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National Endowment for the Arts

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*The Federal agency
that supports the
visual, literary and
performing arts to
benefit all Americans*

**Statement by the National Endowment for the Arts
Regarding a Press Conference and Statements by
The Christian Action Network
September 9, 1993**

Today the Christian Action Network (CAN) once again used innuendo, distortion of facts, guilt by association, and outright untruths to condemn a federal agency. The actions of CAN are irresponsible.

Arts in Education

*Challenge &
Advancement*

Dance

Design Arts

Expansion Arts

Folk Arts

International

Literature

Locals

Media Arts

Museum

Music

*Opera-Musical
Theater*

*Presenting &
Commissioning*

State & Regional

Theater

Visual Arts

1. **MYTH: The Arts Endowment funded the 1991 Pittsburgh International Lesbian and Gay Film Festival.**

FACT: The Arts Endowment did not fund the 1991 Pittsburgh International Lesbian and Gay Film Festival, directly or indirectly.

2. **MYTH: CAN states, "Two weeks ago she (Acting Senior Deputy Chair Ana Steele) authorized \$17,500 for three homosexual film festivals which were previously denied funding in 1992...Ms. Steele arrogantly ordered the money be paid to the film festivals."**

FACT: In response to an appeal by the National Alliance for Media Arts and Culture (NAMAC), the Endowment conducted an administrative review of the process by which three of NAMAC's recommended subgrants were denied funding by the Endowment in 1992. The Endowment found that there was an error in procedure that unfairly and improperly affected the grantee (NAMAC) and the proposed subgrantees. \$17,500 -- an amount equal to that recommended by NAMAC for the three subgrants -- was therefore made available to NAMAC for dispersal to subgrantees in accordance with the terms and conditions of NAMAC's 1993 grant. Under the 1993 grant, allowable costs for film festivals include activities such as symposia and lectures on the art of film, but not the exhibition of films at festivals.

3. **MYTH: CAN states that the video it distributed is "representative of the ideas and deviance Ms. Steele**

has unilaterally decided the United States Government must endorse with tax dollars."

FACT: Ms. Steele did not initiate this action, but rather was required to respond to an appeal by NAMAC. The appeal had been left unresolved by the former Acting Chair. As has been noted, the Arts Endowment did not support the film festival at which these films were shown. Further, since 1965, the National Endowment for the Arts has supported over 100,000 projects that have been of immeasurable value to the American people. It is necessary to look at the full record before concluding that anything is "representative" of what the Endowment does.

- 4. MYTH:** CAN implies that the Endowment funded a recent controversial exhibition at the Whitney Museum of American Art.

FACT: The Arts Endowment did not fund the Whitney Museum exhibition in question.

- 5. MYTH:** CAN implies that the Endowment has taken no action with regard to the "Art Rebate" project recently conducted in San Diego.

FACT: The Endowment declared last week that the \$4,500 distributed through "Art Rebate" was an unallowable cost and should not be charged to the federal grant.

- 6. MYTH:** CAN states, "The evidence is clear."

FACT: Not only is CAN's "evidence" anything but clear, the "information" presented by CAN does not speak the truth.

The Christian Action Network, in its zeal to abolish the Arts Endowment, has shown a flagrant disregard for facts and fairness. In so doing, it has distributed material that misrepresents the achievements of the Arts Endowment and misleads the public, the press, and the Congress. The Arts Endowment did not fund the 1991 Pittsburgh International Lesbian and Gay Film Festival directly or indirectly. The funds that were released recently from

the Arts Endowment will not be applied to any of the cited films.

The National Endowment for the Arts has great faith in the American people and the Congress to make judgments based on the facts, not on fiction.

NOTE: Attached is the Arts Endowment's September 2, 1993, Fact Sheet on this issue.

attachment

**Fact Sheet on the Appeal by
The National Alliance for Media Arts and Culture (NAMAC)**

September 2, 1993

Background: The National Endowment for the Arts provides support to the National Alliance for Media Arts and Culture (NAMAC), based in Oakland, CA, to administer the Media Arts Fund. The fund is a subgranting program that supports artistic excellence and merit, providing assistance for small, emerging, and culturally diverse media arts organizations and projects. Applications from these organizations are received and processed by NAMAC staff and reviewed by a panel of experts in the media arts field selected by NAMAC in consultation with the Endowment. Guidelines are developed jointly by NAMAC and the Endowment. The Endowment reviews the NAMAC panel's recommended applications and approves applications for funding. NAMAC then notifies applicants of subgrant award or rejection, dispenses all funds, and administers the subgrants.

The 1992 guidelines for the Media Arts Fund stated that applicants would be notified of subgrant decisions by April 30, 1992; NAMAC submitted a list of 53 panel recommendations well in advance of that date. In September 1992, 50 of the 53 recommended subgrants were approved by the Endowment's then-Acting Chair. It was not until November 1992, some seven months after NAMAC had submitted its recommended subgrants, that the remaining three were rejected (The Gay and Lesbian Media Coalition, Los Angeles; The New Festival, New York; and the Pittsburgh International Lesbian and Gay Film Festival).

Appeal: NAMAC appealed the denial of the three subgrants in early December 1992, but no action was taken prior to the then-Acting Chair's departure on January 20, 1993. Subsequently, in February 1993, NAMAC restated its appeal to the current Acting Senior Deputy Chair. In response to the appeal, the Acting Senior Deputy Chair undertook an administrative review of the process by which funding to the festivals was determined. Artistic judgment was outside the scope of this administrative review.

The review determined that there was an error in procedure in the 1992 decision due to the lengthy delay in making the decision to deny funding to the festivals. The delay could not be justified on administrative grounds nor in terms of timely and equitable treatment of applicants. The review also determined that NAMAC was itself in compliance with then-existing guidelines. The announced April 30, 1992 deadline for notifying applicants was reasonably relied on by the applicants, and the festivals had in fact concluded before they were notified that their applications had been rejected.

The Endowment has a responsibility to ensure that its administrative procedures are applied fairly and properly. Based on its administrative review, the Endowment is releasing \$17,500 to NAMAC, the amount originally recommended for funding of the festivals. The funds are available to NAMAC in fiscal year 1993 for distribution in accordance with the terms and conditions of its current grant.