Americans for the Arts presents
The 28th Annual Nancy Hanks Lecture
on Arts and Public Policy

Nancy Hanks Lecture on Arts & Public Policy

An evening with

Norman Lear

March 23, 2015
Concert Hall
The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts
Washington, DC

Sponsored By:
The Rosenthal Family Foundation and Ovation
Good evening everyone. The marvelous overture that you just heard was by the Atlanta Symphony Youth Orchestra, under the musical direction of Maestro Joseph Young. Let’s give them another round of applause.

Welcome to the Americans for the Arts 28th Annual Nancy Hanks Lecture on Arts and Public Policy. I’m Bob Lynch, President and CEO of Americans for the Arts, and I want to thank you for joining us tonight, here at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.

We’ve planned a very special evening for you and you’ll hear more from this impressive orchestra, consisting of 106 young musicians, ranging in age from 13 to 18 years of age.

We have special guests as well, including: House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi of California; Congressional Arts Caucus Co-Chair Louise Slaughter of New York; both U.S. Senators from Massachusetts, Elizabeth Warren and Ed Markey; Senator Al Franken of Minnesota; and Representatives Ken Buck of Colorado, Glenn Grothman of Wisconsin, Ted Deutch of Florida, and Mark Takano of California.

I am also so honored to have with us the National Endowment for the Arts Chairman Jane Chu and former Chairman Frank Hodsoll.

We’re gathered here because we all believe in the power of the arts to elevate the quality of our lives, education, and communities. What would our world look like without artists? How would we communicate our history and our culture without artists?

We’re gathered here because we all believe in the power of the arts to elevate the quality of our lives, education, and communities. What would our world look like without artists? How would we communicate our history and our culture without artists? Many of you in the audience and here on stage tonight are artists, whether you are a musician, dancer, writer, painter, filmmaker, actor, or singer. I am so grateful to all of you and especially to the high profile artists on our Artists Committee, who are helping us bring national attention to our issues tonight and on Capitol Hill tomorrow for Arts Advocacy Day, including: Norman Lear, COMMON, Holland Taylor, Doc Shaw, Victoria Rowell, and O.A.R. lead singers Marc Roberge and Richard On.

Let’s give a round of applause for all of these artists and the artists in our lives.

We know that when it comes to making change happen in politics, it also takes behind-the-scenes grassroots lobbying to make our case.

That’s why we have 87 of the most important national arts and civic advocacy organizations in the country, representing more than 100,000 nonprofit cultural organizations, of every discipline, throughout every region of the country, as national co-sponsors of Arts Advocacy Day. They are joined by another 400 state and local arts leaders, who are being shadowed
I’d like to ask all of these Arts Advocacy Day participants to stand and be recognized for the valuable advocacy work that you are doing to keep the arts alive in America.

This brings me to one advocate in particular that I’d like to recognize. Nancy Hanks said he was the nation’s first arts lobbyist. Jack Golodner, who is here tonight, may not be a household name, but he is someone who has impacted each and every one of us. You see, in the early 60s, Jack left his chief of staff job on Capitol Hill and opened up his own lobbying firm. He represented Actor’s Equity and then eventually became the founder and longtime president of the AFL-CIO, Department of Professional Employees, representing 4.4 million workers. He was also hired by Nancy Hanks at the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, who also served as chairman of our organization, then named American Council on the Arts. Together, the two of them worked behind the scenes to get the very first legislation passed to create the National Council on the Arts.

He formed an unlikely but highly effective grassroots coalition called the Clearinghouse Committee on the Arts and the Humanities with such groups as the AFL-CIO, the Garment Workers, Steel Workers, and Auto Workers Unions, the Boys and Girls Scouts of America, AARP, and the Junior League.

Together, they convinced lawmakers that the arts were a powerful economic force that benefited every American. Jack made the arts about jobs, about communities, about the grassroots. But, he also knew that some good old-fashioned, *House of Cards* style backroom dealing was necessary to get thing done in DC as well.

For example, on August 20, 1964, when H.R. 9586, the legislation to create the National Council on the Arts, was languishing in the House on the last day to vote before the House adjourned to attend the 1964 Democratic National Convention, Jack went to meet with Hubert Humphrey in his Senate office. You see Hubert Humphrey was just four days away from being officially nominated as the Democratic Vice Presidential running mate to President Johnson. When Senator Humphrey heard about the logjam, he picked up the phone...
and pulled then-Speaker of the House John McCormack off the House floor to tell him he needed him to move up consideration of the arts bill.

It must have been some call because hours later, the bill passed the House 213 to 135.

The very next year in 1965, Jack spent many late evenings working with Senator Claiborne Pell’s staffers Livingston Biddle in drafting the original legislative language to create the National Foundation for the Arts. And it’s because of this early advocacy work that the National Endowment for the Arts will celebrate its 50th anniversary this fall.

That is how advocacy works. And that is the legacy that we will continue tomorrow on Arts Advocacy Day.

I'd like to ask Jack Golodner to stand now so we can thank him.

Jack, you’ll be pleased to know that we’ve continued to expand our advocacy coalition. I am so pleased that we have our public sector partners with us tonight, including Tom Cochran of the United States Conference of Mayors and Matt Chase of the National Association of Counties; as well as Jerry Abramson with the White House Office of Intergovernmental Affairs.

And finally, please help me to thank our sponsors this evening: Nancy Stephens with The Rosenthal Family Foundation and Charles Segars with Ovation, the nation’s only television arts network.

And now for tonight’s program.

When we asked Norman Lear what kind of music he likes, he said that he loves gospel, classical, patriotic, and spoken word. And being the award-winning producer that he is, Norman introduced us to the one person who could pull all this together.

Tonight’s musical director Nolan Williams, Jr. is one of the country’s foremost producers of inspirational arts programming. Highlights of his work include the music direction of the 2012 internationally televised Dedication Ceremony of the Martin Luther King, Jr. National Memorial; the choir direction of the 2013 National Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony; and the artistic direction of the 2014 Philadelphia Freedom Festival.

Music director Nolan Williams, Jr. led the artistic dedication in honor of Norman Lear with his arrangement of “NEW—Americana Medley” featuring the Atlanta Symphony Youth Orchestra, Voices of Inspiration Chorus, and vocalists and a spoken word artist from the Duke Ellington School of the Arts.
For tonight’s dedicated musical tribute to Normal Lear, Nolan has arranged a “NEW-Americana Medley” featuring the Atlanta Symphony Youth Orchestra along with the glorious Voices of Inspiration Chorus.

Please enjoy.

That was beautiful and so very impressive to see such young musicians perform at such a high artistic level. Thank you again to Nolan, the Atlanta Symphony Youth Orchestra, and Voices of Inspiration Chorus. We’ll get to experience one more performance a little later.

I’d like to now ask a remarkably talented individual and poet to formally introduce Norman Lear to the audience tonight.

COMMON, along with his music partner John Legend (also an Americans for the Arts Artists Committee member), swept the 2015 awards season this year for Best Original Song in a Motion Picture at both the Academy Awards and the Golden Globes for their awe inspiring song “Glory.” His talent does not end there.

COMMON has also played several dramatic roles in such films as Selma and Run All Night, both of which are currently showing in theaters nationwide.

COMMON has also written several award-winning children’s books as well as his New York Times best-selling memoir One Day It’ll All Make Sense.

He remains one of hip-hop’s most innovative and positive voices, and he is here tonight to introduce his friend Norman Lear.

Please welcome, COMMON.
INTRODUCTION OF NORMAN LEAR BY COMMON

If you’ve read his book, *Even This I Get to Experience*, then you know everything I’m about to say. If you haven’t, you should get it, because what I’m about to share with you is just a brief view of a life that is rich with story, and laughs and love.

Norman Lear was born in New Haven, CT in 1922, and at the age of 92 has more energy than many men I know who are half his age. He won admission to college after winning an oratorical contest called “What the Constitution Means to Me,” but dropped out of school to enlist in the Army during World War II, where he flew 52 missions as a radio operator/gunner on B-17 bombers in Europe.

He began his TV writing career in 1950 when he wrote for *The Ford Star Revue* and *The Colgate Comedy Hour*, and his directing career began in 1958 with a film he wrote and directed called *Divorce American Style* that would garner him an Academy Award nomination for writing.

Around the time I was born, 1972, he started creating the shows that defined my childhood—shows like *All in the Family, Maude, Sanford and Son, Good Times, The Jeffersons, One Day at a Time*, and *Mary Hartman, Mary Hartman*.

As I go down the list of all of those shows, each one of those shows had some effect on my life and I must say specifically shows like *Good Times* and *The Jeffersons* that really gave America a new look at black life, that showed America what a black family could be whether growing up in an impoverished area or a family like the Jeffersons who we saw was moving on up. Well, the impact that these shows had upon us as young black kids was phenomenal. It really taught us in many ways who we were and what we could be and to see that money didn’t determine really what a black family is and what pride is and what dignity is. We saw the good times and we saw how the mother, the matriarch, ran the family and the father was there to support the family, but with the same token, it was a family and the neighborhood and the village helped support each other.

It was a beautiful depiction and look at what black life is and what it could be and I hope that he taught us all what black life is and what black life could be. And I must say that those shows really had a big influence on us as hip hop artists. So many times you hear references to some of Norman’s shows in rap songs, music abroad, and pop culture because it really was a way for us to relate to each other. We talked about what J.J. did last night or what happened with Weezy. So we love these shows and for me to have the opportunity to even be in the presence of Norman Lear, the creator of these shows, is that much of an honor for me. So, I just want to say thank you.

But Norman wasn’t happy with just creating great art, because that’s what his shows are—they are art. Art that has won four Emmys and a Peabody award and made him a force to be reckoned with on the TV screen and on the political scene. He took a look at the world around him and realized that there was more he could do. So he walked away from the shows, and the paycheck, and in 1980 started working full-time on the creation of an organization, People for the American Way, that 30 years later remains a powerful voice for the principles of fairness and justice in this country and against the intolerant voices of religious fundamentalism in our country.

So Norman Lear is a war hero, he’s a writer, he’s an artist, he’s an activist, he’s a father, he’s a husband, he’s a grandfather, he’s the kind of guy who can create characters and stories that influence your life, profoundly influence your life, and yet you can still meet him and think, “This guy is my friend.” Ladies and gentlemen, I’m so proud to introduce to you, my friend, Norman Lear.
March 2015 | The Americans for the Arts 28th Annual Nancy Hanks Lecture on Arts and Public Policy

Some of you may be familiar with my life from my recent memoir. For the others, it just might help to know something about the man you invited to the Kennedy Center to talk about the arts in America.

In late June of 1931 and just out of third grade, I was a month away from turning nine, and looking forward eagerly to my first experience at summer camp. A roll of cloth tape imprinted with “... Norman M. Lear, Norman M. Lear, Norman M. Lear...” sat on the kitchen counter, waiting for my mother to cut it up and sew my name into the clothes I was taking with me in a few weeks.

Meanwhile, my father was about to take a plane to Tulsa. It had only been four years since Charles Lindbergh flew 33 ½ hours in his single engine Spirit of St. Louis to get from New York to Paris, and the rare plane that was spotted in the sky had us kids chasing around in the street and yelling, “Lindy, Lindy!” So Dad flying to Oklahoma was a big deal.

He was traveling on some kind of business—“Monkey business!” said my mother, who sensed that the men he’d fallen in with were not to be trusted. And she was right. Five weeks later, he was convicted and sentenced to three years in Deer Island Prison, off Boston Harbor, for trying to sell some phony bonds to a Boston brokerage.

That evening, our house was filled with relatives and friends offering comfort as they checked out the furniture my mother was selling; she having decided that we couldn’t possibly continue to live in Chelsea in such disgrace. At one point, someone I didn’t know offered to buy my father’s red leather chair—the throne from which he had controlled the dial on our floor model radio—just as 40 years later, Archie would control the Bunker family’s TV viewing from his living room armchair.

The loss of my father’s chair was like losing him twice in the same week. And, as if that wasn’t bad enough, I would soon learn that my mother’s plan was to take my younger sister to live with her and leave me with various relatives until my father got out of jail and the family could be reunited.

I was clutching all that remained of my summer dream—that unused roll of “Norman M. Lear” cloth—when someone, an uncle or cousin or neighbor, placed his hands on my shoulders, looked deep into the tear-filled eyes of a nine-year-old, and announced with a smarmy solemnity, “Remember, Norman, you’re the man of the house now.”

That had to be the moment when my awareness of the foolishness of the human condition was born. How could I not have developed a deep appreciation for the absurdities amid the gravity of our existence?

NORMAN LEAR

“The Social Impact of Art”

When COMMON was introduced, I thought the applause was louder. The loveliest thing he called me was his friend. That’s the most uncommon man I know. You know our relationship goes back a whole six, eight weeks. Now there is a way on a certain harmonic, you can be in love with people you’ve never met and then suddenly you meet them and there it is. And he’s been in my life forever as he tells me I have been in his. And I couldn’t appreciate his being here for me more. Bless you, thank you, COMMON.

And thank you, Americans for the Arts, for inviting me here tonight. And you art lovers out there for that exceedingly warm reception. It was warmer, I’m certain, than it would have been just a few years ago.

When I was 88 or 89, you’d have greeted me warmly—but not as warmly.

When I turned 90, something changed—and it wasn’t me, it was YOU. I still get up out of a chair the way I used to, but now I get applause. Cross a room, and I get an ovation.
Speaking of absurdities, let me introduce the relationship my mother had with her only son.

I received a call one Sunday morning in the 70s from a good friend who happened to be the head of the Television Academy of Arts and Sciences to inform me that the Academy had decided to start a Hall of Fame and I was to be among the very first inductees.

When he told me who the others were, it didn’t take me 10 seconds to phone my mother in Bridgeport, CT. She answered the phone, and I told her breathlessly, “Mom, I just learned the TV Academy is starting a Hall of Fame and these will be the first inductees: William Paley and David Sarnoff, who started CBS and NBC; Edward R. Murrow, the greatest of the TV journalists; Paddy Chayevsky, the best writer to come out of television; Milton Berle; Lucille Ball—and me.” My mother’s reaction was typically unforgettable.

“Listen,” she said, “If that’s what they want to do, who am I to say?”

That always gets a great laugh—and I often wonder if such events didn’t prepare me for the difficulties that came along with my success later in life. In 1985, my partner, Jerry Perenchio, suggested it was time to sell the company we had built with Bud Yorkin—and we did.

I took down a whole bunch of money and, on my own, started what I called ACT III Communications. Instead of sticking to media content that I understood, however, I made investments in the business of media—radio and TV stations, broadcast publications, theaters—which I didn’t understand at all.

A few years later, I’d blown my fortune and reached a point where I was advised that we’d probably have to sell our home and start all over again.

Having heard that we’d fallen into such dire straits, my son-in-law phoned me from New York and asked how I was feeling. The answer was, “Terrible, of course,” but then I seem to have added, “I must be crazy, Jon, because despite all that’s happened, I keep hearing this inner voice saying, ‘Even this I get to experience.”

Early the next morning, my son-in-law was on the phone again. He’d heard me say once that when I died I wished to be cremated, and he was calling to ask me to please, please change my mind. I asked why. In a voice that choked a bit at the finish, he answered, “Because some day I want to take my children, your grandchildren, to a gravestone that reads, ‘Even this I get to experience.’

Now you have the title of my memoir—and I have this—this evening with you.

Things were dire for me at the time of that phone call, as they are across the globe today. If that tall percentage of the world’s top scientists is right about climate change—and I think they might just know a little something more than members of the Tea Party—things are getting more dire for our planet every day. And, as all nations do, ours has its own specific problems, among them: one percent of the population takes in 20 percent of the money earned by all Americans; 22 percent of American kids and their families now live below the poverty line; and there are more Black men and boys in confinement today than there were slaves at the height of slavery.

Quarrel with those statistics if you must, believe whatever stats your political leanings may dictate, but our America has yet to deliver on its promise of equal opportunity and justice for all—and we all know it. Then, across the globe, there are the endless conflicts between nations, peoples, and sects; the further threat that rogue nations will acquire the nuclear bomb; the specter of young men and women around the world (some of them, unthinkably, American) primed by the hopelessness
around them to join bands of terrorists such as ISIS.

I was deliberating just a few days ago whether to touch on such negatives before an audience collected in this hallowed hall to celebrate the arts. Then the House Budget Committee came out with its latest—and I saw that its leadership wished to cut tax rates for millionaires and billionaires, the one tenth of one percent who already owns as much wealth as the bottom 90 percent. I still can’t believe it. And I decided, to hell with it! This IS the world we live in.

Despite everything I see and feel, however, I don’t want to wake up the morning I am without hope. We will save our world. But when it is saved, I’m confident that the door will have been kicked open by the things that bring us together—the arts. The music, the film, the literature, theater, painting, photography, sculpture, and dance, which cause us to see and hear as one. We are then free to delight in or disparage according to our individual tastes, but in the embrace of art and beauty, still one.

I believe that heart and soul, head to toe. But I began to wonder many years ago how to make that meaningful to a culture that was growing so numbers-driven and spiritually sterile as America.

The name of the game in corporate America today is the need to deliver a profit statement this quarter larger than the last and, ostensibly, to do that forever. Nothing in human experience suggests that anything can grow forever. Yet the entire community of business thinkers, economists, and strategists subscribe to that dictum.

It is sheer lunacy, a kind of corporate coup d’etat, that has resulted in a general coarsening of the culture, leading us away from the arts and, of course, funding for the arts. It has taken us in the opposite direction, more toward the militarism and the violence we are seeing.

Despite everything I see and feel, however, I don’t want to wake up the morning I am without hope. We will save our world. But when it is saved, I’m confident that the door will have been kicked open by the things that bring us together—the arts. The music, the film, the literature, theater, painting, photography, sculpture, and dance, which cause us to see and hear as one. We are then free to delight in or disparage according to our individual tastes, but in the embrace of art and beauty, still one.

I’m into some heavy duty stuff here, but—as a president you just might remember was fond of saying—let me make one thing perfectly clear: I do not offer myself as an expert or a scholar on these matters, nor am I coming from that “wise old man” place. I am simply a listener and observer—a keen observer perhaps given how many years I’ve been at it.

In that role, as I speak of where America is right now, I cannot help but think of Dwight David Eisenhower. Ike, the Five-Star General who led us to victory in World War II, served two terms as President of these United States and who, as he was leaving office, in his farewell address to the nation, warned us to beware of the potential for the development of a Military-Industrial Complex.

In an early draft, he termed it the Military-Industrial-Congressional Complex.

The way I see it, Ike nailed where we are right now. The
disease of short-term thinking can be seen everywhere—from our rotting infrastructure to the weakening of the middle class to our failure to truly address the long-term issues of our time. We are far more consumers than citizens. And while 21st century Americans are the most technologically well-informed citizenry in our history, we may also be the least self-aware.

At this point, you could be thinking I'm showing my roots as a liberal, but I see myself as a bleeding heart conservative—especially when I ask: Why do today's Republicans take so little pride in Dwight Eisenhower? Why, throughout the 2008 and 2012 election cycles, with so many candidates seeking the nomination, with all the speechifying and the debates, the countless hours of recorded appearances, did we never once hear a reference to him? I think it's because Ike's concern for his country's future has come to pass. America today is totally the product of its Military-Industrial Complex, but Americans for the most part, right and left, refuse to look at it.

And then, as if I'd just heard them shout out, "Norman, remember us? The 47 senators who wrote to Iran?"—proving Ike correct in his first draft when he called it the Military-Industrial-Congressional Complex.

Before I leave the subject, know that I don't see a conspiracy here. These sectors—the military, industrial and congressional sectors—do not "conspire" to secure their complex. It's the result of a confluence of interests that cast shadows that most people don't see.

I have had a good eye for those shadows since, at age nine, I came across Father Charles Coughlin on the radio and ran into my first taste of anti-Semitism. We were taught civics in our public schools back then, and it was clear to me that mixing politics and religion, and railing against people of other faiths, was un-American. As a Jew, I took particular comfort from our founding documents and their promises of equal justice and equality under the law.

In 1980, I saw those dark shadows again and felt the menace of a secular America threatened with the proliferation of evangelical television ministries, most of them fundamentalist. There on my television, preaching to his television congregation, was the Reverend James Robison, brandishing his Bible like a bomb and, in Jesus' name, declaiming, "This nation was built upon a Christian foundation, upon a Bible foundation."

Elsewhere on the tube, the Reverend Jerry Falwell was declaring, "I hope I live to see the day when, as in the early days of our country, we won't have any public schools. The churches will have taken them over again and Christians will be running them. What a happy day that will be!"

As their crusades to spread fear and division became increasingly blatant, so did my desire to reveal what they were really about in the most powerful way I could—through art—in my case, the art of storytelling. I began making notes for a screenplay entitled Religion, with the intent to satirize these fundamentalist TV ministries as savagely as Paddy Chayefsky mocked television in the film Network.

Then one day, I tuned into Jimmy Swaggart's TV ministry and caught the Reverend railing about a constitutional issue that was due to come before the Supreme Court and asking his "Godly" viewers to pray for the "removal" of a certain Supreme Court Justice.

We are far more consumers than citizens.

That was the last straw for me. So instead of telling my story as a two-hour movie, I filmed it as a one-minute public service announcement, and it was on the air in a matter of weeks. It featured a working stiff, in a hard hat, standing next to a piece of factory equipment, talking straight into the camera:

"Hi. I have a problem. I'm religious. We're a religious family, but that don't mean we see things the same way politically. Now, here come certain preachers on radio and TV and in the mail, telling us on a bunch of political issues that there's just one Christian position, and implying if we don't agree we're not good Christians. So, my son is a bad Christian on several issues but she's a good Christian on two others. Lucky me, I'm a hundred percent Christian because I agree with the preacher on all of them. Now my problem is I know my boy is as good a Christian as me. My wife, she's better. So maybe there's something wrong when people, even preachers, suggest that other people are good Christians or bad Christians depending on their political views. That's not the American way."

The PSA got a lot of attention. We bought time for it on a local TV station here in Washington, which led to national nightly news coverage. As awareness grew, various religious leaders and political figures got behind it, and at one point someone said, "I like what he said at the end of the PSA, 'That's not the American way.' You ought to organize around it, and be the people for the American way."

People For the American Way was one year old, with our numbers and our impact growing, when we became more and more aware that all of the talk about God and patriotism,
morality and love of country, had been appropriated by the Religious Right, with the Left, by its silence, seeming to acquiesce. We had to do something. So People For the American Way, with the bipartisan support of President Gerald Ford and Lady Bird Johnson as Co-Chairs of the evening, decided to tell the true version of the American story, in which God and the flag belonged to all of us.

*I Love Liberty* was a two-hour, all-star celebration of American history, diversity, and patriotism with Senator Barry Goldwater and Jane Fonda sharing the same stage, and it further established the People For the American Way brand. I don’t wake up many mornings 30 some years later, read my daily papers, and not give thanks that People For the American Way is there.

Talk about art opening doors!

But inevitably the opening of those doors is followed by efforts to suppress the art that flows through them…We’ve seen book burnings and book bannings since the invention of the printing press. But technology, more specifically the Internet and social media, has increased the power of the arts exponentially. Because of this, we live in a time when the artistic voice has never been more threatened.

We witnessed this in mega 3-D recently when a nation attacked a corporation: North Korea vs. Sony Pictures. And as difficult a moment as that was, I thought it less threatening than the possibility of an age of pre-censorship in which certain subjects are deemed off limits lest they turn out to offend.

When *All in the Family* and *Maude* first went on the air, I was often accused of “editorializing” in my shows. “If you want to send a message,” I was told, “use Western Union.” (Today they’d say, “Text it” or “Tweet it.”)

I was defensive at first, but I soon realized that as a longtime observer of the culture, then in my 50s, of course I had a point of view and wished to express it in my work. Seeing how far we might go for the sake of shock value was never remotely on our agendas. We were just writing about family life as we saw family life, and our view of it included the sensitive and controversial subjects that were sitting out there in plain sight.

We all take it as a given that art is beneficial to society, but do we put sufficient value on that art for art’s sake—and for all people? Many of the powerful people in this world—including the former Chairman of our beloved House Budget Committee Congressman Paul Ryan and those big spenders from private foundations such as David Koch, who is making Lincoln Center his playground—are not necessarily convinced of the “good for all people” part.

They tend to measure the impact of the arts on us solely by the number of tourists and hotel accommodations their museums and performing arts venues are attracting. And so, across the country, funding for the arts for all our people and their children is paltry. In low income and impoverished neighborhoods, arts programs have been eliminated altogether.

At no time can I recall our culture being so estranged from this essential part of itself. And a culture that has become a stranger to its own inner human needs, which are, for better or worse, intuitive, mysterious, and unquantifiable, just may be a culture out of touch with the best of its humanity.

---

**Talk about art opening doors! But inevitably the opening of those doors is followed by efforts to suppress the art that flows through them…We’ve seen book burnings and book bannings since the invention of the printing press. But technology, more specifically the Internet and social media, has increased the power of the arts exponentially. Because of this, we live in a time when the artistic voice has never been more threatened.**

---

**Why have we abdicated our need to explore these most basic values? Why, in our schools and our homes, are we so reluctant to grapple with these core questions? I would suggest that involvement with our inner-selves has given way to pursuing a vision of human salvation through technology and consumerism.**

I wonder often if high-rolling arts lovers would be more disposed to funding arts education for all if science had come up with a way to measure the change in hearts, minds, moods, and attitudes that music, film, literature, and the arts generally, are capable of evoking.

I can’t think about the arts this way without touching on the place from which I believe they emanate, the life of the spirit.

We don’t hear much about that these days. But ever since my early 20s when I smoked my first good cigar, I have felt that
if there were no other reason to believe in God, Havana leaf would suffice. I've had similar epiphanies while biting into a ripe peach, a great ear of corn. And I've sensed a higher presence hundreds of times while standing behind the audiences at our tapings and watching 250 strangers coming forward as one, rising in their seats and then falling back, as people do when they're laughing from the belly. A hunger for connectedness stalks our nation today, and art is the umbilical of connectedness.

A hunger for connectedness stalks our nation today, and art is the umbilical of connectedness.

Why is there such a reticence in our culture to discuss what may be the most distinctive trait of us humans—the inner part that is the wellspring for our species' creativity, that element of our being that gives rise to our sense of awe and wonder, and longing for truth, beauty, and a higher order of meaning.

I suggest that we've entrusted that exploration to our various organized religions, where a stained glass solemnity—a holy scripture and a holy man, very rarely a woman—await our weekly visit.

There we join the family of God, but as branches of that family, not necessarily in harmony—Christian, Islamic, Hindu, Jewish, Buddhist, and many more, not to mention the fundamentalist versions of each—resulting today in warring tribes and sects across the globe and the terror and beheadings that have followed. And in our own country, those branches are helping to fuel the multiple social and political rifts in the fabric of our culture.

Inevitably, it is the arts that are attacked first—and the more powerful the fundamentalists of any religion, the quicker and more vigorous the attacks. These attacks on works of art arrive in the guise of protecting us for our own good from that which the self-appointed arbiters regard as filth or evil—or simply "not good for us"—like the many truths for which they deem us not ready.

I see a symbiotic relationship between the needs of big capital and religious leaders and their institutions. That was the core of the networks' problem when, in 1971, after three years of effort we finally made it to the air with All in the Family, followed by Maude, Good Times, and The Jeffersons. We—writers, producers, directors, and actors—were simply mirroring life in
our time as we saw it.

Some families were poor, some impoverished; bigotry was alive and well; some people cursed; women suffered menopause, men fought impotence; and the question of abortion was a topic of discussion in homes everywhere. Nothing we touched on was foreign to our viewers. And yet, script after script, we were told, “You can’t do it, it won’t fly in Des Moines” or “There’ll be a knee-jerk reaction in the Bible Belt. You can’t go there.” We went there. And not a single state seceded from the union.

As I said, we were accused of sending messages. If making bigotry sound foolish is a message, we stand guilty, I responded. And then one day I thought about the shows that preceded our arrival on the scene, like Leave It to Beaver, Ozzie and Harriet, and Father Knows Best. The biggest problem those families faced was, “Oh, my God, the roast is ruined and the boss is coming to dinner!” or “Holy moley! Mom dented the fender of Dad’s car! How do we keep him from finding out?”

How about the message those shows were sending? For two decades America was being told it had no race issues, no bigotry, no wars, no health problems, no unwanted pregnancies. How nifty! It was certainly expressing a point of view, as all art has a way of doing. But at what level? What impact?

Well, I’ve learned something about that very recently. Most of the time, the impact of art cannot be measured. And that’s because the way art works its magic; you don’t often know what’s happening to you.

Most of the time, the impact of art cannot be measured. And that’s because the way art works its magic; you don’t often know what’s happening to you.

I could not have been more touched by the answer. Those paying me tribute had been affected, in deep, life mattering ways, by my work as the originator and leader of the giant collaboration of the arts represented in our shows and films. I’d never, all those years in production, thought of what I did as art. But that night with Grammy and Oscar winner COMMON; talk show host and our moderator, Touré; music entrepreneur Steve Stoute; President of Def Jam Records Russell Simmons; hip-hop D Nice; actress Marla Gibbs; author and poet Baratunde Thurston; creator of Blackish Kenya Barris; and star of American Crime Regina King, I was led to a trough I’d been to before—but this time I was made to drink.

Our moderator, Touré, led the participants through stories of how an episode, perhaps just a moment in Good Times, The Jeffersons, All in the Family, or Sanford and Son had enriched their lives, or made them see something their realities had, to that point, obscured. The stories as they were told sweetened the memory of others and triggered new ones.

COMMON’s life had been changed by a single episode of The Jeffersons. Baratunde Thurston would not have become the man he is without the example of John Amos, the father on Good Times. Janet Jackson guest starred on an episode as an abused child, and the story virtually changed the direction of D. Nice’s life.

One after another, the stories tumbled out of everyone and the evening became an on-camera love-in that four well-placed cameras gobbled up.

There were tears, of course. But—and this is the point of it all—the tears were not just from those onstage. There were tears in the audience as well. On stage, each performer was reflecting on a key memory and then passing that experience to the others. What I hadn’t accepted, no matter my long career, was that “others” included the audience no less than the other performers.

I had spent half my life sending audiences out of our studios laughing, crying, feeling and thinking, but somehow had not accepted the depth of it all—the art of it all. As my Grandmother says, “Go know.”

It has taken me 92 years, eight months, and a day to get here tonight to tell you that. I mean, that’s a lot of time and effort. On the other hand, it has taken every minute, every split second of each of your lives to come to the Kennedy Center to spend this time with me tonight.

Add it up. I win. And even this I get to experience.

Thank you very much.
CLOSING REMARKS BY AMERICANS FOR THE ARTS
BOARD CHAIR ABEL LOPEZ

Let's give Norman another round of applause. Good evening. I'm Abel Lopez, chairman of the Board of Directors of Americans for the Arts. I want to thank Norman for that personal and inspiring speech as well as COMMON for his amazing introduction of Norman Lear.

I want to thank all of you for joining us tonight, and of course, the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts for serving as the host venue.

And finally, I would send you home with one more special Closing Musical Tribute in honor of Norman Lear.

In 2010, on this very stage, the Kennedy Center produced a star-studded celebration of the arts in America, featuring Smokey Robinson, Branford Marsalis, John Mayer, and the National Symphony Orchestra.

As part of that celebration, our music director for this evening, Nolan Williams, Jr., composed and premiered a new song that conveys the story of two youth: a boy from a town called Hope, who aspires for a career on Broadway and a young girl, who simply wants to dance. This song embodies the spirit of this evening, reminding us of the importance and impact of the arts in our world.

Please welcome again our Music Director Nolan Williams, Jr., the Voices of Inspiration, the Atlanta Symphony Youth Orchestra, along with special guests Maya McBride-Wheatie and Ty Barry from the Duke Ellington School for the Arts, along with the emerging talent of Anthony Whittingham, as they inspire us with this closing selection, entitled: “Life's Inspired by a Song”.

ABOUT THE LECTURER

Norman Lear has enjoyed a long career in television and film, and as a political and social activist and philanthropist. He began his television writing career in 1950, later teaming up with director Bud Yorkin to form Tandem Productions. They produced several feature films, with Norman taking on roles as executive producer, writer, and director. He was nominated in 1967 for an Academy Award for his script for Divorce American Style. In 1970, CBS signed with Tandem to produce All in the Family, which ran for nine seasons and won four Emmy Awards for best comedy series as well as the Peabody Award in 1977. All in the Family was followed by a succession of other hit shows including Maude, Sanford and Son, The Jeffersons, One Day at a Time, Good Times and Mary Hartman, Mary Hartman.

Concerned about the growing influence of radical religious evangelists, Mr. Lear decided to leave television in 1980 and formed People for the American Way, a nonprofit organization designed to speak out for Bill of Rights guarantees and to monitor violations of constitutional freedoms. Norman is chairman of Act III Communications, a multimedia holding company with interests in the recording, motion picture, broadcasting, publishing and licensing industries. In addition to People for the American Way, Mr. Lear has founded other nonprofit organizations, including The Norman Lear Center at the USC Annenberg School, which studies and shapes the impact of media and entertainment on society, and the Business Enterprise Trust to spotlight exemplary social innovations in American business.

In 1989, he co-founded the Environmental Media Association with his wife Lyn to mobilize the entertainment industry to become more environmentally responsible. He was among the first seven television pioneers inducted into the Television Academy Hall of Fame (1984). He is married to Lyn Davis Lear and has six children and four grandchildren. Norman Lear’s biography, Even This I Get to Experience, was released by Penguin Books on October 14, 2014.
With more than 50 years of service, Americans for the Arts is dedicated to representing and serving local communities and creating opportunities for every American to participate in and appreciate all forms of the arts. From offices in Washington, DC, and New York City, the organization provides programs designed to:

1. Help build environments in which the arts and arts education can thrive and contribute to more vibrant and creative communities.
2. Support the generation of meaningful public and private sector policies and increased resources for the arts and arts education.
3. Build individual awareness and appreciation of the value of the arts and arts education.

To achieve its goals, Americans for the Arts partners with local, state, and national arts organizations; government agencies; business leaders; individual philanthropists; educators; and funders. While local arts agencies comprise Americans for the Arts’ core constituency, the organization also supports a variety of partner networks with particular interests in public art, united arts fundraising, arts education, local and state advocacy networks, and leadership development. Through national visibility campaigns and local outreach, Americans for the Arts strives to motivate and mobilize opinion leaders and decision-makers. Americans for the Arts produces annual events that heighten national visibility for the arts, including the National Arts Awards; the BCA 10; and the Public Leadership in the Arts Awards (in cooperation with The United States Conference of Mayors) which honors elected officials in local, state, and federal government. Americans for the Arts also hosts Arts Advocacy Day annually on Capitol Hill, convening arts advocates from across the country to advance federal support of the arts and arts education. For more information, please visit www.AmericansForTheArts.org.

ABOUT OUR SPONSORS

The Rosenthal Family Foundation
The Rosenthal Family Foundation (Jamie Rosenthal Wolf, David Wolf, Rick Rosenthal, and Nancy Stephens) are proud to support the Americans for the Arts 28th Annual Nancy Hanks Lecture on Arts and Public Policy. Established by Richard and Hinda Rosenthal, the Foundation embodies the belief that individuals fortunate enough to receive unusual benefits from a society have the distinct obligation to return meaningful, tangible support to that society—in the form of creative energy as well as funding. The Foundation encourages activity and commentary concerned with constructive social change and recognizes and rewards excellence in individuals and organizations nationwide. Americans for the Arts is particularly grateful to Hinda Rosenthal, who approached the organization about her foundation becoming a sponsor of the Nancy Hanks Lecture 15 years ago, and whose extraordinary support helped the program to flourish and grow into a pre-eminent national forum for dialogue about arts policy.
THE AFTER PARTY

NEA Chairman Jane Chu, Rep. Ted Deutch (D-FL), Congressional STEAM Caucus Co-Chair Rep. Suzanne Bonamici (D-OR), Americans for the Arts’ Board Member Glen Howard, Lyn Lear, Norman Lear, Congressional Arts Caucus Co-Chair Rep. Louise Slaughter (D-NY), actress and playwright Holland Taylor, Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, Americans for the Arts CEO Robert L. Lynch

Americans for the Arts CEO Robert L. Lynch, Ovation Vice President of Legislative Affairs Waldo McMillan, Norman Lear, Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi and Ovation Executive Vice President of Content Distribution Brad Samuels.

NEA Chairman Jane Chu and Rep. David Cicilline (D-RI)

U.S. Conference of Mayors CEO Tom Cochran, actress and playwright Holland Taylor and Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi

Atlanta Symphony Youth Orchestra musicians

Common and Congressional Arts Caucus Co-Chair Rep. Louise Slaughter (D-NY)
AMERICANS FOR THE ARTS LEADERSHIP

As the leading nonprofit organization for advancing the arts in this country, Americans for the Arts works with a broad range of leadership, including corporate, philanthropic, and artistic leaders from across the country. Under the leadership of President and CEO Robert L. Lynch, Americans for the Arts' governing and advisory bodies and their leadership are as follows:

Board of Directors
Abel Lopez, Chair
Ramona Baker
Maria Bell
Nolen V. Bivens
Leslie D. Blanton
Charles X Block
Susan Coliton
Theodor Dalenson
Alessandra DiGiusto
Susan Goode
Floyd W. Green, III
John Haworth
Glen S. Howard
Deborah Jordy
William T. Kerr
William Lehr, Jr.
Liz Lerman
Timothy McClimon
Felix Padron
Dorothy Pierce McSweeney
Julie Muraco
Margie Johnson Reese
Barbara S. Robinson
Edgar L. Smith, Jr.
Tommy Sowers
Steven D. Spiess
Michael Spring
Nancy Stephens
Ty Stiklorius
Ann Stock
Michael S. Verruto
Charmaine Warmenhoven
Robert L. Lynch, ex-officio

Business Committee for the Arts Executive Board
Edgar L. Smith, Jr., Chair
John F. Barrett
Albert Chao
Lynn Laverty Eshens
C. Kendric Fergusson
Martha R. Ingram
Parker S. Kennedy
William T. Kerr
Robert Lamb III
Craig A. Moon
John Pappajohn
Kathryn A. Paul
Roderick Randall
Henry T. Segerstrom
Mark A. Shugoll
Ken Solomon
Jonathan Spector
Steven D. Spiess
Bobby S. Sternlicht
Bobby Tudor

Pierre Dulaine
Todd Eberle
Hector Elizondo
Giancarlo Esposito
Shepard Fairey
Suzanne Farrell
Laurence Fishburne
Ben Folds
Hsin-Ming Fung
Frank O. Gehry
Marcus Giarmali
Josh Groban
Vijay Gupta
David Hallberg
Hill Harper
Arthur Hiller
Craig Hodgetts
Lorin Hollander
Jenny Holzer
Siri Hustvedt
David Henry Kwong
Melina Kanakaredes
Moises Kaufman
Kenna
Jon Kessler
Richard Kind
Jeff Koons
Swoosie Kurtz
John Legend
Liz Lerman
John Lithgow
Graham Lustig
Kyle MacLachlan
Yo-Yo Ma
Yvonne Marceau
Peter Martins
Marlee Matlin
Kathy Mattea
Trey McIntyre
Julie Mehretu
Richard Meier
Arthur Mitchell
Brian Stokes Mitchell
Walter Mosley
Paul Muldoon
Kate Mulleavy
Laura Mulleavy
Matt Mullican
Alessandro Nivola
Naomi Shihab Nye
Richard On
Yoko Ono
Harold Prince
Robert Redford
Michael Ritchie
Marc Roberge
Victoria Rowell
Salman Rushdie
Martin Scorsese
Cindy Sherman
Gabourey Sidibe
Anna Deavere Smith
Arnold Steinhardt
Meryl Streep
Holland Taylor
Julie Taymor
Marlo Thomas
Stanley Tucci
Edward Villella
Clay Walker
Malcolm-Jamal Warner
Kerry Washington
William Wegman
Bradley Whitford
Kehinde Wiley
Henry Winkler
Joanne Woodward
Kulapat Yantrasast
Peter Yarrow
Michael York

In memoriam
Peggy Amsterdam
Peter Donnelly

Artists Committee
Jane Alexander
Kwaku Alston
Dame Julie Andrews
Martina Arroyo
Paul Auster
Bob Balaban
John Baldessari
Alec Baldwin
Theodore Bikel
Lewis Black
Lauren Bon
Amy Brenneman
Connie Britton
Blair Brown
Kate Burton
Chuck Close
Chuck D
Jacques d’Amboise
Carla Dariikov
Fran Drescher
Patty Duke

In memoriam
Ossie Davis
Mary Rodgers Guettel
Skitch Henderson
Leonard Nimoy
Paul Newman
John Raitt
Lloyd Richards
Billy Taylor
Wendy Wasserstein
Nancy Hanks was President of Americans for the Arts from 1968–1969, when she was appointed chair of the National Endowment for the Arts, a position she held for eight years. Until her death in 1983, she worked tirelessly to bring the arts to prominent national consciousness. During her tenure at the National Endowment for the Arts, the agency’s budget grew 1,400 percent. This year marks the 29th Annual Nancy Hanks Lecture on Arts and Public Policy, established to honor her memory and to provide an opportunity for public discourse at the highest levels on the importance of the arts and culture to our nation’s well-being.

**PAST NANCY HANKS LECTURERS**

2013  Yo-Yo Ma, acclaimed musician and arts educator
2012  Alec Baldwin, actor and arts advocate
2011  Kevin Spacey, actor and Artistic Director of the Old Vic Theatre
2010  Joseph P. Riley, Jr., Mayor of Charleston, SC
2009  Wynton Marsalis, Artistic Director, Jazz at Lincoln Center
2008  Daniel Pink, best-selling author and innovator
2007  Robert MacNeil, broadcast journalist and author
2006  William Safire, columnist and author
2005  Ken Burns, documentary filmmaker
2004  Doris Kearns Goodwin, journalist and author
2003  Robert Redford, artist and activist
2002  Zelda Fichandler, Founding Director of Arena Stage in Washington, DC, and Chair of the Graduate Acting Program at New York University
2000  Terry Semel, past Chairman and Co-CEO of Warner Bros. and Warner Music Group
1999  Wendy Wasserstein, playwright
1998  Dr. Billy Taylor, jazz musician and educator
1997  Alan K. Simpson, former U.S. Senator
1996  Carlos Fuentes, author
1995  Winton Malcolm Blount, Chairman of Blount, Inc., philanthropist, and former U.S. Postmaster General
1994  David McCullough, historian
1993  Barbara Jordan, former U.S. Congresswoman
1992  Franklin D. Murphy, former CEO of the Times Mirror Company
1991  John Brademas, former U.S. Congressman and President Emeritus of New York University
1990  Maya Angelou, poet
1989  Leonard Garment, Special Counsel to Presidents Nixon and Ford
1988  Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., historian and special assistant to President Kennedy