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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **BANNED PLAYS TO BE FEATURED DURING BANNED BOOKS WEEKS**

#### ***HPL and the ACLU of CT sponsoring lively panel on banned plays***

**HARTFORD, Connecticut (September 22, 2015)** – Hartford Public Library is celebrating Banned Books Week from September 28 – October 3. Banned Books Week is the national book community's annual celebration of the freedom to read. Hundreds of libraries and bookstores around the country draw attention to the problem of censorship by mounting displays of challenged books and hosting a kick-off event.

Banned Books Week was launched in 1982 in response to a sudden surge in the number of challenges to books in schools, bookstores and libraries. More than 11,300 books have been challenged since 1982 according to the American Library Association. There were 311 challenges reported to the Office of Intellectual Freedom in 2014, and many more go unreported.

This year the Library, in partnership once again with the American Civil Liberties Union of Connecticut, will kick off the celebration with an interactive panel discussion called *Banned Theater!* featuring three plays that were challenged or banned in the United States at one time. The plays are *Blues for Mr. Charlie* by James Baldwin, *My Name is Rachel Corrie* edited by Alan Rickman and Katharine Viner, and *Sister Mary Ignatius Explains It All For You* by Christopher Durang. The *Banned Theater* discussion begins at 6:00 PM in the downtown library's Center for Contemporary Culture at 500 Main Street.

The panel will feature Rob Ruggiero, Producing Artistic Director at TheaterWorks; Rachel Alderman, Artistic Associate at Hartford Stage Company; Jacques LaMarre, local playwright and Director of Communications & Special Programs at The Mark Twain House & Museum; and David McGuire, Legislative and Policy Director at the ACLU of Connecticut. Dr. Lois Brown, Director of the Center for African American Studies at Wesleyan University, will serve as moderator.

"This year, we celebrate the 90<sup>th</sup> birthday of James Baldwin, who was no stranger to the censorship of his work. It is in his honor that we look at his and other banned plays," said Hartford Public Library's chief executive officer Matt Poland. "The history of censorship in the theater mirrors the censorship of literature, and it is only thanks to the dedication of libraries, teachers, and communities that we can still access works that have been suppressed over the centuries. During *Banned Books Week* we lean into controversy with the hope of better understanding what could make a work of art so objectionable that it should be entirely hidden from view."

Stephen Glassman, Executive Director of the ACLU of Connecticut, said, "Attempting to control what we read has always been one of the most odious forms of censorship. We must continue to protect our right to say, think, read, and write whatever we want without fear of government reprisal. We're proud to work with the Hartford Public Library, which puts these rights into action, to celebrate Banned Books Week."

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**ABOUT [HARTFORD PUBLIC LIBRARY](#)**

As a finalist for the 2013 and 2014 National Medal from the Institute for Museum and Library Services, Hartford Public Library has been recognized as national leader in redefining the urban public library in the 21st century as an innovative and stimulating place where people can learn and discover, explore their passions, and find a rich array of resources that contribute to a full life. Hartford Public Library provides free resources that inspire reading, guide learning, and encourage individual exploration. Serving the residents of Hartford and beyond at its nine branches and Downtown location, Hartford Public Library receives more than 860,000 visits per year from adults, children and families seeking early literacy opportunities, work skills training, civic engagement, arts enrichment, and so much more. Visit [hplct.org](http://hplct.org).

**About the [American Civil Liberties Union of Connecticut](#):**

The American Civil Liberties Union of Connecticut (ACLU-CT) is a nonpartisan, non-profit membership organization whose mission is to assure that the Bill of Rights and the rights guaranteed by the Connecticut Constitution are preserved for each new generation. The ACLU-CT accomplishes these goals through legislative advocacy, litigation, grassroots organizing and public education on a broad array of issues affecting our liberties. The ACLU-CT is one of 53 affiliates of the American Civil Liberties Union nationwide. [www.acluct.org](http://www.acluct.org)

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