

# SINGAPORE GOVERNMENT PRESS RELEASE

PUBLICITY DIVISION · MINISTRY OF CULTURE · CITY HALL SINGAPORE 6

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SPEECH BY MR LEE KHOON CHOY, AG MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS, AT THE OPENING OF THE PHOTOGRAPHY EXHIBIT ENTITLED "REFLECTIONS: IMAGES OF AMERICA" ON FRIDAY 30 SEPT 1977 AT 8.00 PM AT THE NATIONAL MUSEUM

National Archives and  
Records Centre, Singapore.

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We are gathered here tonight to have a glimpse of the images of America. Every nation has an image which its leaders want to project to the world. Projecting the right image to reflect the realities of life is not an easy task. Most people generally draw their images or impressions of a nation through the TV, screens or printed words. The modern trend of mass media tends to high-light events which are dramatic or sensational. These together with policy statements enunciated by leaders particularly the provocative and threatening ones that catch the headlines help to shape the images of a nation. The humdrum realities of life of the vast majority are often taken for granted and are therefore less known.

We live in a world of two realities; one concerns the heroic events and personalities in the limelight and the other the less conspicuous common folks carrying on their quiet routine existence. Both are realities but on different sides of the coin. Most people manage to see only one side of the coin and derive a one-sided image. A good traveller and keen observer often discovers that the images which he had of a country and people are quite different from the realities he encounters after the visit. As he stays longer in that country and gets to know people more intimately, he gathers another set of images which bring him closer to the truth.

The organisers of this exhibition chose to present to the spectators the images of the reality-taken-for-granted aspect of the American people. You see no heroes nor any heroic events past or present in this gallery. You see instead the face of a red Indian, a cowboy, a negress; common folks praying at breakfast table and lovers demonstrating

a farowell kiss in the middle of the street. You see the scream of a new-born baby, the hidden smile of a wedded couple by the candle light and the melancholicus tone of a trombone in a funeral procession. There are also scenic spots of snowy mountains, lakes, a farm, a railway and the skyscrapers. Some of the photographs try to capture the moods of different times, the feelings and expressions of the diverse peoples of a 200-year old nation. The angry taxi driver of 1969 contrasted sharply with the well-behaved ladies in a 1909 bus. The various types of professions and sports give another aspect of American way of life.

Not many Singaporeans have been to America, nor can many afford the passage. Our knowledge of America and her people must therefore rely on books, TV and newspapers. Exhibition of this nature. I am sure, can bring about better understanding between our two people who will discover that after all the common folks have many things in common.

I wish the exhibition every success.