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HENRY LOUIS GATES, JR. RECEIVES THE RALPH LOWELL AWARD, PUBLIC TELEVISION'S TOP HONOR

NEW YORK, NY May 14, 2009 – [Henry Louis Gates, Jr.](#), Alphonse Fletcher University Professor and Director of the W.E.B. Du Bois Institute for African and African American Research at Harvard University, is the recipient of the 2009 Ralph Lowell Award, public television's most prestigious honor. It was announced today by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB).

A renowned scholar and educator, Professor Gates is the producer, writer and host of the critically acclaimed PBS documentaries [African American Lives](#) (2006), *Oprah's Roots: An African American Lives Special* (2007) and [African American Lives 2](#) (2008). Professor Gates is the first filmmaker to employ genealogy and genetic science to provide an understanding of African American history. Prior to *African American Lives*, Professor Gates's other PBS programs include [Great Rail Journeys: From Great Zimbabwe to Kilimatinde](#) (1996), [Frontline: The Two Nations of Black America](#) (1998), *Leaving Cleaver* (1999), [Wonders of the African World](#) (1999), and [America Beyond the Color Line](#) (2004).

His most recent film, [Looking for Lincoln](#), received significant critical praise when it aired on PBS earlier this year. The special addressed the many controversies surrounding Lincoln – race, equality, religion, politics, and depression to offer a fresh look at America's 16th president. Professor Gates is currently in production on his next PBS project, *Faces of America*, which will expand the role DNA science played in the *African American Lives* series to take the exploration of identity to a new level.

“We are pleased that CPB has awarded public television's highest honor to Henry Louis Gates, Jr.” said Neal Shapiro, President and CEO of [WNET.ORG](#). “Professor Gates is an extraordinary storyteller and THIRTEEN is proud to be his co-producing partner since 2005. His work has touched people all across the country igniting in them a desire to discover who they are and where they come from.”

In addition to his professorial duties at Harvard and his documentaries for PBS, Professor 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 dictionary *The African American National Biography*.

He is the author of several works of literary criticism, including *The Signifying Monkey*, winner of the 1989 American Book Award, and a memoir, *Colored People*. His most recent books include *In Search of Our Roots* (Crown, 2009), which expands on interviews he conducted for his multi-part PBS series, *African American Lives 1* and *2* and *Abraham Lincoln on Race and Slavery* (Princeton University Press, 2009), a collection he edited of everything Lincoln said or wrote about slavery and race. He is the editor of several anthologies, including *The Norton Anthology of African American Literature*.

An influential cultural critic, Professor Gates is a frequent contributor to *The New Yorker*, *The New York Times*, and other national publications, and has appeared on several television and radio programs.

Professor Gates graduated from Yale University and Cambridge University and has received 50 honorary degrees. His many awards include a 1981 MacArthur Foundation "Genius Award" and the National Humanities Medal in 1998. 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 Revolutionary War.

Each year, CPB recognizes outstanding individual contributions to public broadcasting by awarding the Ralph Lowell Award, named after the late Boston philanthropist, banker and founder of WGBH Educational Foundation. Recipients are chosen for their extraordinary leadership at the national level, and education and professional development.

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