

Address to the World Culture Open
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Introduction: Patrick is speaking on behalf of Friendship Ambassadors Foundation, which has been conducting arts based people-to-people exchanges between cultures in need of strengthening for over thirty years. They also work with young people in regions recently emerging from conflict as well as funding and facilitating a large, arts-therapy programme uniting families affected by terrorism worldwide. Here is why they do their work and how you may join in this important effort ...

I have come a long way to a beautiful country and a magnificent event. I bring you greetings from the WCO at the United Nations in New York and from two related conferences taking place there at the same time that I have helped to plan for the United Nations. Many people around the world are searching with us for a dream and a hope for future peace.

But I visit at a time of international crisis. A crisis nearby your home, and mine. And unfortunately perhaps, a crisis that only we, artists and cultural thinkers, will be able to address and resolve. Culture is starting to completely reshape global events – in much the same way ideology has done for centuries. We come together at the WCO to ensure that culture itself will be a positive influence after all.

In recent years fundamentalist forces throughout the world have grown stronger. Simultaneously peace has weakened, almost in direct relation to the growth in strength by fundamental religion, politics and corporate globalization.

By ‘fundamentalist forces’ I mean those very conservative elements in our society who seek to repress or isolate freethinking for their own ends or gain. The world has watched helplessly while they continue to strengthen their own specific culture while severely limiting intercultural experiences, exchange, and artistic expression among their own constituents.

Perhaps for too long, women and men in the arts have stood on the sidelines while others determined our global future. We have sought to define our worlds on stage, in art museums, and on film while we trusted that others, who had acumen in civil service, would care for our cities and working society. While we have continued to make art, something has changed among our global leaders. More and more, partisan forces driven by rage have replaced civic-minded individuals. A new crop of leaders around the globe has emerged who seem to gain as much from losing ideological battles as they do by winning them. Their goal is no longer to ‘win’ for the people they serve, but to make a point, no matter who is harmed or what the price.

More and more, a majority of the world appears caught in between their struggles. For many people the gathering and establishment of real, intercultural information and relations has become frustrating and ultimately alienating. However, for artists and the culturally minded, this could be a rare opportunity.

The time has come to reclaim our rightful place among those who inform the diplomatic process. Cultural forces need to be trained on ways to positively affect diplomacy and artists must be asked to take time from their own work in order to help us all find new ways to communicate, process, and interpret the information before us. The WCO reminds us how important our voices are now.

In a world overrun with ideological discourse – with everyone talking almost at once – we remain mired in misunderstanding. My question to you today, then, is: when propaganda, prayers, and prosperity fail to promote peace or even mutual understanding, what shall we do?

We, who are artists and cultural thinkers: what shall *we* do?

My work at the United Nations is to encourage cultural and artistic NGOs to affiliate with the Department of Public Information. I am also very interested in increasing youth involvement at the U.N. because young people seem to understand in clear ways that *Culture Matters*.

Angelina Jolie, Bono, Harry Belafonte, and a host of internationally recognized artists have shown us the way: now it is our turn to commit both to making great art as well as to making the world a better place for all to enjoy the art we make.

Many of us feel that democracy is caught in the middle of a clash between two movements. Benjamin A. Barber in his latest book, *Jihad vs. McWorld*, calls this a battle between out of control fundamentalism on the one side and the blind search for purely capital fulfillment on the other.

He states that fundamentalists (like Bin Laden and the Wahabists) and globalists (like George Bush), for their own reasons, seem indifferent to freedom's fate. He feels that freedom and democracy are in a struggle with "the Hollywood cowboys of McWorld on the one hand, and international criminals who promote jihad-at-all-costs on the other".

There is no doubt about it; the forces working against equality of opportunity and intercultural dialogue are powerful and active on all sides. The Economist Magazine states: "McWorld is the universe of manufactured needs, mass consumption, and mass infotainment. It is motivated by profits and driven by the combined preferences of millions of consumers. On the other hand, jihad is (sometimes a) short hand for the fierce politics of religious, tribal, and other zealots."

In its most extreme manifestations, like the Wahabists in Saudi Arabia, the resurging Taliban of Afghanistan or the balkanization of the Balkans, jihads often seek to counter McWorld's pull on our lesser 'pop' oriented interests and McWorld's bloodless, uncaring calculations.

The hurried pursuit of free markets regardless of social consequences has put real democratic development in jeopardy in many nations liberated from communism or dictatorships. This may be why Taliban, ex-Baathist, and ex-Communist officials are re-appearing in newly 'freed' legislatures worldwide.

In economist Robert McIntyre's blunt words: "Communists and (others) are winning because Western economic advice has led to pointless, dysfunctional pain, while failing to set the foundations for politically and socially viable future growth."

Only the "Globalization" of civic and democratic institutions is likely to offer a way out of the global war between modernity and its aggrieved critics, for democracy, culture, and in particular cultural exchange, remain the only viable responses to both McWorld and Jihad.

We who work in culture need to see how McWorld and the fundamentalists are simply, directly linked: in Michael Moore's classic documentary, *Fahrenheit 9/11* we learn that the bin Laden's and Bushes have been friends and remain amicable partners through the Carlyle Group virtually to this day; when Osama bin Laden screamed of his unholy jihad against America, he virtually overtook CNN and Fox News, the media bastions of McWorld, a perverse example of how tied together these forces truly are.

Indeed, when he first raised his fists against the United States, we could plainly see a Timex Sports Watch on his right arm.

Bin Laden's jihad is a rabid response to colonialism and imperialism - and their children: capitalism and modernity. But his cultural call is diversity gone bad, multiculturalism turned cancerous until the dividing cells have ceased to support the living body.

In the worst irony of all, the fact that the Bin Ladens and the Bushes were actually partners in business deals closes the circle, or noose, around the neck of the free people who exist between their jihad and McWorld.

I have believed that both these destructive forces are the enemy of common people and that is why I work in support of the United Nations: to address these issues daily. You see, for our mutual enemies among the globalists and terrorists, it is not about winning or losing *a* war, but perpetually fighting an abstraction with abstractions. They have locked us into a place where no one will ever win but the war will continue forever. They have ensured that their message, and their inner circles on both sides, will be the only secure ones for many years to come.

We are doomed to fail unless we understand that the basis for their success is also the key to ours *and* the freedom and peace most of us want in our lives and for the world.

The truth that they have unwittingly shown us that, as all young people know, culture matters. Like currency, culture matters. When used to promote an evil brand of Christian, Jewish, or Muslim thought, when it proclaims mindless entertainment and divisive politics for self-gain – it reminds us that a positive culture of thought can also be a powerful tool for change, education, and even healing. By showing us the worst of humankind, they have also implied the best and the way for us to find peace and democratic values once again – if we are strong enough to fight the darkness and move their ways of thinking back into the light. The transformative power of the arts and the unifying nature of cultural expression must be used to unite, teach, and empower us all.

When Samuel Huntington wrote about the clash of civilizations in his book "The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order", he was prophetic in writing that global politics were about to be reconfigured along cultural lines. Simply put: civilizations and cultures are mattering more and more.

Furthermore we, the cultural leaders and thinkers of the world, have been challenged by this newest world order to control those forces – or be controlled by them.

Huntington wrote: "Peoples and countries with similar cultures are coming together. Peoples and countries with different cultures are coming apart. Alignments defined by ideology and superpower relations are giving way to alignments redefined by culture and civilization. Political boundaries are increasingly redrawn to coincide with cultural ones: ethnic, religious, and civilizational. Cultural communities (have replaced) Cold War Blocs, and the fault lines between civilizations (have become) the central lines of conflict in global politics."

Practitioners of culture need to be on guard: those who define culture in narrow, religious, fundamentalist ways, or use it to sell as mindless pop or degrading escapism seek to control this dialogue and drive us all apart.

Each of us here has clearly tried to use the arts and our cultural statement to promote understanding, appreciation, and mutually beneficial discourse. My call to you is that we stand in direct opposition to those in power throughout the world who would seek to use culture to divide us.

The unfortunate truth is that for many peoples seeking identity and reinventing ethnicity, enemies are essential, and the potentially most dangerous enmities occur across the fault lines between the world's major civilizations. Rather than resolving differences through cultural discourse, we are allowing the enemies of free and open thought to fan the flames of hatred through cultural propaganda.

Barber reminds us why civil society works for some and why it doesn't for others: "The modern nation-state has acted as a cultural integrator and has adapted well to pluralistic ideals: civic ideologies and constitutional faiths around which many clans and tribes can rally. It has not been too difficult to contrive a 'civil religion' for Americans, French or the Swiss, since these 'peoples' actually contain multitudes of subnational factions, and ethnic tribes earnestly seeking common ground. But what about Muslims now seeking to regain the right to wear their head dress, in France? What about the Basques or the Normans? What need have they for anything but blood and memory? And what about the Palestinians, Alsatians, Bavarians, East Prussians, Kurds, East Timorese, Kosovars, Pashtuns, Catalonians, Tamils, and other peoples without countries inhabiting nations that they cannot call their own?

Only by the work of cultural thinkers like you will these peoples, who define themselves by the slaughter of tribal neighbors, be persuaded to subscribe to a 'faith' organized around civic ideals.

I offer this challenge because many of us believe that only you and others like us can build that bridge ... sadly a majority of our religious, business and political leaders have not only let us down in this regard; in many cases, they have become the enemy themselves.

In the post-Cold War world, the most important distinctions among peoples are no longer ideological, political, or economic. They are cultural. People and nations are attempting to answer the most basic questions humans can face: who are we?

And we are allowing the wrong leaders to answer that question. We all know that without creative introspection, cultural exchange, and a broad reference in open and civil discourse – we will be forced to answer in the traditional way human beings have answered this identity question: by reference only to the things that mean the most to us, personally. People now define themselves not by their beliefs or ideology but in terms of ancestry, religion, language, history, values, customs, and institutions. They identify with cultural groups, tribes, ethnic groups, religious communities, and at the broadest level, civilizations. People now use politics not just to advance their interests but also to define their identity.

The world today also then needs to recognize the tribal, cultural, and spiritual elements that will not fade and just die away. Once again, even among those we may not agree with, it is the responsibility of culture to advance the causes of the tribal and the spiritual and to educate those involved so that their contribution will be diplomatically viable, valuable, and positive.

Unlike the unilateral independence sought by Mr. Bush in Washington, the House of Saud, or by leaders in any variety of totalitarian states, peace today requires interdependence and cultural diplomacy as its key focal points.

Barber contends that to build a new world we need a new Declaration of Interdependence, a declaration recognizing the interdependence of a human race that can no longer survive in fragments - whether those pieces are called nations, tribes, peoples, or markets. There are no oceans wide enough to protect a nation from a spreading plague (whether that plague is Wahabiism or Marlboro's), no walls high enough to defend a people against a corrupt ideology like McWorld nor a vengeful insurgent, or

freedom fighter (depending on your point of view), like Muqtada el Sadr, and certainly there is no security strict enough to keep a determined martyr from his sacrificial rounds.

No nation is ever again likely to experience untroubled prosperity unless others are given the same opportunity. Our world will never again find peace unless useful, intercultural thought is integrated into a new paradigm of diplomacy, and in a positive, participatory way.

To declare interdependence, then, is in a sense merely to acknowledge what is already a reality. To focus on culture and how it may positively contribute to diplomacy is to embrace willingly and constructively what terrorists would like to shove down everyone's throats.

Their message is "Your sons want to live; ours are ready to die." The civilized response to this must be: "We will create a world in which the seductions of death hold no allure because the bounties of life are accessible to everyone." Only cultural thinkers can make this statement resonate in the hearts and minds of the world.

In the 1950's, Lester Pearson warned that humans were moving into "an age when different civilizations will have to live side by side in peaceful interchange, learning from each other, studying each other's history and ideals and art and culture, mutually enriching each others' lives. The alternative, in this overcrowded little world, is misunderstanding, tension, clash, and catastrophe."

Simply put, the futures of both peace and civilization depend upon understanding and cooperation among the world's major cultures.

The good news is that cultural leaders and thinkers *are* now beginning to take their rightful place at the highest levels of diplomacy because without them the world will be full of explorers, lost without a guide. Accept this responsibility; become that guide.

Technology allows us to know everything that is happening; our shared human, cultural experience tells us what it means.

Amidst terrorism, war, hypocrisy, divisions, and anxiety for the future, none of us want to be like the sad figure in Bob Dylan's song, where the singer asks in a mocking tone: "You know something is happening here, but you don't know what it is, do you, Mr. Jones?"

We deeply thank the WCO for allowing this important exchange and I hope I get the opportunity during my stay to speak with many of you so that I may learn from you and take more cultural information back home to improve our knowledge base even further.

We look forward to the next WCO and good, good cultural thinkers sharing together on the road to peace. I thank you so much for your attention and interest.