

2000 GEORGIA HUMANITIES Lecture

## **Rediscovering America**

By William R. Ferris

Georgia Humanities Council Atlanta, Georgia

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Thank you, Jamil. It's absolutely wonderful to be here. I've already hugged and shaken hands with family and old friends and new friends, and it's great to be in a train station. What better place. I thought coming down with Nancy Sturm, the director of our Enterprise Office: we're taking a night train to Georgia. And I've thought about traveling down the Georgia roads and the great voices that have come out of this state. Words of Otis Redding, Joel Chandler Harris, Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., Flannery O'Connor, Alice Walker, Henry Grady, Margaret Mitchell, Robert Woodruff, Ted Turner. I could stand here an hour and recite the legacy of Georgia and what it's done, not only for the nation, but for the world. But we didn't come here for that.

I want to thank you, Jamil, for your kind introduction. Jamil brought to the State of Georgia the top number one leadership voice of state councils where he was head of the Federation and was a formidable voice for the nation, for the humanities, and it was to be expected that when he left that office, he would come to one place and that is Georgia. And we are here to salute you for the work you're doing in Georgia. Jamil and his fine staff, as you well know, have taken an already outstanding humanities council and have made it a global institution and when they get through with this encyclopedia and other projects, it's going to be a familiar place no matter where we travel in the world. I want to also congratulate board chair Tom Dasher, vice chair Ben Harris, and the wonderful board of directors who are leading the humanities for the State of Georgia. You're doing great work and we're all learning from you.

And I'm especially honored to be here for the honors ceremony for the Governor's Awards. What an incredibly distinguished group of people we are here to recognize today. Their dedicated work in the trenches of communities around this state is making a difference and it's an honor to be here with you to recognize them. Professor John Robert Brewer, Dr. Frank Brown, Mrs. Mozelle Daily Clemmons, Dr. Tim Crimmins, Mrs. Joy Jinks, Dr. Patricia Marks, Mr. James P. Marshall, Jr., Dr. Edward Weldon. I salute each of you and your families for the decades of commitment to teaching, preservation, to scholarship, theater, folklore, and in at least one instance, to Swamp Gravy. Who says that learning can't be fun?

We just had a fabulous meeting with Governor Barnes and his office who will be joining us a little later for lunch. Governor Barnes is doing the Lord's work on behalf of education as we speak. And his education reform package is being put forward for the State of Georgia. Georgia shows the nation how to commit to education and the humanities and those are interlocked. One does not exist without the other.

And I want to personally recognize Governor Barnes and the entire state legislature of Georgia for the generous, historic support that they are making to the humanities here in Georgia. The \$175,000 for the state council, plus the \$500,000 for the new Georgia online encyclopedia, plus

\$95,000 for cultural tourism is an extraordinary historic gift of support from the state to the humanities. Governor Barnes and the top elected officials in Georgia have expressed their confidence in the state humanities council through their support for the Georgia Center for Character Education. And these noble public servants are showing every citizen in this nation how essential the humanities are to our daily lives.

In my travels across the country, I have learned first hand that there is a deep thirst for knowledge in this country. A thirst for the kind of knowledge that you and the humanities here in Georgia are providing for your citizens. I believe deeply that people, all people all around this globe define themselves through the places where they're born and where they grow up and each of us in this beautiful building today carries within us in our heart of hearts what Faulkner called his "little postage stamp of native soil". It's to this place that each of us goes to find our clearest, deepest sense of identity. Eudora Welty calls it her sense of place and she writes, "it is by knowing where you stand that you are able to grow and judge where you are. One place comprehended can make us understand other places better. Sense of place gives us equilibrium, extended, it is a sense of direction, too." That's what the humanities are about. Connecting to that sense of place. Connecting to Georgia and to every community in this great state.

The question is how do we understand, how do we connect to place and to each other? Through education, through stories, through memory. By preserving the past, we explore the future. I have in my own personal memory, very fond memories of growing up on a farm outside of Vicksburg, Mississippi. And in the summers, I would run barefoot in the fields outside an old Black church, Rosehill Church, where I attended ceremonies every first Sunday. There was not a hymnal in the church. It was all passed on the each generation from memory. I rode horses bareback and I learned to love the people of that community who were my first teachers. My hometown of Vicksburg, Mississippi is a community where Jewish, Lebanese, Chinese, Irish, Italian, Greek, and many other ethnic traditions have lived in families for more than a century. Diversity is a fact of life in Vicksburg just as it is a fact of life here in this beautiful, expanding city of Atlanta.

My grandfather used to tell me that he had been raised in the aftermath of the Civil War on cornbread and recollections. Now I didn't bring any cornbread with me but I always carry recollections in my back pocket. And I'm reminded of a story of a Civil War general from Georgia. General Beauregard who, as the Civil War was about to unveil, was walking down the street in his little Georgia town where he grew up. And he was in his new Confederate uniform, proudly standing and walking down the street. And he was approached by a lovely, young Southern belle with her parasol twirling. And she walked up to General Beauregard and looked at him and she says, "General Beauregard. General Beauregard." And he says, "yes ma'am. What can I do for you?" She said, "General Beauregard, do you think we can whup them Yankees?" He says, "honey child, don't you worry your pretty little head. We can whup them Yankees with corn stalks." So she twirled her little parasol and said, "thank you, General Beauregard," and walked away. Four years later, General Beauregard was back on the street, a little worse for the wear. His Confederate uniform had holes in it, it was faded and he was walking with a cane. And up the street came that same Southern belle, a little worse for the wear, too. Her parasol had holes in it and had also faded. But she spotted General Beauregard. She walked up to him. She says, "General Beauregard. General Beauregard." He says, "yes

ma'am. What can I do for you?" She says, "General Beauregard. I thought you said we could whup them Yankees with corn stalks." He says, "yes ma'am. But those sons of bitches wouldn't fight with corn stalks."

Now that story is a key because when we deal with education and the humanities, we are not fighting with corn stalks. We're fighting with weapons for education and for the future of this nation that will be victorious and increasingly, are going to be locked in to every American's life through family stories. Every American should know what Lincoln said at his Gettysburg address in 1863. And what Martin Luther King, Jr. said at the Lincoln Memorial in 1963. No American should forget how Frederick Douglass stood up and fought for his freedom and how 100 years later, Rosa Parks sat down on the front of the bus and fought for hers. Through stories like these, we connect to other people and their cultures. If we forget those stories, we have everything to lose.

Civil War historian James McPherson who will be our Jefferson lecturer next month, the highest honor we give a scholar, has warned that we as Americans confront historic amnesia as a danger for our future. As the sources for understanding our national past deteriorate and vanish, we will gradually lose our sense of identity, our capacity to understand who we are and what we are, how we got that way and why. At the National Endowment for the Humanities, we are working to preserve those sources for understanding. It's about healing. It's about linking arms, as Reverend King and many others have done to build bridges across troubled waters, to borrow Aretha Franklin's phrase, and to build a better, brighter future than we found when we came here.

Our mission is to bring the humanities into every home, into every heart in the nation. We do that by awarding grants to schools, to colleges, universities, to libraries, museums, archives, public radio and television stations, and these grants go directly to cultural heritage projects, to teacher training, to scholarly research, to public programs. For thirty-five years, the National Endowment for the Humanities has fostered excellence in individual and institutions.

The Endowment, let me remind you, is a mouse that roared. It is a small federal agency with an annual budget, sit tight, of \$115 million. I would venture to say there's not a community college in the State of Georgia that does not have a larger annual budget. If we break it down by Americans, each of us pays roughly 48 cents a year to run these programs. I call that a real travesty. If we are investing in the future of this great nation and we neglect the humanities, where can we go?

And you are doing just the opposite. You are holding up the mantel of Georgia for the nation. To say, it is absolutely essential to build on our future by building and investing in Georgia. How are you doing that? You're doing it with a project that is very, very close to my heart. The *New Georgia Encyclopedia*. This is a groundbreaking work in a number of ways. First, it's a major private-public partnership between the public and private sector. It joins together the Georgia Humanities Council, the University of Georgia Press, the University System of Georgia and the Office of the Governor. You join those great institutions with the private sector partners who are growing daily and include Georgia Power Foundation and BellSouth, and you have a powerful historic union. Now, this encyclopedia is breaking new ground in terms of intellectual endeavors because it is reaching out to literally the globe. If you have a computer and you're

online, you can be in Toyko or Tel Aviv and you can pull up this encyclopedia and learn about Georgia. You don't have to take that night train here. You can travel on the internet. This will be the first encyclopedia ever conceived as an online project. It will be comprehensive with information on every aspect. From the water you're drinking to the bricks in this great building. Science, technology, health care, music, the arts, and every place. Talk about sense of place. Fort Valley, Albany, wherever you're from or live, it's going to be in there. This is going to be an asset to schools, to colleges, to libraries and to all Americans, not just the people in Georgia, but to people all over the globe. I know the fund-raising under Jamil and others' leadership is going extremely well and I'm hear to say continued success and you have total and full support in this effort. The online encyclopedia and the partnership that has created it is a model for the rest of the nation. As is the Georgia Center for Character Education. This center again demonstrates the power of partnership. The Governor, the state legislature, Georgia Power and the Georgia Humanities Council are working together to help communities around the state build a better future and they are developing an ability to foster respect for others, as well as yourself. To develop a sense of good citizenship and the humanities are the core curriculum. They are the road or the railroad, however you want to envision it, out of troubled waters. And the council is using the great stories of history, of literature, of philosophy to spark thought and reflection in people all over this state.

And the National Endowment for the Humanities, I am personally proud to say, has been supporting Georgia's humanities programs throughout its 35 years. Over the last five years, institutions and individuals in Georgia have received over \$13 million from the endowment for projects that helped reserve your heritage and the nation's heritage. We gave \$45,000 to Georgia College for a Flannery O'Connor literary archive. This is her alma mater. We gave half a million dollars to Spelman College for a survey of the archive of holdings of twenty-nine historically black colleges and universities. My first teaching for two years was at Jackson State College in Mississippi, one of those colleges. And I know very well how powerful and important they are for the nation. And Georgia and Atlanta have some of the finest schools in the nation. Another half million dollars has been given for the preservation of 2,300 historic Georgia newspapers. I don't know if you've read these papers with titles like *Rough Rice's Ready Reporter* and the *Twiggs' County New Era*. But these tell the early history of Georgia and they are being catalogued and microfilmed and shared with the public. We've also invested nearly \$1 million for the Martin Luther King, Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social Change to reproduce Dr. King's words on print, on tape and online.

And like the Georgia council, we at NEH are seeking public-private partnerships and where better to find a leader to head our Enterprise Office than Atlanta, Georgia. Nancy Sturm, please stand up and be recognized. Nancy has come home with me today. Nancy is shaping initiatives for state councils and NEH that expand this great partnership for the humanities. We, under her leadership, have launched and the key person who is putting this together, Patti Van Tuyl's brother, is with us today. Mr. Van Tuyl would you stand and be recognized. There he is.

This book is transforming the nation. It's all about you. When we study history, studies have shown that the least exciting and inspiring way and place to study history is in the classroom. The most exciting place we learn about history is at the dinner table. That's where we're coming to meet you. We want your stories online. This book is online with a lot more. You can

download it or you can order it or you can get it at any public library. There are two copies in every public library in this nation. *My History is America's History* and this project is focused on family stories. The stories – let me see a show of hands on how many of you have taped at least an hour with parents, grandparents, with family. Let's see a show of hands. That's a great show. But it's not enough. When I come back, I want to see every hand go up and I want to see those stories online. You can put your family's stories, your photos, your genealogy and create your own web site and through that, connect to America's history. We have put this project together because we believe that stories like these family stories link all of us, not only to each other but to the nation. Now this project was launched in Thanksgiving this past year with a cover story in *Parade Magazine*. The web site if you're online is simply myhistory.org, and we see this as a virtual front porch where you can sit in your electrical rockers and tell your stories to each other. And new stories are being added each day. My history, one word, dot org.

My old and dear friend, Alex Haley, used to tell me how when he was a child, every summer at his family home in Henning, Tennessee, the aunts would come back home and sit on the front porch in their rockers. They would dip snuff and tell the family stories and little Alex was leaning down behind them, listening. He said he had one aunt, as the fireflies were coming out, who could drop a firefly at ten feet. And he was more interested in that than the stories. But he didn't forget the stories of Chicken George and Kunta Kinte. And those stories led him many years later to create the great chronicle of *Roots* that has inspired all of us to look and to preserve family history as we're doing with My History.

Now these projects, from My History to the words of Martin Luther King, to the preservation of Georgia's newspaper are part of the endowment's central theme, which we call "Rediscovering America". We're Americans, but we know all too little about our own family, about our communities, and about our nation. And as part of this effort to bring Americans back home to their own community and to the nation's history, we are launching ten regional humanities centers around the nation that will be endowed institutions set up to help every American reconnect through research, through teaching and public initiatives that will affect all of us in the future. This is our gift to the nation for the next century and the millennium. And in each of these regions, these humanities hubs will work closely with the state councils and with the infrastructure of libraries, museums and schools. We are reaching out electronically. We have only to look at Atlanta. I sometimes speculate, if you want to think about the South, let's think about – we're taking a trip from Atlanta and we're going to a far distant city. So we get on Delta Airlines and we arrive in that capital. We go to the Holiday Inn, check in. We are interested in the news so we turn on CNN and we're kind of tired and thirsty so we drink a Coke. And, as we are starting that, we hear a knock on the door and there's a package that's come overnight for us via Federal Express. Now, as a Southerner, I find it very interesting that every one of those steps is a Southern blue chip, corporate reality that came out of down home cornbread and recollections philosophy. Whether it's CNN, Coca-Cola, Holiday Inn or Federal Express, these are homegrown institutions that became global empires based on technology. We have only to look at how Southerners in every aspect of technology, whether it's being the head of America Online or various other enterprises, MCI WorldCom. Southerners are shaping the future of the world and if you do not get on that technology train, believe me, you will not make the trip to the end of the line. And the humanities are doing this. As Jamil is showing with the encyclopedia.

At the NEH, we have a monthly electronic newsletter, *NEH Outlook*. You can pull up our web site at [neh.gov](http://neh.gov) and ask for that electronic newsletter and look at our work. We're also linking, because K through 12 is where the problems begin, and we are focusing major resources on classroom teaching, in part through a new web site called Edsitement. This is web site that has a powerful search engine linked to 70 web sites. The Library of Congress, the Smithsonian. So a teacher in Albany, Georgia who wants to look up the Freedom Singers who came out of Albany or Margaret Mitchell here in Atlanta or Reverend King, can simply put in that name and hit search and within seconds, it sweeps those 70 web sites and gives you what's on them. Then the teacher can say, I'm a 10<sup>th</sup> grade teacher here in Albany and I want a 10<sup>th</sup> grade syllabus on Reverend King with the Georgia teaching standards applied. Or you could be in Le Plant, South Dakota or San Francisco and get the same response. So K through 12 teachers can access and get quality teaching resources through Edsitement. You need to come through our web site and you can pluck off all of these and visit them. But this is a peer reviewed web site that allows you the very best web sites like Ed Ayres' *Valley of the Shadow*, the Civil War web site that looks at two communities on either side of the Mason-Dixon line. It's one stop shopping for teachers.

We're also launching schools for the new millennium because we have to transform the entire school, the entire school system community by community which Governor Barnes and many of you are involved in. Schools for the new millennium are doing that around the country. We have twenty prototypes and they tend to be in underserved, poor areas. In Memphis, Tennessee, the Booker T. Washington school is partnered with the Civil Rights Museum looking at the history of civil rights in that historic community. Navaho students in the Southwest are looking at their myths. Ethnic communities in Milwaukee are doing the same. Using partnerships and technology to build a better future for education.

Why are we doing this? Now, I want you to listen carefully. This is my mantra. Over the next decade, this nation will have to find over 2.2 million new teachers for our K through 12 classrooms. That's the first problem. The second, and this is good news for us. Because when we look at K through 12, 2/3 of that curriculum is the humanities. We're not talking about putting in an arts course or putting in a literature course, if you go to school in this nation, you're going to study how to read and how to learn literature and history and the humanities are two-thirds of that core curriculum. So when we come up with solutions like Edsitement, like My History, like schools for the new millennium, we are bringing a solution to the heart of the matter. Because if we're going to have a future, and your governor understand this, we have got to invest in education in the broadest sense, not only in the classroom, but lifelong learning, so that every American is being educated every day of his or her life. When you leave the classroom, you continue to read with library programs, with public radio and television, with all of the rich infrastructure that the humanities offer. And I deeply believe that the places, the memories, the values that we hold are precious and should not, cannot, will never be lost. And as we embrace the brave, new worlds of technology, we have to harness that technology to serve us, to enrich our lives through the humanities. We should never be afraid of it or sheltered from it. We should embrace it and put it to work as Jamil is doing to deliver Georgia history and culture to the world, we harness that technology. We master the humanities through technology.

Now, when I talk about cultural treasures, as a folklorist, I think of the voices that we hear, that we record, and I'm often in my student's conversations with classroom experiences, reciting a

proverb from West Africa that says, “when an old man or woman dies, a library burns to the ground”. And that is what we’re about. We have those libraries in this very room. One of the first things in the 15 lists –

[END OF TAPE ONE, SIDE A]

- *My History* says is that we should all be keeping a diary. You say, well, who’s interested in me? I’m just a teacher. I’m chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities. Who cares about that? Whoever you are, 100 years from now, whatever you’ve put in that ledger is going to be a priceless document. We have to begin.

Now, in looking at culture as a folklorist, for me, one of the richest areas in the South and in the nation, is music. We had the Grammy Awards last night. Many people like my daughter know far more than I about music. But music is a universal language. No matter where we go, people know and love the Southern musical tradition. So I thought I would conclude appropriately with the blues. And before I start, I’d just like to say that since coming here earlier today, I’ve had lots of requests and I’m going to sing anyway. I’d like to dedicate this to the loveliest lady in the humanities worlds in Georgia. She’s actually here in this room with us today. I won’t call her name because she knows who she is. This is one of the most widely sung of those early country blues. We talk about the country blues. We talk about the isolated, rural worlds. And verses that sang like, I’m sitting here all alone in my one-room country shack. My woman has left me and won’t be back. It’s a beautiful image of that loneliness and isolation. And this is one that was widely sung and recorded. It’s called, *Baby, Please Don’t Go*.

Baby, please don’t go  
Say, baby, please don’t go  
Baby, please don’t go down to New Orleans  
You know I love you so

They got me way down here  
They got me away down here  
They got me way down here on a ball and chain  
Treat me like a dog

Thank you.

Now, I’m going to take you on a quick train ride musically through the South. The blues was a part of a rich musical legacy coming out of Africa just as country music came out of Europe and the British Isles. The song that tells a story, the ballad. And the father of country music, of course, was Jimmy Rogers, the singing brakeman, who was known for his railroad songs. And he was followed by one of my heroes, Hank Williams from Alabama. And Hank sang about the movement from country to city and a white working class and how on a Saturday night in places like Nashville, they would gather for a beer and dance at the honky tonks. And he created a whole body of singing and music known as honky tonk music. This is one of my favorites that he called the Honky Tonk Blues.

Well, I left my home down on the railroad route  
Told my mama stepping out  
I got the honky tonk blues  
I said the honky tonk blues  
Well, Lord, I got em  
I got the honky tonk blues

Thank you.

Well, I went into every joint in town  
City lights about the get me down  
I got the honky tonk blues  
Well, the honky tonk blues  
I said, Lord, I got em  
I got the honky tonk blues

How you gonna get rid of em, boy?  
I'm gonna pack my troubles underneath my arm  
Goin' back to my mama's farm  
and lose the honky tonk blues  
Well, the honky tonk blues  
I said, Lord, I got em  
I got the honky tonk blues

Thank you.

Now, our final leg on this journey which is my era, the 50s. It was a time of profound change in this region. Beginning with the 1954 Supreme Court *Brown v. Board of Education* that said never again would public facilities be in quote, separate but equal. As those legal bridges across troubled waters were being shaped that would launch the civil rights movement and the great leadership of Reverend King and others, a musical bridge was also being built. In Memphis, Tennessee, in the little recording studio of Sun Records, a truck driver from Tupelo, Mississippi, Elvis Presley, and others took their roots in white country and gospel and bridged them with the blues and black gospel, and gave it a roll and called it rock and roll. This is one of my favorites from that period by Gene Vincent called *Bebop A Lula*.

Be Bop a Lu La  
She's my baby  
Be Bop a Lu La  
I don't mean maybe  
Be Bop a Lu La  
She's my baby  
Be Bop a Lu La  
I don't mean maybe  
Be Bop a Lu La

She's my baby, baby, now, baby now, baby now

She's a woman in red blue jeans  
She's a woman who ain't .....  
She's a woman, woman that I know  
She's a woman, loves me so

Be Bop a Lu La  
She's my baby  
Be Bop a Lu La  
I don't mean maybe  
Be Bop a Lu La  
She's my baby, baby, now, baby now, baby now

You want to take questions? Thank you so much. We're having fun with the humanities here today and I intend to keep it that way. If there are any questions, it's your show, so have at it. Yes sir?

Question from Chuck Perry, GHC Board Member: Of the current presidential candidates, which one is most likely to be supportive of the humanities?

Response: That's a good question. Of the current presidential candidates, which one has demonstrated the best support for the humanities? Every one of them. Everyone of them is born of a mother and father. Every one of them will understand what we mean by the humanities and we, as Jamil said, my confirmation was unanimous. We have everyone on the hill backing us. From Senator Helms and Senator Lott from my home state to Senator Kennedy. They love the humanities. Who would not? Preserving the nation's treasures. Presidential papers, family stories. I don't know a person that would stand up and question the value of what we do and what you do. Because we are the American people. The humanities is in every home. So, there's no one on the hill that's not loving what is happening with the humanities. And we intend to grow it back and beyond. Our budget is \$115 million. I am calling for multi-billion dollar budgets for the humanities. I want parity with the National Science Foundation, the National Institute of Mental Health. If we look at K through 12, as I said, two-thirds is the humanities, one-third is the sciences. There's something wrong. We are under funding. We are starving our people. When we look at this nation, the wealthiest nation in the history of man, the most powerful military nation and the most sophisticated in terms of health care. We are taking care of our bodies but not our souls. We are curing every disease at the same time that we are forgetting who we are. We are forgetting our family stories and that, my friends, is not acceptable. If the greatest nation on earth moves forward in the next century without taking care of its own hearth, then we are not going to be a very healthy nation for very long. And things are changing so fast that, as we look around downtown Atlanta and every other city, the old buildings, the old people. We're losing the contact with who we are. We've got to address this. We've got to get in these schools and reclaim our schools for the future of the nation and the humanities is a way to do that. And we need adequate funding. We need billions of dollars every year to go into every county, into every library and museum and do what is needed for the State of Georgia and for every other state. This is a cheap way to fix the nation's future. Yes

maam?

Question from ? about the Georgia state flag on the podium, which incorporates the Confederate battle flag:

Response: I heard what you're saying and that is an issue I've wrestled with as a Southerner for many years. And I tell people that my ancestors fought in the Civil War and I fought in the Civil Rights Movement and both of us were proud for what we did. We thought we were doing the right thing. The Confederate flag is a part of our history. It should be on the history books. And I think that is something that in time, we will see. The South in many ways as the historian Dan Woodward has suggested is a counterpoint to the rest of the nation. As goes the South, so goes the nation. And change when it came to the South in the Civil Rights Movement impacted the rest of the nation. And the image of the flag is a sort of lingering part of that change. Governor Barnes was telling me this morning the wonderful story that I plan to quote in my talks about his swearing in. He went back a century to the last governor in his swearing in. He was talking and a century ago, that governor talked about the issues of Jim Crow and reinforcing the laws that denied blacks the vote. Governor Barnes was sworn in by a Black chief justice. And he reflected on how profound the change has been. And how race is at the center of everything we do in this region and in this nation. And we have to acknowledge and come to terms with the fact that we cannot have symbols that are embarrassing and give pain to our fellow Americans. We've got to move on. Yes sir?

Question from ? about declining literacy among college students and others.

Response: the question is about declining literacy among students and what the NEH is doing. This is a major issue with us. And we and the state councils are launching a number of prototypes like Motherread where children teach mothers, many of whom are in prison, to read so that they can communicate through the book. There is a Fatherread project. There are reading initiatives that are being expanded across the nation that are grass roots initiatives. County by county in Georgia – in Louisiana, Prime Time is being expanded around the nation. And in many cases, the library is the hub. Libraries, I'm delighted to say, are greater in number in this country than are McDonald's Restaurants. The library is in many ways for every community, the center. That is why we immediately sent two copies of *My History* to every public library in the nation. We are very concerned about literacy. We are also trying to use technology in areas like *My History* that inspires students because they're dealing with their own family to do more reading about history. Edsitement. But literacy is a major problem and it's not only school children. It is all ages. We're talking about illiteracy in rural, isolated areas. We're talking about illiteracy in urban areas, of newly arrived people from all over the world who can't read English. This is a deep problem. They have a problem go to court. They don't even know what's being discussed. Literacy is a central issue and the endowment is dealing with that in a variety of ways and we're here to learn about what you're doing in Georgia. Because many of the projects I mentioned earlier are prototypes for what we would like to see. I said to Nancy coming down, we need an encyclopedia like this in every state and in every major city. I did one twenty years ago on the American South. There are some in New England, Chicago, New York. Every state, every major city deserves an encyclopedia. Not just the have the record. But let me tell you another think. For education, it's very important. It's equally important for

economic development. There's not a state or a small town, let alone a city, in this nation that does not have a Web site. It'll give you real estate information. Where to eat and sleep. It doesn't give you the humanities, the cultural history. When this encyclopedia goes online, it's going to do what Atlanta has always done. To coin – to repeat Henry Grady's phrase, the New South. This is where that phrase was first used. And you have always been the portal for the New South. When changes came in civil rights and development of the economic frontiers in internationalizing the South, they came in Atlanta first. And when this encyclopedia goes on, you're state is going to be jumping for joy because people will be able to have a sophisticated knowledge of what it is that you as a state offer the world. And so many of your people on this state who are new citizens, retirees, people who've come here to work don't know about the South or Atlanta. They can log on and deepen quickly their knowledge of what it is that makes this state so special. So these encyclopedias are going to be a very powerful tool for literacy and for learning and teaching in ways that we can only imagine. I mean, the limits of this are beyond imagination. But you're on the right track. You're on the cutting edge. Ted Turner's vision with CNN, Roberto Goizueta's with Coca-Cola. The list goes on. You've got leadership here who have recognized the power of technology and are harnessing that in a powerful way. The humanities are going to be the most exciting engine of all because it crosses all boundaries. You don't have to be interested in the evening news or a soft drink. No matter what your interests are, you'll find them well represented on this encyclopedia. Yes sir?

Question by ? about ?

Hey Rudy.

Yes. I have to boast. A teacher is known by his or her students and Rudolph Bird is one of my greatest students. He and Allen Tullos were both in my class at Yale. Rudolph is heading African-American studies. Allen is heading American studies at Emory.

And Dwight Andrews – Yes, Dwight is heading the music programs. It's like a family affair here today. And I just can't answer that question before saying how proud I am of my students and what they do to make this world a better place. Rudolph, thank you. The regional centers are up and running in the planning grants and there are ten regions. We have two institutions that now have planning grants in each region. Later this year, one of those will be selected for a five year, \$5 million challenge grant which they will match three for one. So there will be a \$20 million endowed hub in every one of our regions that can spin out spokes to all of the infrastructure. There'll be undergraduate and graduate degrees on the American South, on New England, on the Pacific Northwest, that will train a new leadership for the nation that understands the value of places and communities in ways that we're talking about. It will have research projects like encyclopedias and archives. And it will do public programs. It will lift our sense of value of the places in which we live because for too long, it's been a stepping stone. There's a nineteenth century writer who said that the Bostonian looks down on the New Yorker, the New Yorker on the Washingtonian, the Washingtonian on the Atlantan, the Atlantan on the Alabamian, the Alabamian on the Mississippian and the Mississippian, we suppose, on pandemonium. Well, I like to turn that around because I think it's at the end of that road you find the richest treasures. But in every area, every city, every community, there are overlooked wonderful resources and that is what the endowment and these regional centers will do. Is to celebrate each of you and your families and every American's tradition. This regional initiative

is my sort of special initiative. It will be the largest infusion of capital for a single humanities project ever. \$200,000 million, which for me, is not a lot of money but it's never been found before. And we're going to find that. We've raised the first million exclusively from private support to show the American people that it could be done. Congress has indicated that they want a partner with private support to move this and all of our other projects forward. So Rudolph, thank you for being here and thank you for doing what you're doing at Emory for the nation. And Dwight, also. Dwight is one of the great jazz performers and teachers in the nation and Emory is cornering the market on talent as far as I can see. When I leave the endowment, I'm going to come down and sit in the classes and learn from my students.

Well, I think we're going to have to move to lunch but let me say again what an honor it is to be here with you. You have the nation's top leader in Jamil. He has vision. He has determination and he has a heart that will bring to the programs of humanities in Georgia something so special and believe me, I will be at his side anytime he needs my support. I encourage you all to log on to our web site. You can pull in a five minute video narrated by Morgan Freeman. You can look at these other web sides. [neh.gov](http://neh.gov) and start being a partner in getting our web site's newsletter and when you're in D.C., come see me and let me personally show you what we're doing. Thank you.

Unbelievable. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.  
[END OF TAPE]