

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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KCPT, The Living Room Theater & the Center for Investigative Reporting
Present

StoryWorks KC: *Justice in the Embers*

Written By Michelle T. Johnson
Based on the work of journalist Mike McGraw
Directed by Jennifer Welch

"*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* from the Center for Investigative Reporting. "*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 Citizens. 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. *StoryWorks KC; Justice in the Embers* is inspired by the Kansas City Star reporting of Pulitzer-prize winning journalist Mike McGraw, who has been writing about the case since 2007.

Performance Dates: February 4th – 20th at the Living Room Theater, KC *Calendar Editors see below

Featuring: Moses Brings Plenty, Amy Attaway, Frank Oakley, Chris Roady and Nancy Marcy* *courtesy of Actors Equity Association*

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Justice in the Embers 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 4-20, 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.

Michelle T. Johnson (Playwright, *Justice in the Embers*) 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

Mike McGraw (KCPT Journalist) In his more than 30 years at The Star, McGraw has covered a wide range of topics: food safety and agribusiness, the business of college sports, art world fraud. His last major series, an investigation of the U.S. beef industry, was produced in conjunction with The Star and Harvest Public Media, based at KCUR. KCPT will soon be part of the Harvest Public Media network. McGraw was part of a 3-person team that produced a 5-part series on human trafficking published in The Star in December 2009. Their investigation found serious flaws in U.S. efforts to lead the international fight against modern-day slavery. The series won the 2010 Robert F. Kennedy journalism award which recognizes coverage of injustice against the underprivileged; the series also received a 2010 Investigative Reporters and Editors award. McGraw won a Pulitzer Prize in 1992 for a series on the U.S. Department of Agriculture. He is also the recipient of two George Polk awards. McGraw has been a reporter since 1972, when he graduated from the University Of Missouri School Of Journalism. He has taught investigative reporting at the University of Missouri, the University of Kansas and as a Ferris Professor in residence last year at Princeton University. He is a former member of the board of Investigative Reporters and Editors, and contributor to IRE's "The Reporter's Handbook."

Jennifer Welch (Director) is the director and co-creator of StoryWorks, a groundbreaking project launched in 2013 that transforms journalism into theater, from The Center for Investigative Reporting, one of the longest-running investigative nonprofit news outlets in the country. 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: “North by Inferno” “Alicia’s Miracle,” “This Is Home,” “Gruesome Playground Injuries,” “Sweet Bird of Youth,” “Waiting for Godot,” “The Little Foxes,” “5 Lesbians Eating a Quiche,” “The Grapes of Wrath,” “Glengarry Glen Ross,” “Buried Child,” “The Trip to Bountiful,” “A View From the Bridge,” “The Rose Tattoo,” “The Night of the Iguana,” “Lysistrata,” “The Real Inspector Hound,” “Killer Joe” and StoryWorks. Her most recent stage credits include Margaret in “Cat on a Hot Tin Roof” (winner of the 2014 Bay Area Theatre Critics Circle best actress award), and Stella in “A Streetcar Named Desire.”

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.

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, an unconventional art space in the Crossroads Arts District in Kansas City, Missouri, was founded in 2010 by Rusty Sneary and Shawwna 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.

StoryWorks, in its third season, is on a mission to challenge, inspire, and heal our community by creating visceral theater experiences that are bold and truthful. StoryWorks creates immediate artistic responses to some of the most controversial and challenging issues our society faces. The format and process is to take investigative journalism, commission playwrights to create plays based on the stories and then produce the shows both in the San Francisco Bay Area, where The Center for Investigative Reporting (CIR) is based, and in the communities most directly affected by the issues. Over the last two and half years, StoryWorks has commissioned and produced five productions, toured in affected communities, translated and performed work in Spanish and challenged theater and journalism to work in innovative ways to represent our world and the immediate issues that confront us. It is an honor to present the world premier of “Justice in the Embers” in collaboration with KCPT and the Living Room Theater. It will also be presented in in the Bay Area in April.

StoryWorks began in 2013. For our inaugural season, we commissioned two plays based on CIR’s reporting: “A Guide to the Aftermath,” about female veterans suffering from military sexual trauma and PTSD, and “Headlock,” which confronted abuse in California’s adult care facilities. What began as an experiment to bring journalism to the stage and give voice to the marginalized and oppressed became a challenge to both our community as a whole and the artists who work with us to tell these stories. Our process evolved as we worked; this had never been done before. Our guiding principles were to proceed with integrity, following best journalism practices, and to allow artistic expression and the creative process to thrive.



Media Announcement

StoryWorks - PAST PRODUCTIONS

HEADLOCK was written by William Bivins and directed by Jennifer Welch based on Ryan Gabrielson's investigation into abuse at California's adult care facilities.

A GUIDE TO THE AFTERMATH was written by Jon Bernson and directed by Jennifer Welch, inspired by Mimi Chakarova's documentary about female veterans suffering from PTSD and military sexual trauma.

THIS IS HOME was written by Tassianna Willis, Dante Clark, Will Houston and Deandre Evans and directed by Jennifer Welch and Jose Vadi in response to Amy Julia Harris' reporting on corruption and squalor in Richmond, California, public housing.

ALICIA'S MIRACLE was written by Octavio Solis, translated into Spanish by Brandon Mears and directed by Jennifer Welch in response to Bernice Yeung and Andrew Donohue's investigation into the use of fumigants in California's \$2.6 billion strawberry industry.

NORTH BY INFERNO written by Jon Bernson and directed by Jennifer Welch based on Jennifer Gollan's investigation into work related death and injury in the Bakken Oil Field of North Dakota.

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Media Announcement

FOR CALENDAR EDITORS

WHAT: StoryWorks KC: Justice in the Embers
Written by Michelle T. Johnson
Directed by Jennifer Welch

SHOWS:

2/4 8pm *preview performance
2/5 8pm OPENING NIGHT
2/6 3pm matinee
8pm
2/11 8pm
2/12 8pm
2/13 3pm matinee
8pm
2/18 8pm
2/19 8pm
2/20 3pm matinee
8pm

WHERE: the Living Room Theater
1880 McGee Street, Kansas City MO

TICKETS: For tickets (\$15-\$20) <http://www.kcpt.org/events>

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