

For Immediate Release

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**Harvard University's Hutchins Center for African & African American Research
Honors 2015 W.E.B. Du Bois Medalists**

Muhammad Ali, Eric Holder, Marian Wright Edelman Among Recipients

Sept. 15, 2015—Cambridge, Mass.— Muhammad Ali, Eric Holder and Marian Wright Edelman are among the recipients of the 2015 W.E.B. Du Bois Medal. In this, its 15th anniversary, the medal honors those who have made significant contributions to African and African American history and culture, and more broadly individuals who advocate for intercultural understanding and human rights in an increasingly global and interconnected world. The Hutchins Center for African & African American Research at Harvard will hold the awards presentation ceremony on Wed., Sept. 30 at 4 p.m. in Sanders Theatre, Memorial Hall, 45 Quincy St., Cambridge, Mass.

Henry Louis Gates Jr., Alphonse Fletcher University Professor and director of the Hutchins Center, said, "This year's honorees come from the worlds of arts and activism, and more often than not, bridge the two in their quest for diversity and excellence."

Glenn H. Hutchins, co-founder and managing director of the private equity firm Silver Lake and the chairman of the Advisory Board of the Hutchins Center, said, "The W. E. B. Du Bois Medals recognize the vital contributions of individuals who act with courage and conviction in their quest to better the world."

The 2015 W.E.B. Du Bois Medal recipients are:

- **Muhammad Ali** first gained worldwide notice when he won the gold at the Rome Olympics in 1960. Perhaps the greatest boxer of all time, a then 22-year-old Cassius Clay won his first heavyweight title in 1964 with a TKO over Sonny Liston. He later converted to Islam and changed his name to Muhammad Ali. Always the focus of media attention, the most controversial period of his life was when he was stripped of all titles and faced possible prison time because he refused to enter the draft for the Vietnam War. The Supreme Court later reversed the conviction. *Sports Illustrated* anointed him Sportsman of the Century and the BBC named him Sports Personality of the Century. (The Ali presentation will be video taped earlier and shown at the Sept. 30 ceremony.)
- **Marian Wright Edelman**, Founder and President of the Children's Defense Fund (CDF), is well known for her lifelong work as an advocate for disadvantaged children. In the 1960's, she was the first black woman admitted to the Mississippi bar, and was director of the

NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund office in Jackson. She later served as counsel to Martin Luther King Jr.'s Poor People's Campaign, and founded the Washington Research Project, a public interest law firm and parent of the CDF. She also served as director of the Center for Law and Education at Harvard before she began the CDF.

- Presenter: Drew Gilpin Faust, Harvard University President and the Lincoln Professor of History.
- **Mellody Hobson** is President of Ariel Investments and Chairman of the Board of Ariel Investment Trust. She is a frequent contributor to *CBS News* and *The Tom Joyner Show*, and she writes a column for *Black Enterprise* magazine. She is Chairman of the Board for DreamWorks Animation SKG, Inc., Director of The Estée Lauder Companies Inc., and Starbucks Corporation. She is also Chairman of After School Matters, a non-profit that provides Chicago teens with high-quality, out-of-school time programs, and is on the boards of The Chicago Public Education Fund, George Lucas Education Foundation, Lucas Museum of Narrative Art, and Sundance Institute. In 2015, she was named to *Time* magazine's list of the 100 most influential people in the world.
- Presenter: Nitin Nohria, Harvard Dean of the Faculty of Business Administration; George F. Baker Professor of Administration.
- **Eric Holder** was the 82nd Attorney General of the United States under President Barack Obama. During the Clinton administration, he became the first African American to be named Deputy Attorney General. He also served as U.S. Attorney for the District of Columbia and an Associate Judge of the Superior Court of the District of Columbia. While a student at Columbia Law School, he clerked at the N.A.A.C.P. Legal Defense Fund and the Department of Justice's Criminal Division.
- Presenter: Martha Minow, Harvard Dean of the Faculty of Law; Member of the Faculty of Education; Morgan and Helen Chu Dean and Professor of Law; Senior Fellow of the Society of Fellows.
- **Charlayne Hunter-Gault**, in 1961, amid controversy and discrimination, became the first black woman to enroll in the University of Georgia. As a journalist she has focused her career on civil rights and inequality. Before joining PBS's *The MacNeil/Lehrer Report*, later known as the *NewsHour*, in 1978, she was a reporter for the *New York Times*. While at the *NewsHour*, she was awarded two Emmys and a Peabody for her work covering national and international stories. She later moved to South Africa to become a correspondent for NPR, and Johannesburg bureau chief for CNN. Earlier this year, she received the Washington Press Club Foundation's 2015 Lifetime Achievement Award.
- Presenter: Glenn H. Hutchins, Co-founder and Managing Director of the private equity firm Silver Lake.

- **Nasir “Nas” Jones** is a critically acclaimed rapper and song writer. His latest release, *Life Is Good*, was his third consecutive Def Jam album to debut at number one on the Billboard 200 albums chart in 2012. Jones has also had a successful career as an actor, appearing in movies and on television, including the crime drama *Belly*, the action crime thriller *Ticker*, *Sacred Is the Flesh* (which he also co-wrote), a cameo in the comedy *Uptown Girls*, and on the CBS-TV series, *Hawaii Five-O*. In 2013, the Hiphop Archive & Research Institute and the W. E. B. Du Bois Research Institute at Harvard established the Nasir Jones Hiphop Fellowship.
 - Presenter: Marcyliena Morgan, Professor of African and African American Studies at Harvard; Founder and Director of the Hiphop Archive & Research Institute
- **Carrie Mae Weems**, an artist, who has said, “storytelling is fundamental to my work,” has employed photography, digital images, fabric and other media to express the human condition, leading to the investigation of racism, sexism, gender roles and political systems. She was the 2013 recipient of a MacArthur grant, and the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation’s Lifetime Achievement Award. BET honored her in 2014 with its BET Honors Visual Artist award. She has also received the Lucie Award for Fine Art photography and was one of four artists honored at the Guggenheim’s International Gala.
 - Presenter: Robin Kelsey, Shirley Carter Burden Professor of Photography; Chair of the Department of History of Art and Architecture at Harvard.

The Hutchins Center includes the W. E. B. Du Bois Research Institute; the Ethelbert Cooper Gallery of African & African American Art; the Hiphop Archive & Research Institute; the Afro-Latin American Research Institute; the Project on Race & Gender in Science & Medicine; the History Design Studio; the Image of the Black Archive & Library; the Jazz Research Initiative; and two publications, *Transition* and the *Du Bois Review*.

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Note to media: Media passes to the ceremony will be available beginning at 3 p.m. on Sept. 30 in the lobby outside Sanders Theatre.