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Acclaimed PBS Series *Finding Your Roots with Henry Louis Gates, Jr.* Returns Tuesday, September 23 at 8pm ET for its Second Season

*The 10-part series explores the heritages and ancestries of 29 of today's leading entertainers, athletes, chefs, and media personalities, including: **Ben Affleck, Jessica Alba, Khandi Alexander, Tom Colicchio, Tina Fey, Sally Field, Derek Jeter, Stephen King, Nas, Anna Deavere Smith, Sting, and Courtney B. Vance***

The basic drive to discover who we are and where we come from was at the core of the first season of the PBS series ***Finding Your Roots with Henry Louis Gates, Jr.*** In the second, 10-part season, Professor Gates, the Alphonse Fletcher University Professor at Harvard University and director of the Hutchins Center for African and African American Research, continues his journey into the past to illuminate the familial histories of 29 of today's most recognizable names in sports, music, film, television, theatre, and literature. Filmed on location

around the world, season two of ***Finding Your Roots***, premieres nationally **Tuesdays, September 23rd – November 25th at 8 p.m. ET on PBS** (check local listings).

The premiere of the second season of ***Finding Your Roots*** comes on the heels of Professor Gates' Peabody Award-winning PBS series *The African Americans: Many Rivers to Cross*, which debuted in the fall of 2013 to critical acclaim. In each hour-long episode of the second season of ***Finding Your Roots***, Gates continues his quest to, as he says, "get into the DNA of American culture." By weaving a group of celebrity stories together, each episode takes viewers on a journey through layers of ancestral history, uncovering familial secrets and sharing life-altering discoveries that ultimately reveal an intimate bond that links each individual's story together.

"We hope that viewers will find ***Finding Your Roots*** to be a moving, uplifting, entertaining and enlightening experience," says Gates. "Genealogy is more popular than ever, but it's far more than a solitary pastime. It's a fascinating endeavor that alters both the way we think about historical events (because of our ancestors' roles in those events) and the way we think of ourselves."

"We're incredibly excited to partner with Professor Gates again and present season two of ***Finding Your Roots***," said Stephen Segaller, vice president, programming, WNET. His brilliant combination of intensive historical research, high-profile guests, and DNA testing brings us an image of American history that no-one has equaled. He, like ***Finding Your Roots*** itself, is unique."

The episode construction of Season Two explores a much wider array of themes than Season One. In each episode, Gates focuses on the specific ethnic roots, cultural traditions and deep interplay of family influence and genetics of three guests, including: celebrity chefs **Tom Colicchio, Aaron Sanchez** and **Ming Tsai**, who cook the food of their ancestors and discover family members who have shaped their lives—and America's cuisine; **Derek Jeter, Billie Jean King** and **Rebecca Lobo**, three of America's greatest athletes whose determination and love of sports were deeply shaped by their families, but who were all cut off from their true origins—raising the question of whether champions are made or born; actress **Tina Fey**, humorist **David Sedaris** and journalist **George Stephanopoulos**, all of whom look into their Greek American ancestry; and American playwright **Tony Kushner**, singer-songwriter **Carole King** and lawyer **Alan Dershowitz**, who not only share a Jewish heritage, but a history of perseverance in the face of withering opposition.

In other episodes, actors **Ben Affleck** and **Khandi Alexander** come to realize their families have long been engaged in the battle for freedom and civil rights, but they had no idea that those principles were passed down through generations of ancestors. Gates also explores the history of the Vanderbilt family with **Anderson Cooper**, discovers a web of intimate relationships between **Nas'** slave ancestors and their masters, and traces **Sting's** roots back centuries in England where we find that being close to the seat of the Empire doesn't mean that life is any better.

New advancements in DNA testing since the first season allow Gates and his team to use genetic genealogy to make unprecedented discoveries about the past in Season Two, including being able to identify tribal Native American ancestry, solve paternity mysteries, and pinpoint the geographic origins of hidden ancestry. These new achievements in DNA testing take center stage with an entire episode devoted to exploring the possibilities, all the while featuring the stories of actress and entrepreneur **Jessica Alba**, **Massachusetts Governor Deval Patrick** and even Gates, himself.

Working closely with leading U.S. genealogists (including Johni Cerny, co-author of the acclaimed [The Source: Guidebook for American Genealogy](#)) and ancestry experts from around the world, Gates and his production team comb through family stories to discover unknown histories and relatives the guests never knew existed. When paper trails end for each story, the team turns to top geneticists and DNA diagnosticians to analyze each participant's genetic code, tracing their bloodlines and taking guests back further in time than ever before.

A far-reaching educational and community outreach initiative will accompany the broadcast, including: locally produced short excerpts to be shown on partner stations in conjunction with ***Finding Your Roots***; a set of standards-based lesson plans for upper elementary and middle school classrooms that incorporate segments from the series; live webinars; and a multimedia guide for educators to encourage use of the series and its additional resources with students.

A ***Finding Your Roots*** companion website (<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/finding-your-roots>) will present video from the series, profiles of featured guests and an ongoing blog from executive producer, writer and presenter Henry Louis Gates, Jr. In addition to his blog, the website will include blog posts and behind-the-scenes material from the production team. With a heavy focus on online engagement, the website will allow fans to submit stories about their own family histories complete with customized maps, and browse those others have uploaded. The website also will offer a comprehensive list of resources that viewers can use to learn more about their own genealogy.

A ***Finding Your Roots*** Facebook page (<http://www.facebook.com/FindingYourRootsPBS>) will provide fans with early access to video content, foster conversation among those fascinated by genealogy and spotlight user-submitted photos, videos and stories related to genetic lineages and family histories. In addition, Prof. Gates will participate in conversations leading up to and during broadcasts via his personal Twitter account (<http://www.twitter.com/henrylouisgates>).

Finding Your Roots: The Official Companion to the PBS Series (Season One) by Henry Louis Gates Jr., will be published in September, 2014 by the University of North Carolina Press.

Finding Your Roots with Henry Louis Gates, Jr. is a production of Kunhardt McGee Productions, Inkwell Films and THIRTEEN Productions LLC in association with Ark

Media. Henry Louis Gates, Jr., Peter Kunhardt, Dyllan McGee and Julie Anderson are executive producers. Stephen Segaller is executive in charge for WNET. John Maggio is senior producer.

Major corporate support for the second season of ***Finding Your Roots*** is provided by Ancestry.com. Additional corporate funding is provided by Ford Motor Company, Johnson & Johnson and McDonald's. Major support is also provided by the Ford Foundation, Dr. Georgette Bennett and Dr. Leonard Polonsky, Candace King Weir, the Daryl and Steven Roth Foundation and Loida N. Lewis. Support is also provided by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and PBS.

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About WNET

As New York's flagship public media provider and the parent company of [THIRTEEN](#) and [WLIW21](#) and operator of [NJTV](#), WNET brings quality arts, education and public affairs programming to more than 5 million viewers each week. WNET produces and presents such acclaimed PBS series as [Nature](#), [Great Performances](#), [American Masters](#), [PBS NewsHour Weekend](#), [Charlie Rose](#) and a range of documentaries, children's programs, and local news and cultural offerings available on air and online. Pioneers in educational programming, WNET has created such groundbreaking series as [Get the Math](#), [Oh Noah!](#) and [Cyberchase](#) and provides tools for educators that bring compelling content to life in the classroom and at home. WNET highlights the tri-state's unique culture and diverse communities through [NYC-ARTS](#), [Reel 13](#), [NJTV News with Mary Alice Williams](#) and [MetroFocus](#), the multi-platform news magazine focusing on the New York region. WNET is also a leader in connecting with viewers on emerging platforms, including the [THIRTEEN Explore App](#) where users can stream PBS content for free.

About Kunhardt McGee Productions

For 26 years Kunhardt McGee Productions led by Peter Kunhardt and Dyllan McGee has been making documentary films about the people and ideas that have shaped our history. Kunhardt McGee is currently in production on the 10-hour series, *Finding Your Roots with Henry Louis Gates, Jr. – Season Two*. Most recently, the company produced MAKERS: Women Who Make America, a broadcast and online initiative with PBS and AOL that aims to be the largest collection of women's stories ever assembled. Other PBS films include: *The African Americans: Many Rivers to Cross* (2013), *Finding Your Roots with Henry Louis Gates, Jr.* (2012), *Faces of America with Henry Louis Gates, Jr.* (2010), *Looking for Lincoln* (2009), *Oprah's Roots* (2007) and *African American Lives 1 and 2* (2006 & 2008). For HBO, Kunhardt McGee Productions produced Emmy-award nominated, *Gloria: In Her Own Words* (2011) and Emmy award-winning *Teddy: In His Own Words* (2010). Other notable works include *This Emotional Life*, *Looking for Lincoln*, *In Memoriam*, *PT Barnum*, *The American President*, *Bobby Kennedy: In His Own Words*, and *JFK: In His Own Words*. More information can be found at: www.kunhardtmcgee.com

About Inkwell Films

Inkwell Films was founded by Henry Louis Gates, Jr. to produce sophisticated documentary films about the African and African-American experience for a broad audience. The most recent film, the six-part PBS documentary series, *The African Americans: Many Rivers to Cross* (2013), earned the 2013 Peabody Award and NAACP Image Award. Inkwell Films has co-produced *Finding Your Roots* (2012), *Black in Latin America* (2011), *Faces of America* (2010), *Looking for Lincoln* (2009), *African American Lives 2* (2008), *Oprah's Roots* (2007), and *African American Lives* (2006). Inkwell Films is currently in production on Season Two of *Finding Your Roots* for PBS.

About Ark Media

Ark Media is an award-winning documentary film company founded in 1997 by the husband and wife producing team of Barak Goodman and Rachel Dretzin. Ark partnered with Kunhardt-McGee Productions on the Henry Louis Gates Jr. series, *The African Americans; Many Rivers to Cross* (2013), *Finding Your Roots* (2012), *Faces of America*, (2010) and also with Kunhardt-McGee, produced *Looking for Lincoln* (2009) and the *Makers* project for PBS. Ark's numerous films for the esteemed PBS series' *Frontline* and *American Experience* have won nearly every major broadcast award: the Emmy, DuPont-Columbia, Robert F. Kennedy, Writers Guild and Peabody Awards, as well as earning an Academy Award nomination and official selection to the Sundance Film Festival. The company is currently in production on the six-hour PBS series "*Cancer: The Emperor of All Maladies*" and a four-hour series for PBS, *The Italian-Americans*. Ark has also produced documentaries for the *New York Times*, American Movie Classics, ABC, and the History Channel. For more information, visit www.ark-media.net.