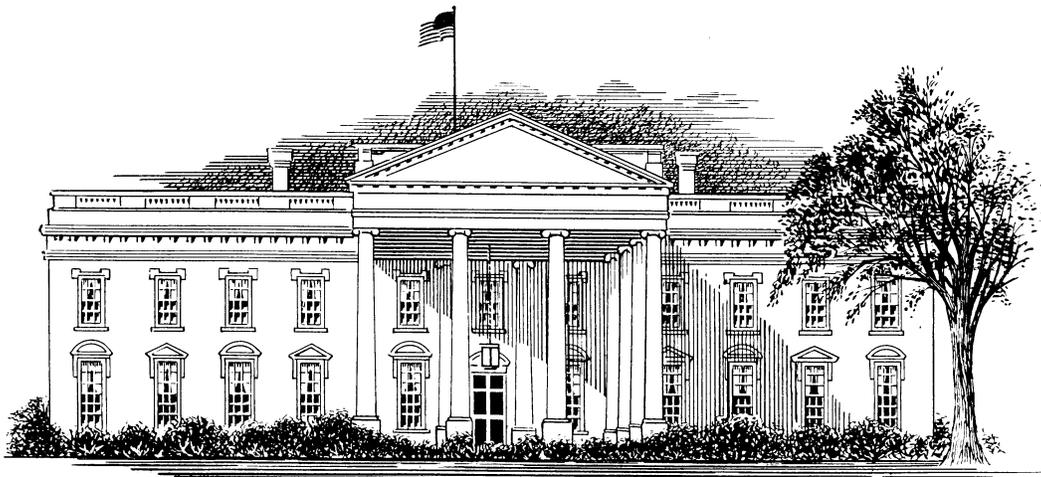


White House Conference on Culture and Diplomacy

November 28, 2000





". . .cultural diplomacy does have the power to penetrate our common humanity."

President
Bill Clinton



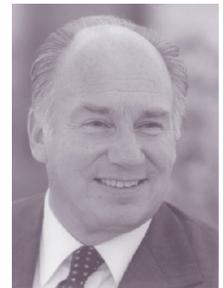
". . .there can be no freedom of speech or press, or freedom of religion or political expression, unless culture is free to thrive."

First Lady
Hillary Rodham
Clinton



"I think there is a sense that culture is elitist And, to me, it is the opposite; it is what democracy is about; it is the way the people of a country express themselves. I hope we can turn away from the elitist aspect of this and make so clear that this is democracy envisioned."

Secretary of State
Madeleine
Albright



"The United States has communications capacity, global communications capacity, which is unique in human history. It seems to me very important that these communications capacities should be used to enhance understanding of the pluralism of human culture. And that message, carried across the world, in the developing world in particular, it seems to me a really essential issue."

His Highness the
Aga Khan

WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCE ON CULTURE AND DIPLOMACY

NOVEMBER 28, 2000

Introduction

On November 28, 2000, President and Mrs. Clinton hosted and Secretary of State Albright chaired the first White House Conference on Culture and Diplomacy.

Organized by the Department of State in cooperation with the Office of the First Lady, the White House Millennium Council and the National Security Council, the conference brought together a remarkable assemblage of nearly 200 cultural and artistic leaders from around the world. The central purpose of the conference was to focus attention on the role of culture in U.S. foreign policy and produce conclusions, which could inform the future development of American cultural diplomacy.

Participants included the leader of a major religious group, a Nobel Laureate in Literature, two former American Poets Laureate, some of America's most recognized actors, artists and musicians, members of Congress, ranking U.S. administration officials, cultural ministers from around the world, U.S. ambassadors, and leaders of private foundations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and multinational companies.

During the conference these men and women of government, business, and culture addressed a wide variety of issues, such as:

- the vital role culture plays in diplomacy;
- the importance of preserving cultural diversity, sites, and artifacts;
- support for cultural expression in the developing world;
- the need for trust and equality in cultural exchange;
- the challenge of projecting to audiences abroad an accurate image of America's cultural diversity;
- the need to improve understanding among Americans of the other cultures of the world;
- the central role played by language, especially English, in cultural exchanges;
- the untapped potential of the Internet to enhance international cultural understanding and communications; and
- the role of multinational companies, NGOs and multilateral organizations in promoting cultural understanding.



“Somehow we have to find a way to elevate our common humanity. That’s where cultural diplomacy comes in.”

President
Bill Clinton

Key Themes

Throughout the day-long conference, panelists, the President and Secretary Albright repeatedly returned to several key themes to set the intellectual framework for the conference discussions:

- “Culture” is a central element of all relations among peoples because it relates to human creativity beyond the scope of politics.
- Programs in exchange and collaboration in the arts and cultural fields enable people to communicate on human terms, identifying the common elements that unite all human existence.
- President Clinton observed that “. . . cultural diplomacy does have the power to penetrate our common humanity.” Cultural programs promote mutual understanding at the most basic level and help shape the context for all other official communications among nations.
- Cultural diversity exemplifies the vast wealth of human experience developed over the centuries and must be preserved. The wealthy societies of the earth which have the economic and technological means to explain their cultures should assist societies that are less visible internationally to share their cultural heritages.
- Education is the key to cultural understanding. Panelist Yo-Yo Ma quoted a Senegalese poet saying: “In the end we will conserve only what we love. We love only what we understand. And we will understand only what we are taught.”
- Democracy is a core American cultural value which will be present in all of our cultural contacts with other countries. Respecting cultural diversity does not mean accepting uncivil or abusive practices which are explained as “culturally based.” Respect for universal human rights must go hand-in-hand with respect for cultural diversity.
- The United States has as much to learn from the rest of the world as we have to share. In the words of President Clinton, cultural exchanges “definitely should be a two-way street.”

White House Plenary Highlights Major Themes

Filling the East Room of the White House, the opening plenary drew upon the insights of the President and Mrs. Clinton, Secretary of State Albright and six panelists of international renown:



Conference participants: l.-r.; Rita Dove, Yo-Yo Ma, Giovanna Melandri, Secretary Albright, President Clinton, the Aga Khan, Wole Soyinka, and Joan Spero.

His Highness the Aga Khan, Imam of the Shia Imami Ismaili Muslims;
Her Excellency Giovanna Melandri, Italian Minister for Cultural Heritage and Activities;
Wole Soyinka, Nobel Prize-winning novelist from Nigeria;
Rita Dove, former Poet Laureate of the United States;
Yo-Yo Ma, cellist; and
Joan Spero, President of the Doris Duke Foundation

The Centrality of Cultural Diplomacy

First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton opened the conference by underscoring that the arts and culture play a central role in the daily lives of all people. "It is the arts and humanities that give us roots," she declared, "that foster our civil society and democracy, and create a universal language so that we can understand each other better as nations and human beings . . ."

"At a time," she added, "when resources are scarce and fears of a global consumer culture that threatens to homogenize us all are on the rise, we are searching for new ways to share and preserve our unique cultures around the world."

Observing that the time had come for such a conference, the First Lady said, "And many people understand that if we want history and identity to be

preserved in the global marketplace, culture matters." She added: "This conference grew out of the ongoing efforts by Secretary Albright and Under Secretary Evelyn Lieberman to ensure that culture is not marginal, but central to our diplomacy. And it grew out of many recommendations we've received about how to strengthen U.S. cultural life and understanding around the world, including the report done in 1997 by the President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities, which specifically suggested a White House forum."

Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, conference chair, added: "Cultural factors play a pivotal role in many of the international challenges we face, from establishing rules for trade to finding common ground in the pursuit of peace." She stressed that ". . . our cultural programs are central -- and I underline that -- central -- to the success of American foreign policy."

President Clinton provided the policy context for the conference by juxtaposing ". . . two apparently contradictory forces;" ". . . the emergence of a huge number of racial, religious, ethnic and tribal conflicts . . ." and ". . . worries that the global information society will rob artists of . . . their independent power to inform, enlighten and enrich."

The President expressed his optimism that culture's role will be positive, ". . . because it will teach us to understand our differences and affirm our common



First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton opens the White House Conference.

humanity.” The President argued that the Internet is not leading to the homogenization of language and society, citing the examples of people all over the world chatting on the Internet in Welsh, downloading fonts in Bengali, and ordering on-line courses in intensive Cherokee. He stressed that “. . . it is important that we understand and appreciate our differences, and then recognize, as important as they are, somehow we have to find a way to elevate our common humanity. That’s where cultural diplomacy comes in.”

He added that he did not agree that knowing more about one another’s culture dilutes the world’s cultures. Instead, the President stressed, “. . . American culture has been enriched by the rest of the world, and hopefully we’ve been a positive force on the rest of the world.” And that “. . . American art, in many ways, is the art of the rest of the world.”

Referring to the anxiety engendered among some groups by globalization, the President countered “. . . globalization, in the end, will be a force for diversity, not uniformity.”

The President underlined the obligations of the United States -- to close the digital divide, include the poor in cultural exchange and ensure America’s contributions reflect our cultural diversity. He highlighted the use of public-private partnerships in meeting these goals in addition to the government commitment.

The President ended his comments with support for the legislation introduced by Representative James Leach and Senator Joseph R. Biden to create an endowment to support State Department cultural presentations.

Assisting Culture in the Developing World

According to His Highness the Aga Khan, creative artists in much of Asia and Africa do not live in economies “. . . in which they can survive from their commitments to culture.” In response, the President noted that America, with its resources and media access, can play a role in ending this deprivation and isolation. He stressed that more needs to be done to close the digital divide so that the poor of the world can exchange cultural information and participate in collaborative cultural projects. His Highness emphasized that more must be done to assist cultural and educational institutions in the developing world, particularly in Africa and Asia “. . . where the humanities are not really taught to a significant level in the universities. . . .”

Trust and Equality

Panel participants underscored the importance of overcoming cultural insularity through trust and human interaction based on equality. With trust, Yo-Yo Ma noted, coexistence can evolve into co-reliance. Nobel Prize-winning author Wole Soyinka



President Clinton and Secretary Albright enjoy the lively discussion at the White House Conference.

offered the view that "Politics tend, I think, to have, as its first principle, the demonization of the other, whereas culture tends toward the humanization of the other." He added, ". . . if the other side -- politics -- is merely dividing peoples, I think then other human activities, such as culture, have a right also to be romantic in that sense."

Both Prof. Soyinka and Rita Dove felt that "cultural exchanges should be among equals."

Preserving Cultural Diversity

Italian Minister of Cultural Heritage Giovanna Melandri highlighted the urgency of the challenge of preserving cultural diversity by stating, "If preserving the environment and biodiversity are in a way the last battles of an industrial society . . . preserving cultural diversity may be considered as the first challenge of the information society." She noted that the risk of universal homogeneity could be overcome by using culture as a connecting link that leads to integration rather than assimilation. This effort, she said, calls for multilateral and bilateral cooperation.

The Limits of Business and the Role of Government

Former Under Secretary of State, Joan Spero, now President of the Doris Duke Foundation, pointed out that U.S. business has been effective in spread-

ing American culture worldwide as a commercial enterprise and through contributions to nonprofit cultural exchange. On the other hand, she made it clear that "there are certain limitations to the role of business." One is that business supports mainstream work that draws large audiences. Ms. Spero said that for this reason, she saw the role of the State Department and embassies as "generators of ideas, as conveners, as provocateurs . . . as marketing agents." She said that the embassies must be used "not just in a financial sense, but in a creative, catalytic way." It is the government and embassies that understand what can be useful abroad and "can support things that are controversial or things that are contemporary or not mainstream," she concluded.

Language, the Internet and Cultural Communications

A lively exchange of views took place on the relationship between language and culture, as well as the impact of the Internet on communication among cultures. His Highness the Aga Khan urged assistance in making English more widespread as a means for cultures to express themselves and carry their rich messages to broader audiences. Rita Dove stressed the importance of language in cultural communications, noting that it is an amalgam of human experiences and difference. Poetry, she noted, was more useful than the mass media in defining our identities.

Thematic Workshops

After the morning East Room session, the conference moved to the Westin Fairfax Hotel for lunch and four simultaneous workshops. Distinguished panelists led the workshops and elaborated on the issues raised at the White House plenary session. The four workshops were:

Workshop A: Preserving and Promoting Diverse Cultures in a Global Economy

Moderator: Ismail Serageldin - Special Advisor, World Bank

Rapporteur: Hon. William J. Ivey - Chairman, National Endowment for the Arts

Discussants:

John F. Cooke - Executive Vice President for External Affairs, J. Paul Getty Trust

Judy Mitoma - Director, Center for Intercultural Performance, UCLA

Workshop B: The Role of Culture in the Practice of Diplomacy

Moderator: Hon. Thomas R. Pickering - Under Secretary for Political Affairs, U.S. Department of State

Rapporteur: Hon. Cynthia Schneider - U.S. Ambassador to the Netherlands

Discussants:

Neal Rosendorf - Kennedy School of Government of Harvard University

Hon. John Kornblum - U.S. Ambassador to Germany

Harold Hongju Koh - Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, U.S. Department of State

Workshop C: The Role of Multinational Companies, NGOs and Multilateral Organizations in Promoting Cultural Understanding and Exchange

Moderator: Cornelia W. Higginson - Vice President, Philanthropic Program, American Express Company and Chair, International Committee, Council on Foundations

Rapporteur: Hon. William R. Ferris - Chairman, National Endowment for the Humanities

Discussants:

Marian Godfrey - Director, Culture Programs, Pew Charitable Trusts

Ralph Samuelson - Director, Asian Cultural Council

Noreen Tomassi - President, Arts International

Workshop D: The Arts and Humanities Abroad - Providing an Accurate Image of America's Cultural Diversity

Moderator: Hon. John Brademas - Chairman, The President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities

Rapporteur: Hon. Harriet Elam-Thomas - U.S. Ambassador to Senegal

Discussants:

Alberta Arthurs - MEM Associates

Tina Ramirez - Artistic Director, Ballet Hispanico

David Hwang - Playwright

Billy Taylor - Jazz Musician and Consultant, The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts

Closing Plenary Session and Conclusions

Following the workshops, Secretary Albright chaired a plenary session during which she received the rapporteurs' reports on the workshop discussions. In her remarks, she underscored that "foreign policy development has to have culture on the table." Noting that the consolidation of the U.S. Information Agency with the State Department had provided new opportunities for funding cultural programs, she emphasized that:

- Cultural factors are inseparable from foreign policy;
- The United States must do a better job of explaining American culture to the world;
- Funding for programs of cultural exchange, understanding and collaboration must be increased; and
- Culture is not elitist, but the way the people of a country express themselves.

The workshop discussions produced the following conclusions:

- The first White House Conference on Culture and Diplomacy was a "summit meeting" and a timely and much-needed reminder of the crucial role of public diplomacy in U.S. foreign policy. The conference should be the first in a series of "summit" meetings on cultural exchange programs.

- Cultural awareness should be central to every section of a U.S. diplomatic mission and should be part of the training of American diplomats. All U.S. Foreign Service personnel should be trained to use cultural resources in the pursuit of U.S. national interests.
- There is a deep need to educate Americans on the importance of understanding other cultures and of the important role culture plays on the national agenda.
- Funding for cultural programs in the Department of State should be increased. The lack of adequate federal funding for cultural programs can leave the U.S. unprepared to respond to opportunities and unexpected challenges abroad. Department of State funding is best employed through public-private partnerships that attract private contributions.
- The legislation submitted in the 106th Congress by Senator Biden and Representative Leach to provide the Secretary of State with the authority to create nonprofit entities to support the Department of State's educational, cultural and arts programs received enthusiastic support.
- New technologies such as the Internet should be exploited more extensively to increase cross-cultural communications and preserve cultural diversity throughout the world. The importance



Secretary of State Madeleine Albright receives reports from Rapporteurs.

of tapping the vast potential of Internet-based information and resources in cultural activities cannot be overstated. Modern technologies must be harnessed to record, preserve and share the cultural histories and expressions of diverse cultures.

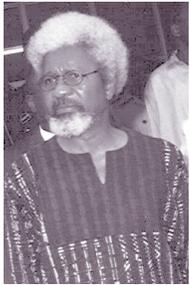
- Cultural partnership projects between countries should be encouraged. Regional and local cultural projects are vital to the promotion of democracy. The developing world should play a greater role in international cultural exchanges and partnerships.
- Public-private and international funding should be identified to protect cultural diversity. The United States should take the lead in global efforts to protect intellectual property rights, paying special attention to the legitimate claims of artists from the developing world.
- Increased outreach is essential among the Department of State, the business community and NGOs to increase cultural exchange programs and educate the public on how they work and the need to expand them. The Department of State and the American and international business communities need to cooperate more closely and fully on addressing the cultural agenda.

- The National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities need to be more visible internationally; foreign government Ministers of Culture should become more aware of the views and activities of the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities.
- The cultural achievements of all regions of the United States should be recognized and become a larger part of the Department of State's overseas cultural programs. The Department of State should work more closely with state and local government-supported cultural programs.
- The translation of American fiction into foreign languages for readers abroad should be supported, as should the translation of foreign literature into English, for the U.S. audience.

It was with "great appreciation" that the Secretary adjourned what she described as "the first -- but not the last" White House Conference on Culture and Diplomacy. In closing the conference, the Secretary observed that "the idea of culture and diplomacy is perhaps not a blank canvas, but neither is it a finished and framed work of art at this stage." She asked that all conference participants "stay engaged in what we are doing and lend your support in order to try to get a complete picture to go forward."



Secretary of State Madeleine Albright chairs Final Plenary Session.



"I wonder what kind of role culture, the presentation of the other in humanized terms, can play in a situation where politics, diplomacy appears to fail; where it is the people who need to talk to one another, who need to be assisted to talk to one another, rather than the leadership talking between themselves."

Nobel Laureate
Wole Soyinka



"To me, a poem, a piece of art or music [are] more useful than, in fact, the mass media. I think the mass media can give us the news, but they can't tell us what to do with it."

Former U.S. Poet
Laureate
Rita Dove



"Businesses play an important role, but they are less likely to do something that is more innovative and more controversial. And that's why I think you need both government and the philanthropic world."

Doris Duke
Foundation
President
Joan Spero



"If preserving the environment and biodiversity are in a way the last battles of an industrial society... preserving cultural diversity may be considered as the first challenge of the information society."

Italian Culture
Minister
Giovanna
Melandri



"A Senegalese poet said, 'In the end we will conserve only what we love. We love only what we understand. And we will understand only what we are taught.' We must learn about other cultures in order to understand, in order to love and in order to conserve our common world heritage."

Cellist
Yo-Yo Ma

This pamphlet was produced by the U.S. Department of State.

The White House Conference on Culture and Diplomacy was organized by the Department of State in cooperation with the Office of the First Lady, the White House Millennium Council and the National Security Council.

Downloadable versions of the Final Report and other information on the conference can be found on the Department of State website at:
<http://www.state.gov/r/whconf/index.html>