

NATIONAL CONSTITUTION CENTER

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FROM ALBANY TO PARIS: FRANKLIN'S ROLE AS A SKILLFUL DIPLOMAT EXPLORED AT THE NATIONAL CONSTITUTION CENTER

Philadelphia, PA (March 16, 2006) - A man of many faces, one of Benjamin Franklin's most important roles was as a wily and clever diplomat. That legacy will be discussed by experts in a joint National Constitution Center/Alliance Francaise program, *Franklin the Diplomat: From Albany to Paris*, on Thursday, April 6 at 6:30 p.m. Tickets are free, but reservations are required and can be made by calling 215.409.6700.

Franklin's talent as a shrewd negotiator ranged from his search for accords with Indian tribes in the Albany Plan to his indispensable role in gaining France's support in the war against Great Britain. As U.S. Ambassador to France, Franklin engineered the Franco-American alliance of 1778 and the peace treaty of 1783, which ended the Revolutionary War.

The distinguished panel of guests for this program includes Pulitzer Prize winning author Stacy Schiff; J.A. Leo Lemay, author and Professor of Colonial Literature at the University of Delaware; and Chris Tudda, author and historian with the U.S. Department of State. Richard Beeman, Professor of History at the University of Pennsylvania and a member of the National Constitution Center Board of Trustees will moderate.

Stacy Schiff is the author of the critically acclaimed book, *A Great Improvisation: Franklin, France, and the Birth of America*. The book recounts Franklin's years as

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emissary to France and how he charmed the French into becoming an indispensable source of money and military might in the war for independence. Schiff won a Pulitzer Prize for *Véra: Mrs. Vladimir Nabokov*.

J.A. Leo Lemay has authored numerous books on Benjamin Franklin, including *The Life of Benjamin Franklin Volumes 1 and 2*, and *The Cannon of Benjamin Franklin, 1722-1776: New Attributions and Reconsiderations*. He is also the creator of an online documentary chronicling Franklin's life.

An historian with the U.S. Department of State, Chris Tudda is the author of the recent book, *The Truth is Our Weapon: The Rhetorical Diplomacy of Dwight D. Eisenhower and John Foster Dulles*. He is currently writing a study of the relationship between the ideology of American independence, British reconciliation efforts, and the Franco-American alliance, 1773-78.

This program is co-sponsored by the Alliance Francaise and is part of the National Constitution Center's *Benjamin Franklin Legacy Series*, which is underwritten by Mellon Private Wealth Management.

Benjamin Franklin: In Search of a Better World, a blockbuster exhibition celebrating Franklin's 300th birthday, makes its world premiere at the National Constitution Center from December 15, 2005, through April 30, 2006. Created by the Benjamin Franklin Tercentenary, this exhibition is being hosted locally by CBS 3. Tickets for the exhibition, which also include regular museum admission, are \$14 for adults; \$12 for children ages 4-12, seniors, and college students; and \$8.50 for groups of 20 or more. For advance tickets, call 215.409.6700 or visit www.gophila.com/ben.

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.

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Opened on July 4, 2003, the Constitution Center is a museum, an education center, and a forum for debate on constitutional issues. The museum dramatically tells the story of the 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 and debates, and is a partner of NPR's "Justice Talking," a program of the Annenberg Public Policy Center. Also, serving 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 215.409.6600 or visit www.constitutioncenter.org.

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