

NATIONAL CONSTITUTION CENTER

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PROFESSOR HENRY LOUIS GATES, JR. DISCUSSES GENEALOGY, GENETICS, AND THE AFRICAN AMERICAN TRADITION AT THE NATIONAL CONSTITUTION CENTER

Philadelphia, PA (May 26, 2009) – Harvard professor **Henry Louis Gates, Jr.** will join the National Constitution Center on Tuesday, June 16 at 6:30 p.m. to deliver a presentation about genealogy, genetics, and the complicated impact slavery's legacy has had on African American identity. Admission costs \$9 for members, \$15 for non-members, and \$7 for students and teachers. Reservations are required and can be made by calling 215.409.6700.

For hundreds of years in this country, African Americans have been disconnected from their ancestral past. Slavery robbed African Americans of their native languages and customs and tore apart families as a way to ensure their dependence on white masters. Professor Gates will explore how cutting-edge genetic science, along with old-fashioned genealogical sleuthing, restored a too long buried history to African Americans. By tracing the genealogy of 19 prominent African Americans – from Oprah Winfrey to astronaut Mae Jemison, Harvard divinity professor Peter Gomes, and The Reverend T.D. Jakes – Gates uncovered a stirring array of family sagas stretching back through U.S. history to revelatory origins in Africa.

Henry Louis Gates, Jr. is the Alphonse Fletcher University Professor at Harvard University, where he is Director of the W.E.B. Du Bois Institute for African and African American Research. From 1991 to 2006, he served as Chair of the Department of African and African American Studies. In 2006, he was inducted into the Sons of the American Revolution after tracing his lineage back to a Free Negro who served in the

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ADD ONE/HENRY LOUIS GATES

Revolutionary War. Gates is Editor-in-Chief of TheRoot.com, a daily online magazine, and of the Oxford African American Studies Center, an online scholarly resource for African and African American Studies. In 2008, he co-edited the eight-volume biographical encyclopedia, *African American Lives*. Gates is also the author of several works of literary criticism, including *The Signifying Monkey* and a memoir, *Colored People*. His most recent book is *In Search of Our Roots: How 19 Extraordinary African Americans Reclaimed Their Past*.

This program is part of the Knight Constitutional Conversation Series, which has been generously underwritten by the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation. The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation promotes excellence in journalism worldwide and invests in the vitality of the U.S. communities where the Knight brothers owned newspapers. Knight Foundation focuses on projects with the potential to create transformational change. For more, visit www.knightfoundation.org.

A book sale and signing will follow the program, courtesy of Joseph Fox Bookshop.

The National Constitution Center, located at 525 Arch St. on Philadelphia's Independence Mall, is an independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to increasing public understanding of the U.S. Constitution and the ideas and values it represents. The Center serves as a museum, an education center, and a forum for debate on constitutional issues. The museum dramatically tells the story of the Constitution from Revolutionary times to the present through more than 100 interactive, multimedia exhibits, film, photographs, text, sculpture and artifacts, and features a powerful, award-winning theatrical performance, "Freedom Rising". The Center also houses the Annenberg Center for Education and Outreach, which serves as the hub for national constitutional education. Also, as a nonpartisan forum for constitutional discourse, the Center presents – without endorsement – programs that contain diverse viewpoints on a broad range of issues. For more information, call 215.409.6700 or visit www.constitutioncenter.org.

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