

**Black Belt African American
Genealogical and Historical Society, Inc**
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Preserving Our Heritage and Creating Family Legacies

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Henry Louis Gates, Jr. to Speak in Selma, AL at Genealogy Conference
Awards Banquet on February 15, 2008**

SELMA, AL, January 21, 2008 - Preeminent historian, writer, critic, and producer and host of PBS series "African American Lives", "Oprah's Roots", and the upcoming "African American Lives 2", Dr. Henry Louis Gates, Jr., will speak at the Black Belt African American Genealogical and Historical Society's (BBAAGHS) 2nd Annual Black Belt African American Genealogy Conference and Family History Fair Awards Banquet in historic Selma, Alabama. The Awards Banquet will be held at Concordia College in Selma on February 15, 2008 from 7:00 pm - 11:00 pm. Cost for the banquet is \$60.00 for non-members, \$48.00 for BBAAGHS members. Seating is limited.

Speaker Profile

Henry Louis Gates, Jr. is the Alphonse Fletcher University Professor and Director of the W.E.B. Du Bois Institute for African and African American Research at Harvard University. He is most recently the author of *Finding Oprah's Roots, Finding Your Own* (Crown, 2007) and the host and executive producer of the critically acclaimed PBS series "African American Lives", "Oprah's Roots" and "African American Lives 2" scheduled to air in February 2008. Among others, "African American Lives 2" will profile two Black Belt celebrities, radio personality Tom Joyner who has roots in Wilcox County and Linda Johnson Rice whose family traces their ancestry to Selma and Dallas County.

Dr. Gates is Editor-in-Chief of the Oxford African American Studies Center, the first comprehensive scholarly online resource in the field of African American and Africana Studies. He is co-editor, with K. Anthony Appiah, of *Africana: The Encyclopedia of the African and African American Experience*. With Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, he is the co-editor of the biographical encyclopedia *African American Lives* (Oxford, 2004), and the online African American National Biography Database.

Dr. Gates is the author of several books, including *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of Afro-American Literary Criticism* (Oxford, 1988), winner of the 1989 American Book Award, and *Colored People: A Memoir* (Knopf, 1994). Professor Gates authenticated and published two landmark African American texts: *Our Nig, or, Sketches from the Life of a Free Black* (1859), by Harriet Wilson, the first novel published by an African American woman; and *The Bondwoman's Narrative* by Hannah Crafts, one of the first novels written by an African American woman. In 2006, he and Hollis Robbins co-edited *The Annotated Uncle Tom's Cabin*, edited with Hollis Robbins (W. W. Norton, 2006).

An influential cultural critic, Dr. Gates has written for *Time* magazine, *The New Yorker*, and *The New York Times*. He is the editor of several anthologies, including *The Norton Anthology of African American Literature* (W.W. Norton, 1996). Dr. Gates also

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produced and hosted two previous series for PBS, 1999's "Wonders of the African World" and 2004's "America Beyond the Color Line."

Dr. Gates earned his M.A. and Ph.D. in English literature from Clare College at the University of Cambridge. He received a B.A. in history, summa cum laude, from Yale University in 1973. The recipient of 48 honorary degrees and a 1981 MacArthur Foundation "Genius Award," Dr. Gates was also named one of Time magazine's "25 Most Influential Americans" in 1997, one of the "100 Most Influential Black Americans" by Ebony in 2005, received a National Humanities Medal in 1998, and in 1999 was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Letters. .

Awards Banquet Honorees

The Genealogy Award will be presented to Gwendolyn M. Holland of Chicago, IL, for her Dallas and Wilcox County research, and to Doll Hargrove of Philadelphia, PA, a Macon County researcher and owner of Doll's Genealogy Site, <http://www.dollsgen.com/>. The History Award will go to Dr. Richard Bailey of Birmingham, AL, author of *They Too Call Alabama Home* and *Neither Carpetbaggers Nor Scalawags*, and Jeanette S. McCall of Prairie Bluff, AL, author of *The First and Last Bell: A Story of Six Missions for Blacks in Wilcox County, Alabama*.

The Preservation Award will be presented to Louretta C. Wimberly of Selma, AL, founder of the Black Heritage Council of the Alabama Historical Commission, and to the Shiloh Community Restoration Project headquartered in Notasulga, AL, <http://www.shilohcommfound.com/>, Elizabeth Ware Sims, President. The Cemetery Preservation Award will go to the Alabama Cemetery Preservation Alliance headquartered in Montgomery, AL, Sherry Johnston, President, and to the Old Cahawba Slave Cemetery in Cahaba, AL, Linda Derry, Site Director. BBAAGHS' Distinguished Service Award will be presented to Board Members Lorena Joyce Nicoll and Martha Phyllis Armstrong, both of Montgomery, AL.

Other Conference Event Highlights

The conference and family history fair will be held Friday and Saturday, February 15 - 16, 2008 from 8:00 am - 5:00 pm at the Larry D. Striplin Performing Arts Center and Selma-Dallas County Public Library.

Speakers include: Frazine K. Taylor, head of the Ready Reference Section of the Alabama Department of Archives and History (ADAH) who will conduct workshops on using African American resources at ADAH and finding slave ancestors; Amos J. Wright, Associate Professor and Director, Section on the History of Anesthesia, Department of Anesthesiology Library, University of Alabama at Birmingham, who will give a talk on "Early African American Physicians in the Alabama Black Belt"; B.J. Smothers, BBAAGHS President and Site Administrator for AfriGeneas.com, who will talk about researching genealogy on the internet and using DNA in genealogy research;

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and Donald Stone who will deliver a talk on his book *Fallen Prince*, the biography of William James Edwards, founder of the Snow Hill Institute. A book signing will follow. David Bice of Heritage Publishing Consultants of Clanton, AL will announce the BBAAGHS-sponsored Alabama African American Heritage Book series, the only project of its kind in the United States.

The two-day conference registration fee is \$75.00 for non-members, \$60.00 for BBAAGHS members. While the conference is open to anyone, the event should be of particular interest to those living in, or with ancestry in, the twelve counties of Alabama's Black Belt Region - Bullock, Choctaw, Dallas, Greene, Hale, Lowndes, Macon, Marengo, Perry, Pickens, Sumter and Wilcox.

For Further Information

To register, purchase banquet tickets, advertise in the conference program, and for more information about the conference and speakers, please consult the BBAAGHS website: www.bbaaghs.org/conference/ or call BBAAGHS President B.J. Smothers at 334-877-4846 or 404-273-6965 . For more information about BBAAGHS, see the website: www.bbaaghs.org.

Contact Information:

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