

PBS AND WETA ANNOUNCE FOUR-HOUR DOCUMENTARY
GOSPEL
WITH HENRY LOUIS GATES JR. TO PREMIERE FEBRUARY 12-13, 2024

**Series from McGee Media and Inkwell Media Explores the Origin of Black Spirituality
Through Sermon and Song**

Companion Concert Special February 9
produced by McGee Media, Done + Dusted, and Friends at Work
Hosted by Henry Louis Gates Jr.

Watch the trailer for the documentary [HERE](#)

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WASHINGTON, DC — August 28, 2023 — PBS and WETA today announced **GOSPEL**, a new four-hour docuseries that explores the rich history of Black spirituality through sermon and song from executive producer, host, and writer **Professor Henry Louis Gates, Jr.**, premiering in February 2024 on PBS, PBS.org and the PBS App. **GOSPEL** reunites acclaimed Harvard scholar and documentarian Gates with directors Stacey L. Holman and Shayla Harris after recently teaming up on **MAKING BLACK AMERICA: THROUGH THE GRAPEVINE**. The series will premiere on February 12 and 13, 2024, with a special companion concert premiering February 9.

From the blues to hip-hop, African Americans have been the driving force of sonic innovation for over a century. Musical styles come and go, but there is one sound that has been a constant source of strength, courage, and wisdom from the pulpit to the choir lofts on any given Sunday: the gospel.

The gospel concert special, produced by McGee Media, Done + Dusted, and Friends at Work, celebrates gospel music and its extraordinary impact on culture and pop music. Featuring the biggest names in gospel music together with the biggest stars from the world of pop, R&B and beyond, the concert will be recorded in Los Angeles in front of a live audience, hosted by Henry Louis Gates, Jr. This one-hour PBS special, from showrunner Kristen V. Carter, will both be inspired by and build excitement for the landmark four-hour history series, **GOSPEL**. A list of performers will be announced at a later date.

In **GOSPEL**, Gates, the Alphonse Fletcher University Professor at Harvard University and director of the Hutchins Center for African and African American Research, speaks with dozens of clergymen, singers and scholars about their connection to the music that has transcended its

origins and now spreads “the good word” all around the world. The series features interviews with notable names including Dionne Warwick, U.S. Senator Raphael Warnock, Rev. Otis Moss III, professor Michael Eric Dyson, and awe-inspiring musical performances of Gospel favorites “Can’t Nobody Do Me Like Jesus,” “Total Praise,” and others from talents including The Belle Singers, Cory Henry, Celisse, and more.

Gospel is more than the soundtrack of the African American experience, “it’s the beating heart and soul,” said Gates. “From the Great Migration to today, the history of Black gospel music and preaching is one of constant movement, and it’s long been a dream of mine to bring it to public television. We’re blessed to have such outstanding partners in delivering this series and concert at a time in our nation when the need for Gospel’s transcendent, healing powers is so great.”

Stacey L. Holman and Shayla Harris, the series producers and directors, said, “It was such an honor to reunite with the incredible team that produced THE BLACK CHURCH on another powerful examination of Black spiritual expression for PBS. For centuries, the sacred sounds of gospel music and Black preaching have testified to God’s goodness and grace while embracing the rhythms and riffs of blues, jazz and hip-hop. They were the way that African Americans found their voice and their power in a strange land and have resonated far beyond the church’s walls. By weaving intimate interviews with dynamic live gospel performances throughout the series, we want our viewers to fully experience and be energized by this uniquely African American art form of prayer, praise and promise.”

“I’m so grateful to have been able to work again with the incredible team of Henry Louis Gates, Jr., Stacey L. Holman, and Shayla Harris,” remarked executive producer Dyllan McGee. “They’ve created yet another impactful and important series that invites audiences to enjoy and celebrate the sounds of gospel.”

PBS’s Chief Programming Executive and General Manager, Sylvia Bugg said “**GOSPEL** celebrates a treasured genre of music that has influenced African American culture and communities, and we are excited for audiences to join Professor Gates on this joyous exploration into a very unique and ardent art form. This four-hour series also expands upon PBS’s efforts to engage communities across America, helping to build greater awareness and understanding.”

GOSPEL concert showrunner, Kristen V. Carter, said, “I am elated to partner with McGee Media, Done + Dusted and Friends at Work to acknowledge, honor and celebrate the rich legacy of Gospel music and the contributions that this genre has made throughout history and culture. We are excited to bring gospel and secular artists together for this incredibly inspiring celebration!”

Throughout its four hours, **GOSPEL** gives a look at the history of Black religious music and preaching, showcasing the symbiotic relationship of words and song present in any Black church. The series examines the origin of Black gospel music, which blended the sacred spirituals with the blues tradition and soared to new heights during the Great Migration. This music served as an outlet for the anger and frustration of living as a Black person in America,

which remains true today. The series also explores the evolution of preaching styles over time, and the impact of class, gender, cultural innovations, and consumer technologies shaped the development of gospel since its conception.

GOSPEL is the latest in a long line of acclaimed docuseries from Gates, continuing his reputation as one of the preeminent documentarians in public media. His history-producing content that brings the African and African American experience to a broad audience includes the works *MAKING BLACK AMERICA: THROUGH THE GRAPEVINE* (2022); *THE BLACK CHURCH: THIS IS OUR STORY, THIS IS OUR SONG* (2021); *RECONSTRUCTION: AMERICA AFTER THE CIVIL WAR* (2019); *AFRICA'S GREAT CIVILIZATIONS* (2017); *BLACK AMERICA SINCE MLK: AND STILL I RISE* (2016); *THE AFRICAN AMERICANS: MANY RIVERS TO CROSS* (2013); and *AFRICAN AMERICAN LIVES* (2006). Additionally, Gates's slate of programming also includes the fan-favorite PBS series [FINDING YOUR ROOTS WITH HENRY LOUIS GATES, JR.](#), which will return for a historic 10th season in January 2024.

GOSPEL will be accompanied by an outreach and public engagement program, providing opportunities – facilitated by local public radio and PBS member stations – for communities to participate in dialogue and storytelling about the impact of Black culture, tradition, and community-building, and the ongoing implications for American society today. In addition, educational resources will be designed to engage teachers and students through multiple platforms, including PBS LearningMedia. Viewers are encouraged to join the conversation on social media with @HenryLouisGates.

GOSPEL is a production of McGee Media, Inkwell Media and WETA Washington, D.C. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. is the writer, host, and executive producer. Dyllan McGee is executive producer. John F. Wilson is executive producer in charge for WETA. Bill Gardner is the executive in charge for PBS. Stacey L. Holman and Shayla Harris are series producers and directors. Deborah C. Porfido is supervising producer. Robert L. Yacyshyn is line producer. Kevin Burke is producer. Barbara Gregson is archival producer.

Corporate support for **GOSPEL** was provided by Bank of America. Major funding support was provided by the Lilly Endowment Inc., Gilead Sciences, Inc., the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, the Silicon Valley Community Foundation and the Ford Foundation. Funding was also provided by members of The Inkwell Society and by public television viewers like you.

About PBS

[PBS](#), with more than 330 member stations, offers all Americans the opportunity to explore new ideas and new worlds through television and digital content. Each month, PBS reaches over 42 million adults on linear primetime television, more than 15 million users on PBS-owned streaming platforms, and 56 million people view PBS content on social media, inviting them to experience the worlds of science, history, nature, and public affairs; to hear diverse viewpoints; and to take front-row seats to world-class drama and performances. PBS's broad array of programs has been consistently honored by the industry's most coveted award competitions. Teachers of children from pre-K through 12th grade turn to [PBS LearningMedia](#) for digital

content and services that help bring classroom lessons to life. As the number one educational media brand, [PBS KIDS](#) helps children 2-8 build critical skills, enabling them to find success in school and life. Delivered through member stations, PBS KIDS offers high-quality content on TV — including a PBS KIDS channel — and streaming free on [pbskids.org](#) and the [PBS KIDS Video app](#), games on the [PBS KIDS Games app](#), and in communities across America. More information about PBS is available at [PBS.org](#), one of the leading dot-org websites on the internet, [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), or through our [apps for mobile and connected devices](#). Specific program information and updates for press are available at [pbs.org/pressroom](#) or by following [PBS Communications on Twitter](#).

About WETA

WETA is the leading public broadcaster in the nation's capital, serving Virginia, Maryland, and the District of Columbia with educational initiatives and with high-quality programming on television, radio and digital platforms. WETA Washington, D.C., is the second-largest producing station for public television in the United States, with news and public affairs programs including PBS NEWSHOUR and WASHINGTON WEEK WITH THE ATLANTIC; documentaries by Ken Burns and Florentine Films, such as THE AMERICAN BUFFALO and THE U.S. AND THE HOLOCAUST; series and documentaries by Prof. Henry Louis Gates, Jr., including FINDING YOUR ROOTS WITH HENRY LOUIS GATES, JR. and MAKING BLACK AMERICA: THROUGH THE GRAPEVINE; performance specials including IN PERFORMANCE AT THE WHITE HOUSE and THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS GERSHWIN PRIZE FOR POPULAR SONG; and health content from Well Beings, a multiplatform campaign. More information on WETA and its programs and services is available at [www.weta.org](#). Visit [www.facebook.com/wetatvfm](#) on Facebook or follow @WETAtvfm on Twitter.

About McGee Media

McGee Media was founded by award-winning filmmaker Dyllan McGee to produce documentary content that is innovative, compelling, and immersive. Every story is born from a vision of a fairer and more equitable world. Whether it is the sweeping history of the African-American experience, or the intimate personal stories of the hundreds of women who made up the feminist movement, McGee Media uses television, film, and digital media in radical new ways to inform and inspire. Recent projects include Emmy nominated FREDERICK DOUGLASS: IN FIVE SPEECHES (HBO), NOT DONE: WOMEN REMAKING AMERICA (PBS), THE BLACK CHURCH: THIS IS OUR STORY, THIS IS OUR SONG (PBS), and BLACK AMERICA SINCE MLK: AND STILL I RISE (PBS) as well as MAKING BLACK AMERICA: THROUGH THE GRAPEVINE, RECONSTRUCTION: AMERICA AFTER THE CIVIL WAR (PBS), AFRICA'S GREAT CIVILIZATIONS (PBS), MAKERS (PBS), FINDING YOUR ROOTS (PBS), ONCE & FOR ALL (AOL), FIRST IN HUMAN (Discovery), and RANCHER, FARMER, FISHERMAN (Discovery).

About Inkwell Media

Inkwell Media was founded by Henry Louis Gates, Jr. to produce sophisticated documentary films about the African and African-American experience for a broad audience. The six-part PBS documentary series THE AFRICAN AMERICANS: MANY RIVERS TO CROSS (2013) earned the 2013 Peabody Award and NAACP Image Award. Inkwell has co-produced FREDERICK DOUGLASS: IN

FIVE SPEECHES (2022), FINDING YOUR ROOTS, Seasons 1-9 (2012-2023), MAKING BLACK AMERICA: THROUGH THE GRAPEVINE (2022), THE BLACK CHURCH: THIS IS OUR STORY, THIS IS OUR SONG (2021), RECONSTRUCTION: AMERICA AFTER THE CIVIL WAR (2019), AFRICA'S GREAT CIVILIZATIONS (2017), BLACK AMERICA SINCE MLK: AND STILL I RISE (2016), 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).

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