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**Director Ava DuVernay, Actor LL COOL J,  
Political Strategist Donna Brazile, Artist Kara Walker  
Among Recipients of Harvard University's Hutchins Center for African & African  
American Research 2017 W. E. B. Du Bois Medal**

**Sept. 14, 2017—Cambridge, Mass.—** Director Ava DuVernay; LL COOL J; and Democratic political strategist Donna Brazile will receive the W. E. B. Du Bois Medal at the fifth annual Hutchins Center Honors. Also being honored this year are artist Kara Walker, Librarian of Congress Carla Hayden, Ford Foundation President Darren Walker, Microsoft Chairman John W. Thompson, and educator and activist Jennifer Ward Oppenheimer (posthumously). The Hutchins Center Honors, presented by the Hutchins Center for African & African American Research at Harvard University, will take place on Wed., Oct. 4, 2017 at 4 p.m. in Sanders Theatre, Memorial Hall, 45 Quincy St., Cambridge, Mass.

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.

Henry Louis Gates Jr., Alphonse Fletcher University Professor and director of the Hutchins Center, said, "Our fifth Hutchins Center Honors carries on our tradition of recognizing leadership, commitment, and excellence. These eight new recipients of the W.E.B. Du Bois Medal look to the future as they celebrate the past. They bring their genius and their abiding sense of social responsibility to the arts, public service, the corporate realm, and philanthropy. To tie their names to the great Du Bois honors all, and advances the Hutchins Center's mission to educate, to interrogate, and to inspire."

Glenn H. Hutchins, Co-founder of North Island and Chairman of the National Advisory Board of the Hutchins Center, said, "Led by the Hutchins Center, African and African American studies is at the vital center of scholarship and community engagement at Harvard. We bring together scholars, students, artists, activists, and public servants to foster dialogue, understanding and discovery - all ever more essential in these tumultuous times."

The 2017 W.E.B. Du Bois Medal recipients are:

- Former Interim National Chair of the Democratic National Committee, **Donna Brazile**, has been a very visible and forceful political voice since the age of nine when she worked to help elect a local city council person. She actively worked on every presidential campaign from 1976 to 2000, and became the first black woman to manage a presidential campaign (Al Gore). Brazile is an adjunct professor at Georgetown University, and a columnist for Ms. Magazine and O, the Oprah Magazine. She is a frequent commentator and contributor on

CNN, and ABC's This Week. She has even had a couple of guest appearances on the CBS show *The Good Wife*. A graduate of Louisiana State University, Brazile has been very active in her home town of New Orleans. She has served on the Louisiana Recovery Board "to work for the rebuilding of the state and to advocate for the Gulf recovery on the national stage" following two devastating hurricanes. She has also worked with young people in the community, encouraging them to vote and run for office. Brazile, who founded and manages her own consulting firm, has received several honorary degrees, is currently a fellow in Harvard's Shorenstein Center, and was a fellow in Harvard's Institute of Politics in 2001.

- Nominated for the Academy Award and eight EMMYs, winner of the British Academy of Film and Television Arts for Best Documentary and The Peabody Award, Ava DuVernay's *13TH* is one of the most critically acclaimed films of 2016. In 2015, DuVernay directed the historical drama *Selma*, which garnered four Golden Globe nominations and two Academy Award nominations, including Best Picture. Her current directorial work includes the award-winning dramatic television series *Queen Sugar*; and the upcoming Disney feature film *A Wrinkle In Time*. Winner of the 2012 Sundance Film Festival's Best Director prize for her previous feature *Middle of Nowhere*, DuVernay's early directorial work includes *I Will Follow*, *Venus Vs.* and *This Is the Life*. In 2017, DuVernay was named one of Fortune Magazine's 50 Greatest World Leaders and TIME Magazine's 100 Most Influential People. She also distributes and amplifies the work of people of color and women directors through her film collective ARRAY, named one of Fast Company's Most Innovative Companies.
- Nominated by President Barack Obama on Feb. 24, 2016, confirmed by the U.S. Senate on July 13, and sworn in as the 14th Librarian of Congress on Sept. 14, 2016, **Carla Hayden** is the first woman and the first African American to lead the national library. Prior to her latest post she served, since 1993, as CEO of the Enoch Pratt Free Library in Baltimore. President Obama nominated her to be a member of the National Museum and Library Services Board and the Senate confirmed it in June 2010. Prior to joining the Pratt Library, Hayden was deputy commissioner and chief librarian of the Chicago Public Library from 1991 to 1993. She was an assistant professor for Library and Information Science at the University of Pittsburgh from 1987 to 1991, and was library services coordinator for the Museum of Science and Industry in Chicago from 1982 to 1987. She began her career with the Chicago Public Library as the young adult services coordinator in 1979 and as a library associate and children's librarian from 1973 to 1979. She was president of the American Library Association from 2003 to 2004. In 1995, she was the first African American to receive *Library Journal's* Librarian of the Year Award in recognition of her outreach services at the Pratt Library. Hayden received a B.A. from Roosevelt University and an M.A. and Ph.D. from the Graduate Library School of the University of Chicago.

- **LL COOL J** is an entertainment icon who has found great success crossing into multiple mediums. A two-time Grammy® Award winner, recording artist, actor, author, NAACP Image Award winner, Kennedy Center honoree, entrepreneur and philanthropist, LL continues to display his wide range of talents with every project. First introduced to the world in 1984 as a Def Jam Records flagship artist, LL is the first rap artist to amass ten consecutive platinum-plus selling albums. The multi-platinum artist and two-time Rock and Roll Hall of Fame nominee is currently tied for third place for most Billboard chart debuts by a rapper. In 2016, LL received a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame for his achievement in music. As an actor, LL COOL J has successfully transitioned to one of the consistently highest rated shows on television. He currently stars in the CBS hit primetime drama series, *NCIS: Los Angeles*, which will premiere its ninth season on Sun., Oct. 1. His performance on the show garnered him six NAACP Image Award nominations for his role of Special Agent Sam Hanna. LL can currently be seen hosting and producing the Emmy nominated show *Lip Sync Battle* on Spike TV. LL has always been an avid philanthropist involved in numerous causes including literacy for kids as well as music and arts programs in schools. Celebrating its 13th anniversary this year, LL's charity "Jump & Ball" aims to give back to his local community by offering a five-week athletic and team building program dedicated to bringing wholesome fun to young people.
- **John W. Thompson**, chairman of Microsoft Corporation since Feb. 4, 2014, has more than 40 years of experience in the technology industry. Most recently, he served as chief executive officer of Virtual Instruments, a privately held company. Prior to this, he was the chief executive officer of Symantec for 10 years, during which time he helped transform the company into a leader in security, storage and systems management solutions. Thompson also held several leadership positions during his 28 years at IBM in the areas of sales, marketing and software development, and he also served as general manager of IBM Americas. He currently serves as either an advisor or board member with Illumina, ReviverMX and Illumio. In addition to his service in the technology industry, he is a member of the board of trustees for the Wetland America Trust. He has served on the national board of Teach for America and on several government commissions that include the Financial Crisis Inquiry Commission, the National Infrastructure Advisory Committee, and the Silicon Valley Blue Ribbon Task Force on Aviation Security and Technology. Thompson received a bachelor's degree in business administration from Florida A&M University, and a master's degree in management science from MIT's Sloan School of Management.
- As President of the Ford Foundation, one of the nation's largest philanthropies, **Darren Walker** has been a leader in the nonprofit and philanthropic sectors for two decades. He guided efforts with the philanthropy committee of the Grand Bargain that helped bring a

resolution to the city of Detroit's historic bankruptcy, and chairs the U.S. Impact Investing Alliance. Prior to joining Ford, he was vice president at the Rockefeller Foundation where he managed an initiative to rebuild New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina. In the 1990s, as chief operating officer of Harlem's largest community development organization, the Abyssinian Development Corporation, Walker oversaw a comprehensive revitalization program of central Harlem, including over 1,000 new units of housing. He had a decade-long career in international law and finance at Cleary Gottlieb Steen & Hamilton and UBS. He is a member of the Commission on the Future of Riker's Island and serves on the boards of Carnegie Hall, New York City Ballet, the High Line, the Arcus Foundation and PepsiCo. Walker received the Distinguished Alumnus Award, the highest honor given by his alma mater, the University of Texas at Austin. In 2016, TIME magazine named him to its annual list of the 100 Most Influential People in the World. He is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and is the recipient of ten honorary degrees and university awards.

- New York-based artist **Kara Walker** is best known for her candid investigation of race, gender, sexuality, and violence through silhouetted figures. Her work can be found in museums and public collections throughout the United States and Europe including Harvard Art Museums; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; The Tate Gallery, London; the Museo Nazionale delle Arti del XXI Secolo (MAXXI), Rome; and Deutsche Bank, Frankfurt. The Walker Art Center in Minneapolis organized and presented a major survey exhibition, *Kara Walker: My Complement, My Enemy, My Oppressor, My Love*, in Feb. 2007. In 2014, Walker's first large scale public project, a monumental installation entitled *A Subtlety: Or... the Marvelous Sugar Baby an Homage to the unpaid and overworked Artisans who have refined our Sweet tastes from the cane fields to the Kitchens of the New World on the Occasion of the demolition of the Domino Sugar Refining Plant*, was on view at an abandoned Domino Sugar refinery in Williamsburg, Brooklyn. The project – a massive sugar covered sphinx-like sculpture – responded to and reflected on the troubled history of sugar. Regarding the work, Walker said at a Radcliffe Institute speech she gave in December 2014, "I love that art can do that (shake you to your core) in a way that just wouldn't be welcome in polite society." Walker received a BFA from Atlanta College of Art in 1991, and an MFA from the Rhode Island School of Design in 1994. She is the recipient of many awards, including the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation Achievement Award in 1997. In 2012, Walker became a member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters. She is the Tepper Chair in the Visual Arts at Rutgers University's Mason Gross School of the Arts.
- A zealous supporter of educational opportunity and a life-long learner who consistently sought and created opportunities for those without, **Jennifer Ward Oppenheimer (AB '89,**

**JD '93**), was a daughter of Harvard, who was committed to the university and promoting the study of Africa not only through her and her husband's contributions to Africa-related initiatives across the university, but also in every interaction she had with faculty, students, and even prospective students. She understood the power of Harvard to contribute to global conversations related to Africa as well as the importance of empowering African societies through educational excellence. She was a strategic visionary in bringing these worlds together. Harvard's present commitment to Africa and African Studies is, in part, a reflection of her longstanding support, and of her insistence that we continue to work harder, think more deeply, and aspire to ever broader impact. Oppenheimer died on Tues., May 16, 2017. Together with her husband Jonathan, she generously endowed the Oppenheimer Faculty Directorship of the Harvard University Center for African Studies, and created a legacy that will continue to shape Africa's future scholars, entrepreneurs and leaders.

The Hutchins Center at Harvard 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 & Cumulative Adversity; 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*.

**Tickets available Monday, September 18 at noon via the Harvard Box Office. Tickets are FREE and available to the public. Seating is general admission. Limit 2 tickets per person.**

The Harvard Box Office  
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**Note to media: Media passes to the ceremony will be available beginning at 3 p.m. on Oct. 4 in the lobby outside Sanders Theatre.**