

THE PROGRESSIVE FORUM

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George Soros Leads Fall Season of The Progressive Forum,
Which Includes Edward O. Wilson and Frank Rich

PHOTOS ATTACHED: George Soros, Edward O. Wilson, Frank Rich

The Progressive Forum, Houston, will present “An Evening with George Soros,” on Thursday, September 7. Soros will kick off a fall season that also includes the Pulitzer Prize winning scientist and eloquent champion of biodiversity, Edward O. Wilson, on September 27, and Frank Rich, the incisive *New York Times* columnist, on October 29. All three are launching new books and will sign books at the end of their evenings. All programs begin at 7:30 p.m. Soros will appear at The Hobby Center; the Wilson and Rich events will be held at The Wortham Center.

Randall R. Morton, president, said, “George Soros will discuss themes from his latest book, *The Age of Fallibility: Consequences of the War on Terror* (Public Affairs), which include financial theory, the global energy crisis, nuclear proliferation, and much more. He is forcefully critical of the Bush administration, saying it is endangering the international order, America’s standing in the world, and its open society at home.”

George Soros was born into a Jewish family in Budapest, Hungary, in 1930, and as a teenager, he survived the Nazi and Russian occupations during World War II. He graduated from the London School of Economics, and in 1956, he moved to New York where he became the world’s most successful financial trader, amassing billions by managing an investment fund that he founded, the Quantum Fund. He then used his fortune to create a network of foundations to undermine the type of totalitarianism he experienced as a teenager. Today, he is chairman of the Soros Fund Management LLC, as well as chairman of the Open Society Institute (OSI), a network of foundations

contributing more than \$400 million annually to build the institutions and infrastructure of open societies in more than 50 countries, developing programs in civil society, education, media, public health, human rights, as well as social, legal, and economic reform.

Since Hurricane Katrina, OSI has given almost \$2 million to local nonprofits in the Gulf Coast region to help them rebuild communities. OSI is a nonpartisan, nonpolitical group, which in the last decade has spent almost \$742 million in the U.S. to support human rights, access to justice, education, palliative care, professionalism in law and medicine, and expansion of the democratic process to everyone.

Apart from his foundation activities, Soros became politically active in the U.S. national elections in 2004, saying the Bush administration had become a threat to open societies and peace and stability of the international order. He personally spent more than \$27 million to support organizations attempting to defeat President Bush in the 2004 election.

Besides a financier and a philanthropist of historic proportions, Soros is a self-described philosopher and the author of nine books, including *The Bubble of American Supremacy: Correcting the Misuse of America Power* (2004); *George Soros on Globalization* (2002); *The Alchemy of Finance* (1987); *Opening the Soviet System* (1990); *Underwriting Democracy* (1991); *Soros on Soros: Staying Ahead of the Curve* (1995); *The Crisis of Global Capitalism: Open Society Endangered* (1998); and *Open Society: Reforming Global Capitalism* (2000).

Edward O. Wilson's new book, *The Creation: A Meeting of Science and Religion* (W.W. Norton), is couched in the form of letters to a Southern Baptist pastor, a religion he grew up with in his native Alabama. He pleads for the salvation of biodiversity, arguing that both secular humanists like himself and believers in God can work together to save the glory of nature, and that the earth's destruction threatens all of us, no matter what we believe about its origins.

Morton said, "Wilson's lecture will feature a multimedia presentation on a large screen, which will be exciting in the beautiful Wortham Brown opera house."

Morton went on to say that a year ago, Wilson entered the heated debate over the false science of intelligent design and creationism by writing a book on Darwin and

taking to the airwaves. Today, a year later, Wilson's latest book says that scientific and religious leaders share a mutual love and concern for our planet, and that it's time to initiate a productive dialogue between the two groups. This fall, Wilson is participating in a series of meetings between the scientific community and religious leaders.

Wilson is the winner of two Pulitzer prizes and the highest awards in science from many nations. *Time* magazine called him one of America's most influential people.

Morton said, "Wilson is one the important great minds of our time, and in my view, one of history's greatest scientists. He's created whole new fields of understanding. For example, his seminal work established the central principles of biodiversity, and he popularized the term biodiversity.

"And besides pioneering the science of biodiversity," Morton said, "Wilson started the sociobiology debate, enabling science to explain human nature within an evolutionary framework, which is outlined in his book *Sociobiology: The New Synthesis* (1975). In 1998, in his book *Consilience: The Unity of Knowledge*, he describes with awe-inspiring vision a basis for improving all ways of human knowing, using objective science to enhance the social sciences and vice versa. He does nothing less than further the original goals of the Age of Enlightenment, an age he discusses in this book, by moving the prospects for what we can know to a new level."

Edward O. Wilson was born in Birmingham, Alabama, in 1929. He graduated from the University of Alabama and received his Ph.D in biology from Harvard where he teaches today. He is on the board of The Nature Conservancy, Conservation International, and the American Museum of Natural History.

Wilson won the Pulitzer Prize for *On Human Nature* (1978) and a second for *The Ants* (1990). A few of his other books include *From So Simple a Beginning: Darwin's Four Great Books* (2005); *The Future of Life* (2002); *Naturalist* (1994); *The Diversity of Life* (1992); and *Biophilia* (1984).

Frank Rich's new book is called *The Greatest Story Ever Sold: The Decline and Fall of Truth from 9/11 to Katrina* (Penguin Press HC). The book's advance description says it is a step-by-step chronicle of how the Bush administration's highest priority was not to vanquish Al Qaeda but to consolidate its own power, a mission accomplished by a propaganda presidency which fashioned a war against an enemy who did not attack

America on 9/11, intimidated the Democrats into incoherence and impotence, and turned a presidential election into an irrelevant referendum on macho imagery and same-sex marriage. Rich also critiques America's infotainment culture that is comfortable accommodating the Bush administration's erasure of the line between reality and fiction, in the realm Rich calls "truthiness."

Frank Rich was born in 1949 in Washington, D.C., and has been a *New York Times* Op-Ed columnist for 12 years, focusing on politics and popular culture. He was the first to write a regular double-length, 1,500-word column for the *Times* which now appears every Sunday. Throughout the 1980s, Rich was the *Times*' chief theater critic, and his theater reviews have been collected in a book called *Hot Seat: Theater Criticism for The New York Times, 1980–1993* (1998). Rich graduated from Harvard where he was editorial chairman of *The Harvard Crimson* and studied American history and literature. Before joining the *Times* in 1980, he was a film critic for *Time* magazine. He published a childhood memoir, *Ghost Light*, in 2000.

The Progressive Forum's first event at The Hobby Center in June 2005 featured Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., and Mayor Bill White speaking on our environmental challenges. In 2006, the first full spring season included Jared Diamond, Seymour Hersh, Molly Ivins, and Al Gore. The Progressive Forum's presentation of Al Gore in June, a sell-out at The Hobby Center, was Mr. Gore's first U.S. book event, launching *An Inconvenient Truth*, on the urgent need to solve global warming.

The Progressive Forum is a nonpartisan, nonprofit 501(C)(3) civic speaker organization presenting at least six events a year in Houston's finest theaters. Its purpose is to enrich our democracy and culture by presenting the greatest minds from all the fields of human endeavor, the sciences and the humanities, as well as politics and public affairs. Its progressive viewpoint is rooted in the mainstream constitutional, enlightenment, and egalitarian values of America's founding fathers, a bedrock of moderate values that need affirming, now more than ever.

The Progressive Forum is pioneering a new model in the field of public affairs to deliver a higher quality experience to much larger audiences than typically attend speaking events, operating like a performing arts company. It uses the finest theaters and

venues, it pays speaker fees to attract the world's top cultural and intellectual stars, and it uses intensive marketing and convenient box office services.

Founder and president Randall R. Morton has owned Randall Morton International, Inc., for 31 years, an advertising and public relations agency whose clients have included leading oil equipment companies in the U.S., Japan, Mexico, and Europe. Morton created and hosted the Oilfield Breakfast Forum, which became the largest speaker platform in the oil industry whose surplus went to Houston's SEARCH Homeless Project. While earning a degree in government from Georgetown University in Washington, D.C., he served as an issue writer for the Democratic National Committee.

Tickets for all three events start at \$19 with further discounts for seniors over 65, students, and groups of ten or more. Patron tickets of \$110 include a private reception with the speaker, autographed book, and preferred seat locations. Tickets to all three events are available online at www.progressiveforumhouston.org. For tickets by phone for the Soros event, visit or call The Hobby Center box office at 713-315-2525 option 1. For phone orders for Wilson and Rich events, call 832-251-0706. The Progressive Forum office does not sell tickets, but for more information, the number is 713-664-0020.