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Harvard announces launch of Hutchins Center for African and African American Research through \$15m gift

Posted by Matt Rocheleau September 18, 2013 01:02 PM

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By Matt Rocheleau, Town Correspondent

Harvard University announced Wednesday it will use a \$15-million donation to launch the Hutchins Center for African and African American Research.

The center will house four new entities: the Afro-Latin American Research Institute, the History Design Studio, the Program for the Study of Race and Gender in Science and Medicine, and the Ethelbert Cooper Gallery of African and African American Art, according to a [statement](#) on the university's website.

The new center will also encompass several existing entities at Harvard: W.E.B. Du Bois Research Institute, the Hiphop Archive and Research Institute, the Image of the Black Archive and Library, the Du Bois Review, Transition Magazine, the Neil L. and Angelica Zander Rudenstine Gallery, and the Hutchins Family Library.

Henry Louis "Skip" Gates Jr., who has directed the Du Bois Institute since he arrived at Harvard in 1991, will be the founding director of the Hutchins Center, the statement said.

The center is named in honor of a \$15-million gift from the Hutchins Family Foundation, which was endowed by Glenn Hutchins, who co-founded technology investment company Sliver Lake and earned a bachelor's degree from Harvard in 1977 and graduate degrees in law and business in 1983.

"With this unprecedented gift from the Hutchins Family Foundation, we secure our place as the pre-eminent site for research about the African diaspora in the academy," said a statement from Gates. "What we have built under the rubric of the Du Bois Institute will continue to grow through the Hutchins Center with even greater global reach, in a way that would have made the public-minded Dr. Du Bois proud."

Hutchins' gift comes from a larger, \$30-million donation he gave to his alma mater [last fall](#) to create the Hutchins Family Challenge Fund for House Renewal and to support broader academic initiatives in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences.

"The Hutchins Center will house a group of world-leading research institutes and programs, all vitally important and all equally dedicated to the creation of cutting-edge knowledge in the field of African and African-American research," said Hutchins, in a statement.

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The university said it will celebrate the center's launch on Oct. 2. during a ceremony at in which Harvard will award its highest honor in the field of African and African-American studies, the W.E.B. Du Bois Medal, to six leaders across government, the arts, and athletics.

This year's honorees will be: Valerie Jarrett, senior adviser to President Obama; playwright Tony Kushner; U.S. Rep. John Lewis; Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor; director Steven Spielberg; and NBA commissioner David Stern.

The Du Bois Medal, established in 2000, has been awarded to individuals in recognition of their "contributions to African and African-American culture and the life of the mind," the statement said. Recipients have included scholars, artists, writers, journalists, philanthropists, and administrators from around the world.

"The W.E.B. Du Bois Medal is named for the great scholar and thinker who devoted his life to the serious study of African and African-American history and culture," said a statement from Gates. "Dr. Du Bois, cosmopolitan in his taste and manners, worked tirelessly to produce and publish learning in all areas of the African diaspora, keenly aware of the need to bring this information to the public. This year's Du Bois Medals are presented to a most distinguished roster of recipients in the spirit of intellectual achievement and social engagement."

"The Hutchins Center will embody this same spirit," he added.

The honorees will be introduced at the Oct. 2 ceremony at Harvard's Sanders Theatre by: Gov. Deval Patrick; Diane Paulus, artistic director of the American Repertory Theater; Hutchins; Harvard Law School Dean Martha Minow; Harvard President Drew Faust; and Celtics legend Bill Russell, respectively.

"More important than inaugurating the Hutchins Center, this event honors six extraordinary people who have contributed in historic ways to African-American community and culture," said a statement from Hutchins, who also directs the Harvard Management Company and chairs the National Advisory Board of the W.E.B. Du Bois Institute, which will become the advisory board of the Hutchins Center.

"Through their work, they embody the purpose of my family's gift: to advance knowledge and understanding, and to improve the society in which we live," he added.

Matt Rocheleau can be reached at mjrochele@gmail.com. Looking for more coverage of area colleges and universities? Go to our [Your Campus pages](#).

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Glen Hutchins is a white guy; you sure you wanna take that crackas' money, Skip?

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Too bad Harvard always follows and does not lead...

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