

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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KC Journalism and Theater Converge in KCPT Exploration of South KC Explosion
KCPT, The Living Room and The Center for Investigative Reporting Partner

KANSAS CITY, Missouri - November 9, 2015 - KCPT has announced today an exciting partnership with The Center for Investigative Reporting (CIR) and Kansas City's The Living Room theater to launch a project that explores the meaning of justice in the context of one of Kansas City's most tragic crimes, and puts the story on the stage. StoryWorks KC will explore the 1988 explosion in south Kansas City that caused the tragic deaths of six Kansas City firefighters.

"The StoryWorks KC production is inspired by the Kansas City Star reporting of Pulitzer-prize winning journalist Mike McGraw, who has been writing about the case since 2007."

"StoryWorks gets to the emotional truth of investigative journalism. Based on facts and allowing for artistic exploration we delve into the personal stories behind the headlines and create dialogue through theater," said Jennifer Welch, Director of *StoryWorks* Reveal + from the Center for Investigative Reporting.

CIR "StoryWorks" brings journalism to theater audiences, and encourages difficult, controversial subjects to be explored through drama and dialogue. Now, for the first time, CIR is bringing its innovative StoryWorks series to Kansas City. The production and post-play discussions will seek to both honor those firefighters and examine questions about the case, raised by new evidence that has surfaced since the 1997 conviction and life imprisonment of five Kansas Citians. One of those convicted, a Native American who was 17 at the time of the crime, is awaiting a possible re-sentencing hearing in the case.

Jennifer Welch is the director and co-creator of StoryWorks. Welch is a member of Tides Theatre, the executive producer of the Des Voix Festival and a founding member of the Howells Transmitter Arts Collaborative. She focuses on new play development and theater for impact, social conversation and change. Her directing credits include: "Alicia's Miracle" and "This Is Home." Her most recent stage credits include Margaret in "Cat on a Hot Tin Roof," earning the 2014 Bay Area Theatre Critics Circle Best Actress title.

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KCPT believes in the power of media on every platform and seeks to use that power to enrich, engage and entertain our viewers both on-air and online. We strive to advance conversations through community engagement and social media; explore complicated issues facing our region with ongoing reporting, investigative reports and informed discussions; and share the stories of people, places, and progress in our community.

Michelle T. Johnson is a former journalist and attorney. Currently, she is a local and national diversity and inclusion consultant, as well as Kansas City Star writer and freelance columnist "Diversity Diva." Johnson has had plays in playwriting festivals locally and nationally, including in Houston, Texas, Medford, Connecticut and Louisville, Ky, as well as in four NYC festivals for her plays "Wiccans in the Hood," "The Negro Whisperer," "Trading Races: From Rodney King to Paula Deen" and "Echoes of Octavia." In 2014, the award-winning production "Trading Races" and "Wiccans in the Hood" were produced by Philadelphia's BrainSpunk Theater, leading to BrainSpunk making Johnson their Playwright-in-Residence. BrainSpunk will have the World Premiere of her play "Final Arrangements" in May 2016. Johnson's "Echoes of Octavia" which has been produced by KC Melting Pot Theater will in be in the 2016-2017 season of NYC's Rhymes Over Beats Theater Company.

The one-act play will be followed by a "TalkBack" discussion with a panel of local journalists and community members, allowing for the questions and views raised in the production and the stories, to be aired out in a post-show dialogue. Join StoryWorks KC, February 5-20, for a community airing and theatrical exploration of the issues - local and universal, touching on justice, equality and belief - that arise from this tragic Kansas City story.

Visit KCPT.org for more information on local events and programming. Be a part of the conversation by following @kcpt on Twitter and Facebook.

The Center For Investigative Reporting

The Center for Investigative Reporting is the nation's first independent, multi-platform investigative reporting organization. Devoted to holding powerful interests accountable to the public trust, CIR creatively employs cutting-edge technology and innovative storytelling to reveal injustice, spark change at all levels of society and influence public dialogue on critical issues. CIR produces high-impact reporting across print, video, TV, radio and online platforms and is the recipient of the prestigious MacArthur Award for Creative and Effective Institutions, winner of a 2013 Emmy Award and a 2013 George Foster Peabody Award, and a Pulitzer Prize finalist in 2012 (for local reporting) and 2013 (for public service).

The Living Room

The Living Room, an unconventional art space in the Crossroads Arts District in Kansas City, Missouri, was founded in 2010 by Rusty Sneary and Shawna Journagan. Dedicated to creating an atmosphere that allows the audience to abandon their perception of "The Theater," the two-stories of The Living Room is constantly being transformed, creating new and engaging performance spaces, to present thought-provoking works by local and published playwrights.

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The logo for KCPT Media Announcement features the letters 'K', 'C', 'P', and 'T' in blue, red, light blue, and yellow respectively. To the right of the letters is a black circle containing a white silhouette of a human head with a brain. Further right, the words 'Media' and 'Announcement' are stacked in a bold, dark blue sans-serif font. The entire logo is set against a background of several overlapping circles in shades of light blue and yellow. A thick black horizontal line runs across the page below the logo.

KCPT Media Announcement

About KCPT

KCPT is a nonprofit, community-owned television station serving the greater Kansas City area that provides programming and services—on air and off—that entertain, educate and enrich the community. For more information about KCPT’s programs and services, or to become a member and support public television in Kansas City, please go to KCPT.org.

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