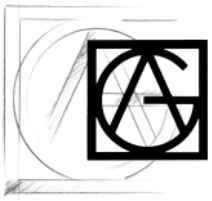

Grantmakers in the Arts
2004 Conference

DANCING WITH DIFFERENT PARTNERS

Proceedings from the Conference
October 17–20, 2004
Renaissance Cleveland Hotel
Cleveland, Ohio

FINDING CIVILITY

This interactive session will explore the cultural landscape in the U.S. and will provide a forum for examining what democracy means in this country today. Radio journalist Tony Kahn will present stories and personal observations drawn from people's daily lives. Bill Ivey joins Kahn for a discussion of how artistic expression, arts enjoyment, and arts discourse has gone beyond the traditional nonprofit definitions that have shaped the work of grantmakers, as well as the obstacles and opportunities presented by this broadened cultural landscape.

Session Organizers: Hal Cannon, *board member, Fund for Folk Culture*
Anne Focke, *executive director, Grantmakers in the Arts and*
Michael Moore, *director of arts programs, The Wallace Foundation*

Discussion with: Bill Ivey, *director, Curb Center for Art, Enterprise, and Public Policy at Vanderbilt University and*
Tony Kahn, *radio journalist (WGBH, Boston)*

October 18, 2004, 2:30 p.m.

CANNON: Welcome to a panel that's been a real joy to put together. Michael Moore and Anne Focke and I have been on the phone in discussion about civility for the last few months, and I think today and tomorrow we have an interesting discussion in store. It's a time when a lot of us as Americans are thinking about civility, about our democratic process. I think our keynote address today by Bill Ivey asks some fundamental questions about civility.

Today's session is going to be structured in this way, it's in two parts, there will be a half-hour break within the session. The first part will feature Tony Kahn, who I'll introduce in a moment, speaking for a little bit and playing some of his work on the radio. The second part will be a discussion, and the respondents will be Bill Ivey and Tony Kahn, and I'll be a traffic cop and try to make sure that no one gets the floor all the time and that a diverse group of you have a chance to say your piece as well.

Both of these gentlemen are friends of mine who have never met before and I always love introducing people that should know each other. Tony Kahn is a radio-maker. He's with WGBH radio in Boston. He has been the co-host of *The World*, a co-production of WGBH and BBC.

I think I first met him when he was a speaker at the Third Coast Audio Festival a few years ago and I was very impressed with the way he thought about radio, the way he thought about democracy, the fragility of democracy. I like the voices that he selects to paint a portrait of America, and that's one reason that we invited Tony today.

He did a wonderful series several years ago called *Blacklisted*, a personal reminiscence about his family which was extraordinary. So I'm going to turn the timer over to Tony and then a little bit later I'll reintroduce Bill.

Tony Kahn.

KAHN: Thanks Hal and welcome everybody. And Bill, it's a pleasure to meet you at last after hearing that incredible speech, and I look forward to practicing civility with you. [*Laughter*] I should probably, if I say nothing else try to give you my working definition of what civility is and then see if I can live up to it in the course of the afternoon.

Civility for me isn't agreeing with somebody else, it's trying to appreciate why somebody has the vision that they do, by listening very carefully to what they have to say and making them and their opinions feel welcome so that you will be accorded the same treatment.

This is a public art form and a civic art form which tends to be practiced only in the best of times, rarely in the worst. I think we're approaching one of those worst of times, and so it's very important to me to try to figure out the ways in which we can hear each other and appreciate the differences so that we can also find the similarities in our experiences as human beings and citizens of the planet.

As someone in radio, I also find my work as providing aid and comfort to people in traffic jams. [*Laughter*] When I actually have a chance to see people, I'm always thrilled and delighted and humbled. And it does look a bit like a traffic jam actually out there today, so I hope you'll be with me for a while and learn about the difficulties out there. Or perhaps you'll turn to somebody beside you and speak civilly. That would be great.

So, public radio. For the sake of our discussion, NPR equals public radio equals NPR. But there's PRI and NPR and individual public radio stations, including local efforts in public radio, which can also be a global effort nowadays because of the technology. Anything that you put out can be heard by anybody with an interest in finding it and listening.

The ear has become perhaps the main organ of the twenty-first century in communication; it's up there with the eye. The ear is very close to the heart I think.

Now in public radio, there is as we know one very strong tradition. That's the tradition of hard news. You might say that it is the main mission of public radio nowadays to be in some sense the news source of record for America. It's an old tradition and one which could be criticized or applauded.

The thing that bothers me the most about it personally is it tends to obscure the existence of another tradition in public radio that is just as old. That is public radio not as the news source of record, but public radio as our national campfire, the place around which people have come from the very beginning to swap stories about their own lives and experiences, not as politicians and not as pundits and not as apologists for one cause or ideology, but as human beings and citizens of the planet.

And these are memorable stories. I'm sure those of you who have had anything like an extended relationship with public radio could probably close your eyes right now and think of at least

one moment that you really treasured in the relationship with public radio. I'm willing to bet that it probably was a story, a story about somebody being themselves in the context of their lives, their families, their careers, behind the headlines and close to their emotions, able to express them, and also show you what it is that they are doing in their lives.

For me, the very first story I heard that I'll never forget on public radio was sometime in the seventies. It was a story about a couple who decided they wanted to make a dream come true that many people their age at the time wanted, and that was to have a restaurant. Own a restaurant, have all of your friends over, be surrounded by all the good feelings associated with making and serving food. They offered themselves up as sacrificial lambs to public radio so that they could be followed in the process of figuring out how to become successful in the restaurant business.

It was a fascinating series because you got to experience what it was like to be them. All of the things you have to learn along the way. All of the arrangements you have to make.

Questions that sometimes were as obvious as where are you going to shop, to as subtle as what kind of print are you going to have on the menu? Because print on the menu tells the customer how to behave. You know, if it's in italics, if there are no prices it's one thing. If there are glossy pictures of triple-decker sandwiches, then it's another.

In any event, they failed to make it in the restaurant business, but as a story and as a series it was absolutely unforgettable. I'm sure you've all had your own.

We have a name in public radio for stories that won't let you go, so that you have to stop everything else to listen. You may be familiar with the term, it's called "driveway potential." Stories that really keep you welded to the steering wheel.

You might say that they even have a kitchen component, because after you've stayed in the car in the driveway listening to the story to be over to find out what happened, the first thing you generally want to do is rush into the kitchen, find somebody, and tell them the story that you just heard.

Stories that are contagious like that are a life-form in a sense. They're kind of like a virus that uses human beings to spread. If you're in the grip of one of these stories it is so much about things that matter to you that you want to pass on that feeling to somebody else.

In the process, you may put a little bit of your life spin onto it. It's that kind of involvement that allows somebody else's experience to become your experience. That's what radio can do, incredibly well.

Radio can do this better than any other media, certainly better than television, not just because with radio you can still keep your eyes on the road, or on anything else you happen to be looking at. But radio requires this amazing conscious act of participation. It is in a sense already a conversation, even though all you're doing is listening. You're attaching your own experience, images from your own experience to the words that you're hearing.

Now, your idea of a villain may be very different from my idea of a villain. If you're producing a drama, this will save you hundreds of thousands of dollars in wardrobe outfitting and scenic design. Your villain may have a mustache. Mine may wear a blue bowtie. Chances are that individual will be made out of some part of your own experience. You'll own that image. You fill in the image.

There's another reason why I think radio is so powerful. Its message is conveyed not by the words, and not just by the silences between the words which also have a meaning. They are carried by the human voice. I see the human voice as the only internal organ we have that we can hear outside of our bodies. It carries with it the truth of basically our essence, our tone, our feelings.

It's very hard to disguise how you're feeling in your voice, unless you are a trained liar. And that's very, very hard to do. The hardest thing for professional actors too, I would venture to say, is to sound normal. To just have all of those cadences and all of those sudden shifts of feeling and tension and tone of your voice that come naturally to anybody when they're speaking the truth.

So the voice carries not just this cargo of ideas and thoughts, it also moves along this amazing constant stream of feelings. We pick up those feelings and those emotions when we're listening. We can hear somebody say hardly anything of consequence at all and still be moved by it because of that unspoken communication that's in the voice.

Or quite the opposite, they could be saying the most sophisticated thing in the world and

if there's something about their voice that just doesn't seem right, doesn't seem genuine, you're not going to be able to really let that story in.

So radio. Its main art form is the story. Story is public radio's art form. It's practiced nowadays by many masters, but not as often as it used to be. Certainly not as often as I and many people who are storytellers feel it needs to be, especially nowadays.

A culture lives by its stories that it tells of itself. In times of uncertainty and fear and political polarization, the stories that celebrate differences, that do not deal in black and white ideological distinctions, but with the universe of human feelings and the contradictions we all practice, those stories in bad times can tend to fall silent.

If a society doesn't keep hearing stories that challenge the political propaganda and the moral uncertainties, or the incredibly narrow menu of so-called important stories that we tend to be fed by the national media as if they were somehow the most significant developments in the world at six o'clock that evening, then the society itself can become closed.

I know a little bit from my own experience about what it is like to grow up in a closed society. I came of age in the time of fear in the late forties and early fifties, a period that some of you may remember as a time that's not unlike nowadays. It was a time when an enormous ideological divide between seemingly one half and another, a time where we lived in fear of a foreign enemy that could easily be identified by a series of labels and behaviors, that they were very different from us.

It was a time where in order to prove your good intentions in your own country you basically had to hate the enemy. Anything less than being critical of the enemy could leave you open to the accusation of being the enemy yourself. That guilt of association, that fear that if you didn't tar and feather your enemy you might not be trustworthy.

It was that kind of anxious patriotism of the forties and the fifties that was intolerant to differences of opinion, and created the silence of that era. That kind of silence would be the language of fear. We just didn't have the ultimate truth of how contradictory all of us are as people, and how similar we are to each other in spite of the differences.

I also learned from that period that the recipe for repression in a society is pretty easy and that it doesn't take an armed police force to create a culture that is somewhat like a police state.

To bring us up to the present, I've been involved with a project at WGBH which is called "Morning Stories," and which has the purpose of trying to keep this case of traditional storytelling rather than hard news in public radio, alive. We've been on since January. We broadcast one morning story a week, sometimes two, so we have to get to fifty or so in all, which is nice, it's a productive forum.

It's a search for stories from people who in general have never been on the radio, who might be encouraged to explore something of their own essence through a story about something that happened to them. It's basically anecdotal. Situations where something is being described as very easy for you to visualize, and where there is an enormous cargo of feeling involved as well. Moments of significance to the individual, whatever they might be.

It's also based on a proposition, which we've been able to operate on, that if approached respectfully and if listened to carefully, just about everyone might have a story to tell. You can assist them in the process of finding it, by being a fluent listener, and then as a radio producer finding out the ways in which to shape that story with them so that you can bring it on the air.

What I'd like to do is play a few of these stories for you, with very short introductions, and then just open it up to any questions that you might have. I also want to add – and this is getting a little bit ahead of myself – but what makes "Morning Stories" unique for me as a producer is that this is also the very first public radio program in the nation, in the world, that has decided to follow a system of distribution just starting out, called podcasting. It makes it accessible to an audience that not only is worldwide, but that did not necessarily take influence from public radio to begin with. So, it could be a development of some great significance.

Let's listen to the first story. These stories can either be edited from an interview that I might have with the individual, or perhaps the individual is interested in writing their story, they feel more comfortable doing it that way, in which case I may work with them on the script or on the reading.

In this case, this is a story that was told to me by my cleaning lady who is an undocumented Brazilian, who I knew was living a difficult life and who probably wanted to talk about it. And so I asked her if she would sit down and tell me something about herself and I invited her to come over on Sunday when she wasn't working.

She'd been working in our house for three years. She came dressed in her Sunday best with her daughter and a gift of cookies for me. Her name is Fatima, and this is her voice:

"When I was 7 years-old, my mom was killed! And I saw it. I never met my father. And so after that, my brother took care of me but not like a brother, but as a servant girl. That's why I know how to clean. Something inside of me always tell me to go on and never give up.

When I was 18 years old, I get married and we have our children. And when they start to grow, I was like, oh my God, what can I give to them living here in Brazil? They are going to be just like me. They're not going to get a good education to help people and have the opportunity to move on in the world. That's when we decide to come to America.

When we arrived here, we worked really hard, really, really hard. My husband helps me clean house, he delivers papers and he works delivering pizzas.

But we are illegal. If you are illegal, you are not able to drive. You can't have a job, but you can spend money. And there aren't any doors open. I feel invisible to the world.

In my eyes, I think that Americans, they live like... how you say? They create a wall. You cannot see inside. Like if you talk to me you can see my face and also you can see a little bit of me and I cannot see you. They don't let you in, and it's so, so sad. It happened a lot, you know?

Like when Americans get older, I've seen a lot of them at the nursing home and it breaks my heart. They feel lonely. They work hard their whole entire life. Sometimes they don't even have time to see what moves a family to be together around a table having dinner, doing nothing but be together. And then they will spend the rest of their life in the nursing homes with nurses that they have never met. Oh my God!

I'm working now for my kids. My Tammy, she's twelve years old, and I think that she don't think like a twelve years old girl. She is really smart, she studies at Summerview. For some people, going to school at Summerview is not good, but for them it's excellent. Excellent because in Brazil they don't have what they have here, you know? And she's doing really, really well.

After September 11th, if a policeman talk to me and they see that I'm not legal, they can handcuff me and my husband as if we are criminals. Imagine how my kids will feel? Oh my God!

And I know a lot of immigrants that are really concerned. It's really hard for you to live in a place and never say, I'm not legal here. I'm doing something wrong. This feeling, if you are a person who wants to do things right, kills your self.

If I could stay and, like, study a career, I'd probably study something to work with kids, because if I'm a good mother, if I know how to raise my children, healthy with good food, looking at the bright side, I think I could help a lot of kids too. And I could do a really good job. Not just because of the money but because you are helping someone what they need. And I know what it means to need something and get it.

At least I know, like, in my case, we are thinking about go back. Be more close with people who are human, warm. Human and warm. Yeah, I think we still might. I think so. I visit. Human... warm. I love it. I love it! I just love it."

KAHN: For those who might want to know what happened to Fatima, she did go back and it was a heartbreaking decision on her part, but the only one she felt was right for the sake of her own children. In leaving the country with not much possibility of returning any time soon if ever, I think the country lost a great American. That was my parents' story, my grandfather's story, and the American story.

The next one I'd like to play for you is a story that was revealed to me by a fellow named Sonny L. He is of French-Canadian background, a working class type of guy who has seen a lot of trouble in his life, and he was one of the most thoughtful and intelligent people that I've met. I asked him how come you get into so much trouble? And this is Sonny's story.

"I had left the house and I was going to meet someone for dinner ten minutes away. I got in the car and I felt fine. The next thing I know it was two hours later. I had two police cars following me and I was just hitting everything going both sides of the road, and I ended up in somebody's front yard.

They pulled me out of the car and I would fall down and they'd pick me up. They tried to give me the sobriety test and finally one of the policemen just got so disgusted, he said "This guy doesn't even know what he's saying." So they handcuffed me and threw me in the cruiser and brought me to jail.

That's when they called the emergency room and the ambulance came over and when they revived me I just sat right up. And the guy said, "We've got your sugar up to about ninety right now.

How do you feel?" And I said, "Ninety? What is this? Where am I?"

The cop said, "He's lying." The guy said, "No, he's a diabetic." And I kept saying, "Where's my car?" And I think the guy in the ambulance said, "You don't want to know. You don't want to know anything that happened that night."

At the trial, the policemen said, "We're dropping all the charges" and the D.A. said, "No, you're not." The D.A. said, "If he's been a diabetic for eighteen years, he should've known better."

I don't know what I should have done or what I could have done. I'm living this 24/7 and I'm trying to do the best I can. I've done everything to fix it. You've got to have your kit with you, you know, with your insulin, with your test tube in it.

You go to a restaurant with people, got to check, okay, I'll need this much insulin if I order this. Well I can only have this much and you've got to figure out your meal. You've got to figure out how much insulin's going to cover that meal. And then you've got to take the injection.

You can never do anything without thinking about that. If I go for a walk and I forget my glucose tabs, I mean, I could be a mile from the house and if it hits me, I won't make it back!

You just never know what you're going to do next. What you need to do, what you want to do, doesn't figure. Doesn't figure. And after a while, you burn out.

I'm kind of afraid to be around people. I lost a job once just because I was embarrassed to say, "Excuse me, can we take like twenty minutes out? Do you mind if I sit over there and chew down these glucose tablets?" You know, there's something wrong with me and I need you to understand. And I couldn't do it!

Sometimes, I just wish this was over. If I have to measure out one more meal… No, I'm just going to go grab that bag of chips and I don't care! I'm eating!

Sometimes I hate it so much that I think, well maybe there's a reason for it. You know, maybe I'm supposed to have this. There's something that I need to learn. And one of the things I needed to learn is that I can't be totally independent.

I always used to think about, boy, you know it would be great if I ever made a lot of money, I would get that place in the mountains and I would just never have to deal with people again. You know, I could have everything delivered that I wanted and go away.

And I don't feel that way anymore. I wouldn't like it up there on that mountain. I think I need to be with people. Good people... and even mean people.

And that job that I lost and that client that I lost because I couldn't tell them, I keep thinking sometimes that maybe they would've liked to help me, you know? Like maybe, "Would you like a drink? Do you want something to eat?" You know?

A lot of times I go through that where I'll hate people and still want them to leave me alone. But man, if I had to get through life without anybody, that would be pretty tough!

My third brother just got diagnosed with it last year. We never talk about real feelings. But now that he's got this though, he's a little warmer. You know, since this happened and this is just recent, whenever we talk on the phone, instead of saying goodbye, he always says, "I love you." [*chuckles*] That's a completely new thing for me. I like it! And I always say, "I love you" back. I guess it is true what they say, you do fall in love with your own diseases, don't you?

KAHN: What's nice about doing this podcast as opposed to a broadcast, that we can actually just let the music play at the end and give somebody an opportunity to think about it when it's over. If you're broadcasting the announcer comes on and says "Morning Stories can be heard every Tuesday…"

Having somebody discover the story that they want to tell is something that I think was happening in the course of that conversation. That's one of the great pleasures of being able to be involved in a civil discourse with somebody, that you actually are surprised, that you find out something new about yourself, about the other individual.

You suddenly understand you're allowed to explore your own impulses to the point where you can begin to question. You don't have to defend them, but you can express them and then see what happens next. That to me is a wonderful model that can help in all kinds of ways. It's a great model for a society too.

The next story is a shorter one. It's called "Such a Good Boy" and what's wonderful about this for me is that it's told by a fellow who's an Indian. Very complicated history and I won't bother you with it, but basically this guy sounds like he was

educated at Oxford, but he lives in a working-class community in Boston. So he really gets a chance to see many different worlds.

He came in and we talked as two educated people would, about his situation in life and it was pretty much all distractions. All the things you'd expect to hear about crossing cultures, and what are boundaries and what aren't boundaries.

I was thinking to myself, oh my God, we're spending a whole hour and I don't have a morning to spend. I think there was a pause and I just said to him, "Hey Finch, is there anything else you'd like to say that you've never really said before?" as a desperate question.

He paused for a second and from everything that he'd been talking about, about being an outsider and not really having anybody understand who you are, he started telling this story. And in about four minutes he gave me, with just a tiny little bit of editing, "A Morning Story".

"There's a place to which I've been going, a busy corner restaurant. Greek American. Very working class. One of those places you go when you're in graduate school. The food is good. It's cheap. And the people are friendly.

I'd been going there for years and years. Then I started dating this tall, white girl, and I was not sure how they would take it. But, you know, it was a regular place, so Rachel and I went there.

And the owner's mother who was a friend of mine, so to speak, came over to Rachel when I was in the bathroom, and said to Rachel "Such a good boy! He's such a good boy!" You know, there was none of that racism or anything that you always think of.

And I got to know this family very well. The father had passed away. The son was the owner of the restaurant. And I learned what extraordinary effort it took them, to make the life they had.

The son who owns the restaurant works out – he could give Arnold Schwarzenegger a run for his money. But the mother told me "See my son there, until he was twenty, he used to sleep in the bed with his parents because he couldn't sleep in his own bed by himself." And this gentleman is now married, with children, very happy.

This man had tried a bunch of different jobs and nothing had succeeded. And finally the family pooled all of its resources, they had so much experience in restaurants, they had worked as a short-order cook and so forth. They opened this place.

This man would get up every morning and go to the Chelsea Market to buy his vegetables. Just show up, start preparing the meals there. He left home at five. And he had two young children. And I said, "Do you get to see them very often?" because the restaurant was a seven-day-a-week affair.

He said, "Do you know what, we do. At 4:30 every morning my wife and I wake up our children." He spends half an hour every day reading the Bible to his children. He said "That's the only time I have. I want to teach them something good. I don't know anything good, but I know that the Bible is good."

And so he spends this half an hour. The children read the Bible and they go back to sleep. His wife wakes them and they go to school. How moving is that?

I know that life. That's how my parents worked, you know. And when I think of the American family, I think of how hard people have to work to make their lives, and how desperately they want to relate to their families, to give to their families and at what cost they achieve that.

We live so much surrounded by the American dream and American success, but what extraordinary effort to make the life they had. How valuable that is.

"Such a good boy. Such a good boy!"

KAHN: And very briefly, the shortest and in a way one of my favorites on "Morning Stories" and comes to us, actually, by way of Hal.

I realized very early on with "Morning Stories" that even though we had stumbled upon a way of being able to reach many people and bring many people in, we were still going to need a lot of outside help. We have a staff of two people and we're looking at three, right now. So we really need stories and storytellers from elsewhere, or at least raw material that could become a Morning Story.

It's obvious to me, as night follows the day, that there are tons of incredibly gifted radio producers out there who just don't fit the format of all of the established programs that list on public radio. And maybe they've got something in their archives.

So I asked Hal, "You got anything that might work with Morning Stories?" He sent me two

pieces that came from interviews. Is that right Hal? People who have projects of their own and they didn't make the cut into the program, weren't quite sure what to do with them.

So I took them and turned them into Morning Stories. But I just want to play you one of them – a war story. You're going to hear this one on Saturday.

"We were on the banks of the Pulangi River after the war, in Mindanao. We were accepting the surrender of the Japanese troops that came down out of the mountains.

And I was a medic and this Japanese fellow, he wandered in out of the jungle and he was pathetic. He was dying, in fact. He was burning up with fever. I was sure that he had malaria and I knew he had pneumonia.

And so I took him in the Aid tent there, and I doctored him the best I could. And I had quite an audience attending to this guy, quite a little ring of GIs standing around making remarks about my professionalism and this, that and the other.

And so I asked the cook to bring him a bowl of soup. So he went over and he brought in a bowl of hot tomato soup. So I sat there with this guy with his head on my lap, I fed him this soup.

And then in a little bit, why, he gave a cough or two and up came the tomato soup and up come the blood. You couldn't tell the difference. But he died.

And so everybody said, "Well, you killed him, you've got to bury him." And I protested, I said, "No, I didn't kill him. It was that damned food out of the kitchen that killed him." A guy's laying there dead and we're having a big argument over who killed him! *[Laughs]*

Anyway, they took him over there and dug him a little grave on a sandbar and shoveled some sand over him. So I took a couple of old planks there and stuck them in and made a little cross and I inscribed a little poem on it. I said,

> Unknown, unwanted and unwept
> Far from Nippon's cherry skies
> In a grave shallow and unkept
> My worthless carcass lies.
> May the demon imps of Hell
> As they shovel the burning coal
> Know that I served them well
> And have mercy on my soul.

And heck, I was just a kid, but later on I thought about that and... well, it bugged me. I mean, who am I to condemn anybody to Hell, you know? Nevertheless, I wrote it.

I used to write very heroic things about wars and I had a lot of poetry and I rolled it up. And I don't know if you ever remember the old KC Baking Powder cans. And I rolled all my poetry up and I put it in one of those cans and I dug a grave, and then I buried them.

> May the demon imps of Hell
> Know that I served them well
> And have mercy on my soul.

CANNON: After hearing some of those for the first time, I thought, what a wonderful sort of document of civility for us to hear.

I remember once I was with a bunch of ranchers and we were sitting down with a group of environmentalists. We were talking to each other in this sort of human way, I remember one of the ranchers saying, "You know, I've been to a lot of hearings and I never feel heard!" He says, "You don't listen to each other at hearings."

And I think that's what the common element of that discussion was, people are really listening to one another. That's what I appreciated about these pieces, that they're intensely listened to. You can tell it, just in the production of them.

Any questions for Tony or comments? We wanted to see a vision of who we're serving, what you were talking about earlier Bill, about the civic responsibility that we hold, what we can do in the larger scheme of things. I thought these stories told that in a pretty interesting way.

IVEY: We live out of metaphors and sometimes we articulate them, and sometimes we just live out of them without knowing that we're living out of them.

And I've often wondered – and I think this relates to the work of grantmakers – what's the metaphor that we use for American society, either functionally, or what metaphor do we idealize?

I think in some ways we idealize a vision for the relationships between culture and society that's maybe a little more on the European model. We strive for a unified vision which we can invest in certain known pieces of our expressive heritage, and thereby satisfy this unified vision.

Although that's the ideal, we probably live out of the metaphor in which our society is more like a border, is more like a metaphorical border in which lots and lots of things are constantly jousting up against one another.

One of the problems with getting a federal cultural policy moving is that if you live out of a border metaphor, it's hard to think about what constitutes the underlying center. What holds it together?

But if the border is the metaphor we have to live out of, then the question is, what promotes civility in a border? What you look for are mechanisms of exchange that allow communication and probably minimize conflict, if you are going to keep your border vigorous and without a lot of street fighting and knifings.

Certainly the thing that works the best is food. We do tremendously in our border societies, and I mean this metaphorically, I don't just mean geographical borders, but in a border society we exchange food with one another extraordinarily well with a lot of ease and a lot of openness and it's probably the best means of exchange we have.

I would argue that our expressive life in the sense of music and dance, visual art and so on, comes in a fairly close second to food as a mechanism of exchange.

If you look at American society as something that is by definition perpetually bordered, we, in our basic documents, in our democratic vision, we have to honor so much difference that we're kind of doomed, fated, or blessed by living in perpetual border, then to the extent to which we can do things, intervene in ways, that keep that border civil by investing in the activities that allow that kind of communication. And look at ways to prevent that communication from getting all knotted up. I think those are the kinds of interventions that probably make the most sense.

Now I'm not suggesting that everybody here at a foundation rush out and start giving ethnic restaurants all of your money. I think there are things to do in the expressive life that work almost as effectively, that take you right to where you live, which is, nurturing parts of the expressive system, to make sure that communication is fluid along the border.

I think in saying that, food, music and dance, and I think Tony's stories are great, but I think particularly the last one, raises the specter that storytelling can be dangerous a lot of times. It can be a source of conflict. I think that that particular story, told in some settings, might bother a Japanese American listener.

While it's important to keep the system nurtured, and civility is an essential ingredient of a democracy that operates and lives on the border metaphor, I think we have to realize that some forms of expressive life still do embody values and ideas that can be challenging, and in fact challenging to the kind of civility that we want to promote.

So the question is how do we balance honesty with freedom?

KAHN: Can I engage you in a conversation about this? Tell me what it was that you heard in that last story that led you to that feeling.

CANNON: That the deceased soldier had been, in view of the narrator, an instrument of the devil. That could be viewed as challenging to someone who felt that maybe they hadn't been!

KAHN: What I heard in that story, and I'd love to know, if you have responses because it would certainly be, from a very selfish point of view, enormously helpful to me to see what kind of conversation a story like this leads to.

What I heard in that story was what I considered to be the essential act of civility, because you admit that you yourself may be mistaken about your beliefs. And you only know that through experience. I think it's very hard in the absence of a connection with somebody else, to figure out what you do or do not do that is not particularly civil.

For me the story was the story of a man who acted out of his own sense of patriotism and of being in the thick of war, and the peer pressure of his companions who suddenly had a moment of conscience and took action as a result of this. And in a sense honored the person who he had dismissed as less than human at the end, by calling down his own blessing.

Those final lines to me – and I did take a liberty, and I should say this for this story, which I cleared with the author, because I regard all these stories as collaborations to the extent that I bring them to the air and put my own spin on them, I want to make sure that the storyteller feels that that is still his story or her story. If not, that's the end of it, or we come up with another solution.

I had him repeat that line in the poem at the end, as a comment on himself. And he said that was fine. He found that there was a truth in that. And I took that liberty only because the way that he remembered that story left me to feel that until he acknowledged his own mistake, he wasn't ready to move on himself with that memory. That he could revisit the experience and realize that, no, that was another person who died, and you know, anybody who could damn someone for being a human being, should damn himself.

Anyway, I saw that as the kind of essential act of allowing yourself, in the presence of another, to admit that you may not have all the answers. That opens up a whole dialogue with yourself and with someone else where you can begin to explore a common experience.

That is what we tend not to have as much in the media. We do not have anything that amounts to an exploration of an issue, that isn't ultimately guided by some ideological principles. We don't really allow too many contradictions to show up in the course of the same story. We'll present one point of view, and then if it's an election season, we'll let the other side present its point of view. But that's not a conversation. That's not civility. Admitting your own imperfections liberates the energy to find the truth.

Anyway, that was my take on the story, I'd love to know if you felt something different.

IVEY: I'll say one last thing quickly and then hear from the audience.

One of the advantages of food, and many components of expressive life, music and dance and so on, is that though they may be challenging, you know, hip hop and rap challenged me for a long time, it took me forever to be able to appreciate the nuances. It took me a decade. And I still haven't really figured it out, but I have learned how to appreciate it and what some of the internal values are.

While those things may be challenging, unlike narratives, I think they don't require much of an editorial hand, in order to play in the marketplace of ideas in the borders. One of the great things about the blues or jazz or hillbilly music or Beethoven's Fifth, is that they have a way of moving difference in values in those borders, in a way that may be challenging, but that only rarely is truly inflammatory. And therefore it is an arena in which I think we can play with a very light editorial touch.

For those of you who desire to invest, or nurture, or open gates in a way that increases the vibrancy of the art, I think that those expressive forms are attractive simply because they don't require much editorial hand.

We're not going to put up stories about Klansmen. There are lots of stories out there.

KAHN: But I would love to hear a Klansman, not say what he normally would say facing somebody who probably would not agree with him, but just simply what he would say to me as a fellow Klansman, and then explore what the feelings really are. What is he expressing in that language of ideology, that he might actually be able to put in terms of a real story about something that happened to him?

Those are the moments when I think we suddenly have the possibility of moving ahead together. But how often does that happen?

CANNON: Let's hear from our audience.

AUDIENCE: I wanted to agree with you Bill, that I think food and the other marketplace things are not as ideological as narratives, but they also don't seem to be viewed as political the same way narratives are.

QUESTION: I have a question. There's a kind of NPR story like this that you always add music to. And to me, I guess you're doing it because you don't think that we can really contribute. You start out saying how beautiful the human voice was, and I think in way you're saying to the audience, well, we know that you really can't handle this, so we're going to add a little music. I also wonder if you might think that that's a little uncivil.

KAHN: For the sake of full and open disclosure, may I just say, "Ow!?" *[Laughter]*

QUESTION: But have you thought about that?

KAHN: I think I could always do better. What I try to do with music, and it's a process that I continually learned about and from. You certainly have expressed an opinion that other people have said, and then there are those who agree with me.

But my operating principle as a producer is to try to make sure that the music, when used, whether or not I should be using it, adds another layer of meaning to it. It's not simply a substitute for a feeling that should be there otherwise, or enhance something that we should be able to feel, but it suggests another current.

In the case of the Indian story for instance, it was obvious that he was from India, I didn't want to say that he was from India. It was when he started talking about being brought back by that experience to his own heritage, that I felt it was important to signal that change with the music, or just to say that that's what this moment can mean about this whole other world that he's no longer a part of.

So I try to make those decisions. If they're felt as interference then they haven't succeeded, at least in that case. To be able to hear about that and

continue to dialogue, I think would be the one factor that the media, if it could benefit from it, should have.

Our influence is totally out of proportion to the depth of our opinions and our understanding of reality. And how could we hear back?

I do believe that things may be moving with the technology, with the choices that people can make about to subscribe or unsubscribe from a program, that can be immediately registered, that we may be reaching a point where the broadcaster does have to pay more attention and be more responsible to the audience, and make sure that the work is a conversation.

I appreciate your saying that, even though it still hurts terribly.

QUESTION: From the other side of that, I'm a listener and listen so closely and all four of those stories touched me, touched my soul, touched my heart. I'm a crier. So that's how I responded. And I find the music actually giving me some kind of relief from these touching, touching stories. So that's just another point of view.

CANNON: Jerry?

AUDIENCE: I like Bill's comment about metaphor because I came to the conclusion a few years ago, that we in the arts tend to use metaphor obviously in our artistic products, but we tend not to use metaphor in our conversations, or at least not very creative metaphors.

Spending some time with our various dialogues over the next few years to talk about metaphor would be very helpful. There was a conference I was involved in a few weeks ago where they asked people to envision the future metaphorically. It was a very simple kind of go-around, but I thought it was revelatory to get people sharing things that they couldn't share at the table.

KAHN: Just as an outside observer, could I ask you to give me an example of some of the metaphors that came up or how that process really worked?

AUDIENCE: Well, we were talking about the traditions for artists and a colleague from the Bronx said he wanted the way for artists to be as smooth as a baby's butt. So that was a much better way of talking about it than I had for talking about it, you know..

AUDIENCE: That's a simile.

KAHN: It's sort of innate. *[Laughter]*

AUDIENCE: I'm sorry.

KAHN: But did that help in terms of freeing up some of your professional powers to bring to bear to the discussion? Did the metaphor help you to be as good an arts administrator as you were before you heard the metaphor?

AUDIENCE: It actually helped me imagine what the future might be, as opposed to what the picture is for artists today. That's what the metaphors did for me, and I think that that's what your stories do.

As I said earlier, a lot of our art conversation is about depending on indicative numbers and whatever, and not really understanding the metaphorical nature of the arts.

AUDIENCE: I think that's what the arts are. I think the arts provide us with a framework for that metaphor. We're not so good at explaining to people who really are interested, that that's what we are! You know theater is a way of developing an aesthetic sense of things. Museums are ways of communicating with people who speak different languages. And there's music.

We <u>are</u> the metaphor. The arts <u>are</u> the metaphor.

IVEY: I think the U.S. arts in their totality, really do stand as a nice metaphor for our democracy.

When I got involved in work as a folklorist and ethnomusicologist, one of the things that struck me right away is that if you want to find people who are both enthusiastic and knowledgeable about American vernacular music, you go to other countries. I've often wondered, you go to England or to Europe or to Japan, for expertise, including hardcore quality research on country music and blues and jazz and so on. And I always wondered why that was the case.

I think it was because the power of the metaphor resonates particularly well in other places. What people see or hear when they engage American art-making are examples of individual accomplishments, the likes of which would be difficult or impossible in other societies because of the character of the people who become accomplished, their backgrounds and so on, how unlike one another they can be.

When you see the representative art forms of many different groups, flourishing side by side in England as well as in this country. So you see the role of African Americans in art-making and so on. And the music of non-elite groups in our society doesn't break through perfectly by any

means, but it tends to break through better than in other places.

When folks around the world look at American art-making, they say, wow! That is the metaphor. This is where your individual talent can flourish and your expressive work that comes with your nationality or ethnicity, can also flourish.

We haven't found a way of bundling that power into a phrase or two that resonates with policymakers so that our own leadership gets art and the quality of our cultural landscape, the vibrancy of our cultural system, as being important to who we are to each other and who we are around the world.

And I would say one of the symptoms of our decline in reputation around the world within the last few years, beyond military excursions and so on, is simply the lack of attentiveness to the way our artistic metaphor is moved around the world. We've stopped paying attention to it. *Baywatch* is the most viewed television show by non-elite populations in the Middle East, for reasons I'd be happy to go into. They have a wonderful business model, a global business model. But we're not attending to that.

Finding the language to get people like my old boss, Bill Clinton, who never got it, though his life was transformed by art, he never really got it as a public policy goal. To get people like that to start having an, "aha!" moment around this would be terrific.

But I think the burden is on us to gather up that visionary statement, that motivating statement that will get people to understand.

KAHN: I am generally involved in the conversations of arts groups, foundations from the other side. It's a terribly intimidating process! Because you basically have to learn a different language from the language that you use with yourself when you're trying to create the one thing you think is worth doing.

In other words, it's not the lack of civility, people are trying very hard to listen to each other, but I'm not entirely sure that in the ways in which one feels one has to make one's case that it's worth funding, that one is allowed to be as instinctive or passionate or inarticulate as you may feel.

The process is what you do in order to get clear. I don't know until the final edits what the story is going to be really! Yet how can I justify that unless I can say, the meaning of the story is such and such a thing and it hits these points.

That's just part of the discourse. But I've wondered both in the direction of influencing the policy-makers and also welcoming the artists with conversations in both of those directions, could have a little bit more of that free-form...

IVEY: I thought somebody was going to attack for my, art promotes civility, by saying, here's my old agency, the NEA, involved in some of the most uncivil encounters around art making, in a period in which visual arts, which I described as being somewhat more benign than storytelling, was actually at the center, perceived to be incredibly uncivil. Whether it was Andreas Serrano or Robert Mapplethorpe, there were people who saw their work as every bit as uncivil an act as a cruel racist joke.

KAHN: Bill, I think if you were to go back over the history of all of the public statements about this, looking for the stories that people told about what that whole encounter meant, you probably wouldn't find a great variation in terms of the main positions. They were very polarized positions. There wasn't a human story behind this and how things can go wrong, at least in somebody's opinion, how someone can be offended and how an offense might not be meant. It remained sort of on the ideological side.

AUDIENCE: Adding onto that though, the Mapplethorpe/Serrano thing was offensive, and yet we have rap artists who have risen to a high level of financial wealth doing something that I find equally offensive in vilifying others.

KAHN: Wal-Mart won't sell their CDs unless they go in and edit out the nasty words. So they have issues also. There's pushback against them as well.

AUDIENCE: As I was listening to the stories, and also Bill as I was listening to you talk about our inability to use metaphor to communicate, I was thinking about, what is it that contributes to the breakdown of civility?

I was thinking about the inability to craft your own story and the expectations that others already know, and that feeds into it. And then, Bill, listening to you respond to the story about burying the Japanese soldier.

The other thing that I think is a major impediment in our current times to actual civility is taking offense on behalf of the perceived Other. "I don't mind it, but so-and-so else will."

More than anything in the work that I'm doing with community stories, theater productions and in the re-grant work of Alternate Roots, is

where the stop comes. It's that inability to seize first voice and say, honestly, I am offended by this and here are the reasons for it. It takes on the character of, I'm going to be offended on behalf of someone else, and it's deeply inauthentic.

KAHN: Civility comes in where you can say that with a relative feeling of confidence and safety that you will be heard, so then you can also then allow yourself to be confused about why you're feeling the way that you are. So often we may reach for institutional certainties in order to shore-up our own sense of doubt about, it doesn't feel right but I don't feel free to explore why.

I grew up in the fifties as a foregone conclusion in the eyes of my neighbors. They had their minds made up about who I was because of my father's politics, and so I was at age five, a Communist! An eight-year-old was absolutely certain that I was a Communist and I was absolutely certain that he was an idiot for calling me a Communist. If I had the words "capitalist lackey" in my vocabulary at five I might have used that in response! *[Laughter]*

The fact was that I was not allowed to know I even had a story, because it had been taken away from me by the conclusions of my neighbors that were in turn probably driven by fear. As a kid I thought it was hate. But I'm old enough looking back on it to realize, no it was fear, the fear of being associated with us, or whatever!

So that, being able to open up the conversation so that you can hear someone's objections and not be endangered by it, is what somehow it would be great to be able to build into this society.

IVEY: One of the things I commented on during my prepared remarks today was that the entire arts system has become excessively risk-averse. And I think this notion of not offending, is a part of the spectrum of risk-aversion that sometimes involves economic self-interest and sometimes involves another set of calculations.

But there is a tremendous amount of self-censorship in the pursuit of limiting risk. Right now if we could extract one thing from the entire arts system, that fear of taking risks, if we could pull that out, that would be extraordinarily helpful.

BRIEF BREAK

IVEY: I had the experience when I was a chairman. I came in and I was told, we need a new strategic plan; we did a new strategic plan. We needed initiative; we came up with something called Challenge America. We went around and talked to everybody about it. In other words we did a tremendous amount of listening in developing that plan – state arts agencies, lots of grantmakers, various service organizations representing clusters of nonprofit arts work and so on.

And that helped. Being a listener in formulating your policy helps. It brought in a level of support around the initiative when it needed to go first to the White House and then to Congress, that hadn't always been there for a dominant program.

And then the second thing that happened, I think somewhat by accident, we made community art grants with signatures out of the big project of Challenge America.

And those grants were unlike much of what the agency had done in its history because they were grants that said, tell us what you want to do in your community, with the arts and we will help you. It wasn't, here's a program with these eight guidelines and you either fit it or you don't. It was tell us what you want to do. The kinds of things that got funded were all over the place.

We also made the judgment that we would fund non-arts organizations that were nonprofits, to carry out arts projects, the YMCAs, etc. We went wherever the action was in the community.

It was extraordinarily successful, and more than we would have anticipated. That's why I say it was somewhat by accident. It was very useful politically when we were talking about what the Endowment was contributing to, or the public purpose, talking to members of Congress and so on.

Unfortunately, when the Republican team came in, they, as far as I can tell pretty much across the government, just didn't want to hear what we had been up to. So there wasn't a handoff of what we had learned from the Clinton/Gore thinking to the current administration.

Anyway, I think that what you are seeing is a fallback to the seventies model where they've got a big Shakespeare tour out big-footing it around the country and, look out America, here comes Shakespeare. We were talking to somebody out on the break about this who said, Shakespeare vouchers for a community, here if you want you want to do Shakespeare, here's $20,000, do something in your community around Shakespeare. And maybe it's in the schools, maybe it's in the theater, who knows?

But it was a surprisingly useful approach to grantmaking, and it was more popular and paid

bigger dividends and produced better projects than we would have anticipated going in. So to the extent that foundations have an opportunity to rethink some of this highly prescriptive strategic work and go more toward, hey we're here to help you do what you want to do, I think there would be a number of surprising good benefits, because it certainly worked for us.

I would love to say that it was me or that it was our team of career political people who had the foresight to see that this was a great idea. We stumbled into it and then were very pleasantly surprised that it was so successful. It's one of the reasons that the Challenge America program ended up getting written into the legislation as a separate account in the Interior bill. The new money all went to the Challenge America account for the NEA, so it was pretty powerful.

KAHN: Can I just add something to that Bill?

That's fascinating to hear because it reminds me of a similar situation that developed in the commercial sphere, in the early days of cable at Nickelodeon, when Nickelodeon was a franchise, if you want to call it that, but it was of no consequence whatsoever to Viacom. It was just a kid's channel, and they had nothing to go on except the experience of Sesame Street on public television.

The president of the company at that point, Geraldine Laybourne who has since gone on to many other things in the media, was told to do something, come up with something, and brand it. I don't even think they had a concept of branding going on yet. But you know, there are going to be a lot of cable stations out there, try to make this into something that people as they are going through with their remote would stop at because they know what it is.

She had an inspired idea! She said, we have a lot of studio time which nobody is using around here, and a small budget. I will give $20,000 and two days of studio time to anybody who would like to come up with the idea of a television show. And most of the people who took her up on it had very little experience in production, very little to lose, and they were close enough to being children themselves – they were in their twenties – that they just started to play.

And they created some very cheap programs that involved the use of a lot of goop. And the early days of Nickelodeon were based on the incredible recognizable energy of flinging goop, and of having fun around that and formatting things to make it work!

That was inspired leadership I think. It's not Shakespeare vouchers but the idea is to appreciate the process here and don't expect people to apply for grants, but just simply recognize that there is probably pretty good bets if given the chance to play and see what happens.

AUDIENCE: But that's philosophically, completely opposed to where we are right now in every way. *[Laughter]*

KAHN: Could you be a little more direct about that? I don't understand you.

AUDIENCE: It sounds great but how do you do it?

AUDIENCE: I want to say something here because I think something that a lot of us think a lot about, and it depends on, how do you change the relationship? How do you change the relationship between grantors and grantees? We do think of ourselves as two completely different sides of a huge gulf.

I rather like to think that we're all not-for-profit organizations. We all, if we focused, could have a mission, simply because otherwise we wouldn't quite know where we're going. Organizations that can fit with each other's missions and can find each other.

How do we change that relationship once we've found others on our mission? If we want to do good, that's good, that's fine. But how come we can't form a relationship to be a learning relationship?

Too many foundations, and I work for a foundation, have a very hard time with learning.

AUDIENCE: I guess what I struggle with and what I've always struggled with, for all nonprofits, but I've worked on both sides of the fence, on the fundraising side and on the grantmaking side. There's a huge difference between a nonprofit that doesn't have to raise money and a nonprofit that has to raise money. That's the biggest distinction.

The great thing about being on a foundation staff, I don't have to worry about the payroll every month, the way I did when I was running an organization. That's not to say that it's a perfect world, but it's a lot more perfect than the other.

My relationship with foundations over the years was often a decent one in the sense that I felt I had relationships where I could have conversations. But there always was the point of the ask, there always was the point of having to request money from somebody else.

And for me it is a question that I've always wanted to come here to from the foundation side was, what do you really need? Rent? Operating support? You tell me what you need, and that's what we really ought to be funding, rather than, what I see happening over and over again, foundations believe the hype, we've got the answer, we've got the silver bullet in the arts or education or whatever, you guys figure out how you're going to jump through the hoops, and we'll give you a little bit of money.

AUDIENCE: "What do you need?", doesn't factor in psychology though. I mean it does…

AUDIENCE: Well, the psychology never goes away.

AUDIENCE: No, but money is essentially, not in the discussion of the foundation. Money is like being given a tax free advantage.

AUDIENCE: If you believe that you may believe in Santa Claus. You're right technically, but…

AUDIENCE: But those are manmade structures that we put on top of that, and how does it have to be the structures and the psychology behind those structures in order to assess what they're talking about. Because just changing the philosophy of the funder, it's just reversing, it doesn't actually change it, you know what I mean?

AUDIENCE: Well, but you have to recognize going in, what foundations are. They are not these democratic institutions. Foundations always operate as if they have consistency. Their only consistency is looking at what has worked in the past and if they have happy grantees. They are not carrying anybody else along for the ride.

If somebody had asked me five years ago what I like most about being a foundation executive as opposed to being a candidate, I like it because I'm unaccountable. Comparatively.

AUDIENCE: Then when you come here next year and the year after that and the year after that, and the year after that, to have the conversation about the problems between foundations and grantees, right?

AUDIENCE: Right.

AUDIENCE: I want to address this in a way that ties it to radio broadcast, because I felt it was a wonderful way to start this discussion and the stories were very polished and very beautiful stories.

And one of the things that occurred to me in listening to them, particularly as you told of the Brazilian woman coming to your home, that what we're not putting on the table is a power issue, that is, the authorial voice. We alluded to it a little bit, a person talked about music and how that's chosen and so forth.

We all know what it takes to produce a program like that. It takes a certain kind of selection; it takes a certain kind of conceptual work; it takes asking the right questions of the people; it takes editing them so you get some coherency.

It takes all of that to produce something that is a mixed metaphor. That is to say, it's both the volitional story or language of the person who's telling it, and it's the volitional story of the person who's making it and putting it into a form that other people can grasp.

So there's these two things going on, and it's very important. We talked about personal stories – it seems to me, to talk power issues of authorial voice and perception.

Similarly, this gets at your issue about grantors as grantees. I've been on both sides of that equation as well for many years, and the best creative work I've ever done has been instances where the foundation officer that I was dealing with, would come at it from almost the perspective that you're talking about happened with Nickelodeon.

That is to say, where, for whatever miraculous reason, there was a funder who said, What do you want to do? Tell me about it. Tell me what your approach is. And said, Okay, I'll give you a little money, you come back to me and tell me what you've accomplished, and maybe we'll give you some more.

The absence of highly technical guidelines made that work possible. And I won't commend foundations by name, but most recently I was the recipient of a wonderful fellowship, where the way I got it was to describe on one page what I wanted to do, why I thought it was a meaningful thing to do.

I was so floored by that practice and that application, that it seemed to be from another planet, considering the guidelines that most grantees are now asked to work with.

Now talk about foundations including the National Endowment, and I've done a lot of panels for them, of which a grant recipient's personal metaphor may be actually inarticulable in the terms of the grant request, in terms of the proposal request. I've seen guidelines become increasingly, intensively filled with language that is very difficult for certain kinds of grantees or potential grantees to respond to. And often they

give up! They absolutely give up because they don't understand what's being asked of them.

They're not asked how much money they need, they're asked what percentage of your annual budget you intend to spend on nineteen things. That's what the application process is. Often they have no opportunity to talk to a person at all, they talk to the paper. The paper is then perused by reviewers who are inundated with those papers, and I have to say do not offer the opportunity to inquire further, the way that I've been offered when I was picking grants.

So it seems to me that the question of civility, if civility really relies on people hearing one another, that we're very far from that. It will take a very stringent commitment to stop articulating our missions and our guidelines in ways that are far outside the capability of a number of very worthy and very needy recipients.

It's really amazing to me to think that an organization would actually operate like that, because I have not seen this in the last fifteen years. I've seen things going exactly the opposite direction.

CANNON: Let me take one more comment. One thing that would be very useful is to maybe just talk about this process where you could see us going to that next step, because maybe that's the opportunity to make some of those changes.

AUDIENCE: Thinking back to your radio interviews, you were talking to your maid. There was a power differential, but the reason you got a story was because you gave her respect. You went into it saying, I really want to hear what you've got to say, I value what you have to say. And so I think maybe that the key is to go in and like you were also saying, to Bill, to say, we might be wrong. You're the expert, tell us, how you view this.

KAHN: You're touching on something that I wouldn't say is just simply a matter of respect. I would say it's touching on a very simple human fact, which is that nobody feels right unless they have a chance to give back.

That according somebody respect is simply saying, I'm going to give you an opportunity to give me something of value, which is your story. All aid goes wrong when it's uneven that way, when the recipient in some way can't feel worthy of being able to give back, in terms of the work or something like that.

So anyway, that's how I understand respect.

AUDIENCE: Bill, I was real excited by what you laid out in your keynote. You said in Challenge America, the NEA was going where the action was, whether that was the YMCA or an incipient arts organization.

Where do you see the action in terms of current opportunities now in the culture for drawing a bigger map, so we can see some of the relationships to cultural workers for the next ten years or twenty years?

IVEY: There are a couple of things I would say in response to that. I know the things that we would like to look at, in addition to the policy forum in Washington that I described, where you can connect with the twenty-five or thirty people that represent entities, that, 5-10 percent of the time is involved in cultural work even if they don't know it, bringing them together to talk about it. We discussed that this morning.

But I think some of the other things are, to really map how artists navigate is you look at two or three settings where artists have to navigate different systems and see where the gates are open and the gates are closed, so that we can collectively come up with some new ideas for where to intervene and how to intervene. That is something that's on the horizon. It could be done in communities, or it can be done on a national scale.

With creativity and risk we need to figure out that, personally, lends itself very much to a kind of solid, academic sound. Figure out how creativity works, risk as a component of creativity.

Then, find ways – and this can also be done at a community level or it could be done nationally – to build a policy community among for-profit art groups. We're going to try working with agents and managers who I mentioned in the question and answer session, because they're the ones in that arena that seem most invested in the livelihood, the career arc of artists.

Those are some things that constitute next steps, but let me back up and say something. I may be introducing a slightly different subject, but I'd love to hear from this audience. I'll tell you how it came to me while I was NEA chairman.

I was in the White House all the time. I'd be standing around, I'd be talking to Bill Clinton, he'd be leaning against the wall, drinking a diet Coke which was his deal. We'd talk about this or that. It gradually dawned on me that I had plenty of access to the White House and plenty of access to the President, but what I didn't have is what I would call credible access. You need both things.

If you look at the NEA back to its earliest days, even in the days right before it was created in the Kennedy Administration, you know culture in government, in our national government, is connected with administrations through the East Wing of the White House. It's through the First Lady's office, it's through the Social office. It's about parties and so on.

It does not have, the NEA does not have and has never had, a connection with the Domestic Policy Council which is in the West Wing, or with the National Security Council, which is in the West Wing.

Now, had Al Gore not only won the election, but prevailed, and had I stayed for another eighteen months with a good relationship to the White House, I was going to try to work on that. Find a way to pick up the NEA's portfolio and move it about seventy-five yards west into the West Wing, where as I like to say, real men make real policy even if those men are women. Someone like Condoleezza Rice is a very real policy maker, who also is a very real artist, who would not on CNN ever use her training as a pianist as a metaphor for what she is trying to accomplish from a policy perspective. She wouldn't dare do that.

Now this is where I'd like to get some reaction. What it meant was that the NEA was not like many other departments. It didn't have what I would call a full-blown policy presence among real policy makers.

I get the sense that that's also true for grantmakers who are in NGOs that have a healthcare agenda or… And that you're kind of the people, Oh yeah, here they come it's the Arts Institute, you want a hundred thousand? We'll give you a hundred thousand. Now we'll take away a hundred thousand.

It's all part of the light stuff. It's the fluff. It's what you get to do after you've done everything else, but you never get quite done with everything else.

The challenge for us, and it's a subtext to what I was saying before and it's that, we need to paint the picture of what a vibrant cultural landscape looks like, and at the same time talk about why it is critical to civility and to civil society, so that we can take our honorable place side by side with defense, transportation, health care. I don't mean in government, but I mean just in public policy thinking, whether it's in an NGO or in the government.

That's the test. That's a kind of preliminary bar that we have to get over before we can effectively get into, say, well we want this resource to go here or this resource to go there. It's really about establishing values in the minds of policy leaders so that the cultural agenda has the same weight and has the same significance as any of the other interventions that NGOs and government agencies want to make, in order to improve the quality of life.

That's why I think right now is a very good opportunity to back up and go through this process of definition and do some research and come forward with a new message. We've done that nonprofit culture thing, let's do something bigger that attacks the whole problem in a bigger way. At the end of the day we'll be just as important as all the others.

It's one of those things, I wish I had known it. I wish somebody had told me that when I first became chairman, because I would have worked on it right away. But it was a couple years and all of the sudden I thought... wait a minute!

And Bill Clinton was the most frustrating, because here's a guy whose life was transformed by his relationship with art. He's a really good saxophone player, he's not just a plunker like Richard Nixon was. He's really, really good, he was in a great band with great people when he was in high school; his music teacher was a surrogate father and a transforming character in his life.

Yet it has never tipped over into being a public policy agenda item. Now I don't know if they polled on it and it didn't poll well, or I don't know if he just instinctively can't take something that is so important in elevating someone's personal quality of life, and translate the personal into the public policy agenda. But he certainly couldn't. Well, I won't go on because I want to hear from you.

AUDIENCE: You talked to him about it? You tried?

IVEY: I tried to talk to him about policy. He and Ricky Skaggs and I did a little show in one of the Smithsonian's Theaters the morning of the Millennium celebration. Ricky played and sang. I interviewed him about his relationship to music, what it meant to community, what it meant to his life. All of the Clintons were there. And they were supposed to only stay for twenty minutes, but they stayed for forty-five minutes!

So I thought, wow I'm really getting through to him! You know, we're talking about community and art and stuff.

So I was with the President the next day. I said, wow, that thing with Ricky Skaggs and all about the meaning of Bluegrass and Appalachian music and what it means to the community and how they're bringing it into schools...

He said, "Yeah, that was really fun, you know?" Like no willingness to engage that as an interesting policy issue.

That kind of thing happened again and again. I don't know, maybe it happens to you. Maybe when you go to the chairman of your board…

AUDIENCE: I think it's really powerful when the artists that have found a way to be commercially viable work as arts educators and how important it is.

Do you think they are ready – and maybe this will come out in some of your conversations in the future – to do this kind of advocacy? To gather up all of the arts and culture whether it makes money or doesn't make money, and have this conversation?

IVEY: What do you mean by "they"? Do you mean "they" the artists?

I think of it, and my mind can be changed on this because it's not a question I ask, but my thinking was that this is a question for policy, for leaders in the arts, in terms of what you want to embrace and where and how do you want to engage, and it's a question for policy makers.

I would hope that artists can set the sense of need or priorities, but I don't know that we have to think about artists as being the implementers of this.

KAHN: Well I think that in terms of influencing policy in general, let me just share a fantasy that I'm having here, based on the fact that maybe your stealth weapon is the arts as opposed to the grantmaking.

What if for instance, you worked it out so that a storyteller, or let's say a producer of a story *(laughter)* – I told you it was a fantasy – could become artist in residence at the House or the Senate for a year. His or her job would be to get each of the legislators who is willing, to talk about their relationship to that aspect of their lives where art really happened. In other words get them personally invested.

Now, the chances are very good that they're going to have this compartmentalized mind, but I'm willing to bet that you could get enough of these people to see the arts agenda personal enough that they might start to invest a little of their own emotional capital in it.

Of course, once you've got your own money involved, then you start getting more serious about something.

AUDIENCE: Do you give away a lot of money to particular public charities and have relationships with them? I think one of the issues is not just sharing power, and it rarely concerns GIA, is the dynamics between corporate, really good, good program officers.

It's been very hard to create a safe environment to have that discussion. I speak at risk in a meeting like this, because I could say something and a funder could say, "Oh, screw you!" But the reality is, we're all in this ship that's got a lot of holes in it, but together. Unless we figure out where the power share is going to be, we're really going to lose, we're losing share.

I think the strategies for survival that often go on in those public funders and private funders of flavor of the month, three-year initiatives, etc., drives a field crazy because it's like you set something up that could still be a learning environment, but it takes more than three years to figure out what you've done wrong and what needs course correction, and suddenly it's all over.

And then there's all this incredible work going on about research, and you say, "well, how do we respond to that? I'm losing market share."

So how do we start rowing together, because the ship's still got a lot of holes in it.

But it is about this power discussion that I think we all have to think about. We have to be very honest about people who are scared for their own position, very frequently, if they push too hard.

IVEY: It goes back to my risk aversion notion, which is all over the arts system. I do think that everyone is afraid because the total pie seems to be either stuck at one size or maybe even shrinking a little bit. The sector itself isn't getting smaller, is it? It's maybe growing a little. So you've got a real disconnect there which I think is creating tremendous pressures on all the players.

And that's why I said before, I think really the nonprofit sector is probably at the moment more challenged than for-profit in terms of finding the creative elbow room to take risk and open gates and so on.

I kind of blew past this in my speech, but I think if we take a bigger bite of the policy apple, if

we say, yes we're about all of the nonprofit arts, the refined arts that are mostly nonprofit, and we're also about arts that are for-profit. We're also about policy on cable television. We're about media regulation.

I don't think it's like, to keep the metaphor alive, you bite the apple and it's got money in it. That's not a very good analogy. But I think what it does is, it lays out an opportunity to walk in to the folks who are the gatekeepers to money and influence, with an agenda that is more parallel to what you would talk about in healthcare or in social services, or those kinds of things. But I think ultimately that's where we're going to have to be.

I've said this a couple of times, and no one will like this, but I'm going to say it anyway. If I were a conspiracy theorist, and I were to say, I want to construct a situation in which the arts industry can pretty much go their own way, and there won't be any claim of the public interest in the face of sanctions in intellectual property rights, protection of revenue streams, and so-on.

The way you would do it, is you'd say, let's create this nonprofit arena and put it over here. And let's take all the smart people and say, you guys go over here. Leave us alone to extend copyright, to move our arts products all over the world without any notion of how it serves the public interest or not, etcetera, etcetera.

Now, that didn't happen, but the effect is somewhat like that. In other words, you've got a big sector of the society, the art system, but we have been, partly by choice and partly by circumstance, mostly working in that nonprofit sector. I ran a nonprofit organization, I ran a federal agency, But it's all been within that world.

If the smart people say, we're going to do something bigger, eventually that will pay dividends of the kind we want. That is it's going to make the cultural enterprise, the enterprise of creating a vibrant cultural landscape, more important and more like the other big investments that we've made in the wellbeing of our society.

AUDIENCE: What you're talking about is cultural, not an economic impact. It's not enough that we would say, look how big we are, you can't ignore us. But look at the impact we're having on American life, the quality of life in the community. That's a whole other issue. It's well beyond the aggravations and challenges of bringing up the numbers.

AUDIENCE: Can I say something about a model that I think is one of the best models I've ever seen for achieving what we've been talking about as stability, is that I talk a lot in terms of parity, of discourse, parity of languages, metaphors that work on both sides of the equation.

The Illinois Arts Council for a few years had a staff person, a dedicated staff person whose job was to work with potential grantees, to teach them how to fill out all the forms; to teach them what the meanings of all those big words were; to help them work on their budget and break them down in ways that grant officers could understand.

And what happened, first of all it was, as far as I could tell, a very respectful dialogue that went on, and that there was no kind of one-down-ness perceived on either side of the equation.

The results were amazing in terms of the quality of grants, and most particularly the proliferation of grants from people of color who had heretofore been tacitly excluded because they didn't have the wherewithal to fill out those forms.

Okay, so you look at that model and say, this is a fantastic, working, successful model, for achieving all the goals we've been talking about here on a small level, not a federal level, but certainly on a state level. And what happened to it? The minute the budget began to be cut, that was one of the first staff jobs cut.

That was not because it was a risky project or a risky intervention, it was because it was too successful. It was bringing in too broad a diversity of grants for the organization to deal with. It was bringing simply too complex a cultural landscape if you will, for people to deal with.

So I said this because (A), I was extremely excited about that business and I personally volunteered to work with some people on it. But secondly I think that sometimes we do ourselves a favor by thinking on a smaller level simultaneously with thinking about national initiatives and positioning the arts nationally. There are real things that can be done very locally, and within a very small private foundation, that would help to move forward the very agendas that I think we have.

CANNON: This conversation's taken so many turns. I wanted to piggyback around the power discussion and bring it back to civility. This theme that was running from both the stories that we heard on the recordings as well as throughout the conversations that are happening

now, around the power discussions, is the issue that probably is unpopular, but and/or that many of us don't want to deal with, is issues of privilege within our cultures and within our institutions, and in our personal lives.

That we deal with that, I think is a really core factor in that we are consistently tripping on through each conversation.

So I just wanted to put that out. It's the other piece that I don't think that, with power and privilege, we express within these conversations that I think is critical to really digging deep into why we keep on stumbling.

AUDIENCE: I've given a lot of thought to how one's neighbors in the organizations, ways of looking at it that would change that dynamic. I think of foundations much like I think of labor unions. You've got too many friends, you've got too many enemies, you've got too many things at once, and you don't like it and you've got to get the hell over it.

I never was able to pull that off. I always wanted to pull that off. There's no more comfortable job than program manager. They're good jobs. And I think people stay in them for a long time. They often stay in them too long.

The other thing I always wanted to do was you read about foundations wanting to evaluate all their grantees, seriously evaluating themselves. Most of the reports I've read about foundations evaluating the programs to help funder grantees themselves raise issues about how they administer their grants.

AUDIENCE: I just want to place a different term on some of this. In some cases what I think I perceive is the potential for more synergy is private and public, but also national and regional, state and local funders who are talking together more.

I'll see a situation where it really is a local resource that's not valued by its local arts agency or state, but a national foundation sees its value within a context, but there's no conversation. They swoop in, they anoint that group.

It goes the other way as well. There's all kinds of cross-purpose that sometimes I think the opposite could be happening. We could be putting both introspecting kinds of support together, but also thoughtful support that complements and helps them grow in ways that we don't. So I would love to see more conversation at that level.

CANNON: Good observation. Anyone else?

AUDIENCE: This has been a great conversation. One of the sidebar conversations I've had with somebody as Ray was talking about his talk, was I really love this, this is really fabulous. The payout for me kind of plays back to more money for nonprofit organizations.

I think we're such a prisoner of that, that against this growing sector that far outstrips the resources of anybody to address it anymore, that in my perspective it generates more and more rules and subcategories to greater triage and to push people out. I feel it's so much a driver to all of the pathologies that we're trying to deal with.

I think back to doing some work with people at the Hauser Center at Harvard, that I've been doing a lot of work for a number of people in the public sector. One of the people there, Mark Moore, makes the point that to do something in the public sector versus the private sector, if you could put rules or guidelines for doing that, one is that if there is an economic failure, a market failure, that the market's not going to provide that particular experience.

But the other issue is if there's an issue of justice or fairness. It seems to me that the issues have been about the market failure of nonprofits and the need to support them, that we've done so successfully, that it's not a really compelling argument anymore that symphonies are all going to go away if we quit funding them. I don't think it's a compelling public argument, and I don't think it's compelling even within the private foundations. There's always things that I think are much more critical, much more important.

Back to your stories, one of the things to me that was really compelling, was underneath them is a sense of justice or fairness, that in a democracy, rises above as a larger purpose than just, I'm trying to support my sector or my organization.

In a field like the arts that has so much value, to actually use that value as a rationale for more money, to maybe short-circuit it, the power of it. How do you get people to understand the power of that. Hopefully, they'll understand, but it's very tough.

AUDIENCE: Part of the power issue is where leadership acknowledges historically, did Ford and Rockefeller really value the arts? A sense that we were...that there was some larger vision and that people weren't sure where they were going but, people were thinking about it.

Then, after the NEA's fall, the field has grown dramatically. What were fledging operations are now mature organizations. And there's leadership there.

All I'm saying is that I think that there are great opportunities to look at the history, look at the future. We are collectively missing this larger vision for the next phase of art. This is really, I think, as Michael was talking about justice, I'm not sure we really think of social and economic justice and where arts and culture fits into that issue. If it doesn't, then we're really losing that next phase of opportunity.

It's not just about money, it's about perception, it's about privilege has its responsibilities. And I think that it could be actually a great move of the new leaders.

AUDIENCE: Actually, Marco's comment about justice resonates with me as well, A lot of the organizations we work with are very small. Most of them are involved in traditional arts in one way or another. But we have developed such a vocabulary in private and public funding agencies that tackling all of these issues of organizational development, of wanting to make small things bigger and better and more structured and more permanent.

Where I think we're missing the boat is some of these organizations, it's not about organizational development. A lot of these really small ones, particularly culturally specific or whatever you want to call a lot of these organizations, their needs were not being met by the ordinary market. They came into being for very specific reasons. And a lot of them are about cultural justice, for lack of a better word.

For us, one of the frustrations has been trying to break out of that cul-de-sac of organizational development type of effort, which we do a lot of. But in the last few years we've been working more and more with non-arts organizations or organizations that combine arts with lots of other things.

That is a new big organization we're seeing more and more of, but for us also, part of the issue of building alliances is precisely this issue of advancing this case for the value of culture to other sectors. It's becoming increasingly a very big stumbling block for us.

I go to other affinity group meetings. A couple a years ago I went to a whole immigrant and refugee discussion of community organizers working with all sorts of groups, and talked about culture all the way through it.

Then I went up after and talked to them, and I said, have you thought about developing a more intentionally cultural program? Oh, well we have arts when we have our board meetings, and we bring in dancers. And I mean that's how they thought of it. After they'd just been talking about it for two hours. It blew my mind! But I do think that's one of our biggest obstacles to success in the next couple of years. We've got to get in!

AUDIENCE: My take on this, I think the drop in funding for the NEA was really just a post Cold War withdrawal of support for cultural work. And other things that had a Cold War metaphor, like NASA and space things, they also took a hit at exactly the same time.

And these were things... and unfortunately, we're in an environment in which even our current president has used the word "cultural struggle" in talking about this war on terrorism and so on. In the 9/11 Commission report, there's a little section that's in chapter seventeen, I think, about culture. But the only real specific recommendations in terms of an action to take around the cultural piece of this, is Richard Clarke's suggestion that we reopen embassy libraries around the world that have been closed because of security concerns.

Well, I think the reason there aren't more recommendations is that culture is so far off the radar screen of policymakers that even when we say there's a cultural problem, nothing comes to mind. It doesn't convert into a list of ten action items because they haven't thought about them at all!

And it's just an indication that's the bar, the initial bar that we have to get across. But I think that we can. And this notion of economic fairness, social justice, individual qualities.

As I said today, if we can succeed half as well with whatever the next thing is, as the nonprofit matching grant intervention succeeded, we're all going to look like geniuses. Because that was a successful cultural intervention. I've never read one more dramatic.

KAHN: I'm really trying to synthesize where the conversation seems to be going.

Very briefly, just listening to all the problems that you think are unsolvable right now, in the context of how you do your daily job, maybe the answer is they are unsolvable because of the way that the circumstances force you to look at them. That there comes a time when the paradigm changes.

I think about the fact that I began my career as a Russian scholar and I'm friends with Yevgeny Yevtushenko who was the perfect example of the artist as hero in the society. He published his latest book of poems in 100,000 copies, 150,000 copies have sold internationally. People in Russia can look into the conscience of the nation and there was a tradition that went as far back as Pushkin and Lermontov in the 19th century, when that's what the poet stood for.

You could say we came close to this maybe in the sixties with rock stars which stood for embodying the values––and I don't know what the funding situation nationally was for the arts when Bob Dylan was getting started, but he didn't need it obviously, he also became a vast commercial success.

Somehow, when the problem is unsolvable, then you've got to rethink the problem. Ask yourself, why is it really impossible to make the case that the arts are important to this society? Why are the arts not as important in my own organization as they should be? If you can come up with an answer to that in terms of an energy or a vision, then maybe that's the start of the paradigm change from your level.

But before that, I don't see any institution voluntarily offing itself, you know, or changing its own procedures, if it doesn't absolutely have to, it isn't driven by something.

CANNON: I think we're going to end. I'd like to propose that we thank Tony and Bill for opening both our hearts and our minds.

END