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New Lecture Series at UNH Is a Step towards Diversifying Faculty

James O. Horton, professor and African-American historian, is first speaker April 5

By [Erika Mantz](#)
UNH News Bureau

March 28, 2001

DURHAM, N.H. -- Regular viewers of The History Channel, visitors to Colonial Williamsburg, and those who watch the DVD version of the movie "Glory" know James O. Horton. The founding director of the Afro-American Communities Project at the Smithsonian's Museum of American History, he has served as historical advisor to museums, presidential commissions and numerous film and video productions.

The Benjamin Banneker Professor of American Studies and History at George Washington University will talk about the need for today's American society to deal with its troubled past in coming to grips with today's issues of diversity Thursday, April 5 in the University of New Hampshire's Memorial Union Building.

Horton is the first speaker in a new series sponsored by the President's Commission on the Status of People of Color and the Provost's Office. His lecture, "Presenting Slavery: Dealing with America's Troubled Past," is free and open to the public. It will take place in MUB Theatre II from 12:40 to 2 p.m., followed by a book signing.

"This new series shows a desire on the part of the commission and the administration to begin to try to put some teeth into our commitment to diversity, particularly in the recruitment of faculty," says Sharon Demers, chair of the commission. "It's designed to bring speakers to campus who might be potential faculty members or who might help us identify potential faculty members. And the second goal is to

educate the community about diversity, creating a welcoming and tolerant environment. The commission thanks the Office of the Provost for funding this series. Dr. (David) Hiley has not only voiced his commitment to diversity, he has willingly committed resources."

UNH History Professor Jeff Bolster says Horton "has his finger on the racial pulse of American society" and is highly respected in his field.

"Professor Horton knows that UNH is trying to diversify its faculty, and he is well-placed to spread that word through his connections to American Studies scholars throughout the country," says Bolster. "His visit to UNH is a chance for people to be in the presence of a remarkable man."

An advocate of public history, Horton has served as a historical consultant to numerous film and video productions, including those seen on ABC, PBS, the Discovery Channel and the History Channel. He appears regularly on the History Channel and was the subject of a recent episode in the "Great Minds in American History" series hosted by Roger Mudd. He recently appeared in the PBS series "Africans in America" and his historical commentary on the Civil War is part of the DVD version of the movie "Glory."

From 1998 to 2000, he served on the White House Millennium Council, acting as historical expert for First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton, and in the fall of 2000, he was one of two historians appointed by President Clinton to serve on the Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission.

In addition to serving as an advisor to the National Park Service and other museums in an effort to connect everyday citizens with up-to-date scholarship in black history, Horton has published seven books including "Free People of Color: Inside the African American Community" and his most recent, "Hard Road to Freedom: The Story of African America." A Senior Fulbright Professor in Germany, Horton assisted the government there in developing American Studies programs in the former East Germany.

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