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***African American Lives*, Acclaimed PBS Series By Harvard Scholar Henry Louis Gates, Jr., Becomes A Summer Course In Spain**

NEW YORK, NY July 9, 2009 — When [*African American Lives*](#) first aired on PBS in 2006, *The New York Times* called the series “the most exciting and stirring documentary on any subject to appear on television in a long time.” Presented and written by [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, the unprecedented four-part series, took the quest to discover African American ancestry to a whole new level. The series’ innovative approach, combining expert genealogical research, DNA analysis and the poignant family stories of nine accomplished African Americans, offered both an in-depth look at individual lineages and an entirely new view of African-American history.

This July, the University of Coruña in Spain, is offering a course entitled *The Journey to African Roots: Literature, DNA & Genealogy* based on *African American Lives* (2006) and subsequent series *African American Lives 2* (2008). The course, taught by Professor María Frías, who teaches African American literature at the University of Coruña, will look at genetic testing methods and genealogy, explore the personal stories of the participants in both *African American Lives* series while learning about the journey of their ancestors from Africa to America, reflect on Africa and the literary imagination, and examine to what extent the stories in *African American Lives* might change the perspective of the history of African Americans in the United States.

“We congratulate Henry Louis Gates, Jr., for creating work that inspires others and has an impact beyond the television screen,” said Paula Kerger, President and CEO of PBS. “Increasingly, PBS programming is finding a global audience and we are delighted *African American Lives* will be used as a course of study this summer in Spain.”

“*African American Lives* represents the very best of public broadcasting,” said Pat Harrison, President and CEO of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. “CPB is proud

that Professor Gates' remarkable documentaries and the science behind them will be part of the university's curriculum."

"To have a university in Spain use *African American Lives* is very exciting," said Professor Gates. "Here in the United States there are similar courses in development, at Marygrove College in Detroit and Southern Vermont College. National Geographic EXPLORER magazines are developing a feature on how to research your family tree, targeting grades 2-6. With these diverse participants, the *African American Lives*-based curriculum makes it clear that the desire to know who you are and where you come from is universal, transcending boundaries of geography, age, race, and socioeconomic status."

"Henry Louis Gates, Jr., continues to break new ground with his work," said Neal Shapiro, President and CEO of WNET.ORG. "The summer course in Spain is the first university-level course to use *African American Lives* and its companion book. As a co-producing partner with Professor Gates, we share his excitement."

The course in Spain, aimed at University of Coruña members and open to the general public, takes place July 27 and 28, and will feature workshops, talks/discussions/screenings, a poetry reading, and a host of keynote speakers including Fred D'Aguiar, writer, University of Virginia Tech State, United States; Trudier Harris, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, United States; Carlos Acuña Rubio, Galician Association of Genealogy, Pontevedra, Spain; and Antonio Salas, University of Santiago, Spain. Depending on lecturers' choice, talks will be delivered in English, Spanish or Galician.

Course topics to be covered include: *Africa-US-Africa: Return Ticket?; History Written in the DNA; The Genealogy of the Galician Community; Whoopi Goldberg's Journey to Africa; Looking for an Ancestral Home: How African American Writers During the Harlem Renaissance Imagine Africa; Continental Shelf: Genealogy and Belonging; and Tina Turner's Journey to Africa.*

Courses currently in development in the United States include:

Marygrove College, Detroit, MI

The Marygrove College Board of Directors approved, in May 2006, a long-term strategic vision of fostering urban leadership. This decision has spawned high-level planning and focused attention around a number of college-wide initiatives, including the development of an Urban Leadership Curriculum. Approximately half of the College's entire faculty is working this summer under a planning grant from the W.K. Kellogg

Foundation to develop innovative curricula to provide students the skills and knowledge necessary to be effective leaders in urban communities. Effective urban leaders must understand and manage complexities of race, ethnicity and culture. The work being undertaken in collaboration with the African American Lives Genealogy and Genetics Curriculum project of the W.E.B. Du Bois Institute for African and African American Research has the potential to become a signature element of Marygrove's Urban Leadership Curriculum. The goal is to provide first-year students with an understanding of the complexities of race, ethnicity, and culture utilizing problem-based learning techniques and integrated strategies of genealogy, oral history research, family stories, and DNA analysis.

National Geographic EXPLORER magazines

In collaboration with Henry Louis Gates Jr. and award-winning children's author Patricia McKissick, National Geographic EXPLORER magazines will feature family genealogy in the January-February 2010 issue. In celebration of African-American history month, readers will learn about Dr. Ben Carson's quest to trace his family roots and the special challenges that African Americans face when researching their family histories. Dr. Ben Carson was featured in the first *African American Lives* series which premiered in 2006. The magazines will explore the themes of identity and family, while teaching children how to create their own family trees. National Geographic EXPLORER is used in more than 100,000 classrooms across the country. The Pioneer and Pathfinder editions are designed for students in grades 2-3 and 4-6, respectively. To support the magazines' compelling content, each issue comes with a detailed teaching guide that includes research-based teaching practices.

Southern Vermont College, Bennington, VT

Exploring Faces of Diversity: Building The "I am...and I am from..." Exhibition. This project will engage first-year students in the deep and dynamic exploration and understanding of their roots, learning-while they do so-about different ways of unearthing, viewing, and presenting their own lives, family histories and ancestries. By learning how to conduct this type of specialized research, students will mount an exhibit at the Bennington Museum focusing on who they are, where they are from, where they are now, and where they might be headed. *Exploring Faces of Diversity* is part of the College's Quest For Success first-year seminar program, which emphasizes problem-posing teaching and service learning.

About PBS

PBS, with its 357 member stations, offers all Americans — from every walk of life — the opportunity to explore new ideas and new worlds through television and online content. Each month, PBS reaches more than 115 million people on-air and online, inviting them to experience the worlds of science, history, nature and public affairs; hear diverse viewpoints; and take front row seats to world-class drama and performances. PBS' broad array of programs has been consistently honored by the industry's most coveted award competitions. Teachers of children from pre-K through 12th grade turn to PBS for digital content and services that help bring classroom lessons to life. PBS' premier children's TV programming and Web site, pbskids.org, are parents' and teachers' most trusted partners in inspiring and nurturing curiosity and love of learning in children. More information about PBS is available at www.pbs.org, one of the leading dot-org Web sites on the Internet.

About WNET.ORG

New York public media company WNET.ORG is a pioneering provider of television and web content. The parent of Thirteen, WLIW21 and Creative News Group, WNET.ORG brings such acclaimed broadcast series and websites as [Worldfocus](#), [Nature](#), [Great Performances](#), [American Masters](#), [Charlie Rose](#), [Wide Angle](#), [Secrets of the Dead](#), [Religion & Ethics Newsweekly](#), [Visions](#), [Consuelo Mack WealthTrack](#), [Wild Chronicles](#), [Miffy and Friends](#), and [Cyberchase](#) to national and international audiences. Through its wide range of channels and platforms, WNET.ORG serves the entire New York City metro area with unique local productions, broadcasts and innovative educational and cultural projects. In all that it does, WNET.ORG pursues a single, overarching goal – to create media experiences of lasting significance for New York, America and the world. For more information, visit www.wnet.org.

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