

NATIONAL CONSTITUTION CENTER

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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NATIONAL CONSTITUTION CENTER DEBUTS NEW THEATER SHOW FOR GROUPS, *LIVING NEWS*

Philadelphia, PA (January 19, 2007) – The National Constitution Center is pleased to announce an exciting new interactive theater show in which current constitutional issues come to life for young visitors. Titled *Living News*, the production presents young people with constitutional issues in the media that have a direct impact on their everyday lives, and helps them understand that their voice matters.

The 20 minute show, conceived and created by the National Constitution Center, features three actors who present civics and history through a theatrical performance. The show opens in a debate about whether the words “under God” in the Pledge of Allegiance violate First Amendment rights. The following scenes highlight such controversial issues as questions of privacy, the rules of search and seizure in the context of our post-Columbine and post-9/11 world, as well as legal and illegal immigration, and the responsibilities of citizenship. Video, contemporary music, and current news broadcasts are incorporated to involve the audience throughout, and the production culminates by asking audience members to share their points of view in a “show of hands” vote on several timely issues.

A post-show discussion—led by actors and museum educators—transforms the stage into a public forum for the exchange of ideas and reflections on the issues presented by the actors. Visitors will leave the Center with a greater knowledge of the issues, an ability to ask informed questions and a desire to become more involved citizens.

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ADD ONE/LIVING NEWS

The show, which opens March 12, 2007 and runs through June 8, 2007, is geared towards student groups in grades 7 through 12. The performances will take place in the Exhibit Theatre inside of the National Constitution Center's DeVos Exhibit Hall, every Monday through Friday at 9:30 a.m., 10:30 a.m., 12:30 p.m., and 1:30 p.m.

The Center is launching this new show at a special group package rate of \$9.75 per person for the month of March. The package rate for the remainder of the show's duration (April 1 through June 8) will be \$13 per person. The cost of the package includes *Living News*, as well as admission to the National Constitution Center exhibits and the award-winning theatrical performance, "Freedom Rising". Group reservations must be booked in advance by calling 215.409.6800.

The actors featured in the performance are James William Ijames, Rainey Lacey, and Amanda Schoonover, and the show was written by Larry Loebell and directed by David Bradley.

James William Ijames is a native of Bessemer City, North Carolina. He is a recent graduate of Temple University's MFA acting program where he has appeared in *Jitney*, *The Sea Gull*, and *A Lesson Before Dying*.

Rainey Lacey is from Richmond, Virginia. Lacey studied at the Moscow Art Theatre in Russia. Her career as an actor, dancer, choreographer, and director has afforded her the opportunity to work abroad in Prague and Budapest. In Philadelphia, she has worked with the University of the Arts Theatre Program, SCRAP Performance Group, Mum Puppettheatre, Pig Iron Theatre Company, The Arden Theatre Company, and the McCarter Theatre in Princeton.

Amanda Schoonover, a seasoned actress, received a 2006 Barrymore for Supporting Actress and Ensemble as Dottie Smith in *Killer Joe* with Theatre Exile. She has worked with many theater companies in the Philadelphia area, including People's Light, Bristol Riverside, and Brat and the Lantern. Amanda also co-produced and performed in *4.48 Psychosis* with Theatre Catalyst.

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ADD TWO/LIVING NEWS

Larry Loebell has produced full length plays, including *La Tempestad*, which had its world premiere in 2005 at the Ohio Theater; *The Ballad of John Wesley Reed*, which had its world premiere in 2005 at Philadelphia's Theater Catalyst; and *Pride of the Lion*, which premiered in Philadelphia in 2002. He is a four time recipient of the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts Fellowship in Playwriting. From 1998 to 2005, Loebell was the literary manager and dramaturge at InterAct Theatre Company in Philadelphia. He currently teaches playwriting and dramaturgy as part of the adjunct faculty at Arcadia University.

David Bradley has been part of the production's development since its inception. He has been an active explorer of how art, community, and civic dialogue connect, and has created projects that have told the stories of Benjamin Franklin, The Philadelphia Naval Shipyard, the reinvestment Fund, and towns in rural Pennsylvania. He is a Yale University graduate and currently teaches at Arcadia University.

The National Constitution Center, located at 525 Arch St. on Philadelphia's Independence Mall, is an independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to increasing public understanding of the U.S. Constitution and the ideas and values it represents. Opened on July 4, 2003, the Constitution Center is a museum, an education center, and a forum for debate on constitutional issues. The museum dramatically tells the story of the Constitution from Revolutionary times to the present through more than 100 interactive, multimedia exhibits, film, photographs, text, sculpture and artifacts, and features a powerful, award-winning theatrical performance, "Freedom Rising". The Center also houses the Annenberg Center for Education and Outreach, which serves as the hub for national constitutional education. Also, serving as a nonpartisan forum for constitutional discourse, the Center presents – without endorsement – programs that contain diverse viewpoints on a broad range of issues. The National Constitution Center's programs earned the organization a 2006 Best of Philly® award from *Philadelphia* magazine as the "Best Place To Smarten Up". For more information, call 215.409.6700 or visit www.constitutioncenter.org.

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