

AFRICAN AMERICAN LIVES 2

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press information

THIRTEEN/WNET NEW YORK, KUNHARDT PRODUCTIONS AND INKWELL FILMS IN PRODUCTION ON NEW PBS SERIES *AFRICAN AMERICAN LIVES 2*, SEQUEL TO THE ACCLAIMED PROGRAMS AFRICAN AMERICAN LIVES AND OPRAH'S ROOTS

From Thousands Of Applicants, One Winner Chosen To Join Professor Henry Louis Gates Jr. And Renowned Group Of African Americans On Quest To Discover Family History

The Coca-Cola Company, Johnson & Johnson And Buick To Sponsor Series, Slated For February 2008 PBS Broadcast

New York, NY—June 26—The critically acclaimed PBS broadcasts *African American Lives* (2006) and *Oprah's Roots* (2007) shined a national spotlight on the powerful process of discovering one's family history. This month, the producers of those landmark programs begin an ambitious filming schedule on *AFRICAN AMERICAN LIVES 2* that will take them across the country over the course of the summer. Professor Henry Louis Gates Jr. is guiding an all-new group of men and women, including a poet, a pop star, a theologian, a comedian, a publisher, an actor, a radio personality, and a rock 'n' roll legend, on the dramatic quest for their roots – with a unique twist.

From more than 2,000 applications by ordinary Americans, the producers of *AFRICAN AMERICAN LIVES 2* identified 10 finalists and then selected one winner, who will join the other participants in having their ancestry revealed when the series premieres in February 2008.

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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.

The Coca-Cola Company *Johnson & Johnson* Buick

Co-Produced by
Thirteen/WNET New York,
Kunhardt Productions
and Inkwell Films

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“It gives me great pleasure to announce that we have selected an individual to join our group of celebrated African Americans as I take them all on this life-altering journey,” says Professor Gates, series host. “This person’s family history adds an exciting new element to *AFRICAN AMERICAN LIVES 2*, and will help show that this process of discovery is available to all Americans.”

The winner was selected after a thorough evaluation of applicants who were asked to describe the extent of their knowledge of their family’s history and why they would be the ideal candidate to participate in *AFRICAN AMERICAN LIVES 2*. The 10 finalists included men and women from around the country.

“We were thrilled to receive so many applications, and deeply impressed at the large number of people who have already made great strides in researching their family history,” said Professor Gates. “It was extremely difficult to winnow those applicants down to 10 finalists and even harder to choose just one.”

AFRICAN AMERICAN LIVES 2 will draw on DNA analysis, genealogical research and family oral tradition to trace the lineages of the 10 participants down through U.S. history and back to Africa.

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AFRICAN AMERICAN LIVES 2 is a co-production of Thirteen/WNET New York, Kunhardt Productions and Inkwel Films. Graham Judd is series producer; Dyllan McGee is senior producer for Kunhardt Productions. Executive producers are Henry Louis Gates Jr., William R. Grant and Peter W. Kunhardt.

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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*, 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 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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