

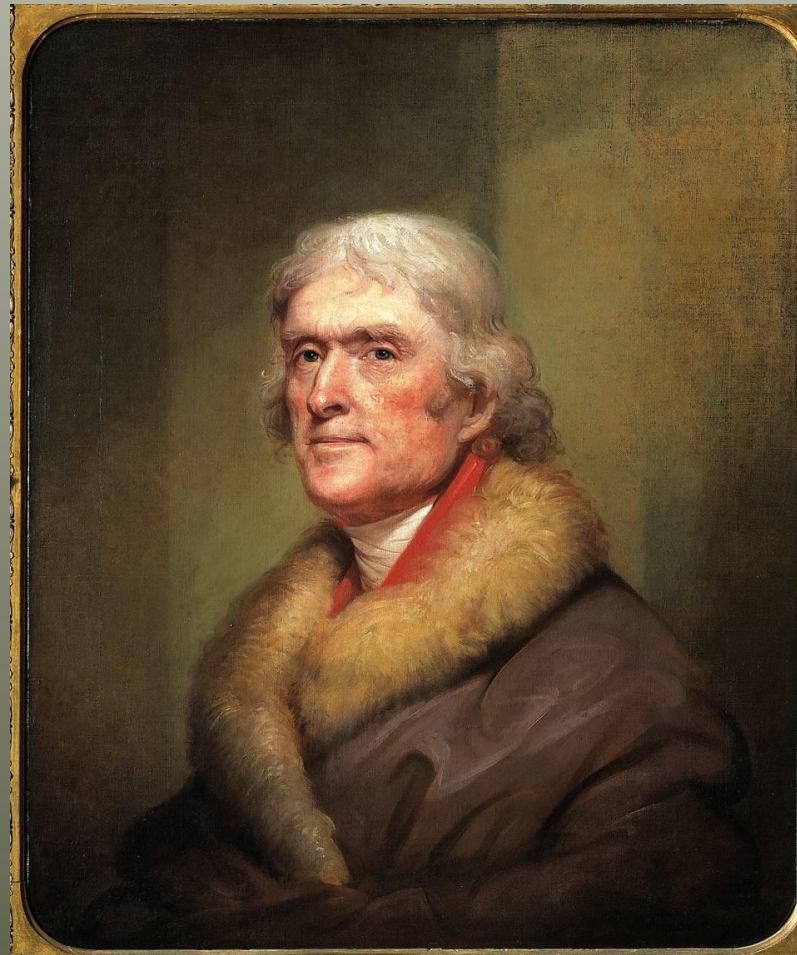
# Public and Cultural Diplomacy Debate

Canadian Conference of the Arts

Toronto, June 12, 2008

Ambassador Cynthia P.  
Schneider

# Origins in the US



# Thomas Jefferson

- *You see I am an enthusiast on the subject of the arts. But it is an enthusiasm of which I am not ashamed, as its object is to improve the taste of my countrymen, to increase their reputation, to reconcile to them the respect of the world and procure them its praise.*
- Thomas Jefferson to James Madison, Paris, September 20, 1785

# Public Diplomacy/Cultural Diplomacy

- Public Diplomacy consists of all a nation does to explain itself to the world, and cultural diplomacy – the use of creative expression and exchanges of information and people to increase mutual understanding -- supplies much of its content.”

# Effective Cultural Diplomacy Should:

- Communicate some aspect of America, i.e. diversity, opportunity, individual expression, freedom of speech and thought, merit-based society;
- Cater to interests of host country or region
- Offer pleasure, information or expertise in a spirit of exchange and mutual respect;
- Open doors between American diplomats and their host country;
- Provide another dimension, or an alternative to the official presence of America in the country;
- Form part of a long term relationship and cultivation of ties;
- Be creative, flexible, and opportunistic.

# Effective Cultural Diplomacy Should Not:

- Try to 'sell' a country, region, or culture
- Be used as 'Rapid Response'
  - “Every time there is a crisis, you open a library”
- Assume that target shares your values, aspirations, and assumptions
  - US Public Diplomacy's “Shared Values” strategy

“If she could convince me to buy Uncle Ben’s rice.....”

Colin Powell on Charlotte Beers as Undersecretary of Public Diplomacy



# “Branding America”

- “How is it possible that the nation that invented Madison Avenue, and whose music and movies are sought all over the world fails so miserably in communicating who we are and what we stand for?”  
Congressman Henry Hyde



# Arts and Culture Humanizes What Politics Demonizes

- *“I look at a situation which I’m sure is on the mind of everybody here, the Middle East, where the issue really is one of a very profound demonization of conflicting parties. And I wonder what kind of a role culture, the presentation of the “other” in humanized terms, can play in a situation where politics, diplomacy, appears to fail; where it is the peoples who need to talk to one another, who need to be assisted to talk to one another, rather than the leadership talking between themselves.”* Wole Soyinka, White House Conference on Cultural Diplomacy, November, 2000

# “Cultural Ambassadors”

- Jazz Musicians traveled to Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, Turkey, Congo, India, Pakistan, Russia and more
- Irony of black musicians playing the music of freedom when they lived under Jim Crow laws of segregation in the U.S.
- Dizzy Gillespie “briefed” at the State Department
- Louis Armstrong insisting that people waiting in the street be let into his concert

# Dave Brubeck and the 1958 Jazz Tour



# Ella Fitzgerald and Dizzy Gillespie



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# Dissent: Democracy in Action

- *“What I sensed they got out of visiting American writers was, to them, our spectacular freedom to speak our minds. I mean, there we were, official representatives of the U.S – sort of the equivalent of their Writers Union apparatchiks – who had no party line at all..and who had the writers’ tendency to speak out on controversial issues... In other words, the exchanges enabled Soviet writers, intellectuals, students et al. to see that that the “free world” wasn’t just political cant”.*

# Winning the (Cold) War, Losing the Battle (of Ideas)

- Public/Cultural Diplomacy drastically cut following end of Cold War
- Coincided with attack on government funding of the arts and spending on foreign programs led by Senator Jesse Helms
- Like Canada, demise of public/cultural diplomacy linked to domestic cuts
- No defense of mission of USIA
- Demand for quantifiable results
- “We don’t do culture; we do policy”

# Cultural Diplomacy More Important Than Ever

- “Nor can it be seriously argued... that these tools of US foreign policy are no longer needed now that the Cold War is over...far from being on the verge of a new order, the world has entered a period of great disorder...Cultural diplomacy..has increased in importance, whereas traditional diplomacy and military power are of limited use...”
  - Walter Laqueur, “Save Public Diplomacy”  
Foreign Affairs 1994



# Commercial Culture

- Movies, music, TV, online entertainment is one of America's most significant exports
- American paradigm of private, commercial culture is unique in the world
- "America" does not send out *Baywatch*, *Friends*, *24*, or *Sesame Street*
- Private distribution – someone in office in LA suburb
- Disconnect with global audience
- Elsewhere culture controlled, at least in part, by government
- Commercial culture shaping image of US

# American Idol, but not Americanization

- Global variants on American Idol have introduced merit based contests, with winners selected (entirely or in part) by the public
- Unexpected Results - winner in Czech Republic a gypsy, in Germany Turkish/German
- Does not mean that democracy will come to countries with American Idol inspired contests
- Long term impact of merit based competition unknown
- Contests fostered sense of national,

*I am not afraid...I think all of Afghanistan is in danger, but if we worry about those dangers, we can't move on and the country's not going to develop. Lima Sahaar*



# Cultural Diplomacy Best Practices

- **Layalina** “On the Road in America” reality show broadcast to 25 million viewers in Middle East
- **Search for Common Ground/Video Cairo SAT** joint production *The Bridge*
- **Chat the Planet** *Hometown Bagdad*
- **American Voices Jazz Bridges** *Afghanistan, Unity Academy, Iraq*

# Hometown Bagdad: New Media, New Model



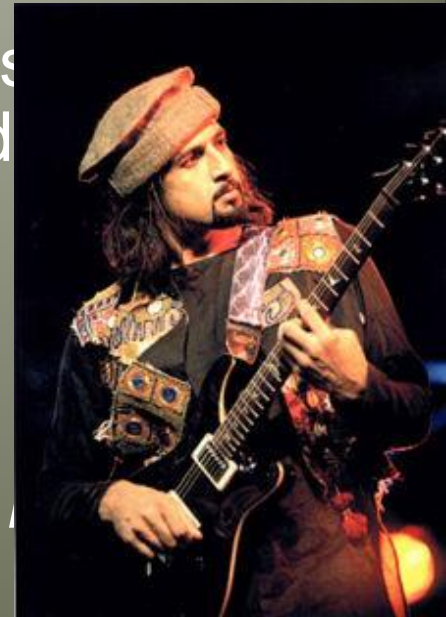
# Jazz Bridges Afghanistan



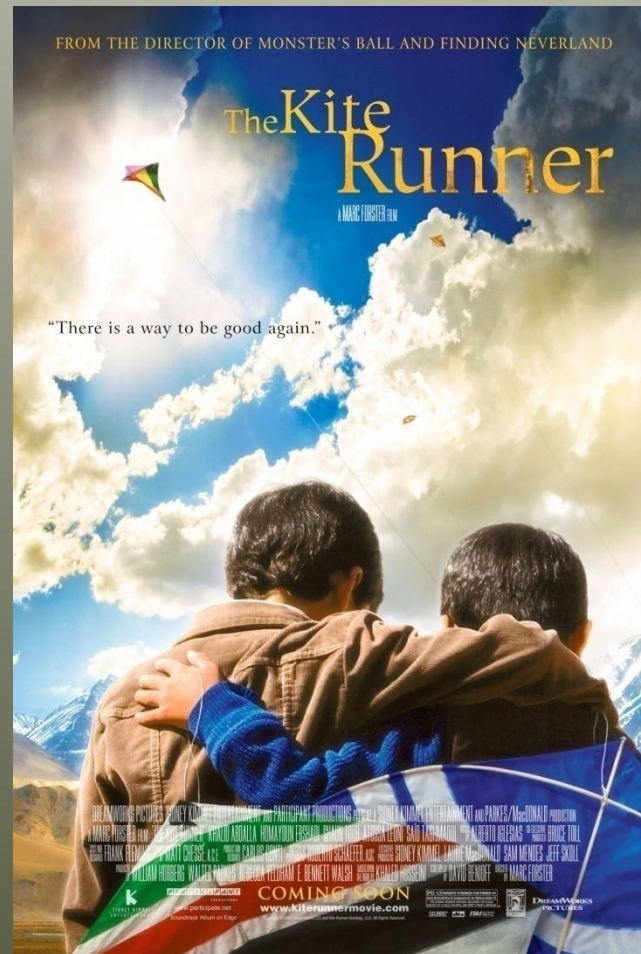
# Brookings Arts and Culture Initiative

- Arts and Cultural Leaders Seminar
- Amy Tan, Robert Pinsky, YAS, Ben Chavis Ahmad, Nashwa al Ruwaini, Howard Gordon
- Hollywood Engagement Initiative
- Favorite Poem Project
- Global Hip Hop Concert and Summit
- *Mightier than the Sword: Arts and Culture in the Real*

*Relationship between the U.S. And the Islamic World*, to be published by the Brookings Institution, September 2008



# The Power of Storytelling





## Conclusion: What It Would Take to Reap the Potential of Cultural Connections between the US and Muslim World

- Recognition of importance of arts and culture in shaping perceptions in US-Muslim world relationship
- Restructuring of support for arts and culture in international context and within diplomacy in the US
- Coordination/cooperation between public, private, nonprofit sectors
- Funding from private sector, including philanthropic
- Funding from public sector