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For Immediate Release

Community Conversation on Racial Equity and Healing *CommonPlace* Event at Minnesota Humanities Center on December 12, 2016

December 1, 2016—ST. PAUL, Minn.— The Minnesota Humanities Center is launching a two-part series of community conversations on racial equity and community healing in partnership with *Sweet Potato Comfort Pie™*, a Twin Cities-based organization dedicated to facilitating healing conversations through storytelling circles and African American food traditions. ***CommonPlace*** takes place as Minnesotans respond to racial issues that are tearing the fabric of our communities and country, including the deaths of Jamar Clark and Philando Castile.

CommonPlace will convene local cultural and political leaders, law enforcement officers, educators, clergy, Veterans, students, and parents for conversations on racial equity and building community. The day before this convening, 20 ***CommonPlace*** participants will bake 50 sweet potato pies in a commercial kitchen at the Humanities Center. Through the act of making and giving pies and joining together in story circles, participants will address the tough conversation on race and violence while engaging in a community process of sharing, listening, connecting, and healing.

“Together we share this city and this state,” said David O’Fallon, President of the Humanities Center. “Together we can—and will—make our communities safe and welcoming for every one of us.”

As participants share a few of the baked pies, they will gather in circle and to talk to each other and listen to one another’s stories and perspectives on race, equity, and law enforcement and community relations. Small groups of ***CommonPlace*** participants will gift the packaged pies to others in the days following ***CommonPlace***. Each group will reconvene a few weeks later to share stories of giving pies and reflect on these experiences.

“There is power in the making and giving of pie,” said Rose McGee, founder of *Sweet Potato Comfort Pie™*. “Across this nation, there is an urgency to respond to the hurt, the divisiveness, and the absence of trust,” said McGee. “***CommonPlace*** dialogues will focus on race in a way aimed to help participants share actions that will lead to healthy solutions.”

Sweet Potato Comfort Pie™ was founded by Rose McGee, a program officer at the Humanities Center and renowned storyteller. The mission of *Sweet Potato Comfort Pie™* is to strengthen — and connect new — community relationships through the creation and distribution of sweet potato pies, the “sacred dessert” of Black culture. With deep roots in African American history and culture, sweet potato pie serves as a catalyst for building connections and demonstrating compassion.

The first **CommonPlace** convening will be held on December 12, 2016 from 5:00-8:00 p.m. at the Minnesota Humanities Center at 987 Ivy Avenue East in St. Paul. For details about this event and to register to attend, please visit: mnhum.org/commonplace.

The second **CommonPlace** conversation will take place on January 15, 2017 from 2:00-4:30 p.m. at Calvary Lutheran Church in Golden Valley, Minnesota. This event coincides with the Martin Luther King Jr. Day federal holiday, and volunteers will bake 88 pies to commemorate Martin Luther King Jr's 88th birthday.

CommonPlace is part of the Humanities Center's mission and articulates what connects us rather than what divides us.

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