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Famed Historian James Horton to Speak on Abraham Lincoln for Founders' Day

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. – James Horton has lent his expertise to museums across the nation, but has spent his career bringing history directly to people as an advisor, Pulitzer Prize-nominated writer and consultant for The History Channel.

An historian emeritus with the National Museum of American History at the Smithsonian Institution, Horton will deliver an address titled “Abraham Lincoln: Slavery and the Civil War” for Illinois Wesleyan University’s annual Founders’ Day Convocation at 11 a.m. Wednesday, Feb. 18 in Westbrook Auditorium in Presser Hall (1210 Park St., Bloomington). Horton’s visit is supported in part by the David and Ann Lawrence Speaker’s Series. The event, which is free and open to the public, honors the 30 founders who signed the charter for the University in 1850.

The Benjamin Banneker Professor Emeritus of American Studies and History at George Washington University, Horton has been on the national and international stage for decades, working toward the preservation and understanding of history. He was the senior Fulbright Professor of American Studies at the University of Munich, Germany, from 1988 to 1989, and has also lectured throughout Europe, and in Thailand and Japan. In 1991, he assisted the German government in developing American Studies programs in the former East Germany. Two years later, U.S. Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt appointed Horton to the National Park System Advisory Board, and in 1996 he was elected board chair. His work for the board included serving as senior advisor on historical interpretation and public education for the director of the National Park Service.

Continuing his dedication toward preservation, Horton served on the White House Millennium Council from 1998 to 2000, acting as an historical expert for First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton. He traveled with the First Lady’s “Save American Treasures” bus tour of historic places in the summer of 1998 and accompanied her on a tour of historic sites in Boston in the winter of 1998. In the fall of 2000, he was one of two historians appointed by President Bill Clinton to serve on the Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission.

In 2003, Horton held the John Adams Distinguished Fulbright Chair in American History at the University of Leiden in The Netherlands. The following year, he served as president of the Organization of American Historians. He was the director of the Afro-American Communities Project of the National Museum of American History at the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, D.C., and is currently the visiting professor of American Studies at the University of Hawaii.

Receiving a doctorate in 1973 from Brandeis University (Massachusetts), Professor Horton has served as historical advisor to several museums in the United States and abroad, including the Underground Railroad Freedom Center in Cincinnati, Ohio; the National Civil Rights Museum in Memphis, Tenn.; Colonial Williamsburg; and Thomas Jefferson's home of Monticello.

An advocate of public history, he has been an historical consultant to numerous film and video productions including those seen on ABC, PBS, the Discovery Channel, C-Span TV and The History Channel. He was also a consultant to PBS and appeared in several PBS series, including, "Africans in America," "New England and the Civil War" and *The American Experience Series* "John Brown's Holy War." Professor Horton appears regularly on The History Channel, and was the subject of an episode in the series, "Great Minds in American History," hosted by Roger Mudd.

Horton has been recognized for excellence in scholarship and teaching, receiving the Trachtenberg Distinguished Teaching Award from George Washington University in 1994. He also received the Professor of the Year Award for the District of Columbia in 1996 from The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and the Council for Advancement and Support of Education. Horton was honored with the 2002 Distinguished Alumni Award from the State University of New York at Buffalo, where he received a bachelor's degree in 1964, before earning a master's degree from the University of Hawaii in 1970.

An avid writer, Horton has published ten books, eight jointly with Lois Horton, including the 1997 Pulitzer-Prize nominated *In Hope of Liberty: Culture, Protest, and Community Among Northern Free Blacks, 1700-1860* (Oxford University Press). He edited the Oxford University Press series, "The Landmarks of American History," and co-authored *Von Benin Nach Baltimore: Geschichte der African Americans* written in German and published in 1999 in Hamburg, Germany, by the Hamburger Edition. Other books by the Hortons include *Hard Road to Freedom: The Story of African America* (Rutgers University Press, 2001) and *Slavery and the Making of America* (Oxford University Press, 2006), which was praised by *Publishers Weekly*:

“As the Hortons chronicle lives from freedom in Africa to slavery in America and beyond, they tell an integral American story, a tale not of juxtaposition but of edgy oneness.”

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