

AFRICAN AMERICAN LIVES 2

Thirteen/WNET New York
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press information

AFRICAN AMERICAN LIVES 2, A NEW FOUR-PART PBS SERIES, EXPLORES ROOTS, RACE AND IDENTITY THROUGH THE ANCESTRY OF REMARKABLE INDIVIDUALS, PREMIERING FEBRUARY 6 AND 13

Featuring Maya Angelou, Bliss Broyard, Don Cheadle, Morgan Freeman, Peter Gomes, Kathleen Henderson, Linda Johnson Rice, Tom Joyner, Jackie Joyner-Kersey, Chris Rock, And Tina Turner

“These stories of adversity, sacrifice, achievement, and empowerment transcend the realm of color with a universal resonance.”

– Henry Louis Gates, Jr., series host and participant

Building on the widespread acclaim of *African American Lives* (2006) and *Oprah’s Roots* (2007), *AFRICAN AMERICAN LIVES 2* will again journey deep into the African-American experience to reveal the triumphs and tragedies within the family histories of an all-new group of remarkable participants. Harvard professor **Henry Louis Gates, Jr.** returns as series host, guiding genealogical investigations down through the 20th century, Reconstruction, slavery and early U.S. history, and presenting cutting-edge genetic analysis that locates participants’ ancestors in Africa, Europe and America.

AFRICAN AMERICAN LIVES 2 premieres Wednesdays, February 6 and 13, 2008 at 9 p.m. (ET) on PBS (check local listings). The four-part series is a production of Thirteen/WNET New York, Kunhardt Productions, and Inkwell Films.

“These discoveries about our ancestors are fascinating stories that everyone,

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Major corporate funding for *African American Lives 2* and its outreach initiatives is provided by The Coca-Cola Company and Johnson & Johnson. Additional corporate funding is provided by Buick. Funding is also provided by public television viewers and PBS.



Co-Produced by
Thirteen/WNET New York,
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regardless of race, can identify with and draw inspiration from,” said Gates, Alphonse Fletcher University Professor and director of the W.E.B. Du Bois Institute for African and African American Research at Harvard University. “They’re stories that together offer a new understanding of not only the African American experience, but also of race in America.”

Joining Professor Gates in the new broadcast are poet **Maya Angelou**, author **Bliss Broyard**, actor **Don Cheadle**, actor **Morgan Freeman**, theologian **Peter Gomes**, publisher **Linda Johnson Rice**, athlete **Jackie Joyner-Kersey**, radio personality **Tom Joyner**, comedian **Chris Rock**, rock ‘n’ roll legend **Tina Turner**, and college administrator **Kathleen Henderson**, who was selected from more than 2,000 applicants to have her family history researched and DNA tested alongside the series’ well-known guests.

“Through even greater depth of research and more powerful storytelling, all of the stories in *AFRICAN AMERICAN LIVES 2* share a common thread – they show the value of knowing who you are and where you come from,” added Gates. “And now, the inclusion of Kathleen’s story shows that viewers everywhere can take this same journey.”

Episode One, “The Road Home,” will focus on participants’ ancestors in the early 20th century. Stories include the tragic account of **Tom Joyner**’s great-uncles, who in 1915 were convicted by an all-white jury and executed in the electric chair for a crime that new evidence suggests they did not commit; and **Bliss Broyard**, who lived her life unaware that her father, renowned *New York Times* critic Anatole Broyard, was a light-skinned black man who chose to “pass” as white. She only learned of her African-American roots upon her father’s death in 1990.

Episode Two, “A Way Out of No Way,” will continue tracing the guests’ lineages back through the late 1800s to the Civil War, featuring such stories as **Chris Rock**’s maternal great-great grandfather, Julius Caesar Tingman, a black Civil War veteran who was twice elected to the South Carolina State Legislature; and **Don Cheadle**’s ancestors, who had been enslaved by Chickasaw Indians and brought to Oklahoma on the tail end of the “trail of tears,” the forced

relocation of Native Americans during the 1830s.

Episode Three, “We Come from People,” reveals stories of participants’ ancestors during the early years of the United States, such as a riveting account of life in slavery by **Morgan Freeman**’s great-grandmother, discovered within the records of the Depression-era Works Progress Administration, and **Peter Gomes**’s ancestors, who were freed and supported by Quaker families in Virginia in the late 1700s.

DNA analysis leads to fascinating discoveries about participants’ lineages in Episode Four, “The Past Is Another Country.” A groundbreaking study links **Professor Gates** to a powerful ancient Irish warlord, while evidence suggests **Peter Gomes**’s direct paternal line traces back to a Portuguese Jew who fled the country in the early 1500s to escape the Inquisition.

Launching the week of January 28, the companion Web site for *AFRICAN AMERICAN LIVES 2* (www.pbs.org/aalives2) will provide resources for visitors to pursue their own family genealogy; further information on the series’ research, scholarship and science; interactive scrapbooks for each series participant; a social media application that allows users to upload and tag their own family stories; lesson plans and media-rich classroom activities for teachers, and more. In cooperation with seven public television stations across the country, a far-reaching educational outreach effort will guide K-through-12 teachers in the use of the broadcast program, Web site, and educational print materials in standards-based classroom instruction.

AFRICAN AMERICAN LIVES 2 will be available on DVD through PBS Home Video at ShopPBS.com in spring 2008. A book by Professor Gates, *In Search of Our Roots: How 19 Extraordinary African Americans Reclaimed Their Past*, will be published by Crown, a division of Random House, in spring 2008 as well. Incorporating the family histories of all the participants from *African American Lives*, *Oprah’s Roots*, and *AFRICAN AMERICAN LIVES 2*, the book presents further discoveries not included in the broadcasts while weaving the narratives together into an unprecedented tapestry of the African-American experience.

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AFRICAN AMERICAN LIVES 2 is a co-production of Thirteen/WNET New York, Kunhardt Productions and Inkwell Films. Executive producers are Henry Louis Gates Jr., William R. Grant, Peter W. Kunhardt, and Dyllan McGee. Graham Judd is senior producer. Leslie Asako GladsjØ, Jesse Sweet, and Jack Youngelson are producers/directors.

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About PBS

PBS is a media enterprise that serves 355 public noncommercial television stations and reaches nearly 73 million people each week through on-air and online content. Bringing diverse viewpoints to television and the Internet, PBS provides high-quality documentary and dramatic entertainment and consistently dominates the most prestigious award competitions. PBS is a leading provider of digital learning content for pre-K-12 educators and offers a broad array of other educational services. PBS's premier kids' TV programming and Web site, PBS KIDS Online (www.pbskids.org), continue to be parents' and teachers' most trusted learning environments for children. More information about PBS is available at www.pbs.org, one of the leading dot-org Web sites on the Internet.

About Thirteen/WNET New York

Thirteen/WNET New York is one of the key program providers for public television, bringing such acclaimed series as *Nature*, *Great Performances*, *American Masters*, *Charlie Rose*, *Religion & Ethics NewsWeekly*, *Wide Angle*, *Secrets of the Dead*, *NOW With David Brancaccio*, *Exposé: America's Investigative Reports*, and *Cyberchase* – as well as the work of Bill Moyers – to audiences nationwide. As the flagship public broadcaster in the New York, New Jersey and Connecticut metro area, Thirteen reaches millions of viewers each week, airing the best of American public television along with its own local productions such as *The Ethnic Heritage Specials*, *The Thirteen Walking Tours*, *New York Voices*, and *Reel New York*. Thirteen extends the impact of its television productions through educational and community outreach projects – including the *Celebration of Teaching and Learning* – as well as Web sites and other digital media platforms. More information can be found at: www.thirteen.org.

About Kunhardt Productions

For nearly 20 years, Kunhardt Productions has been responsible for critically acclaimed historical programming with a reputation for high editorial standards. Most recently, Kunhardt Productions co-produced *Oprah's Roots* (2007) and *African American Lives* (2006) for PBS. Previously, the company produced *Freedom: A History of US*, an eight-hour PBS series based upon Joy Hakim's award-winning books. Other notable works from Kunhardt Productions include *Lincoln*, a four-hour series for ABC; *In Memoriam*, a one-hour co-production with HBO about Mayor Rudolph Giuliani and the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001; and *The American President*, a 10-hour PBS series profiling all forty-one presidents of the United States. Kunhardt Productions is

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currently developing a multi-part series for PBS, *Looking for Lincoln*, to be broadcast in 2009 as part of the Bicentennial Celebration of Abraham Lincoln's birth. More information can be found at: www.kunhardtproductions.com.

About Inkwell Films

Inkwell Films was founded by Henry Louis Gates Jr. to produce sophisticated documentary films about the African-American experience for a broad audience. In addition to *Oprah's Roots*, Inkwell Films co-produced *African American Lives* (2006) and is currently developing *The History of the African American People*, an eight-part series tentatively slated for national broadcast premiere in 2009-2010.

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