

University of the District of Columbia

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University of the District of Columbia to Confer Two Honorary Degrees at Annual Commencement Convocation

Washington, D.C. — The Board of Trustees of the University of the District of Columbia will confer honorary degrees on two leaders in law and art as part of the University's 29th Commencement Convocation, scheduled for 10:00 a.m., Saturday May 13th, 2006 at the Verizon Center. Mr. Anthony A. (Tony) Lewis, President of Verizon Washington DC, will be the keynote speaker for Commencement, which will be presided over by University President William L. Pollard, PhD.

As a part of the graduation activities for the nation capital's only public university, honorary doctoral degrees will be conferred on Willie E. Gary (Doctor of Laws) and Sam Gilliam, Jr. (Doctor of Humane Letters).

Attorney Willie E. Gary is living the American Dream. Once a migrant worker, now a multi-millionaire attorney, Gary earned his reputation as “The Giant Killer” by representing little-known clients against major corporations. Along the way he has handled some of the largest jury awards and settlements in U.S. history, winning more than 150 cases valued in excess of \$1 million each.

Mr Gary’s amazing success has earned him national recognition as a leading trial attorney. In May 2002, he was featured in Ebony magazine as one of the “100 Most Influential Black Americans.” Forbes Magazine has listed him as one of the “Top 50 attorneys in the U.S.” Mr. Gary has been featured in national media publications, such as The New York Times, The Chicago Tribune, The Boston Globe, Ebony, Jet, People, Black Enterprise, Fortune, The New Yorker and The National Law Journal.

Mr. Gary is chairman of the Black Family Channel - the nation’s only African-American owned and operated 24-hour cable channel devoted to wholesome “family values” programming aimed at urban viewers. In 1994, he and his wife, Gloria, formed The Gary Foundation to carry out this formidable task. The Gary Foundation provides scholarships, direction and other resources to youth, so they can realize their dreams of achieving a higher education.

Since the early sixties, Sam Gilliam has been recognized as an original and innovative color field painter. He has advanced the inventions associated with the Washington Color School and Abstract Expressionism to a new level. Mr. Gilliam has redefined the techniques of these traditions and he continues to reinvent his ideas about making art. To his early works in the 60's and 70's on stretched, then draped, and more recently wrapped canvas, Mr. Gilliam added sculptural elements as extensions of his surface, thereby making uniquely shaped works. By 1980, he was applying sculptural elements to the surface, making three-dimensional sculptural paintings. Currently, he creates multimedia installations and employs brightly stained polypropylene, dozens of layers of painted and printed color, computer generated imaging, metallic and iridescent acrylics, hand-made paper, aluminum, steel, and plastic: Mr. Gilliam's art is an example of evolution through aesthetic exploration.

His progress also reveals a consistent commitment to long standing principles of art. Through this process of informed improvisation, Mr. Gilliam creates art which embellishes its surroundings and entices viewers with its daring diversity. His large scale installations in Metro stations and airports are as exciting and new as his individual studio pieces. Mr. Gilliam's ability to compliment and challenge existing spaces using form, design, color and scale with visual and tactile appeal constantly amazes and delights long-time fans as well as new-comers to his world of abstraction and ingenuity.

The University of the District of Columbia is the sole public source for accessible, inclusive, affordable, and comprehensive public higher education in the District of Columbia and provides additional life-long learning opportunities. The University delivers quality instruction and uses student-centered approaches to empower and benefit both individuals and its local communities. The University, an urban land grant institution, is a very diverse community, a gateway to the world, and a significant investment engine for the District of Columbia. The University is located at 4200 Connecticut Ave, NW Washington, and is conveniently located at the Van Ness/UDC stop on the Red Line of Metro. For more information on other University activities, contact Mike Andrews, Senior Director for Communications and University Spokesman at (202) 274-5685 or visit the University's web site at www.udc.edu.

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NOTICE TO MEDIA: Media are welcome to observe and report on highly visual activities taking place in concurrence with the University of the District of Columbia's Commencement Convocation. Media interested in covering this event should contact Mike Andrews, Senior Director for Communications at (202) 274-5685 prior to the event.