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New Season of *Commonspace* Tackles Pressing Issues through Local and Celebrity Voices

Commonspace, a project supported by The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage, examines current events through personal narrative

Philadelphia—News-themed radio program and podcast *Commonspace* returns for its second season with a fresh lineup of local and celebrity storytellers chronicling today's pressing issues through surprising and thought-provoking narratives. Drawing from their respective expertise in storytelling and journalism, First Person Arts and WHYY continue to amplify remarkable true stories creating a place as fun, poignant, and maddening as the world that surrounds us.

On a mission to broaden our understanding of ourselves, each other, and the world, season two of *Commonspace* features celebrity comedian **Margaret Cho**, co-founder of Pussy Riot **Nadya Tollokonkova**, local comedian **Nick Kupsey**, media and sports analyst **Steven Knebels**, UPENN professor and STEM education advocate **Marion Leary** and **Adrienne Mackey**, founder of Swim Pony Performing Arts and others.

"It's important to remember that there are real lives behind every story," said Elisabeth Perez Luna, *Commonspace* Executive Producer and WHYY's Executive Producer of Audio Content. "*Commonspace* magnifies the reach of these heartfelt narratives around sometimes difficult, often complex issues."

Commonspace was born in January 2017 when two trusted Philadelphia-based organizations—First Person Arts and WHYY—joined forces to address recent headlines through personal accounts of people from all walks of life, alongside archival news content, historical context and artistic responses to the topics. Taking on such timely topics as "Being a Black Man is a Full Time Job," immigrant issues and mental health in season one, the collaboration also debuted its first dedicated event series in May 2017.

Together Perez-Luna and Jamie J. Brunson, Executive Director of First Person Arts and producer, co-writer and host of *Commonspace*, shape each episode to offer the audience a deeper understanding of what's taking place in society while positioning the storyteller's perspective as a catalyst for further dialogue.



“People today want to connect—they want to share their lives. *Commonspace* reminds us of that by helping audiences experience news stories on a human level. It’s all about discovering what you might have in common with someone who you never would have imagined connecting with before,” said Brunson.

The weekly hour-long radio show *Commonspace* airs **every Sunday of each week** on WHYY-FM and can also be found wherever you listen to podcasts.

Latest Episode:

Title: Death Becomes Us

Description: No one makes it out of this world alive. From tales of reckless funerals to spreading cremains in unusual places, these storytellers face mortality in heartfelt and surprising ways.

About First Person Arts

Now in its 17th 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 monthly StorySlams, First Person Arts 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 enriches the lives of people in our community through news, arts, education and civic dialogue. We are the region’s leading PBS/ NPR member station, and hundreds of thousands of people access our programs and services through television, radio and award winning online properties, including the all new WHYY.org. We also offer more than 75 forums, events, lectures and media education about programs each year.