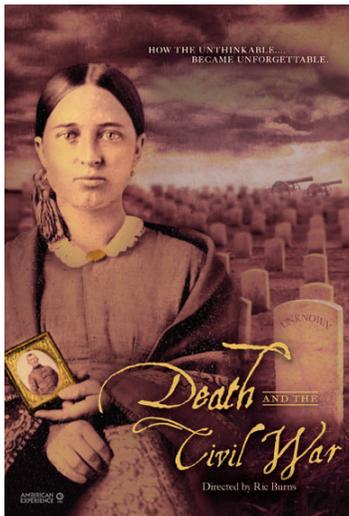




## AMERICAN EXPERIENCE Presents *Death and the Civil War*

Premieres Tuesday, September 18, 2012  
8:00 p.m. - 10:00 p.m. ET on PBS



From acclaimed filmmaker Ric Burns, *Death and the Civil War* explores an essential but largely overlooked aspect of the most pivotal event in American history: the transformation of the nation by the death of an estimated 750,000 people – nearly two and a half percent of the population – in four dark and searing years from 1861 to 1865.

With the coming of the Civil War, and the staggering and completely unprecedented casualties it ushered in, death entered the experience of the American people as it never had before – on a scale and in a manner no one had ever imagined possible, and under circumstances for which the nation would prove completely unprepared. The impact would permanently alter the character of the republic, the culture of the government and the psyche of the American people – down to this day.

“Transpose the percentage of dead that mid-19th-century America faced into our own time – seven million dead, if we had the same percentage,” says author Drew Gilpin Faust, on whose groundbreaking book, *This Republic of Suffering*, the film is based. “What would we as a nation today be like if we faced the loss of seven million individuals?”

*Death and the Civil War* tracks the increasingly lethal arc of the war, from the bloodless opening in 1861, through the chaos of Shiloh, Antietam, Gettysburg, and the unspeakable carnage of 1864 – down through the struggle, in the aftermath of the war, to cope with an American landscape littered with the bodies of hundreds of thousands of soldiers, many unburied, most unidentified.

The work of contending with death on this scale would propel extraordinary changes in the inner and outer life of all Americans – posing challenges for which there were no ready answers when the war began – challenges that called forth remarkable and eventually heroic efforts on the part of individuals, groups and the government – as Americans worked to improvise new solutions, new institutions, new ways of coping with death on an unimaginable scale.

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ANY VIEWS, FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, OR RECOMMENDATIONS EXPRESSED IN THIS PROGRAM DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT THOSE OF THE NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES.

Before the Civil War, there were no national cemeteries in America. No provisions for identifying the dead, or for notifying next of kin, or for providing aid to the suffering families of dead veterans. No federal relief organizations, no effective ambulance corps, no adequate federal hospitals, no federal provisions for burying the dead. No Arlington Cemetery. No Memorial Day.

*Death and the Civil War* will premiere on AMERICAN EXPERIENCE on Tuesday, September 18, 2012 from 8:00 p.m. – 10:00 p.m. ET on PBS in conjunction with the 150th anniversary of the Battle of Antietam – to this day, the single bloodiest day in American history.

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On July 21, 1861, three months into the Civil War, more than 60,000 men blundered into each other on a field outside the Virginia town of Manassas Junction. Nine hundred men were killed and 2,700 wounded – in just twelve hours. On that fateful day, the terrible reality of the Civil War – universally predicted to be a brief and bloodless military adventure – came crashing down. As the war dragged on and casualties mounted, the cumulative impact of the war sank deeply into the psyche of the American people.

Woefully unprepared for the monumental work of burying and accounting for the dead, the northerners and southerners alike had to find a way to deal with thousands and thousands of bodies, many unidentified, and the grieving families seeking information about loved ones who in the end, would never be found.

When the Civil War ended in April 1865, Americans struggled to come to terms with what they had done to each other and to themselves in four bloody years. But much of the work of death had only just begun.

No official policy existed for locating, identifying, re-burying and honoring the hundreds of thousands of people who had died, or for comforting the even vaster army of widows and orphans left behind. Tens of thousands of soldiers lay unburied, their bones littering battlefields; still more had been hastily interred where they fell, and hundreds of thousands remained unidentified.

A reburial movement spread across the country and in February 1867, Congress passed formal legislation to establish and protect national cemeteries. What became the largest and most elaborate government program undertaken in the nearly 100 year history of the republic, when the re-interment program was completed in 1871, 303,536 Union soldiers had been buried in seventy-four national cemeteries; 140,000 of the Union bodies were interred in graves marked simply “unknown.”

All 30,000 African American soldiers were buried in areas designated “colored.” Segregated in death, as in life, their treatment was an indication that the Civil War was but the first battle in a much longer struggle.

In the impoverished and embittered postwar white South, where virtually every household had lost a husband, father, brother or son, it did not pass unnoticed that the \$4 million in public funds allocated for the reburial process was used exclusively for Union dead. In order to take care of their own, women of the South banded together, lobbied Congress and raised the money to similarly honor their fallen sons.

The refusal of the victorious North to attend to the vanquished southern dead would have powerful consequences for generations to come. The deep feelings of grief, loss, rage and doubt white southerners carried within became focused on reclaiming the bodies of hundreds of thousands of their dead loved ones,

abandoned by the federal government. These fallen warriors soon became an anchor and rallying cry for resurgent Confederate identity.

Decoration Day rituals – placing seasonal flowers on graves sites – sprang up in many locations around the South. Northerners, too, frequently chose a spring day for formal commemoration of the dead. In the spring of 1868, General John Logan officially designated May 30 “for the purpose of strewing with flowers or otherwise decorating the graves of comrades who died in defense of their country.” Memorial Day is still celebrated nationally on the day General Logan specified three years after the end of the Civil War. Many southern states recognize Confederate Memorial Day on a different date from the nationwide holiday, reflecting persistent sectional differences among both the living and the dead.

“After the Civil War, the United States thought constantly about the dead, this constituency that was no longer there, and yet was so powerful in the influence it has on our nation, because the nation had to live up to the sacrifice that these individuals represented,” says Drew Gilpin Faust.

The generation of Americans that survived the Civil War lived the rest of their lives with grief and loss. Some continued to search for information about their missing loved ones until they themselves died. Others were never able to get over the cruel deaths of sons or husbands or dear friends and lived in perpetual mourning. Their struggle to give meaning to the seemingly senseless deaths of so many still haunts us today.

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### **About the Participants**

**Drew Gilpin Faust** took office as Harvard University’s 28th president on July 1, 2007. A historian of the U.S. Civil War and the American South, Faust is also the Lincoln Professor of History in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences. She previously served as founding dean of the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study (2001-2007).

Before coming to Radcliffe, Faust was the Annenberg Professor of History at the University of Pennsylvania. She is the author of six books, including *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War* (January, 2008), which was awarded the 2009 Bancroft Prize, the New-York Historical Society 2009 American History Book Prize, and recognized by *The New York Times* as one of the “Ten Best Books of 2008.”

Faust’s honors include awards in 1982 and 1996 for distinguished teaching at the University of Pennsylvania. She was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 1994 and the American Philosophical Society in 2004. She received her bachelor’s degree from Bryn Mawr in 1968, magna cum laude with honors in history, and master’s (1971) and doctoral (1975) degrees in American civilization from the University of Pennsylvania.

**David W. Blight** is a Professor of American History at Yale University and Director of the Gilder Lehrman Center for the Study of Slavery, Resistance & Abolition. He has written numerous books and articles including *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Harvard University Press, 2001). Blight is also a frequent book reviewer and has written many articles on abolitionism, American historical memory, and African American intellectual and cultural history.

**Vincent Brown** is the Charles Warren Professor of History and Professor of African and African-American Studies at Harvard University. He is the author of *The Reaper's Garden: Death and Power in the World of Atlantic Slavery* and producer and director of research for the television documentary *Herskovits at the Heart of Blackness*, broadcast on the PBS series *Independent Lens*. Dr. Brown received his BA in History from UC San Diego and his PhD in history from Duke University.

**J. David Hacker** is Associate Professor of History at Binghamton University, SUNY. He has published articles on a wide variety of topics in U.S. demographic history. His article, "A Census-Based Count of the Civil War Dead," won the 2011 John T. Hubbell Prize for the best article published in *Civil War History*.

**Thomas Lynch** is the author of five collections of poems and three books of essays often related to the topic of death. His work has been the subject of two documentaries: PBS/Frontline's *The Undertaking* (2007) and *Cathal Black's Learning Gravity*, produced for the BBC.

**Admiral Mike Mullen** served as the 17th Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff from October 1, 2007 until September 20, 2011, serving as the principal military advisor to the president, the Secretary of Defense, the National Security Council and the Homeland Security Council.

**Mark S. Schantz** earned his B.A. in History at The George Washington University, a Masters of Divinity degree from Yale University, and a Ph.D. in History from Emory University. His books include *Awaiting the Heavenly Country: The Civil War and America's Culture of Death* (Cornell University Press, 2008). He is currently Provost and Professor of History at Birmingham-Southern College.

**George F. Will** is a Pulitzer Prize winning columnist on politics and domestic affairs for *The Washington Post*. He is also an ABC News commentator and regular panelist on *This Week*.

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## About the Filmmakers

Written and Directed by	Ric Burns
Edited by	Li-Shin Yu
Produced by	Robin Espinola, Bonnie LaFave, and Ric Burns
Narrated by	Oliver Platt
Original Concept Developed by	Paul Taylor
Cinematography by	Buddy Squires, Stephen McCarthy, Allen Moore
Music by	Brian Keane

**RIC BURNS (Producer/Director)** Ric Burns is best known for his acclaimed series *New York: A Documentary Film*, a sweeping chronicle of the city's history, which garnered several honors, including two Emmy Awards and an Alfred I. duPont-Columbia Award. Burns' career began with the celebrated series *The Civil War*, which he produced with his brother, Ken Burns, and co-wrote with Geoffrey C. Ward. In 1991, Ric founded Steeplechase Films and has since written and directed a number of award winning films for PBS, including *Coney Island*, *The Donner Party*, *The Way West*, *Eugene O'Neill*, and *Andy Warhol: A Documentary Film*. Most recently, for AMERICAN EXPERIENCE, Burns wrote, produced, and co-directed *Tecumseh's Vision*, part two of the groundbreaking five-part miniseries *We Shall Remain*, and a film about the history of the whaling industry, *Into the Deep: America, Whaling & the World*. A graduate of Columbia University and Cambridge University, Burns lives in New York City.

**MARK SAMELS (Executive Producer)** Under Samels' leadership, the series has been honored with nearly every industry award, including the Peabody, Primetime Emmys, the duPont-Columbia Journalism Award, Writers Guild Awards, Oscar nominations, and Sundance Film Festival Audience and Grand Jury Awards. Samels also serves on the Board of Governors at the Academy of Television Arts and Sciences. Prior to joining WGBH, Samels worked as an independent documentary filmmaker, an executive producer for several U.S. public television stations and as a producer for the first co-production between Japanese and American television. A native of Wisconsin, he is a graduate of the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

### **About AMERICAN EXPERIENCE**

Television's most-watched history series, AMERICAN EXPERIENCE has been hailed as "peerless" (*Wall Street Journal*), "the most consistently enriching program on television" (*Chicago Tribune*), and "a beacon of intelligence and purpose" (*Houston Chronicle*). On air and online, the series brings to life the incredible characters and epic stories that have shaped America's past and present. Acclaimed by viewers and critics alike, AMERICAN EXPERIENCE documentaries have been honored with every major broadcast award, including 14 George Foster Peabody Awards, four duPont-Columbia Awards, and 30 Emmy Awards, including, most recently, *Exceptional Merit in Nonfiction Filmmaking* for *Freedom Riders*.

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