

For Immediate Release

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Historian David Blight to Direct the Gilder-Lehrman Center at Yale

June 9, 2004. New Haven, CT ◆ Yale University President Richard C. Levin has announced the appointment of Professor David W. Blight, a preeminent scholar of the history and legacy of the American Civil War, as director of the Gilder-Lehrman Center for the Study of Slavery, Resistance and Abolition at the Yale Center for International and Area Studies.

Blight succeeds David Brion Davis, the Sterling Professor Emeritus of History, who has been director of the Gilder-Lehrman Center since it was established six years ago.

"Yale is delighted that Professor Blight will be bringing his prize-winning scholarship and energy to the mission of the Gilder-Lehrman Center," Levin said. "The center's research efforts and its work to foster wider understanding of slavery issues will both be furthered under his leadership."

The Class of 1954 Professor of American History, Blight joined the Yale faculty in 2002. He has earned a multitude of honors and awards for his work examining how the nation's "peculiar institution" and its bloodiest war to end it shaped the country's history and identity. Blight's first major book, "Frederick Douglass's Civil War" (1989), helped to establish his reputation as an outstanding authority of the period. Published to critical acclaim in 2001, his seminal "Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory" garnered many of the top awards bestowed on American historians. These include the Frederick Douglass Prize, the Lincoln Prize, three awards from the Organization of American Historians and the Bancroft Prize. "Race and Reunion," explores how, in the interest of reunification, the country ignored the racist underpinnings of the war, leaving an intractable legacy of racial conflict.

Blight has contributed chapters and articles to many publications, most prominently to the widely used college textbook of American history, "A People and a Nation."

Before he joined the faculty at Yale, where he has a joint appointment in history and African American studies, Blight was the Class of 1959 Professor of History at Amherst College, where he taught for 13 years. Blight, who earned his Ph.D. from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, taught at Harvard and at North Central College in Naperville, Illinois. He was also senior Fulbright Professor in American Studies at the University of Munich in Germany in 1992-93. Previous to his university career, he taught for seven years in a public high school in his hometown of Flint, Michigan.

The Gilder-Lehrman Center for the Study of Slavery, Resistance and Abolition was launched in November 1998. Its mission is to promote the study of all aspects of slavery, in particular the Atlantic slave system, including African and African-American resistance to enslavement, abolitionist movements and the ways in which chattel slavery finally became outlawed. The

center is dedicated to the dissemination of knowledge through publications, conferences, educational outreach and other activities.

To honor Davis, the Gilder-Lehrman Center will sponsor a lecture series in his name to be held each spring. Yale University Press will publish each lecture as a short book. The inaugural lecturer will be Joseph Miller of the University of Virginia, who will speak on "the problem of slavery as history." Miller has written widely on the African and Atlantic slave trade, especially to Brazil.

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