

Friends of the Du Bois Homesite Clinton African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church

Press Release--Immediate Release

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Clinton A. M. E. Zion Church to Celebrate the 142nd Birthday of W. E. B. Du Bois: Gene Dattel to Speak

GREAT BARRINGTON, MA—The public is invited to celebrate the 142nd birthday of W. E. B. Du Bois with the Clinton A. M. E. Zion Church and Friends of the Du Bois Homesite on Saturday, February 27, featuring Gene Dattel, author of *Cotton and Race in the Making of America*. Festivities begin at 2:30 PM at Clinton A. M. E. Zion Church, 9 Elm Court, Great Barrington.

Gene Dattel is the author of *Cotton and Race in the Making of America: The Human Costs of Economic Power* (2009). He grew up in the cotton country of the Mississippi Delta and studied history at Yale and law at Vanderbilt. He is a financial historian, author, lecturer, government and private sector advisor on American and Asian financial institutions, and media commentator. He is also a theatrical contributing writer and performer. He is on the Board of Advisors of the BB King Museum in Indianola, MS and has served as an advisory scholar to The New York Historical Society on its Slavery II--Cotton and Commerce exhibition (2005).

Actor Morgan Freeman says: "Gene Dattel's book tells the story of the irresistible power of cotton that changed the destiny of the nation--not just the region. America's material obsession blossomed in the cotton fields, where blacks were trapped. Racial hostility--both North and South--was the enabler. His book masterfully captures American history and its painful legacy."

W.E.B. Du Bois was very much aware of the linkage between cotton and race. In 1911, he published a novel, *The Quest of The Silver Fleece*. The silver fleece was cotton. Du Bois understood the centrality of cotton to the American and African American experience, and with Frederick Douglass and Booker T. Washington, lived in an age in which Blacks - whether slave or free - were bound to cotton. Consequently, these three African American leaders inescapably incorporated cotton into their vision of the future of blacks in America. Mr. Dattel will discuss their views and compare their thoughts in a presentation, "Cotton Captivity: The Fate of African Americans."

Following Dattel, Managing Director Maurice Hobson of the W.E.B. Du Bois Center at UMass Amherst and anthropologist Robert Paynter will report on recent activities to promote the Du Bois legacy at the W.E.B. Du Bois Homesite and the Center.

Rev. M. Louise Williamson will moderate. Musical offerings will be performed by The Just-Now Choir of the Clinton A. M. E. Zion Church. The program is free. Light refreshments will be served. A goodwill offering will be collected.

The annual Du Bois Birthday celebration at Clinton A M E Zion Church was instituted in 2001 by the late Rev. Esther Dozier. Du Bois, a Great Barrington native, was a co-founder of the NAACP and the founder and guiding force of the *Crisis*, the journal of the NAACP, from 1910-1934. He was a central figure in the Harlem Renaissance and is widely considered to be the father of Pan Africanism.

Tax-deductible gifts for the ongoing maintenance of the Church may be made to Clinton A. M. E. Zion Church. For information about the W. E. B. Du Bois Celebration contact Wray Gunn, 413-229-2668 or wraygunn@msn.com or Rachel Fletcher, Friends of the Du Bois Homesite, 413-528-3391, info@DuBoisHomesite.org

