

Remarks by the First Lady at the National Arts and Humanities Youth Program Awards

November 19, 2012, White House

Thank you. Thanks so much. Well, good afternoon.

And welcome to the White House. It's good to have you here. I am thrilled that all of you are here joining us today.

I want to start by thanking the Committee on the Arts and Humanities, and all their work for sponsoring these awards each year. They've just done an amazing job.

And most importantly, I want to thank all of the educators, the artists, and all of you who are working every day in communities all across this country to run these youth programs.

And every day, you all are doing the hard work. You are pushing and inspiring our kids. You're revealing their boundless promise, and teaching them to believe in themselves. Because of the programs that you all run, young people are learning breakdancing, hip hop, African drumming. They're putting on plays, publishing poems and articles. They're becoming historians, designers, musicians.

And I know that you make all this happen on shoestring budgets; you do it in unbelievable ways, in some of the most difficult economic circumstances imaginable. And I know that you put a lot of late nights and long hours in to give these kids opportunities worthy of their promise.

But you keep on doing this year after year because you have seen yourselves the transformative power of the arts in the lives of young people across this country. You know that the skills that you're teaching are critical in the classroom and will be critical in the workplace when you all get there, right?

You teach them that no matter what life throws their way, if they draw on their own talent and courage and creativity, if they are persistent and tenacious and bold, then they can truly make something extraordinary of their lives. Because that's what we expect: nothing but extraordinary.

And that is why it is such a pleasure to honor you all here today -- for the work that you do, for inspiring our kids, for keeping their promise alive, for loving them, for supporting them. The work you do is so critical, and we thank you.

And with that, it is now my pleasure to introduce the person who will present the awards. One of the distinguished Chairs of the Committee on the Arts and the Humanities -- a man whose tremendous career in the arts and tremendous service to our country is such an inspiration to us all. Please welcome George Stevens.