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Annette Gordon-Reed Wins Douglass Prize

September 28, 2009

News release by the Gilder Lehrman Center for the Study of Slavery, Resistance, and Abolition.

Annette Gordon-Reed, Professor of Law at New York Law School, Professor of History at Rutgers University-Newark, and Visiting Professor of Law at Harvard University, has been selected as the winner of the 2009 Frederick Douglass Book Prize, awarded for the best book written in English on slavery or abolition. Gordon-Reed won for her book, *The Hemingses of Monticello: An American Family* (W.W. Norton and Company).

In addition to Gordon-Reed, the other finalists for the prize were Thavolia Glymph for *Out of the House of Bondage: The Transformation of the Plantation Household* (Cambridge University Press) and Jacqueline Jones for *Saving Savannah: The City and the Civil War* (Alfred A. Knopf Publishers). The $25,000 annual award is the most generous history prize in the field. The prize will be presented to Gordon-Reed at a dinner in New York City in February 2010.

This year's finalists were selected from a field of over fifty entries by a jury of scholars that included Robert Bonner (Dartmouth College), Rita Roberts (Scripps College), and Pier Larson (Johns Hopkins University). The winner was selected by a review committee of representatives from the Gilder Lehrman Center for the Study of Slavery, Resistance and Abolition, the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, and Yale University.

"In Annette Gordon Reed's *The Hemingses of Monticello*, an enslaved Virginia family is delivered -- but not disassociated -- from Thomas Jefferson's well-known sexual liaison with Sally Hemings," says Bonner, the 2009 Douglass Prize Jury Chair and Associate Professor of History at Dartmouth College. "The book judiciously blends the best of recent slavery scholarship with shrewd commentary on the legal structure of Chesapeake society before and after the American Revolution. Its meticulous account of the mid-eighteenth century intertwining of the black Hemingses and white Wayles families sheds new light on Jefferson’s subsequent conjoining with a young female slave who was already
his kin by marriage. By exploring those dynamic commitments and evasions that shaped Monticello routines, the path-breaking book provides a testament to the complexity of human relationships within slave societies and to the haphazard possibilities for both intimacy and betrayal."