

# THE PROGRESSIVE FORUM

Great Minds, Great Answers

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For Release

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Richard Leakey to Appear Thursday October 28, 2010

The world's most famous paleoanthropologist, Richard Leakey, will appear at The Progressive Forum, Thursday October 28, 2010, at the Wortham Center, Cullen Theater, at 7:30 PM. *Time* magazine named him among the top 100 great minds of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Leakey's program is entitled, Why Our Origins Matter. He will discuss evolution, conservation, climate change, wildlife, human rights, and more. Leakey will sign books and greet fans at the end of the evening.

Tickets range from \$14 to \$54. A limited number of \$74 tickets are available which include a pre-event reception with Richard Leakey, a complimentary signed book, and center front seating. Leakey will sign books and greet fans at the end of the evening.

Tickets are available at [www.progressiveforumhouston.org](http://www.progressiveforumhouston.org) or by calling 832-251-0706.

There is no physical box office except at the theater on event night.

Randall Morton, Progressive Forum president, said, "We strive to present the greatest minds alive, our motto is "Great Minds, Great Answers." Richard Leakey fits our highest ideals, we're excited to present him."

The event is made possible with sponsors, Berg & Androphy and Magnolia Charitable Trust.

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Leakey is credited with some of the most significant fossil discoveries including the legendary Turkana Boy which lived over 1.6 million years ago. The nearly complete skeleton found in 1984 near Lake Turkana, Kenya, belonged to an eight to twelve year old boy more than five feet tall. Analysts say the boy was more fully developed than a modern child, and would have grown to nearly six feet. Tall and lanky, someone who walked the open savanna, the American Museum of Natural History calls Turkana Boy, “The first early human with...a tall stature...like our own.”

The only other reasonably intact hominid is the famous “Lucy” who was small and probably lived in trees according to the American Museum of Natural History.

Since Leakey led his first fossil hunting expedition in 1967, he and his team of paleoanthropologists known as “The Hominid Gang,” have unearthed more than 200 fossils. His wife, Meave Leakey, a zoologist who once worked with his father Louis Leakey, continues research on human origins. In 1995, she discovered fossils that indicated humans walked upright 4 million years ago, 500,000 years earlier than previously thought. With wife Meave, they have two daughters, Louise and Samira. From an earlier marriage, he also has a daughter Anna.

Richard Leakey long ago turned from fossil hunting to focus on conservation and politics. He lives on a farm in his native Kenya where he spearheaded efforts to end rampant elephant poaching, raising over \$150 million and rallying international support for banning ivory trade.

In 1995, Leakey started a new political party called Safina (Swahili for Noah’s Ark), taking a stand against government corruption and oppression in Kenya. He suffered a whipping, death threats, and lost his legs in a suspicious plane crash in 1993. He was ultimately successful, and international financial support returned to Kenya.

He is the son of famed fossil hunters and scholars, Louis and Mary Leakey. Richard was born in Nairobi, Kenya, in 1944. He was one of three brothers, the middle child. Father Louis Leakey was born in Kenya of British missionary parents.

Richard Leakey has co-authored over 100 scientific articles. A few of his books include: *The Sixth Extinction: Patterns of Life and the Future of Mankind*; *Origins Reconsidered: In Search of What Makes Us Human*; *The Making of Mankind*; and *Wildlife Wars: My Fight to Save Africa's Natural Treasures*.

Leakey recently founded WildlifeDirect.org, an online service that allows anyone to play a role in saving the world's most endangered species. When he's in the U.S., he serves as a professor of anthropology at State University of New York at Stony Brook. He's an elected Fellow of The Royal Society which includes the most distinguished scientists of the U.K.

The Progressive Forum is a nonpartisan, nonprofit 501(C)(3) civic speaker organization presenting its events at The Wortham Center. It's the only civic speaker organization in America dedicated expressly to progressive values. Its purpose is to enrich our democracy and culture by striving to present the greatest minds from all the fields of human endeavor, the sciences and the humanities as well as politics and public affairs, great minds it believes are advancing the success of individuals, our species, and life on the earth.

This year of 2010 marks the fifth anniversary of The Progressive Forum. The Progressive Forum premiered on June 13, 2005, with Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. and Houston Mayor Bill White in a program called "Our Environmental Challenges." Al Gore launched *An Inconvenient Truth* at The Progressive Forum, his first U.S. book event for that title. Others include Jared Diamond, Seymour Hersh, Molly Ivins, George Soros, Edward O. Wilson, Frank Rich, Garrison Keillor,

Joe Klein, Tim Flannery, Anna Deavere Smith, Gloria Steinem, James Hansen, Ken Burns, George Lakoff, Robert Redford, Bill McKibben, Elizabeth Edwards, Larry Wilmore, T. Boone Pickens, Lester Brown, Nancy Pelosi, Brian Greene, and Karen Armstrong.

The Progressive Forum originated a new model in civic speaker organizations in Houston to deliver a higher quality experience in a theater rather than a hotel luncheon, as well as generate a much larger audience than traditional speaking events. The Progressive Forum operates similar to a performing arts company by using the finest theaters, paying speaker fees to present top intellectual stars, and marketing throughout the region. It offers convenient box office services through its website allowing ticket buyers to print tickets at their computer in addition to traditional phone sales.

Founder and president, Randall R. Morton has owned Randall Morton International, Inc. for 34 years, an advertising and public relations agency whose clients have included leading oil equipment in the U.S., Japan, Mexico, and Europe. Morton created, produced, and hosted the Oilfield Breakfast Forum from 1994 to 2003, a speaker platform which is still the largest in the oil industry today. While earning a degree in government from Georgetown University in Washington, D.C., he served as an issue writer for the Democratic National Committee.