen Music Festival
& School; Founder, Cultural
Policy Center, Harris School for
Public Policy Studies, University
of Chicago

Stefan Hayes
Director of Theatre, & Cirque, &
Cinema; Stefinity Entertainment,
Inc.

James Hayes
Partner, Hayes Lorenzen Lawyers
PLC; Board Member, Iowa Arts
Council (2007-2010); Members
Council of University of Iowa
Museum of Art, Past President
(2004-2006) and Board Member;
Board of Directors, Iowa City
Historic Preservation Commission

Joel Henning
Columnist, Leisure & Arts
Page, The Wall Street Journal;
Chairman, Illinois Governor's
Commission on Financing the
Arts; Former Member, Illinois
Arts Council; Lawyer; Law Firm
Management Consultant

Rodney Holman
Executive Director, Poets in Public
Service, NY, NY

William Ivey
Director, The Curb Center for
Art, Enterprise, and Public Policy,
Vanderbilt University; Former
Chairman, National Endowment
for the Arts

Sharon Jensen
Executive Director of the Alliance
for Inclusion in the Arts; Member
of the Board of The Actors Center,
New York City; Member, Advisory
Board of Deaf West Theatre, Los
Angeles

Sheila Johnson
CEO, Salamander Hospitality;

WNBA Washington Mystics;
Global Ambassador, CARE;
Member, VH1 Save the Music
Foundation Board of Directors;
Board member, Americans for
the Arts

Meghan Styles Jones
Producer, Eastwind Theatre
Company; Chair, Young
Benefactors of Americans for
the Arts

Anne Katz
Executive Director, Arts
Wisconsin; Chair, State Arts
Action Network of Americans for
the Arts

Jonathan Katz
National Association Chief
Executive Officer

Jordan Kerner
Dean, School of Filmmaking,
UNC School of the
Arts; motion picture producer,
Kerner Entertainment

Steve Lavine
President, California Institute of
the Arts

Leslie Lee
Obie-winning and Tony-
nominated playwright; instructor
in dramatic writing, New York
University

Kenny Leon
Film and Broadway Director;
Founding Artistic Director, True
Colors Theater Company

Sarah Elizabeth Lewis
Critic, Yale School of Art; Former
Assistant Curator, Museum of
Modern Art

Caren Lobo
Founding Board member,
FORUM 2008. Member, board
of trustees, Florida Humanities
Council.

Sherron Long
President and founder, Creating
Executive Options Inc.

Dan Lurie
Board Member, Chicago Music
Commission; President, Board
of Directors, Walkabout Theater
Company

Anne Luzzatto
Arts Advocate; Former Attorney;
Former Vice President, Council
on Foreign Relations; Assistant
US Trade Representative; Special
Assistant to the President and
Deputy White House Press
Secretary, National Security
Council (1993-1998)

Robert L. Lynch
President and CEO, Americans
for the Arts

Kristen Madsen
Senior Vice President, The
Grammy Foundation and Music
Cares Foundation; former
President, California Assembly
of Local Arts Agencies; former
Program Director, Utah Arts
Council, LA, CA

Elaine Mariner
Executive Director, Colorado
Council on the Arts

Wynton Marsalis
Artistic Director, Jazz at Lincoln
Center

Robert Martin
Executive Director, Lensei
Performing Arts Center, Santa Fe

Nancy McCullough
Principal, Law Offices of Nancy
L. McCullough; Board Member,
California Lawyers for the Arts

Van McLeod
Commissioner, Department of
Cultural Resources, State of New
Hampshire

Sondra Myers
Senior Fellow for International,
Civic and Cultural Projects,
University of Scranton; former
Special Assistant to the Chairman,
National Endowment for the
Humanities; Cultural Advisor to
PA Governor Robert P. Casey;
president, National Federation of
State Humanities Councils; Chair,
PA Humanities Council; founding
president, Citizens for the Arts,
Pennsylvania

Charles Newell
Artistic Director, Court Theatre,
Chicago

Margo Oberman
Past President of the Chapters
Executive Board of Lyric Opera of
Chicago, Member of the Woman's
Board, Chicago Symphony
Orchestra

Michael Oberman
Member of the Board, Ryan
Center Lyric Opera of Chicago;
CEO and Chairman, Omeda, Inc.

Sara Paretsky
Novelist, Essayist, Winner of
Cartier Diamond Dagger; ACLU
Harry Kalven award for Free
Expression

Kal Penn
Film and television actor; Adjunct
Lecturer in Cinema Studies/
Sociology/Asian American
Studies, University of Pennsylvania

Harold Prince
Director: Cabaret, Sweeney Todd,
Evita; Trustee, National Council
of the Arts, NEA; Received
National Medal of Arts from
President Clinton; 21 Tony
Awards

Nick Rabkin
Former Executive Director, Center
for Arts Policy, Columbia College
Chicago; Vice President, Arts
and Business Council of Chicago;
Former Deputy Commissioner of
Cultural Affairs, City of Chicago

Lawrence L. Reger
President, Heritage Preservation;
previously served as CEO,
American Association of
Museums, and as general counsel,
and director of planning and
management at the National
Endowment for the Arts; member,
Cultural Property Advisory
Committee, Department of State,
1996 - 2000

Milton Rhodes
President and CEO, The Arts
Council of Winston-Salem and
Forsyth County; former President
and CEO, American Council for
the Arts (now American for the
Arts); former General Manager,
Spoleto Festival USA

Rebecca Robertson
President & CEO, Park Avenue
Armory

Barbara S. Robinson
Chair, Arts Midwest; Board of
Directors, Americans for the
Arts; Chair Emeritus, Ohio Arts
Council; former chair, National
Assembly of State Arts Agencies

Judith Rubin
Chairman of the Board,
Playwrights Horizons; Member,
New York State Council on the
Arts

Tom Russell
National Promotions Director;

Superfly Productions; Festival and
Event Operations Manager for
Bonnaroo, Veegoose,

Mary Schmidt Campbell
Dean, Tisch School of the Arts,
New York University; Chair, New
York State Council on the Arts

Thomas Schumacher
Producer and President, Disney
Theatrical Productions

Marc A. Scorca
National Arts Service
Organization Leader

Jan Selman
Arts Advocate, Immediate Past
Chairman Georgia Council for
the Arts, Southern Arts Federation
Board Member, State Captain,
Americans for the Arts

Teka Selman
Partner, Branch Gallery and writer

Jonathan Sheffer
Composer and Conductor; Board
member, VH1 Save The Music
Foundation; NY City Council
Speaker Appointee to the Board of
Lincoln Center

Virginia Shore
Chief Curator, Art in Embassies
Program, Department of State

Joan Small
Retired First Deputy
Commissioner, Chicago Dept. of
Cultural Affairs; former Board
member, Americans for the Arts;
former Trustee, Art Institute of
Chicago

Ken Solomon
Chairman, Ovation TV; former
President, Universal Studios
Television

Robert Storr
Dean, School of Art, Yale
University

Nicole Vandenberg
Principal, Vandenberg
Communications

Nicola Vassell
Director, Deitch Projects; Young
Benefactors Steering Committee,
Americans for the Arts

Michael Verruto
Vice Chair, Americans for the Arts
Board of Directors; Philadelphia
Arts Leader; former Public Art
Chair, Arts and Sciences Council,
Charlotte-Mecklenburg; Principal,
HPI Capital, LLC

Marc Vogl
Program Officer, William and
Flora Hewlett Foundation; former
member, San Francisco Arts Task
Force; Co-Founder, Kennedy
School of Government for Obama
Chapter

Andrea Fellows Walters
Arts Administrator; librettist;
Co-chair New Mexico Alliance
for Arts Education; Albuquerque
Museum Foundation, Artdge
Committee

Judith Weitz
Former Senior Executive
Associate, CommunicationWorks;
consultant, President's Committee
on the Arts and Humanities,
Clinton Administration

Damian Woetzel
Principal Dancer, New York
City Ballet (Ret.); Harvard Task
Force on the Arts; Director, Vail
International Dance Festival

Patricia York
International Fine Art
Photographer; author; lecturer

Affiliations are listed for identification purposes only. Members of this group are participating as individuals, and the views expressed in this letter and attached policy document in no way express those of their affiliated organizations or institutions.

ARTISTS FOR OBAMA

The following is a listing of visual, performing, and literary artists who believe in and support Barack Obama's message of hope, and are willing to endorse his candidacy for President of the United States.

Mark Adamo
composer, librettist

Jessica Alba
actor

Jane Alexander
actor, arts administrator

Britt Allcroft
author, director,
producer

Paul Auster
author

Joan Baez
singer, activist

John Baldessari
visual artist

A. Scott Berg
author

Ashley Bickerton
visual artist

Andre Bishop
theatre director,
producer

Ross Bleckner
visual artist

Ashley Boudier
dancer

Louise Bourgeois
visual artist

Jackson Browne
musician

Joy Bryant
actor

Carol Burnett
actor, comedienne

Danny Burstein
actor

Keith Carradine
actor, musician

Michael Chabon
author

Martha Clarke
choreographer

Francesco Clemente
visual artist

Chuck Close
visual artist

Barbara Cook
singer

John Corigliano
composer

David Crosby
musician

Michael
Cunningham
author

E.L. Doctorow
author

Leonardo Drew
visual artist

Christopher
Durang
playwright

Todd Eberle
photographer

Mitch Epstein
visual artist

William Finn
composer/lyricist

Eric Fischl
visual artist

Frank Gehry
architect

Gina Gershon
performing artist

Sam Gilliam
visual artist

Philip Glass
composer

Savion Glover
dancer

Oswaldo Golijov
composer

April Gornik
visual artist

Alicia Graf
dancer

Joel Grey
actor

John Guare
playwright

A.R. Gurney
playwright

David Hammons
visual artist

Sheldon Harnick
composer, lyricist

Kim Hastreiter
author

Phillip Seymour
Hoffman
actor

Jenny Holzer
visual artist

Siri Hustvedt
author

Doug Hughes
theatre director

Brian Keith
Jackson
author

Marc Jacobs
designer

Erica Jong
author

John Kander
composer

Alex Katz
visual artist

Larry Keigwin
dancer

Jon Kessler
visual artist

James Lapine
playwright, director

Kenny Leon
theatre director

Glenn Ligon
visual artist

Margo Lion
theatre producer

Maya Lin
visual artist

John Lithgow
actor

Robert Longo
visual artist

Rebecca Luker
actor

John Lyons
film producer

Wynton Marsalis
musician

Kathleen Marshall
director, choreographer

Marlee Matlin
actor

Marlene McCarty
visual artist

Elizabeth McGovern
actor

Julie Mehretu
visual artist

Paul "DJ Spooky"
Miller
musician

John Cameron
Mitchell
film director,
screenwriter

Jerry Mitchell
director, choreographer

Isaac Mizrahi
designer

Toni Morrison
writer

Gillian Murphy
dancer

Wangechi Mutu
visual artist

Graham Nash
musician

Marsha Norman
author

Conor Oberst
singer, songwriter

Jack O'Brien
theatre director

Claes Oldenburg
visual artist

David Parsons
choreographer

Kal Penn
actor

Itzhak Perlman
musician

Zac Posen
designer

Darryl Pottorf
visual artist

Alan Poul
producer, director

Hal Prince
director, producer

Martin Puryear
visual artist

Bonnie Raitt
musician

Patricia Resnick
author

Alexis Rockman
visual artist

James Rosenquist
visual artist

Sarah Ruhl
playwright

Ed Ruscha
visual artist

Tom Rush
musician

Matthew Rushing
dancer

David Salle
visual artist

Kenny Scharf
visual artist

Dana Schutz
visual artist

Michael Scoggins
visual artist

Martin Scorsese
film director

Richard Serra
visual artist

Joel Shapiro
visual artist

Jonathan Sheffer
composer, conductor

Cindy Sherman
visual artist

Amy Sillman
visual artist

Sarah Silverman
actor, comedienne

Stephen Sondheim
composer, lyricist

Keith Sonnier
visual artist

Steven Spielberg
film director

George Steel
arts administrator,
conductor

George Stevens, Jr.
director, author,
playwright

Ethan Stiefel
dancer

Joss Stone
musician

Tracy Straus
arts educator

Susan Stroman
director, choreographer

Wendy Sutter
musician

Philip Taaffe
visual artist

Jackie Taylor
theatre director, actor

Hank Willis
Thomas
visual artist

Rasta Thomas
dancer

Michael Tilson
Thomas
conductor, composer

Mickalene Thomas
visual artist

Richard Tuttle
visual artist

Alfred Uhry
playwright, screenwriter

Christine Vachon
film producer

Coosje van Bruggen
visual artist

Ben Vereen
actor

Kara Walker
visual artist

Nari Ward
visual artist

Heather Watts
arts educator

Sigourney Weaver
actor

Wendy Whelan
dancer

Kehinde Wiley
visual artist

Vanessa Williams
actor

Terry Winters
visual artist

Damian Woetzel
arts executive, dancer

George C. Wolfe
theater and film
director, playwright

Christopher Wool
visual artist

Michael York
actor, author

David Zippel
lyricist

Robert Zemickis
film director

Pinchas Zukerman
musician

Eugenia Zukerman
musician, journalist

Death Cab for Cutie:

Ben Gibbard

Chris Walla

Nick Harmer

Jason McGerr

My Morning Jacket:

Jim James

Tom Blankenship

Patrick Hallahan

Carl Broemel

Bo Koster

musicians

OK Go:

Damian Kulash

Tim Nordwind

Dan Konopka

Andy Ross

musicians

Pearl Jam:

Eddie Vedder

Stone Gossard

Jeff Ament

Mike McCready

Matt Cameron

musicians

REM:

Michael Stipe

Peter Buck

Mike Mills

musicians

Sonic Youth:

Thurston Moore

Kim Gordon

musicians

STATEMENT BY MICHAEL CHABON

The Obama Arts Policy Committee asked committee member and author, Michael Chabon, to describe the critical importance of the arts at this moment of remarkable opportunity and challenge in our nation's history.

Every grand American accomplishment, every innovation that has benefited and enriched our lives, every lasting social transformation, every moment of profound insight any American visionary ever had into a way out of despair, loneliness, fear and violence—everything that has from the start made America the world capital of hope, has been the fruit of the creative imagination, of the ability to reach beyond received ideas and ready-made answers to some new place, some new way of seeing or hearing or moving through the world. Breathtaking solutions, revolutionary inventions, the road through to freedom, reform and change: never in the history of this country have these emerged as pat answers given to us by our institutions, by our government, by our leaders. We have been obliged—to employ Dr. King's powerful verb—to dream them up for ourselves.

America's artists are the guardians of the spirit of questioning, of innovation, of reaching across the barriers that fence us off from our neighbors, from our allies and adversaries, from the six billion other people with whom we share this dark and dazzling world. Art increases the sense of our common humanity. The imagination of the artist is, therefore, a profoundly moral imagination: the easier it is for you to imagine walking in someone else's shoes, the more difficult it then becomes to do that person harm. If you want to make a torturer, first kill his imagination. If you want to create a nation that will stand by and allow torture to be practiced in its name, then go ahead and kill its imagination, too. You could start by cutting school funding for art, music, creative writing and the performing arts.

Our children need training and encouragement and support—they need rehearsal space and tempera paint and bass violins, teachers and tap-shoes; they need constant, passionate exposure to the great artistic heritage of their people, so that even if they don't grow up to be artists themselves, they will still have been blessed, as Americans have always been blessed, with the artist's gift for seeing the possible in the impossible, the fellow soul on the other side of the fence. Our artists need freedom to pursue the solitary investigations into which their art inevitably leads them. America needs that untrammelled flow of creativity, of the willingness and ability to innovate, to skylark, to tinker, to daydream out loud: over the course of two and a half centuries now, our creative flow has filled the world's libraries, museums, theaters and recital halls, its academies, movie houses and marketplaces, with works of genius to break the heart and boggle the mind. And the people of the world--our world--need an America that remains in full, confident possession of its mighty gift of imagination, not merely to meet the global demand for our entertainment and art and literature, but so that they--and we--need never fear the brutality, the arrogance and the inhumanity to which a nation in want of imagination must, inevitably, descend.

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