



For Immediate Release

## **Storytelling Shows Tackle Today's Most Pressing Issues Through Local Voices and Artistic Response**

*Commonspace, a news-themed storytelling project supported by The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage, debuts its first event series, helping the region process today's headlines*

### **Commonspace LIVE**

Presented by WHYY and First Person Arts

May 22-31, 2017

Multiple venues across Philadelphia, PA

Tickets at: [acommonspace.org](http://acommonspace.org) and [267-402-2055](tel:267-402-2055)

FPA Member tix on sale April 10 | General Public tix on sale April 14

PHILADELPHIA – Two of Philadelphia's leading cultural organizations—First Person Arts (FPA) and WHYY—have joined forces to present *Commonspace*, a news-themed storytelling radio program, podcast, and now, event series. Launched in January 2017, the radio show and podcast has tackled such timely topics as “Being a Black Man is a Full Time Job,” Immigrant issues, and Mental Health. In May 2017, the collaboration will debut its first dedicated event series with 7 days of arts programming responding to today's timely topics.

Each night of the series features something new, including four distinct curated performances, an open-mic style storytelling competition, and two live auditions for upcoming broadcasts and events. From stand-up storytelling to magic, theater, and puppetry, local performers reveal the real life impact of today's headlines through a wide range of artistic genres. All events will be recorded for the *Commonspace* project.

“It's easy to feel bombarded by news headlines,” said Jamie J. Brunson, Executive Director of FPA and host of *Commonspace*. “Our vision is that through *Commonspace* LIVE, we'll build bridges, and better understand



ourselves, each other, and this crazy, beautiful world we all share together.”

Performance topics include gentrification, stereotyping and targeting, cultural revelation, masculinity, and ethnicity. First Person Arts will also present a StorySlam on the theme “Battle Scars” in honor of Memorial Day.

“I’ve worked in journalism for a long time,” said Elisabeth Perez Luna, *Commonspace* Executive Producer and WHYY’s Executive Producer of Audio Content. . “It’s imperative that we remember that there are real lives behind every story. *Commonspace* reminds us of that.”

“Come hear a story, tell a story, and feel a bit more connected to the world,” says Jamie J. Brunson, Executive Director of First Person Arts and *Commonspace* host. “What we have in common may surprise you.”

### **Full Schedule:**

#### **Woke**

For most of us, daily life is in stark contrast with the constant conflict of the news. But what happens when real life collides with real headlines? Join us for an evening of dramatic revelation as performers weave personal stories about eye-opening, life changing experiences into theatrical dialogue. Through jolting truths, medical diagnoses, and surprising injustices, storytellers connect the dots between their own lives and today’s complex world. *FringeArts Theater; Mon., May 22; Doors at 7PM, Show at 8PM; \$10, \$7 for members of WHYY, First Person Arts, and FringeArts. Tickets at [fringearts.com/woke](http://fringearts.com/woke).*

#### **First Person Arts StorySlam: Battle Scars**

In honor of Memorial Day, First Person Arts presents a StorySlam on the theme “Battle Scars” during the *Commonspace* LIVE series. No body’s perfect. From broken limbs to heartbreak, and everywhere in between, we want to hear all about your scrapes, scuffs, dings, and dents. Not every battle leaves a scar, but every scar tells a story. Ten audience storytellers sign up at the door to perform real life stories on the theme of the night: “Battle Scars.” The winner takes home \$100, and advances to the season finale Grand Slam. *FringeArts Theater; Tues., May 23; Doors at 7PM, Show at 8PM; \$10, \$7 for members of WHYY, First Person Arts, and FringeArts. Tickets at [fringearts.com/battlescars](http://fringearts.com/battlescars).*



### **Gentrified**

A destabilizing force. An investment opportunity. A tax hike. A new yoga studio. Gentrification means different things to different people. But what does it really mean for our relationships, our community, and our local culture? From Point Breeze to University City, Fishtown to South Philly, the impact is more than just curb appeal. Join us for a compassionate and honest investigation as performers share real, lived experiences about a timely issue that hits close to home. *FringeArts Theater; Wed., May 24; Doors at 7PM, Show at 8PM; \$10, \$7 for members of WHYY, First Person Arts, and FringeArts. Tickets at [fringearts.com/gentrified](http://fringearts.com/gentrified).*

### **Now You See Me**

Step right up! Step right up! For one night only, three astonishing illusionists tantalize audiences with the mysteries of masculinity and race. Flexing their powers of magic and machismo, performers will defy all reasonable logic with hypnotizing skill. Be mesmerized by their tricks, stunts, and stories, and leave questioning what is real, and what is really illusion. *FringeArts Theater; Thurs., May 25; Doors at 7PM, Show at 8PM; \$10, \$7 for members of WHYY, First Person Arts, and FringeArts. Tickets at [fringearts.com/nowyouseeme](http://fringearts.com/nowyouseeme).*

### **Targeted**

Behind the crosshairs, there is a person. Behind the person, a community. Behind the community, a history. Behind it all, the truth. "Your kind is not welcome here." If you've ever been an outsider, you know what it feels like to wear a target on your back. Witness the sobering reality of a country divided as you hear provocative personal accounts about Americans under fire. You can't unhear this. You can't unsee this. You must do something. Step into the target zone. *FringeArts Theater; Fri., May 26; Doors at 7PM, Show at 8PM; \$10, \$7 for members of WHYY, First Person Arts, and FringeArts. Tickets at [fringearts.com/targeted](http://fringearts.com/targeted).*

### **Pitch! Commonsplace Auditions**

WHYY and First Person Arts are looking for stories to be featured on *Commonspace!* Pitch us your provocative, heartwarming, or remarkable story for a chance to be featured. Don't have a story to share this time? Join us for FREE as an audience member. For more information about Pitch, and how to submit your story for a chance to audition in person, visit [acommonsplace.org](http://acommonsplace.org). *Sat., May 27 at William Way LGBTQ Community Center; Wednesday, May 31 at United Bank; FREE.*



*Commonspace* has been supported by The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage.

### **About First Person Arts**

Now in its 15th year, First Person Arts is Philadelphia's premier storytelling organization and the producers of StorySlams, the Annual First Person Arts Festival, First Person Arts Podcast, and Applied Storytelling community engagement programs. From such artistic luminaries as novelist Toni Morrison, activist Angela Davis, and celebrity chef Marcus Samuelsson, to everyday people at twice-monthly StorySlams, FPA presents a diverse array of storytellers in order to foster an appreciation for our unique and shared experiences, and connect us with each other and the world.

### **About WHYY**

WHYY advances civic life through news, arts, education and civic dialogue. As the region's leading public media provider and PBS/NPR member station, WHYY's multimedia outreach includes WHYY-TV, WHYY-FM, WHYY's award-winning online home for news and civic dialogue, NewsWorks.org and "off-air" community forums, artistic performances, lectures and media education programs through the Dorrance Hamilton Public Media Commons.

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