



# Black Mountain Institute

## News and Events

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### BMI Advisory Board Member Gates to Speak at UNLV 11/20/06

10 November 2006

Esteemed cultural historian and literary critic Henry Louis Gates, Jr., W.E.B. DuBois Professor of Humanities and chair of African American Studies at Harvard, will discuss and show clips from his new PBS documentary, *African American Lives*, during a Nov. 20 event at UNLV. The lecture, which is free and open to the public, is sponsored by the Black Mountain Institute and will be held from 7 to 8:30 p.m. in Doc Rando Hall at UNLV.

Named one of *Time Magazine's* "25 Most Influential Americans," Gates is among the most prominent scholars on African American culture, history and literature of our time. Gates rose from a working class West Virginia family to become the first African American to earn a Ph.D. from Cambridge. While at Cambridge, Gates became enthralled with African and African American literature while under the tutelage of Wole Soyinka, Nobel Laureate and former Elias Ghanem Professor of Creative Writing at UNLV, and in 1981 was awarded one of the first MacArthur Foundation Fellowships for his work.

Author of a dozen books and numerous essays, Gates is best known for defining black literary theory and for catapulting the lost and forgotten works of early African American authors into the forefront of American literature.

In 1983, Gates authenticated and facilitated the publication of Harriet Wilson's *Our Nig*, the first novel published by an African American woman. He won an American Book Award in 1989 for *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of Afro-American Literary Criticism*, which redefined the relationship between African and African American vernacular traditions.

Earlier this year, Gates wrote and produced *African American Lives* for PBS, the first documentary series incorporating genealogy and science in an effort to un-

derstand African American history. “This is one of the most exciting projects in which I have been involved,” said Gates. “It is about African American history, of course, but on a deeply personal level. Slavery deprived African Americans of their historical and familial memory, and this series is an attempt to restore that memory—on both sides of the Atlantic.”

For more information on the event, please contact Maritza White at 895-5542.

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