

For immediate release:
Contact—Harold Holzer (646-894-6902)

LINCOLN FORUM PRESENTS ANNUAL ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS TO HISTORIAN DAVID W. BLIGHT AND INTERNATIONAL LINCOLN CENTER AT LSU SHREVEPORT

(Gettysburg, November 18, 2018)—The Lincoln Forum has presented its annual Richard Nelson Current Award of Achievement to historian David W. Blight, the prize-winning author of both *Race and Reunion* and the acclaimed new biography of Frederick Douglass, *Prophet of Freedom*. Blight, who directs the Gilder Lehrman Center at Yale and teaches in its history department, accepted the award and delivered the keynote address at the 23rd annual Lincoln Forum Symposium November 18 at the Wyndham Gettysburg. Some 300 enrollees braved an unusual autumn snowstorm to attend the three-day event.

The previous evening, November 17, the Forum's annual Wendy Allen Award for achievement by a Lincoln organization or society went to the International Lincoln Center for American Studies at LSU Shreveport.

Richard Nelson Current Award

The Current Award was presented by Harold Holzer, newly elected Forum Chair, who praised Professor Blight “for reminding us in his work why the Civil War was fought, and how long the fight lasted beyond 1865; for helping us, compelling us, and inspiring us to awaken from historical amnesia and acknowledge, reconsider, and reshape national memory; for revivifying the life, struggles, and words of the American prophet Frederick Douglass and convincingly advocating for his heroic place in the national story; for defining the arc of the struggle for equality that has roiled our past and continues to challenge us today; for inspiringly engaging the public in the search for the usable past; and for compelling all of us to contemplate an imperfect *reunion* in the 19th century in order to form a more perfect Union in the 21st.”

Blight serves as Class of 1954 Professor of American History and Director of the Gilder Lehrman Center for the Study of Slavery, Resistance, and Abolition at Yale University. Earlier, he taught at both Amherst College and in a public high school. His widely hailed 2001 book, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* won the Frederick Douglass Prize, the Bancroft Prize, and two prizes from the Organization of American Historians. It awaked interest in “memory history” and the painful impact of post-war reunion that emphasized sectional over racial reconciliation. Blight’s newly published book is *Frederick Douglass: Prophet of Freedom*.

The Current award is in the form of a newly created Lincoln bust by sculptor (and Current Award laureate) John McClarey. Previous winners are: Gabor Boritt (1996); Brian Lamb (1997); John Hope Franklin (1998); Senator Paul Simon (1999); David Herbert Donald (2000); Garry Wills (2001); James M. McPherson and an honorary award to Richard Nelson

Current himself (2002); Sam Waterston (2003); John Y. Simon (2004); sculptor John McClarey plus an honorary award for founding chairman Frank Williams (2005); Doris Kearns Goodwin (2006); Jeff Shaara (2007); Ken Burns (2008); Justice Sandra Day O'Connor (2009); Mark E. Neely, Jr. (2010); Ed Bearss (2011); Eric Foner (2012); Tony Kushner (2013); James Getty (2014); Edward Steers Jr. and William C. "Jack" Davis with an honorary award to Harold Holzer (2015); James I. "Bud" Robertson (2016), and Ron Chernow (2017).

Wendy Allen Award

Outgoing Forum Chairman—now Chairman Emeritus—Frank J. Williams officiated at the presentation of the annual Wendy Allen Award to the International Lincoln Center for American Studies at Louisiana State University Shreveport, the first Lincoln organization founded in the Deep South. Accepting the award was the institute's director, William D. Pederson, a longtime Forum Advisory Board member. In his speech, Professor Pederson reminded the audience of the many honors given Lincoln abroad—including the minting of Lincoln postage stamps in his honor in most countries abroad.

"The International Lincoln Organization has introduced and sustained the Lincoln legacy in many countries where his example is still desperately needed to light the way to freedom," Chief Justice Williams said in his presentation. "Bill Pederson and the Center have made sure that this vital story remains alive and well in every corner of the globe while reminding Americans of Lincoln's deservedly outsized impact on the global image of the United States." The award, named for the premier Lincoln artist Wendy Allen, a Gettysburg resident, is in the form of a print based on one of her paintings of the 16th president.

Founded in 1983, the Center offers a year-round cycle of events and programs for students and the community, conducts a wide-ranging publishing program (most recently, in 2009, with *Lincoln Lessons*, edited by Pederson and Williams), and hosts annual Constitutional Democracy lectures, a triennial presidential conference series, a summer Washington D. C. mini-semester, and visits to Lincoln-related sites around the country and the world. For more information: william.pederson@lsus.edu.

In accepting the award, Professor Pederson said that "coming to know Frank Williams in 1992, I felt obliged to become a 'collector,' too. So I resumed stamp collecting, which had begun and ended in elementary school, this time focusing on Lincoln stamps from abroad. I thought I might end up with a single, slender volume, but it has instead turned into some 30 thick volumes and a growing number of articles authored on the topic for philatelic publications."

The Wendy Allen Award honors "organizations that exemplify Abraham Lincoln's spirit in word and deed." Previous winners include the Friends of Ford's Theatre in Washington, D.C.; President Lincoln's Cottage at the Soldier's Home in Washington; the Lincoln Home National Historic Site in Springfield, Illinois; the Lincoln-Douglas Society of Freeport, Illinois; the Ulysses S. Grant Association at Mississippi State University/Starkville; the Lincoln Shrine in Redlands, California; the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History in New York; the Lincoln Heritage Museum at Lincoln College in Lincoln, Illinois; the Gettysburg Foundation; and the Friends of the Lincoln Foundation in Fort Wayne, Indiana.

####