

# Henry Louis Gates explores 'Africa's Great Civilizations'

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## ABSTRACT

"So the brothers and the sisters back in the Nile Valley were combing out their hair with an Afro comb," [Henry Louis Gates Jr.] observes. "I thought we invented this in the '60s!" Gates was also astonished to learn that the ancestors also made use of "fake hair." In the opening episode titled "Origins," viewers journey with Gates to Kenya, Egypt and beyond as he discovers the origins of man, the formation of human societies and the creation of significant cultural and scientific achievements on the African continent.

## FULL TEXT

In his new six-hour series, "Africa's Great Civilizations," Henry Louis Gates Jr. provides a "new look from an African perspective at African history," traversing the dawn of mankind to the dawn of the 20th century.

Airing Monday-Wednesday, Feb. 27-March 1, 9-11 p.m. on WHYY, the series is a breathtaking and personal journey through history that includes evidence of the earliest human culture and art, arguably the world's greatest ever civilizations, and some of the world's earliest writing.

"From the origins of human civilization to the threshold of the modern world, I'll be going on a journey through 200,000 years of Africa's rich history, great cities, breathtaking architecture, art of unparalleled beauty and technical brilliance," Gates says in the documentary's official trailer. "This is the untold story of how, for thousands of years, Africans helped shape our modern world."

In an interesting and rather amusing moment of the series, Gates marvels at the discovery of a 6,000-year-old wooden Afro comb (pick), which looks as if it could be found in an urban beauty supply store.

"So the brothers and the sisters back in the Nile Valley were combing out their hair with an Afro comb," Gates observes. "I thought we invented this in the '60s!" Gates was also astonished to learn that the ancestors also made use of "fake hair." In the opening episode titled "Origins," viewers journey with Gates to Kenya, Egypt and beyond as he discovers the origins of man, the formation of human societies and the creation of significant cultural and scientific achievements on the African continent.

In "The Cross and the Crescent," immediately following, Gates charts the rise of Christianity and Islam, whose economic and cultural influence "stretched from Egypt to Ethiopia." Viewers will learn of African religious figures like King Lalibela, an Ethiopian saint, and Menelik, bringer of the Ark of the Covenant.

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