



June 24, 2001

First Lady Laura Bush
The White House
Washington D.C. 20500-0002

Dear First Lady Laura Bush,

This letter is in regards to the benefits of the Blues in the Schools Programs. The remedial effects of Blues in the Schools Programs in combating violence in our nation's educational system are remarkable. The impact of these unique programs, which are endorsed by the Blues Foundation, and hundreds of educational institutions across the country and Canada, teach tolerance while providing a vehicle for music education.

My name is Fruteland Jackson. As an author, lecturer, storyteller and solo acoustic blues artist, I seek to raise the profile of these programs. For the past 11 years, I have been presenting these award-winning programs across the U.S. and Canada. They are presented at high schools, grammar schools, colleges, cultural and community centers. In 1997, I received the Blues Foundation's "Keeping the Blues Alive" award through education, a reward for my efforts in promoting this valuable program.

The Blues in the Schools Programs create a deeper appreciation and greater awareness of this distinctive American music. The Program's greatest achievements have been the building of self-esteem, the promotion of diversity, hard work and team building. Because of the powerful impact that popular music has on young people and in light of the trend of violence that has gripped our nations schools (Columbine), an alternative must be found. I have found Blues in the Schools programs to be a counter balance, providing a fun way to channel deep emotions and venting stress. In this type of group setting the possibility of student alienation, and absenteeism is diminished.

Blues in the Schools Programs with all of its components include music instructions, art and photojournalism. History lessons are shared through lecture/performances and artist residencies that are tailored toward specific grade or age levels. The Programs are diverse and draws interest from students and adults regardless of socio-economic background. These Programs have proven to be an excellent tool for teaching gifted students, the physically/emotionally challenged and inner city, high-risk students; like the Washington Montessori School CT and Dubose Middle School in Charleston, SC (serving students with special needs). The Programs have been presented at the top rated Hotchkiss School, Lakeville CT and won high praise from The Department of Housing and Urban Development in 1994 in conjunction with The Housing Authority of the City of Charleston in a program called *Bluz In The Hood*.

My desire is to begin a nationwide program using Blues in the Schools as a template. Blues in the Schools will enable our youth to deal with the stresses of daily discourse while exposing them to America's great gift to world culture, Blues music. My hope is that you will find these programs to be an effective tool in our schools in combating school violence; your assistance would be greatly welcomed in expanding their popularity or in directing me to the appropriate processes to make this possible. I envision this program teaching tolerance and anger management while students learn American history, how to play a musical instrument, sing or draw in a workshop setting.

Enclosed is a Blues in the Schools course guide and other related materials for your review. The Fruteland Jackson Homepage website (www.fruteland.com) provides additional information. Please except my invitation to be a guest at any of my scheduled workshops or performances.

Sincerely yours,

Fruteland Jackson