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Office of University Communications

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Oprah Winfrey Named Howard University's 139th Commencement Orator
Dr. Julian M. Earls, Dr. Henry Louis Gates, Jr., and Mrs. Irene Sue Pollin are among the 2007 honorees

Washington, D.C., April 2, 2007 – Global media leader and international philanthropist Ms. Oprah Winfrey has been named the Commencement Convocation speaker for Howard University's 139th graduating class on Saturday, May 12 at 10 a.m. on the upper quadrangle of the main campus. The prolific actress, talk show host, and producer will receive a Doctor of Humanities *honoris causa* for her lifetime achievements and stellar contributions to the global community.

Howard University will confer four honorary degrees to an exemplary group of trailblazers in their respective fields including academia, science, health care and philanthropy. The honorees are **Dr. Julian M. Earls**, director (Ret.) NASA Glenn Research Center, Doctor of Science; **Dr. Henry Louis Gates Jr.**, Alphonse Fletcher Professor at Harvard University, Doctor of Humane Letters; **Dr. Walter E. Massey**, president of Morehouse College, Doctor of Science; and **Mrs. Irene Sue Pollin**, founder of Sister to Sister: Everyone Has A Heart Foundation, Inc., Doctor of Humanities.

“The entire Howard University community is delighted that Ms. Winfrey has accepted our invitation to speak at our 139th commencement,” said Howard University President H. Patrick Swygert. “An already special event will be made more so by the outstanding gift of her presence. We look forward eagerly to hear from one of the world's best loved and most inspirational figures.”

About the Honorees

Ms. Oprah Winfrey, through the power of media has created an unparalleled connection with people around the world. As supervising producer and host of the top-rated, award-winning *The Oprah Winfrey Show*, she has entertained, enlightened and uplifted millions of viewers for the past two decades. Her accomplishments as a global media leader and philanthropist have established her as one of the most respected and admired public figures today. In January 2007, she opened the Oprah Winfrey Leadership Academy for Girls near Johannesburg in South Africa, one of many examples of her dedication and commitment to investing in education for underserved children nationally and internationally.

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Dr. Julian M. Earls has served as director of NASA's Glenn Research Center since Oct. 1, 2003. Previously he served as the center's deputy director. As director, he is responsible for planning, organizing, and directing the activities required to accomplish the missions assigned to the center. The Glenn Research Center is engaged in research, technology, and systems development programs in aeronautical propulsion, space propulsion, space power, space communications, and microgravity sciences in combustion and fluid physics.

Dr. Henry Louis Gates Jr. is the Alphonse Fletcher Professor at Harvard University. In 2006, Professor Gates wrote and produced the PBS documentary also called "African American Lives," the first documentary series to employ genealogy and science to provide an understanding of African American history. He served as Chair of the Department of African and African American Studies at Harvard from 1991 to 2006.

Mrs. Irene Sue Pollin, M.S.W., is the founder and president of the Sister to Sister: Everyone Has a Heart Foundation, an organization begun in 2000. Its mission is to help women learn about heart disease, how to prevent heart disease and to provide free heart health screenings. Mrs. Pollin has a strong history in the medical profession; she entered the field in 1975 as a psychiatric social worker for Children's Hospital in Washington, D.C.

Dr. Walter E. Massey is president of Morehouse College, he served as director of Argonne National Laboratory from 1979 to 1984, as the University of Chicago's vice president for Research from 1984 to 1991, and as founding chair of the University of Chicago Development Corp. from 1986 to 1991. He was named to his current membership on Argonne's Board of Governors in 2004. One of the nation's top science administrators, Massey directed the National Science Foundation from 1991 to 1993.

Howard University is one of 48 U.S. private, Doctoral/Research-Extensive universities and comprises 12 schools and colleges. Founded in 1867, students pursue studies in more than 120 areas leading to undergraduate, graduate and professional degrees. Since 1998, the University has produced two Rhodes Scholars, a Truman Scholar, a Marshall Scholar, 13 Fulbright Scholars and nine Pickering Fellows. Howard also produces more on-campus African-American Ph.D.s than any other university in the world. For more information on Howard University, call 202-238-2330, or visit the University's Web site at www.Howard.edu.

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Note to the Media:

Please be advised that media coverage must be coordinated with Ms. Royster or Ms. Hamilton (contact information above) by Wednesday, May 9, 2007. Media should report to Gate #2, located at 6th Street and Founders Walk, between 7:30 – 8 a.m. (broadcast media will need to be stationary by 8 a.m.).