

## **Dr. Henry Louis Gates, Jr.**

*Emmy Award Winning Filmmaker, Cultural Critic & Journalist*

Henry Louis Gates, Jr. is the Alphonse Fletcher University Professor and Director of the Hutchins Center for African & African American Research at Harvard University. Emmy Award-winning filmmaker, literary scholar, journalist, cultural critic, and institution builder, Professor Gates has authored or co-authored twenty-five books and created twenty-three documentary films, including *Wonders of the African World*, *African American Lives*, *Faces of America*, *Black in Latin America*, *Black America since MLK: And Still I Rise*, and *Africa's Great Civilizations*. *Finding Your Roots*, his groundbreaking genealogy series now in its seventh season on PBS, has been called "one of the deepest and wisest series ever on television," leveraging "the inherent entertainment capacity of the medium to educate millions of Americans about the histories and cultures of our nation and the world."

Professor Gates's six-part PBS documentary series, *The African Americans: Many Rivers to Cross* (2013), which he wrote, executive produced, and hosted, earned the Emmy Award for Outstanding Historical Program—Long Form, as well as the Peabody Award, Alfred I. duPont-Columbia University Award, and NAACP Image Award. His series *Reconstruction: America after the Civil War* (PBS, 2019) was a winner of the Alfred I. duPont-Columbia University Award, and his related book, *Stony the Road: Reconstruction, White Supremacy, and the Rise of Jim Crow* (Penguin Random House, 2019), a *New York Times* Notable Book of 2019. Gates's newest film series is *The Black Church: This Is Our Story, This Is Our Song* (PBS, 2021), with Penguin Random House published a companion book under the same title.

Having written for such leading publications as *The New Yorker*, *The New York Times*, and *Time*, Professor Gates serves as chairman of *TheRoot.com*, a daily online magazine he co-founded in 2008, and chair of the Creative Board of FUSION TV. He oversees the Oxford African American Studies Center, the first comprehensive scholarly online resource in the field, and has received grant funding to develop a *Finding Your Roots* curriculum to teach students science through genetics and genealogy. In 2012, *The Henry Louis Gates, Jr. Reader*, a collection of his writings edited by Abby Wolf, was published.

The recipient of fifty-eight honorary degrees and numerous prizes, Professor Gates was a member of the first class awarded "genius grants" by the MacArthur Foundation in 1981, and in 1998, he became the first African American scholar to be awarded the National Humanities Medal. He was named to *Time*'s 25 Most Influential Americans list in 1997, to *Ebony*'s Power 150 list in 2009, and to *Ebony*'s Power 100 list in 2010 and 2012. He earned his B.A. in History, *summa*

*cum laude*, from Yale University in 1973, and his M.A. and Ph.D. in English Literature from Clare College at the University of Cambridge in 1979. In 2018, he was one of 15 alumni of African descent honored in the exhibition, *Black Cantabs: History Makers*, at the Cambridge University Library. He also is an Honorary Fellow, Clare College, at the University of Cambridge.

Professor Gates has directed the W. E. B. Du Bois Institute for African and African American Research—now the Hutchins Center—since arriving at Harvard in 1991, and during his first fifteen years on campus, he chaired the Department of Afro-American Studies as it expanded into the Department of African and African American Studies with a full-fledged doctoral program. He is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters and serves on a wide array of boards, including the New York Public Library, the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, the Aspen Institute, Jazz at Lincoln Center, the Whitney Museum of American Art, Library of America, and the Brookings Institution. In 2017, the Organization of American States named Gates a Goodwill Ambassador for the Rights of People of African Descent in the Americas. In 2011, his portrait, by Yuqi Wang, was hung in the National Portrait Gallery in Washington, D.C.

#### **RESUME:**

- 2014: Published *Finding Your Roots: The Official Companion to the PBS Series*.
- 2013: Wrote, executive produced and hosted six-part PBS documentary series, *The African Americans: Many Rivers to Cross* (2013), which earned the Emmy Award for Outstanding Historical Program — Long Form.
- 2007: Author of *Finding Oprah's Roots, Finding Your Own*.
- 2006: Received the Jay B. Hubbell Award for Lifetime Achievement in American Literary Studies from the Modern Language Association.
- 2004-2006: Author of *America Behind the Color Line: Dialogues with African Americans, African American Lives*, co-edited with Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham and *The Annotated Uncle Tom's Cabin*, edited with Hollis Robbins.
- 1999: Co-editor with K. Anthony Appiah of the encyclopedia *Encarta Africana* published on CD-ROM by Microsoft, and in book form under the title *Africana: The Encyclopedia of the African and African American Experience*.
- 1999: Election into the American Academy of Arts and Letters.
- 1998: Received a National Humanities Medal.
- 1997: Named one of *Time* magazine's "25 Most Influential Americans."
- 1994-1996: Co-author, with Cornel West, of *The Future of the Race* and the author of a memoir, *Colored People*, that traces his childhood experiences in a small West Virginia town in the 1950s and 1960s.
- 1993: Received the George Polk Award for Social Commentary.
- 1987-1989: Author of several works of literary criticism, including *Figures in Black: Words, Signs and the "Racial" Self* and *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of Afro-American Literary Criticism*.
- 1983: Authenticated and facilitated the publication of *Our Nig, or, Sketches from the Life of a Free Black* (1859), by Harriet Wilson, the first novel published by an African American woman.
- 1981: Received a MacArthur Foundation "genius grant."

- 1973: Earned M.A. and Ph.D. in English literature from Clare College at the University of Cambridge, and his B.A. *summa cum laude* in History from Yale University, where he was a Scholar of the House.

**Topics:**

- A Conversation with Henry Louis Gates, Jr.
- The African Americans: "Many Rivers to Cross"
- Finding Your Roots: Genealogy & Genetics