



OBAMA'08
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“I want our students learning
art and music and science and poetry...
and all the things that make an education worthwhile.”

BARACK OBAMA, FEBRUARY 9, 2008

ARTS POLICY COMMITTEE

A MESSAGE FROM GEORGE STEVENS, JR. AND MARGO LION

Co-Chairs of the Obama Arts Policy Committee

We don't want to let this opportunity pass to urge our friends from the arts community to join with us in supporting Barack Obama's candidacy for the president of the United States.

Barack Obama has the creative imagination and the political acumen to bring forth the kind of change our country needs. And we believe his election will send a signal to people everywhere that America is moving forward in a way that respects the differences between us while honoring our shared hopes for the future.

We were thrilled when Barack Obama asked us to chair the Arts Policy Committee for his campaign. His decision to create such a committee was unique in this election year. The committee has engaged artists, cultural leaders, art educators and arts advocates to better understand the major issues confronting the arts in this country and to advise Barack as he develops his policy positions.

We are therefore pleased to be able to present the attached Fact Sheet which provides a summary of the actions needed in order to significantly advance the arts in America, and to ensure the arts and creative resources of this country are at hand in addressing the many pressing problems we face as a nation.

Finally, our committee member, Michael Chabon, has beautifully captured the significance of the arts in our society with the following words:

Every grand American accomplishment, every innovation that has benefited and enriched our lives, every lasting social transformation, everything that has from the start made America the world capital of hope, has been the fruit of the creative imagination, of the ability to reach beyond received ideas and ready-made answers to some new place, some new way of moving through the world.

To find out more about how to get involved with the campaign in your area, please visit www.BarackObama.com

We also invite you to join the official online group of arts advocates who support Obama at: <http://my.barackobama.com/page/group/CreativeAmericaforObama>



OBAMA NATIONAL ARTS POLICY COMMITTEE

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Arts Policy Committee Co-Chair
Writer, Director; Producer; Founder of the American Film Institute

Margo Lion

Arts Policy Committee Co-Chair
Broadway Producer, Margo Lion, Ltd.; Adjunct Professor, Tisch School of the Arts, New York University

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Arts Management/Media Advisor; Former Vice President, Americans for the Arts; Former Municipal Arts Agency Director, City of Ventura

Michael Dorf

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Artist, Visual Arts Teacher; Arts Advocate

Michael Chabon

Novelist; Screenwriter; Columnist; Short Story Writer; 2001 Pulitzer Prize for Fiction

Cathy Crain

President, Cincinnati Opera Board of Trustees; Board Member, Cincinnati Fine Arts Fund; Former Vice President Investments and Chairman, Charitable Endowments National City Bank Corporation

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President, Board of Directors, Black Ensemble Theatre; Principal, The Dale Law Group

Alan Fletcher

President and CEO, Aspen Music Festival and School; former head of the school of music, Carnegie Mellon; former Provost and Senior Vice President, New England Conservatory

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Owner and Principal, Christine Forester, Catalyst, Community and Arts Activist

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Former CEO, Hanes Companies; Former Board Mbr, National Endowment for the Arts; Kennedy Center (DC), Salzburg (Aus) Seminars; A founder, American Council for the Arts; National Governors Arts Award (1982); National Medal of Arts Recipient (1991), Trent Lott Center for Innovation Hall of Fame (2008)

Joel Henning

Columnist, Leisure & Arts Page, The Wall Street Journal; Chairman, Illinois Governor's Commission on Financing the Arts; Former Member, Illinois Arts Council; Lawyer; Law Firm Management Consultant

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Pat York

Artist; Photographer; Arts Advocate; Los Angeles Cultural Leader

Affiliations are listed for identification purposes only. Members of this group are participating as individuals, and the views expressed in this letter and attached policy document in no way express those of their affiliated organizations or institutions.



BARACK OBAMA: A CHAMPION FOR THE ARTS

Our nation's creativity has filled the world's libraries, museums, recital halls, movie houses, and marketplaces with works of genius. The arts embody the American spirit of self-definition. As the author of two best-selling books – *Dreams from My Father* and *The Audacity of Hope* – Barack Obama uniquely appreciates the role and value of creative expression.

A PLATFORM IN SUPPORT OF THE ARTS

Reinvest in Arts Education: To remain competitive in the global economy, America needs to reinvigorate the kind of creativity and innovation that has made this country great. To do so, we must nourish our children's creative skills. In addition to giving our children the science and math skills they need to compete in the new global context, we should also encourage the ability to think creatively that comes from a meaningful arts education. Unfortunately, many school districts are cutting instructional time for art and music education. Barack Obama believes that the arts should be a central part of effective teaching and learning. The Chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts recently said "The purpose of arts education is not to produce more artists, though that is a byproduct. The real purpose of arts education is to create complete human beings capable of leading successful and productive lives in a free society." To support greater arts education, Obama will:

- **Expand Public/Private Partnerships Between Schools and Arts Organizations:** Barack Obama will increase resources for the U.S. Department of Education's Arts Education Model Development and Dissemination Grants, which develop public/private partnerships between schools and arts organizations. Obama will also engage the foundation and corporate community to increase support for public/private partnerships.
- **Create an Artist Corps:** Barack Obama supports the creation of an "Artists Corps" of young artists trained to work in low-income schools and their communities. Studies in Chicago have demonstrated that test scores improved faster for students enrolled in low-income schools that link arts across the curriculum than scores for students in schools lacking such programs.
- **Publicly Champion the Importance of Arts Education:** As president, Barack Obama will use the bully pulpit and the example he will set in the White House to promote the importance of arts and arts education in America. Not only is arts education indispensable for success in a rapidly changing, high skill, information economy, but studies show that arts education raises test scores in other subject areas as well.

Support Increased Funding for the NEA: Over the last 15 years, government funding for the National Endowment for the Arts has been slashed from \$175 million annually in 1992 to \$125 million today. Barack Obama supports increased funding for the NEA, the support of which enriches schools and neighborhoods all across the nation and helps to promote the economic development of countless communities.

Promote Cultural Diplomacy: American artists, performers and thinkers – representing our values and ideals – can inspire people both at home and all over the world. Through efforts like that of the United States Information Agency, America’s cultural leaders were deployed around the world during the Cold War as artistic ambassadors and helped win the war of ideas by demonstrating to the world the promise of America. Artists can be utilized again to help us win the war of ideas against Islamic extremism. Unfortunately, our resources for cultural diplomacy are at their lowest level in a decade. Barack Obama will work to reverse this trend and improve and expand public-private partnerships to expand cultural and arts exchanges throughout the world.

Attract Foreign Talent: The flipside to promoting American arts and culture abroad is welcoming members of the foreign arts community to America. Opening America’s doors to students and professional artists provides the kind of two-way cultural understanding that can break down the barriers that feed hatred and fear. As America tightened visa restrictions after 9/11, the world’s most talented students and artists, who used to come here, went elsewhere. Barack Obama will streamline the visa process to return America to its rightful place as the world’s top destination for artists and art students.

Provide Health Care to Artists: Finding affordable health coverage has often been one of the most vexing obstacles for artists and those in the creative community. Since many artists work independently or have non-traditional employment relationships, employer-based coverage is unavailable and individual policies are financially out of reach. Barack Obama’s plan will provide all Americans with quality, affordable health care. His plan includes the creation of a new public program that will allow individuals and small businesses to buy affordable health care similar to that available to federal employees. His plan also creates a National Health Insurance Exchange to reform the private insurance market and allow Americans to enroll in participating private plans, which would have to provide comprehensive benefits, issue every applicant a policy, and charge fair and stable premiums. For those who still cannot afford coverage, the government will provide a subsidy. His health plan will lower costs for the typical American family by up to \$2,500 per year.

Ensure Tax Fairness for Artists: Barack Obama supports the Artist-Museum Partnership Act, introduced by Senator Patrick Leahy (D-VT). The Act amends the Internal Revenue Code to allow artists to deduct the fair market value of their work, rather than just the costs of the materials, when they make charitable contributions.

STATEMENT BY MICHAEL CHABON

The Obama Arts Policy Committee asked committee member and author, Michael Chabon, to describe the critical importance of the arts at this moment of remarkable opportunity and challenge in our nation's history.

Every grand American accomplishment, every innovation that has benefited and enriched our lives, every lasting social transformation, every moment of profound insight any American visionary ever had into a way out of despair, loneliness, fear and violence—everything that has from the start made America the world capital of hope, has been the fruit of the creative imagination, of the ability to reach beyond received ideas and ready-made answers to some new place, some new way of seeing or hearing or moving through the world. Breathtaking solutions, revolutionary inventions, the road through to freedom, reform and change: never in the history of this country have these emerged as pat answers given to us by our institutions, by our government, by our leaders. We have been obliged—to employ Dr. King’s powerful verb—to dream them up for ourselves.

America’s artists are the guardians of the spirit of questioning, of innovation, of reaching across the barriers that fence us off from our neighbors, from our allies and adversaries, from the six billion other people with whom we share this dark and dazzling world. Art increases the sense of our common humanity. The imagination of the artist is, therefore, a profoundly moral imagination: the easier it is for you to imagine walking in someone else’s shoes, the more difficult it then becomes to do that person harm. If you want to make a torturer, first kill his imagination. If you want to create a nation that will stand by and allow torture to be practiced in its name, then go ahead and kill its imagination, too. You could start by cutting school funding for art, music, creative writing and the performing arts.

Our children need training and encouragement and support—they need rehearsal space and tempera paint and bass violins, teachers and tap-shoes; they need constant, passionate exposure to the great artistic heritage of their people, so that even if they don’t grow up to be artists themselves, they will still have been blessed, as Americans have always been blessed, with the artist’s gift for seeing the possible in the impossible, the fellow soul on the other side of the fence. Our artists need freedom to pursue the solitary investigations into which their art inevitably leads them. America needs that untrammelled flow of creativity, of the willingness and ability to innovate, to skylark, to tinker, to daydream out loud: over the course of two and a half centuries now, our creative flow has filled the world’s libraries, museums, theaters and recital halls, its academies, movie houses and marketplaces, with works of genius to break the heart and boggle the mind. And the people of the world--our world--need an America that remains in full, confident possession of its mighty gift of imagination, not merely to meet the global demand for our entertainment and art and literature, but so that they--and we--need never fear the brutality, the arrogance and the inhumanity to which a nation in want of imagination must, inevitably, descend.

Michael Chabon is the Pulitzer-Prize winning author of THE YIDDISH POLICEMEN'S UNION and THE AMAZING ADVENTURES OF KAVALIER AND CLAY. His other books include THE MYSTERIES OF PITTSBURGH and WONDER BOYS. His work has appeared in The New Yorker, Harper's, and in a number of anthologies, among them Best American Short Stories 2001 and Prize Stories 1999: The O. Henry Awards. He lives in Berkeley, California, with his wife, Ayelet Waldman, also a novelist, and their four children.