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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Scholars Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and Gary B. Nash Urge U.S. Senate to Pass Bill to Authorize Memorial on the National Mall to Blacks in Revolutionary War

Federal Panel Recommends Site Between the Lincoln Memorial and the Washington Monument

Alexandria, Virginia (July 24, 2006) – Two prolific authors and powerhouses of academia, Harvard Humanities professor Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and UCLA History Professor Gary B. Nash, have teamed up to urge the U.S. Senate to pass legislation to create the National Liberty Memorial on the National Mall before the 109th Congress adjourns in October.

The memorial would honor the more than 5,000 African Americans who served as soldiers, sailors and spies in the Revolutionary war as well as those who sought liberty by filing petitions and law suits and running away from slavery. Introduced in April by Senator Chris Dodd of Connecticut, the legislation, S. 2495, has the support of a bipartisan base of Senators including Charles Grassley, Robert Byrd, Barack Obama, George Allen, Elizabeth Dole and Lincoln Chafee.

Professors Gates and Nash recently told Senate president Pro Tem Ted Stevens that this legislation “encapsulates dreams and intentions spanning more than 200 years to honor in some fitting way the contributions of slaves and free persons to the struggle for liberty during the Revolutionary war era.”

“The nation’s Mall will never be a ‘completed work of art’ until this memorial takes its place across from a memorial to the 56 Signers of the Declaration of Independence. There, it will redefine how most Americans perceive the nation’s birth, ‘all men are created equal,’ and our future as one nation based upon enduring principles, instead of color and race.”

Recently inducted into the National Society Sons of the American Revolution (SAR), Dr. Gates has announced that he has teamed up with the organization to identify black descendants like himself whose lineage can be traced to the Revolution. Dr. Gates discovered his Revolutionary war ancestor, a black man from Virginia, while filming his PBS series, “African American Lives.”

Dr. Nash is the author of over a dozen books that reveal the inspiring role of blacks and Indians during the Revolutionary war era, including the “Forgotten Fifth” and the “Unknown American Revolution.”

The National Liberty Memorial will be located on the lake at Constitution Gardens between the Lincoln Memorial and the Washington Monument. The project is being spearheaded by National Mall Liberty Fund D.C.. The group was given a boost on June 27, 2006, when the National Capital Memorial Advisory Commission voted to favorably recommend the Mall site to Congress.

The memorial is the idea of Maurice A. Barboza, of Virginia, who discovered a Revolutionary war ancestor in his Connecticut roots. A member of the SAR since 1980, he saw the need to educate America about this forgotten history after his aunt, Lena Santos Ferguson, a black woman, was denied membership in the National Society Daughters of the American Revolution in the mid-1980s.

Now deceased, Mrs. Ferguson’s 1984 settlement agreement with the DAR required the group to research all black soldiers and patriots of the Revolutionary war. In 2001, after 17 years, the group fell far short, publishing a list of some 2,000 names.

Mr. Barboza, founder and CEO of Liberty Fund D.C. said, “we are optimistic that the Congress will pass this legislation before the projected October adjournment. We have ambitious plans to complete the memorial by July 4th 2010.”

[Letter and bibliography to Hon. Ted Stevens](#)