

2019 Gilder Lehrman Lincoln Prize recipient announced

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Gettysburg College and the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History announced today that David Blight, author of *Frederick Douglass: Prophet of Freedom* (Simon & Schuster), is the recipient of the 2019 Gilder Lehrman Lincoln Prize. A noted Civil War historian, Blight is Class of 1954 Professor of American History at Yale University and directs the Gilder Lehrman Center for the Study of Slavery, Resistance, and Abolition at Yale University.

He will be recognized during an event hosted by Gettysburg College and the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History at the Union League Club in New York City on Tuesday, April 16, 2019. The award includes a \$50,000 prize and a bronze replica of Augustus Saint-Gaudens' life-size bust "Lincoln the Man."

Blight's nearly 900-page *Prophet of Freedom* tackles Frederick Douglass's complex history and his legacy as an abolitionist. The prizewinning historian's research for the book spanned nine years.

"David Blight is the foremost expert on the life and legacy of Frederick Douglass," said James G. Basker, President of the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, "and this is a brilliant culmination of his life's work. Every American who cares about the future of our country should read this book."

Basker is one of the six Gilder Lehrman Lincoln Prize Board members who decided this year's winners. In addition to Richard Gilder and Lewis Lehrman, principals of the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History in New York and co-creators of the Gilder Lehrman Collection, other board members include Gettysburg College President Janet Morgan Riggs, Trustee Larry D. Walker, and Trustee Emeritus H. Scott Higgins.

"Each year, it is remarkable to see the creation of so many new and exceptional scholarly works that

illuminate the Civil War era, a period that forever shaped Gettysburg College and our nation,” Riggs said. “In his enthralling biography of Frederick Douglass, Blight captures both the complexity and courageousness of one of the most important American voices of the 19th century.”

The laureate was one of those recommended to the board by a three-person jury: John Stauffer, Sumner R. and Marshall S. Kates Professor of English and of African and African American Studies at Harvard University; Barbara A. Gannon, Associate Professor of History at the University of Central Florida (UCF); and Elizabeth R. Varon, Associate Director of the John L. Nau III Center for Civil War History and Langbourne M. Williams Professor of American History at the University of Virginia.

“This is the most comprehensive and multi-dimensional biography of Frederick Douglass ever written,” wrote the jury in their report to the board. “Mr. Blight, a professor of history at Yale, recovers for the first time Douglass's full significance to America's historical experience...It is an absorbing and moving book that speaks to our time as well as Douglass's, with new insights on almost every page.”

The jury also selected four other finalists from 102 submissions: Richard J. M. Blackett, *The Captive's Quest for Freedom: Fugitive Slaves, the 1850 Fugitive Slave Law, and the Politics of Slavery* (Cambridge University Press); William W. Freehling, *Becoming Lincoln* (University of Virginia Press); Joanne B. Freeman, *The Field of Blood: Violence in Congress and the Road to Civil War* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux); Diane Miller Sommerville, *Aberration of Mind: Suicide and Suffering in the Civil War-Era South* (University of North Carolina Press)

The Prize has been awarded annually to a work that enhances the general public's understanding of the Civil War era. It was co-founded in 1990 by businessmen and philanthropists Richard Gilder and Lewis Lehrman, co-chairmen of the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History in New York and co-creators of the Gilder Lehrman Collection.

About the Gilder Lehrman Lincoln Prize

Founded in 1994 by Richard Gilder and Lewis E. Lehrman, visionaries and lifelong supporters of American history education, the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History is the leading nonprofit organization dedicated to K-12 history education while also serving the general public. The Institute's mission is to promote the knowledge and understanding of American history through educational programs and resources. As a 501(c)(3) nonprofit public charity the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History is supported through the generosity of individuals, corporations, and foundations. The Institute's programs have been recognized by awards from the White House, the

National Endowment for the Humanities, the Organization of American Historians, and the Council of Independent Colleges.

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Founded in 1832, Gettysburg College is a highly selective four-year residential college of liberal arts and sciences with a strong academic tradition. Alumni include Rhodes Scholars, a Nobel laureate, and other distinguished scholars. The college enrolls 2,600 undergraduate students and is located on a 200-acre campus adjacent to the Gettysburg National Military Park in Pennsylvania.

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