

Darren Walker, President of the Ford Foundation, delivered to the Americans for the Arts 30th Annual Nancy Hanks Lecture on Arts and Public Policy entitled:

“The Art of Democracy: Creative Expression and American Greatness”

- “Art is not a privilege. Art is the soul of our civilization; the beating heart of our humanity; a miracle to which we all should bear witness, over and over again...”
- “In fact, the arts and humanities are necessary to address a kind of poverty that goes beyond money—a hunger that lives not in our bodies but in our souls, a uniquely human hunger for dignity and for transcendence.”
- “Today we may well be the wealthiest nation in the world – but I believe there is a spiritual poverty that plagues America...and I believe this poverty – of heart and mind, of spirit and soul, of civic imagination – has brought us to our current moment of crisis.”
- “All of this reflects a poverty of imagination—a poverty of imagination that has metastasized into a paucity of hope... Too many people around this country feel hopeless—many millions of us. And yet, at a moment when art could be the light—when art’s potential could bring us hope—we who support the arts find ourselves with our backs against the wall.”
- “To me, numbers will never explain what happens the moment the curtain rises or the lights go up. They don’t measure the quickening of our hearts in time with the music, the widening of our eyes, or the suspension of our disbelief.”
- “This is *no time* for a poverty of imagination in our country. Right now, this is the argument we should be making. This is the argument for our times. As we watch the spreading disease of cynicism, the widening divides, and coarsening of our discourse, the arts may be the very thing to save us from hopelessness and selfishness, and the ugliness they permit and promote.”
- “Without art, there is no empathy. Without empathy, there is no justice. The arts have the power to lead us forward, to heal us, to bring read divides.”
- “Because when we do the work of the arts, when we hold the mirror up to ourselves and our society, we not only experience our shared humanity, we arrive at our shared obligation to humanity: Our connection with and obligation to all people who suffer, and struggle, and seek to be heard.”
- “This greatness—of our culture and our character—is worth fighting for.”

Some noteworthy and inspiring quotes (as excerpted by attendee, Nicki Clarke)

For full text visit:

americansforthearts.org/sites/default/files/pdf/2017/events/arts_advocacy_day/FordSpeechINT03-15-17FINAL.pdf