

## OF PEOPLE AND THEIR CULTURE ... And the Pursuit of Happiness ...

by Alan Lomax

human resources.

History is filled with examples such as these, where workers demanded and fought for their rights, thus enriching the rights each of us today enjoys.

That involvement continues unabated, as America's free trade union movement daily exercises the First Amendment rights of freedom of speech and freedom of association so vital to a democracy. Freedom is made secure only when citizens exercise their rights vigorously.

The events of today are so important and consume so much of our attention that Americans sometimes forget to look back, to reflect on the people who built America. This bicentennial celebration offers every American the opportunity both to look back with immeasurable pride on how far we've come as a nation and to look forward to rededicate ourselves to the tasks that lie ahead—to the continued building of America.

The AFL-CIO, the largest free trade union center in the world, is proud to participate in the Working Americans exhibits of the 1976 Festival of American Folklife. We are proud of the workers whose skills you will see and the heritage that today's workers share with the patriots of 1776.

To working Americans, the Spirit of '76 is as alive today as it was 200 years ago.

How can we maintain the varied artistic styles which help to make this nation an agreeable place to live? One senses on every hand the oppressive dullness and the psychic distress of those areas where centralized music industries, exploiting the star system and controlling the communication networks, have put the local musician out of work and silenced folk song, tribal ritual, local popular festivities and regional culture.

Scientific study of cultures, notably of their languages and their musics, shows that all are equally valuable: first, because they enrich the lives of the people who use them and whose very morale is threatened when they are impoverished or destroyed; second, because each communicative system (whether verbal, visual, musical, or even culinary) holds important discoveries about the natural and human environment; third,

because each is a treasure of unknown potential, a collective creation in which some branch of the human species invested its genius across the centuries.

The only way to halt the loss of our national cultural heritage is to commit ourselves to the principle of cultural equity, as we have committed ourselves to the principles of political and social equity. Thomas Jefferson was certainly thinking of cultural equity when he wrote in the Declaration of Independence "that all men are created equal and endowed with the inalienable right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." We now understand that Jefferson's luminous phrase means more than the right of the individual to "do his thing." It means the right of every community or ethnic group to its own way of life, its own culture—the group heritage, customs, art and language that gives every human group its sense of identity, continuity and satisfaction. The importance given to national unity and quick communication has caused this nation to forget or devalue these all-important cultural differences, which are, in the Jeffersonian phrase, inalienable human rights. The rich variety of accent, of posture, of song, and of local custom has too often been sacrificed to mainstream conformity. Our ethnic heritage has not been melted down, but it has been degraded. Indeed, the pace of reduction of cultural differences has so accelerated that many assume their total disappearance. Yet there is another trend afoot. Culture pattern is tough, because it is both invisible and omnipresent.



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**Alan Lomax**, co-founder of the Archive of American Folk Song at the Library of Congress, has engaged in major collecting activities in North America and Europe. He was one of the principal architects of the American folk song revival, as editor of the first albums of field recordings as well as the first oral histories in this field. As Director of the Cantometrics Project, Columbia University, he is now involved in cross-cultural study of world patterns of expressive behavior.

We can retain our varied ways of pursuing happiness if we take pains now.

A first move against cultural pollution is to give all cultures a) a fair share of time on the airwaves and b) time in the classroom. When country folk, urban ethnics, or tribal peoples hear or view their own traditions, projected with the authority generally reserved for the output of Madison Avenue, and when they hear their traditions taught to their own children in school, something magical occurs. They see that their expressive styles are as good as that of others and, if they are permitted, they will continue them.

During the 1920's a few southern radio stations began to broadcast the music of the Appalachian mountains. Local audiences bought the products advertised on the programs, so that other southern stations followed suit, and today we have a vigorous modern southern rural musical tradition with several indigenous forms of orchestration that match in virtuosity the storied orchestras of Spain and central Europe. This occurred because talented carriers of a folk tradition were allowed to have their share of broadcast time.

Another instance—the flowering of Black orchestral musical in New Orleans—came about because Black musicians found steady, high-paying jobs and prestige in the amusement district, and they had time to reorchestrate and then record this local music for export to the whole world.

The Festival of American Folklife marks a further step forward. Our folk artists and craftsmen—the fiddlers, the blues guitarists, the blanket weavers, the cooks, the Mariachi musicians, the telephone linemen—brought from all over the United States and set down in the midst of the most powerful national symbols, step out onto the middle of the stage to receive the attention they deserve. They return home, stronger in their own eyes and more respected in their own communities. The principal effect of the Festival seems to be



# Our 200th Birthday: What We Have to Celebrate

by Margaret Mead

in this validation of local culture and of local folk artists.

By giving every culture its equal access to audiences, its equal time on the air, and its equal weight in education, we can come closer to the realization of the principles of Jefferson's declaration. Twentieth-century communications systems and recording devices, in fact, make it possible for the oral traditions to reach their audiences, to establish their libraries and museums, to preserve and record their songs, tales, and dramas directly in sound and vision without writing and printing them in another medium. So today we see Native American tribes recording for their own archives their own sacred literature, broadcasting age-old sacred rituals over their own local radio stations for the spiritual refreshment and education of their youth.

Thus, neither universal education nor communication need necessarily destroy local traditions, provided that the many customs and the many media channels we possess are shared so as to provide support for a multiple heritage. But the cultural myopia of the past must be put aside so that the unwritten, non-verbal traditions may be endowed with the status and the space they deserve.

The next hundred years should put the principle of cultural equity on a par with the principles of political liberty and social justice on which our national life was founded, so that every region and every group may pursue happiness in its own way.

*This article was adapted from "An Appeal for Cultural Equity" that appeared in the UNESCO Journal, The World of Music—Quarterly Journal of the International Music Council, in association with the International Institute for Comparative Music Studies, Volume XIV, Number 2, 1972.*

The best thing about a summer festival is that we can celebrate out of doors in green places where many people can come together—men and women, young people and old people and very little children, families and friends and strangers, echoing one another's pleasure in the event. That is the style we set long ago for the annual celebration of our country's birthday. The Fourth of July is pre-eminently an outdoor holiday—a day for family picnics, a day for celebrations on the greens and commons and plazas of villages and small towns, a day for outdoor games and for fireworks at dusk, a day on which people gather to enjoy themselves and one another.

So it is especially appropriate that one of the principal ways we have chosen to celebrate this year of America's 200th birthday is with outdoor, summertime festivals. And it is even more appropriate that in these festivals we celebrate ourselves as a people—as Americans—in all the extraordinary diversity of our inheritance, our present-day lifestyles, the kinds of work we do and the entertainments we have kept alive out of our so-varied past or have newly fashioned for ourselves in every region of our land. As people holding these festivals we are at one and the same time the celebrators, the audience and the objects of celebration.

Yet almost everything to do with celebrating the Bicentennial this year has aroused criticism from many people. This is not a time to celebrate, these people say. We have seen a President resign. The tragedy of the Vietnam war continues to haunt us. We are in the midst of an economic recession.

**Margaret Mead** is a world famous anthropologist and a molder of opinion in a wide variety of humanistic fields. She has written prolifically in anthropology and the social sciences and has pioneered in the use of film as a way to study culture. Among many honors, she last year served as President of the American Association for the Advancement of Science of which she is now Chairman of the Board.

tion. To give ourselves over to celebration and enjoyment, even on our 200th birthday, say the critics, is callous and heartless.

It is quite true we are living through difficult times. But life does not stop for difficult times. The celebration of our 100th anniversary as a nation also took place in a time of trouble. In 1876, the country was still struggling to recover from the devastation and deep division of the Civil War. In addition, Americans were faced with problems of political corruption and with the effects of a disastrous recession. It was not a good time. But taking pride was a good thing. We gained strength and looked to the future.

The celebration of our country's 100th birthday, in 1876, which reached its climax in the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition, was very different from our Bicentennial in its central emphasis and in the part played by everyday Americans. More than 8 million people—foreign visitors as well as Americans—flowed into Philadelphia between May and November of 1876. But they had no active part to play. They came as spectators, to marvel.

One of the high points of that exposition was a magnificent display of paintings and sculpture, porcelain and textiles from Europe and the Orient. For most Americans this was their first opportunity to enjoy great art, including the work of living artists. It was also the first national occasion at which American artists and sculptors could exhibit within a brilliant international context. For the great American museums of fine arts were still in the making, and began to open their doors to the public only in the decade after the centennial exposition.

Equally memorable—and probably far more exciting for a great many Americans—was a tremendous display of every kind of industrial and commercial technology, brought to the exposition from all over the industrialized world of the 19th century. In this display Americans shone as experts who were as innovative and accomplished as any in the contemporary

world. In the application of science to technology we were already finding our place among the leaders.

The Centennial Exposition gave us a chance to be proud—justifiably proud. As we can now see, looking back, a principal aim of the exposition was to display our accomplishments in the production of objects, both in the fine arts and in industry and technology. What we particularly wanted to demonstrate to ourselves and to the world was that the United States, after only 100 years of nationhood on a new continent, could stand alongside the greatest European industrial nations.

Today we have become critical of technology. And if we compare our 1976 festival celebrations with the festivities of the Centennial Exposition, what is most striking is the change in emphasis from material objects to human beings. *Then* the celebration focused on the marvels of the *things* Americans had made and the new objects and processes that were still in an embryonic stage of development. *Today* we are celebrating *people*.

The Festival of American Folklife is a case in point. This Festival is taking place on the Mall during the summer of 1976, in the green and open space between the Washington Monument and the Lincoln Memorial. The Mall has been called the "axis of the nation." In a sense this national festival also is an axis. For the people taking part in it are gathering from all over our country and many foreign lands, and, once it is over, they will stream away to other festive celebrations.

In the year of 1976, Native Americans are coming to Washington from every area of the country, celebrating their ways of living both in the lost past and in the modern world. Ethnic Americans of the most diverse cultural heritages are joining together with their contemporaries from the lands of their cultural origin. Black Americans are celebrating with their cultural cousins from Africa and the New World. Working Ameri-