

NATIONAL CONSTITUTION CENTER

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NATIONAL CONSTITUTION CENTER CELEBRATES THE WORK OF PLAYWRIGHT AUGUST WILSON IN CONJUNCTION WITH *AMERICA I AM* EXHIBITION

Philadelphia, PA (February 5, 2009) – The National Constitution Center presents a special two-hour program celebrating and exploring the work of playwright August Wilson, in conjunction with the world debut of the ***America I AM: The African American Imprint*** exhibition. The evening will include a discussion with historian **Dr. Nathaniel Norment, Jr.** of Temple University, moderated by theater director **Walter Dallas**, about Wilson's work in relationship to the social, political, and historical experience of African Americans. The program will also feature dramatic readings from some of Wilson's most famous works performed by a company of professional actors. This unique Constitution Center event will take place on Monday, February 23, 2009 at 6:30 p.m. Admission costs \$12 for members, \$15 for teachers and students, and \$20 for non-members. Reservations are required and can be made by calling 215.409.6700.

August Wilson is among the most influential and successful African American playwrights of the twentieth century. In Wilson's *Century Cycle*, he dramatizes the African American experience and heritage of the twentieth century. A two-time Pulitzer Prize-winning author, Wilson's plays have been produced all over the world and have brought black theater to the mainstream American stage. Selections from notable works such as *Gem of the Ocean*, *Joe Turner's Come and Gone*, *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, *The Piano Lesson*, *Fences*, *Two Trains Running*, *Jitney*, and *Radio Golf* will be performed during the event.

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ADD ONE/AUGUST WILSON

Walter Dallas has worked on and off-Broadway, in England, Africa, France, Russia, and at numerous major American theatres. A frequent collaborator with August Wilson, he spoke at his memorial tribute in 2006. In 1983, he created the University of the Arts' School of Theatre Arts and served as its Director for ten years. From 1992 to 2008, he served as Artistic Director of Philadelphia's award-winning Freedom Theatre. Dallas is best known for his productions of *Lazarus*, *Unstoned*, *Willie Lobo/Manchild*, *Black Nativity*, *Sparkle*, *Black Picture Show*, *Seven Guitars*, *The Old Settler*, *Cooley High*, and *Asafohene*. In spring, 2009, he will direct Tanya Barfield's *Blue Door* for the African Continuum Theatre Company in Washington, DC. A graduate of Morehouse College and the Yale School of Drama, with additional studies at Harvard Divinity School and the University of Ghana, Dallas recently joined the Theatre Department of the University of Maryland for a five-year tenure as Senior Artist-in-Residence.

Dr. Nathaniel Norment, Jr. serves as chair and associate professor of African American Studies at Temple University, where he teaches undergraduate and graduate courses in African American Studies and African American literature and culture. He is the co-director of The Center for African American Research and Public Policy, whose research focuses on four areas affecting African Americans: criminal justice, economic development, education, and health. He is the editor of *The African American Studies Reader*, *Readings in African American Language: Aspects, Features and Perspectives - Volume 1 and Volume 2*, *An Introduction to African American Studies: The Discipline and its Dimensions*, and *The Addison Gayle, Jr. Reader*. Norment earned his B.S. at Ball State University, his M.S. at Saint Francis University, and his Ph.D. at Fordham University.

The National Constitution Center, located at 525 Arch St. on Philadelphia's Independence Mall, is an independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to increasing public understanding of the U.S. Constitution and the ideas and values it represents. The Center serves as a museum, an education center, and a forum for debate on constitutional issues. The museum dramatically tells the story of the

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ADD TWO/AUGUST WILSON

Constitution from Revolutionary times to the present through more than 100 interactive, multimedia exhibits, film, photographs, text, sculpture and artifacts, and features a powerful, award-winning theatrical performance, "Freedom Rising". The Center also houses the Annenberg Center for Education and Outreach, which serves as the hub for national constitutional education. Also, as a nonpartisan forum for constitutional discourse, the Center presents – without endorsement – programs that contain diverse viewpoints on a broad range of issues. For more information, call 215.409.6700 or visit www.constitutioncenter.org.

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