

also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks on the Picturing America Initiative

February 26, 2008

Thank you all for coming. Please be seated. Thank you. Welcome to the White House. Looks like we have a distinguished crowd here today. Most of you are renowned scholars, intellectuals, and writers. You've earned reputations for expressing man's noblest deeds and thoughts in pristine, eloquent English. Just like me. *[Laughter]*

Justice, thanks for coming. Appreciate you being here. I thank members of the Cabinet who have joined us. Ambassador, glad you're here.

I want to say a word about Bruce Cole. Bruce is an accomplished art historian, a good man, and he's been a great Chairman of the National Endowment of the Humanities.

Bruce understands what all of you understand: At their best, the arts and humanities express the ideals that define our Nation. The United States is a country defined not by bloodline, race, or creed but by our character and convictions. We are united by an unyielding principle, and that is, all men are created equal. We firmly believe that each man and woman has the right to make the most of their God-given talents. And we believe that all are endowed with the divine gift of freedom.

These ideals have sustained us throughout the centuries, and as a new generation is called to defend the principles of our democracy, they must understand why these principles are worthy of effort and sacrifice.

The National Endowment for the Humanities is at the forefront of this vital educational mission. One way the endowment fulfills this mission is through the "We the People" program, which we established in 2002 to address gaps in our children's knowledge of history and civics.

In just 5 years, the program has awarded nearly 1,400 grants to projects that preserve historical sites, documents, and artifacts and train future historians. In partnership with

the American Library Association, "We the People" has produced an annual bookshelf on enduring American themes such as courage and freedom. More than 6,000 sets of these books have been provided to schools and public libraries across the country.

"We the People" teacher workshops have allowed thousands of educators to discover American history in places where history was made, Ellis Island or the waters of Pearl Harbor. The initiative's National Digital Newspaper Program is making millions of pages of historic American newspapers accessible online. Countless students and teachers and historians will benefit from these important first drafts of history.

In all these ways, "We the People" does an outstanding job of passing America's rich heritage on to future generations. Today I'm pleased to unveil a new project under this program, the Picturing America Initiative. This initiative will educate children about the great people and places and moments in our history using American art and masterpieces that depict them.

It's much better for us to hear about educational programs from someone who's probably more qualified than me—*[laughter]*—like a former teacher or a librarian. *[Laughter]* And so it's my honor to welcome Laura, the First Lady.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:47 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia; and Italy's Ambassador to the U.S. Giovanni Castellaneta. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the First Lady.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Prime Minister Mirek Topolánek of the Czech Republic and an Exchange With Reporters

February 27, 2008

President Bush. We'll have opening statements, and then we'll accept two questions a side. Mr. Prime Minister, welcome. We value our friendship and our partnership with the people of the Czech Republic. I remember well my visit to your beautiful country.