American Fault Line: Race and the American Ideal

Ken Burns & Henry Louis Gates, Jr. in conversation with Michel Martin

Presented in association with WETA, DC and PBS

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WHO’S WHO

KEN BURNS has been making documentary films for almost 40 years. In 1981 he produced and directed his first film for PBS, Brooklyn Bridge, which earned an Academy Award nomination. He has gone on to direct and produce some of the most acclaimed historical documentaries ever made, including The Civil War, Baseball, Jazz, Statue of Liberty, Huey Long, Lewis and Clark: The Journey of the Corps of Discovery, Frank Lloyd Wright, Mark Twain, Unforgivable Blackness: The Rise and Fall of Jack Johnson, The War, The National Parks: America’s Best Idea, The Roosevelts: An Intimate History, and, most recently, Cancer: The Emperor of all Maladies. Burns’s other future projects include films about the Vietnam War, the history of country music, Ernest Hemingway, and the history of stand-up comedy.

HENRY LOUIS GATES, JR. is an Emmy Award-winning filmmaker, literary scholar, journalist, cultural critic, and institution builder. He is an Alphonse Fletcher University professor and has served as the director of the Hutchins Center for African and African American Research at Harvard University since 1991. He has authored 17 books and created 14 documentary films, including his current PBS series Finding Your Roots and the six-part PBS documentary series The African Americans: Many Rivers to Cross, which he wrote, executive produced, and hosted and which earned him an Emmy Award, Peabody Award, and NAACP Image Award. Gates has written for The New Yorker, The New York Times, and Time, is the editor-in-chief of the online magazine TheRoot.com, and oversees the Oxford African American Studies Center, the first comprehensive scholarly online resource in the field. In 2012, a collection of his writings, The Henry Louis Gates, Jr. Reader, was published. Gates is the recipient of 53 honorary degrees and numerous prizes, including a 1981 genius grant from the MacArthur Foundation. In 1998, he became the first African-American scholar to be awarded the National Humanities Medal. He was included in Time’s “25 Most Influential Americans” list in 1997, Ebony’s Power 150 list in 2009, and Ebony’s Power 100 list in 2010 and 2012. He also is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters and serves on the boards of 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. Gates’s forthcoming film Black America Since MLK: And Still I Rise looks at race and race relations from the end of the civil rights movement going forward, culminating in the election of Barack Obama.

MICHEL MARTIN, the weekend host of NPR’s All Things Considered, draws on her deep reporting and interviewing experience to dig into the week’s news. She is also the host of Going There, a live event series programmed in collaboration with NPR member stations, and is perhaps best known as the host of Tell Me More, the one-hour daily NPR news and talk show that aired from 2007 to 2014. From 1992 to 2006 Martin worked at ABC News and became a correspondent for Nightline in 1996, reporting on such subjects as the congressional budget battles, the US embassy bombings in Africa, racial profiling, and the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. At ABC, she contributed to numerous programs and specials, including the network’s award-winning coverage of September 11, a documentary on the Anita Hill-Clarence Thomas controversy, a critically acclaimed AIDS special, and reports for the ongoing series “America in Black and White.” In her reporting for the ABC news magazine Day One, she won an Emmy for her coverage of the international campaign to ban the use of landmines. Before joining ABC, Martin covered state and local politics for The Washington Post and national politics and policy at The Wall Street Journal, where she was White House correspondent. She was also a regular panelist on the PBS series Washington Week and a contributor to NOW with Bill Moyers. Martin has been honored by numerous organizations, including the Candace Award for Communications from the National Coalition of 100 Black Women, the Joan Barone Award for Excellence in Washington-based National Affairs/Public Policy Broadcasting from the Radio and Television Correspondents’ Association, and a 2002 Silver Gavel Award, given by the American Bar Association. Martin is a native of Brooklyn. She graduated cum laude from Radcliffe College at Harvard University and has done graduate work at Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, DC.

#BurnsGates