



The Department of State's

SILK ROAD TOURS



Cellist Yo Yo Ma poses with Silk Road Tour journalists after a roundtable discussion on his Silk Road Project.

Scenographer Rajeev Sethi and Secretary of State Colin Powell look at a painted truck from Pakistan, a highlight of the Silk Road Festival.





Secretary of State Colin Powell and cellist Yo Yo Ma walk through the Smithsonian's Silk Road Folklife Festival on opening day.



Assistant Secretary of State for Educational and Cultural Affairs Patricia Harrison talks to the Silk Road Tour journalists about American initiatives to understand world cultures.

THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE SPONSORED PRINT AND broadcast journalists on two “Silk Road Tours” in June 2002. The Foreign Press Center’s tour was a two-week reporting tour, June 22-July 7, for 14 leading cultural journalists from 12 countries along the “Silk Road” (China, Mongolia, Turkey, Syria, Nepal, Italy, Azerbaijan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Pakistan, India, Georgia, Armenia, and Bangladesh). The tour highlighted contributions made by Muslim-Americans to U.S. cultural and artistic life, as well as U.S. respect and appreciation for Muslim cultural heritage. In the post-9/11 environment, the tour was also designed to improve mutual understanding with the Muslim world.

It began with behind-the-scenes coverage of the Smithsonian “Silk Road” Folklife Festival, a living exhibition of the music, crafts, culinary and narrative traditions involved in the historical cultural interchange between the “East” and the “West.” Secretary Powell opened the Festival on June 26. The group also interviewed noted cellist Yo Yo Ma about his own “Silk Road Project” and met with State Department officials and Muslim leaders.

Subsequent stops in Chicago and New York demonstrated U.S. appreciation for the cultural contributions of “Silk Road” countries to our traditions and lifestyle. In Chicago, the reporters visited the Art Institute of Chicago, the Institute of Islamic



Secretary of the American Muslim Council Nedzib Sacirbey discusses Muslim life in America after September 11 with Silk Road Tour journalists.



Professor of Oriental Studies Donald Whitcomb takes the Silk Road Tour journalists through the Persia Exhibit at the University of Chicago's Oriental Institute.

Information and Education and the Oriental Institute at the University of Chicago; one participant noted that the overriding American ideas of hard work, freedom, and equality shone through everywhere he went. He used to think that America was segregated into different cultures, but he now has a better understanding of what it means to be American.

In New York, after celebrating the Fourth of July and visiting Ground Zero, one journalist said that he had not realized the breadth of this catastrophe. Seeing the site made him realize why America was reacting as it has to 9/11. Another commented on the cultural diversity of American society and its people, saying, “There are roses of many colors in the garden of culture.”

The 14 reporters wrote numerous stories about their trip. In the Bangladeshi daily *Prothom Alo*, the correspondent wrote: “The United States is a country of democracy, individual freedom, freedom of expression and of immigrants. If the door is closed to this country, its inner soul will perish which will be a defeat — the American leaders say this and understand this well.”

China’s participant lauded the diversity of U.S. culture, writing in the *Shanghai Star*, “I heard artists talking between themselves in Shanghai dialect beside the



Secretary of State Colin Powell and Smithsonian Folklife Festival Scenographer Rajeev Sethi light a ceremonial lamp, opening the Silk Road Festival.

Metropolitan Museum in New York. They have become part of the local life of America and part of the country's culture.” One of two Indians on the tour noted that the Folklife Festival might have broader repercussions: “Connecting cultures, creating trust – maybe, the festival motto might hold true for India and Pakistan, too.” The reporter from Mongolia wrote: “As America continues to recover from the events of September 11, it is clear from the spirit and words of the speakers and people I met that awareness about Asia, and mutual understanding between our nations, is a priority for all.” ■

Broadcast Services Tour:

- Assisted foreign TV correspondents with “Silk Road” news and feature productions. Provided camera crews and footage to reporters from Romania, Mongolia, Russia, Azerbaijan and other Central Asian countries.
- Broadcasted TV coverage of the visit and remarks of Secretary of State Powell to the “Silk Road” via the American Embassy Television Network. The footage was provided to the news media.
- Produced a “Silk Road” documentary. Americans experience the culture, history and traditions as the “Silk Road” runs through the nation's capital.
- Co-produced the series *Conversation with America*, with RTR, Russian Public Television, to make a half-hour program on the “Silk Road.” It focuses on the “Silk Road Festival” in Washington D.C. and the history and culture of the Central Asian countries along the “Silk Road.”
- Acquired rights to documentary footage of the “Silk Road” performances and exhibitions from the Aga Khan Trust for Culture. This official documentary footage will be in both documentary productions.

