

Actor James Avery to Speak on *From Slavery to Freedom* Feb. 24 at UCSD as Part of Black History Month Activities

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Jan Jennings

James Avery won a scholarship to the University of California, San Diego and earned a bachelor's degree in drama and literature - that was his kick-off to celebrity acclaim.

Avery - television, film, and stage personality - will be the guest speaker at the fifth annual Black History Month Celebration and Scholarship Brunch at 10:30 a.m. Feb. 24 at the Faculty Club at UCSD.

Avery's topic is *From Slavery to Freedom: UCSD Celebrates the Journey and Stories of African Americans*, which is the theme for UCSD's Black History Month celebration.

The brunch also honors Joseph W. Watson, vice chancellor of Student Affairs, who will retire at the end of the academic year, 2007, having served the university for 40 years.

"Given that we are honoring Vice Chancellor Watson, former Third College (now Thurgood Marshall College) provost, at this year's brunch, it seems most appropriate to select someone such as Avery who is an alum of Third College and truly one of the great African American success stories whose journey included this campus at a markedly different time in history," says Renee Barnett-Terry, dean of Student Affairs, Revelle College.

"James Avery will reflect on that journey and join us in celebrating the invaluable contributions and legacy of Vice Chancellor Watson at UCSD."

Avery has guest starred on TNT's *The Closer*, and has played Philip Banks on *The Fresh Prince of Bel Air*. He starred in UPN's *Sparks* and *All of Us* and has had recurring roles on Showtime's *Soul Food*, Lifetime's *The Division*, TNT's *Bull*, and CBS's *Beauty and the Beast*. He has played a judge on *Murder One*, *L.A. Law*, *Hill Street Blues*, and *Amen*.

Avery's feature films include *Third Wish*, *Think Tank*, *Lethal Eviction*, *Dancing in September*, *The Brady Bunch Movie*, *Fletch*, and *License to Drive*. He has just completed shooting for an independent film, *Whose Your Caddy*.

Avery performed *Othello* at the Will Geer Theatricum Botanicum which earned him the NAACP Image Award for lead male actor. Other plays in which he has performed include *Cheaters*, *Blues For An Alabama Sky*, *Romeo and Juliet* and plays with the Oregon Shakespeare Festival.

A native of Atlantic City, Avery served in the Navy in Vietnam, 1968-1969. He settled in San Diego after his discharge from the Navy and wrote poetry and television scripts for PBS. He received a bachelor's degree from UCSD and has an honorary degree, Doctor of Humane Letters, from Virginia State University.

When not acting, Avery devotes time to charitable causes including education and animal rights. He has traveled with the USO to visit U.S. troops in Guam, Kwajalein, Roi Namur, Korea, Kosovo, Macedonia, and Bosnia.

Tickets for the Avery talk and brunch may be purchased through the UCSD Box Office, (858) 534-4559 or (858) 534-6467. For further information contact Renee Barnett-Terry at (858) 534-3492 or rbarnett-terry@ucsd.edu.

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