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For Immediate Release

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**THE INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL OF ARTS & IDEAS  
ANNOUNCES  
DEMOCRACY: WE THE PEOPLE**

**VIRTUAL IDEAS PROGRAMMING WILL FEATURE  
INTERACTIVE EVENTS AND CONVERSATIONS WITH VITAL THINKERS  
FROM AROUND THE WORLD AND RIGHT HERE IN NEW HAVEN**

**ADDITIONAL PROGRAMMING WILL BE ANNOUNCED IN THE COMING WEEKS**

The **International Festival of Arts & Ideas** announces that its virtual Ideas programming will begin on Tuesday, May 12, and continue through Friday, June 26.

Entitled **Democracy: We the People**, the interactive events and conversations bring together vital thinkers and doers to address and engage with national and international issues through the microcosm of the culturally rich, diverse, and complex communities of New Haven.

Confirmed participants include 2012 Inaugural Poet Richard Blanco, award-winning scholar Dr. Khalilah L. Brown-Dean, NEA Big Read Author Stephanie Burt, renowned writer Anand Giridharadas, and Nikole Hannah-Jones, recipient of the 2020 Pulitzer Prize in Commentary for her landmark “The 1619 Project” published by *The New York Times*.

Last winter, the International Festival held a series of public forums around the concept of democracy to help form and shape this year’s Ideas programming, which has evolved in response to the current moment. A 2016 study conducted by ABC News’s FiveThirtyEight found that the New Haven metropolitan area is most similar to U.S. demographics overall, based on age, educational attainment, race, and ethnicity.

“The United States was founded on both freedom and slavery, human rights and genocide. Our country is still coping with the contradictions of its founding, while grappling with very real and intractable issues in the present,” said Festival Co-Directors **Liz Fisher** and **Tom Griggs**. “We



**Wednesday, May 13, 7PM**

***Stephanie Burt in Conversation***

Kick-off the annual NEA Big Read with poet **Stephanie Burt** in conversation about her book *Advice From The Lights* (Graywolf Press, 2017). Stephanie Burt is a poet, literary critic, and professor hailed by *The New York Times* as “one of the most influential poetry critics of [her] generation.” Her other collections of poems include *Belmont*, *Parallel Play*, and *Popular Music*.

Additional support for *Stephanie Burt in Conversation* was provided through the NEA Big Read, a program of the National Endowment for the Arts in partnership with Arts Midwest, presented locally in partnership with the New Haven Free Public Library and New Haven Pride Center.

**Tuesday, May 19, 7PM**

***Wealth in Our Democracy: Anand Giridharadas in Conversation***

A conversation about income inequality in the U.S. with **Anand Giridharadas**, author of the recently published *Winners Take All: The Elite Charade of Changing the World* (Alfred A. Knopf, 2018). In his book, Giridharadas asks hard questions: Why, for example, should our gravest problems be solved by the unelected upper crust instead of the public institutions it erodes by lobbying and dodging taxes? He also points toward an answer: Rather than rely on scraps from the winners, we must take on the grueling democratic work of building more robust, egalitarian institutions and truly changing the world. Giridharadas is an editor-at-large for *Time*, an on-air political analyst for MSNBC, and a visiting scholar at the Arthur L. Carter Journalism at NYU. His others books include *The True American: Murder and Mercy in Texas*, and *India Calling: An Intimate Portrait of a Nation's Remaking*.

**Tuesday, May 26, 7PM**

***Cultivating Hope: The Role of Artists in Democracy***

The 2012 Inaugural Poet **Richard Blanco** is joined by Lakota playwright **Larissa FastHorse**, and Founder of Theatre of the Oppressed NYC and New Haven native **Katy Rubin** who reflect on their roles as mediators and responders during times of great social challenge.

**Thursday, June 4, 7PM**

***Democracy, Pandemic, and How We Move Forward***

Former Connecticut Secretary of State **Miles Rapoport** moderates a conversation with political commentator and author **Heather McGhee**, political activist and CEO of Voto Latino **María Teresa Kumar**, and political scholar **Archon Fung**, all of whom have spent their lives working to strengthen our democracy. Together they will explore the question: Where do we go from here?

**Friday, June 5, 5PM**

***Democracy, Refugees, and Asylum***

*In Partnership with IRIS-Integrated Refugee & Immigrant Services*

Historian **Quan Tran** and sociologist **Jasmina Besirevic-Regan** share their personal stories and professional perspectives on borders, migration, and democracy. Bring your questions and curiosities to this interactive event with our partners at IRIS.

**Tuesday, June 9, 7PM**

***Stories, Sovereignty, and Imagining Forward***

A conversation with Native American artists and leaders who offer their perspective on issues of sovereignty, ancestry, and post-pandemic survival, organized in partnership with theater director **Madeline Sayet**. A member of the Mohegan Nation, Sayet is the Executive Director of the Yale Indigenous Performing Arts Program. She has been honored as a Forbes 30 Under 30 in Hollywood & Entertainment, TED Fellow, MIT Media Lab Fellow, National Directing Fellow, Drama League Director-In-Residence, and a recipient of The White House Champion of Change Award from President Obama.

**Thursday, June 11, 7PM**

***Housing as a Human Right? Tackling Challenges of Affordability and Discrimination***

*In partnership with The CT Mirror*

Explore the intersection of housing and democracy with Connecticut policy experts, including **Karen DuBois Walton** (Executive Director of the Elm City Communities/Housing Authority of the City of New Haven), **Jacqueline Rabe Thomas** (Reporter for *The CT Mirror*), and **Alexis Highsmith Smith** (Executive Director of New Haven Legal Aid).

**Tuesday, June 16, 7PM**

***Who is Essential? Race, Culture, and Identity in American Democracy***

*In partnership with The CT Mirror*

**John Dankosky** invites **Khalilah Brown-Dean**, Political Science Professor at Quinnipiac University, and others to reflect on identity politics at this disorienting time when a new identity has emerged in our society: “essential.” What has changed in the current conversation about identity? What’s stayed the same, and what are the implications for the struggle for power in 2020?

**Thursday, June 18, 7PM**

***Voter Rights Workshop***

*In Partnership with Civic Impact Lab, Mothers & Others for Justice, The Urban League of Southern Connecticut*

This workshop will give participants an opportunity to learn how structural racism shapes our voting system, imagine how a just and equitable alternative should work, and discuss how we as individuals and institutions can create a voting system rooted in shared liberation.

*Registration required.*

**Friday, June 19, 7PM**

***Slavery & The American Story***

*In Partnership with The Narrative Project*

Join Pulitzer Prize-winning investigative reporter and creator of the landmark 1619 Project for *The New York Times Magazine* **Nikole Hannah-Jones** in conversation with the host of The Center For Investigative Reporting’s *Reveal* podcast, **Al Letson**, and New Haven local columnist, communications specialist and founder of The Narrative Project, **Mercy Quaye**. The

journalists will discuss the local, national, and global impact of American slavery and liberation on democracy in America and our relationship with truth and history. This talk will include a special performance by New Haven musician **Paul Bryant Hudson**.

**Friday, June 26, 7PM**

***On Being Good: A Conversation with The Good Place Philosophers***

Philosophers **Pamela Hieronymi** and **Todd May**, who served as philosophy advisors on the acclaimed television comedy, *The Good Place* (NBC), explore the nature of goodness and its role in society, an especially poignant and visceral subject against the backdrop of the current public health crisis.

***Constitution Cafe Series***

Join your neighbors and local experts in a series of community dialogues around daily issues that intersect with Theour Constitution. Bring your ideas, questions, and curiosity and join in this online iteration of artist Linda Pollack's project, *My Daily Constitution*, which creates rigorous constitutional discussions outside of the lecture hall and places them into public life. Stay tuned for the announcement for speakers at each event.

*Registration required.*

**Wednesday, June 3, 5PM**

***Constitution Cafe: The Role of Government During Pandemic***

**Wednesday, June 10, 5PM**

***Constitution Cafe: The Future of Governing and Public Assembly***

**Wednesday, June 17, 5PM**

***Constitution Cafe: Federal Vs. States Rights***

**Wednesday, June 24, 5PM**

***Constitution Cafe: Constitution & Mass Incarceration***

*In Partnership with ACLU Connecticut. Co-hosted with Babz Rawls Ivey, radio personality and Editor-in-chief of Inner City News*

**MORE ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL OF ARTS & IDEAS**

The International Festival of Arts & Ideas celebrates and builds community, engages with vital issues, and promotes the arts. Each year, we highlight the City's diverse and culturally rich community with events featuring world-class artists, thinkers, and leaders. The Festival's additional programs include the annual Visionary Leadership Award and educational opportunities like the High School Fellowship Program. The Festival was established in 1996 by Anne Calabresi, Jean M. Handley, and Roslyn Meyer, who envisioned an annual celebration in New Haven—a city steeped in a rich array of cultural and educational traditions—distinguished from other arts festivals by its fusion of the arts with events centered on sharing ideas.

The Festival is presented with major support from Yale University, The Community Foundation for Greater New Haven, Connecticut Office of the Arts, and the National Endowment for the Arts with additional support from The City of New Haven, KeyBank, The Whitney Center, Yale New Haven Health, the Avangrid Foundation in partnership with United Illuminating and Southern CT Gas, Connecticut Humanities, a non-profit affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities, and our generous community of individual supporters.

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