

2012

Honorary Degree Citation: Laurens Grant

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Governors State University, "Honorary Degree Citation: Laurens Grant" (2012). *Commencements*. Paper 129.
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Laurens Grant

Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters, Honoris Causa

Award-winning filmmaker. Intrepid journalist. Bold storyteller. During her exceptional career, Laurens Grant has admirably used her talents to shine a bright, unwavering light on chapters of American history that are too often overlooked. Grant's remarkable abilities are clearly displayed in her unforgettable documentary films, which have received the highest awards in the industry. Her video projects offer searing insights into the shame of slavery, and Jim Crow racism, and the resilience and heroism of African Americans throughout our nation's history.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said, "The moral arc of the universe is long, but it bends toward justice." With stunning results, Grant has charted that arc. She has focused her lens on men and women who, through their brave actions, changed the course of our country, and moved it closer to justice.

Grant is first and foremost a hardworking journalist. As a journalism graduate of Northwestern University, she worked as a reporter for *The Star* in Chicago's south suburbs. She went on to a distinguished career as a foreign correspondent in Latin America where she headed the Panama bureau for Reuters, and wrote about Latin American politics and culture for many publications.

She first received national attention in 2003. Working with renowned director Stanley Nelson, Grant was coordinating producer for *The Murder of Emmett Till*, on PBS's *The American Experience*. The U.S. Department of Justice re-opened the Emmett Till murder case in part because of the film's previously unpublished eyewitness accounts and research. The film was honored with a Sundance Jury Award, Primetime Emmy, and a Peabody Award for Best Documentary. Grant was producer of the 2011 documentary *Freedom Riders*, the first feature-length film telling the story of the courageous men and women who participated in the 1961 freedom rides, which shook the nation's conscience and helped end segregation. She won a Primetime Emmy for the documentary, first seen on *The American Experience*.

Grant directed the PBS documentary *Jesse Owens*, which recently made its debut on *The American Experience*. It tells the story of African-American sprinter Jesse Owens, who shocked Hitler's Aryan nation by winning four gold medals at the 1936 Berlin Olympics. She also received an Emmy for *Slavery and the Making of America: Seeds of Destruction*, a four-hour PBS special.

For her dedication to truth and her commitment to a nation where equality and justice are steadfast, the Board of Trustees of Governors State University is proud to confer upon Laurens Grant the degree of Doctor of Humane Letters, honoris causa, and to welcome her to our community of scholars, educators, and humanitarians.

