“THESE are the times that try men’s souls. The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of their country; but he that stands by it now, deserves the love and thanks of man and woman. Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered; yet we have this consolation with us, that the harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph. What we obtain too cheap, we esteem too lightly: it is dearness only that gives everything its value. Heaven knows how to put a proper price upon its goods; and it would be strange indeed if so celestial an article as FREEDOM should not be highly rated.”

These are the words of one of our founding fathers, Thomas Paine. For those Americans, like Paine, who prize freedom above all, that can only mean freedom for all. Not license for me and my friends, nor a special pass or privileges for me and my kind, but choice for everyone with whom we share a common territory and common heritage. And make no mistake, that heritage is not just a thing of marble statues and buildings but of marbled bodies and minds in which mingle all the rich and multitudinous veins of the American experience. A pure American is by definition an impure bred creature, the sum of generations of mingling ethnicities, cultures, and creeds.

That reality is under more concerted assault from “summer soldiers and sunshine patriots” than any period in our history. But they will not prevail. They cannot prevail. Because denial is ultimately powerless against the manifest and abiding fact of our ingenious, disputatious, energizing variety. For far too long groups within the scope of the Democratic Vistas whose expansive hymn Walt Whitman sang in the Leaves of Grass, whose epoch bridging, ocean-spanning lyrics Langston Hughes picked up in “The Negro Speaks of Rivers”, and whose intimate costs Adrienne Rich captured in Diving into the Wreck have been left out of Big Tent democracy. But those days are past. The reckoning has come due. And America is and will be the better for its many-faceted manifestations.

As with the poetry and music they write, the dances they dance, the buildings they build, the films they make, Americans can best be known by the art they create. FAPE sees to it that remarkable examples of such work are visible everywhere the United States has an embassy or consulate, and that people of the countries where these diplomatic outposts are located, the people coming to do business in them will, in passing, have the opportunity to get to know us better through expressions of who we are that will outlast the temporary policies of any one administration or party. FAPE is a strictly non-partisan but unapologetically patriotic coalition of private citizens of wide-ranging artistic preferences and political affiliations, all of whom are dedicated to the proposition that the best way to present our nation to others is as the sum of its vital, vivid differences. We owe our thanks to the patrons who have made this sustained effort possible, but first and foremost to the artists who have contributed their ideas, time, and talent to every aspect of the projects we have sponsored.

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