



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 27, 2017

## People's Light Launches Crowdfunding Campaign around New Play that Addresses Commercial Sexual Exploitation in Philadelphia Region

(Malvern, PA) – In March 2017, People's Light launches a month-long crowdfunding campaign around the world premiere production of *Project Dawn*, a vital new play inspired by Project Dawn Court in Philadelphia, a real-life innovative court program designed to transform the lives of women trapped within the commercial sex industry. The \$7,500 campaign goal will underwrite theatre tickets for targeted communities who could benefit from seeing the play, but who would not otherwise attend, including: social workers, teachers, first responders, parole officers, law enforcement, and students training in these fields. Partial and complete ticket subsidies for these key groups will expand the production's reach, as well as foster empathy and understanding among those who serve our most vulnerable populations.

Based on playwright Karen Hartman's extensive observation and research, *Project Dawn* bursts with urgency, but is also full of deep empathy and humor, bridging the gap between what we might currently know about sexual exploitation and what we could know – what is actually happening in our own backyards. Carol Metzger, local anti-trafficking advocate and author of the book *Facing the Monster*, says about the play, "*Project Dawn* shows that victims of commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking are real women worthy of care, love, dignity, and respect. The play shows that there are a lot of myths held by society that must be broken.

"For teachers, law enforcement officers, or health workers who may be dealing with victims on the front lines and may not recognize the signs, the play paints a very clear picture of who is being harmed and how that happens. It elicits great empathy. We may be seeing [these people] for the very first time."

The play, in which seven actresses play double roles as both participants and staff members of the Philadelphia court, illustrates the shared humanity and dignity of women on both sides of the law. Shea Rhodes, Esq., Director of the Villanova Law Institute to Address Commercial Sexual Exploitation, met with Karen Hartman throughout the play's development. "*Project Dawn* shows that [commercial sexual exploitation] could happen to anyone, from any socioeconomic or racial background. It happens in Chester County," Rhodes explains. "You don't need a street corner anymore; the internet is the street corner."

### For information contact:

Shawn Stone  
Director of Marketing & Communications  
610.647.1900 x104  
Cell: 484.678.9728  
stone@peopleslight.org

Box Office: 610.644.3500

On the impact *Project Dawn* could have on legal and criminal justice professionals who attend, Rhodes says, “It’s not always easy to set aside your professional hat to really just engage on a human level and be empathic and sympathetic. This play really brings home [the notion that] it could be me; I could be the lawyer, or I could be the prostituted person. I think it’s important to show that.”

Abigail Adams, director of *Project Dawn* and Artistic Director & CEO at People’s Light, says “*Project Dawn* informs, challenges, and celebrates those involved in fighting human trafficking in a way that no class, seminar, or chapter in a book could capture.” The play raises complex questions and asks audiences to consider multiple sides of a very challenging issue. The crowdfunding campaign aims to create awareness around this issue, to better protect and support vulnerable populations, and to build empathy and understanding for those who are exploited.

People’s Light is connecting with key groups to offer partial and complete ticket subsidies for individuals on the front lines of the commercial sex industry. One of the barriers to attendance for many of these groups is ticket price. Through their crowdfunding efforts, People’s Light aims to enable 400 people who would not otherwise see the play to attend.

Some of the organizations currently confirmed to receive subsidized tickets include: Crime Victims Center of Chester County, Justice Works Youth Care in West Chester, Dawn’s Place, Chester County Youth Center (CCYC), Arts Holding Hands and Hearts, Religious Council of Greater West Chester, and the Salvation Army New Day Drop-In Center. Recommendations for individuals or groups that could benefit from subsidized tickets to *Project Dawn* should be directed to Marcie Bramucci, Director of Community Investment, at [bramucci@peopleslight.org](mailto:bramucci@peopleslight.org).

The crowdfunding campaign is titled “PROJECT DAWN: Subsidized Tickets to a Vital, New Play” and can be found on generosity.com: <https://igg.me/at/XWn5BMri-6Y>

Help us spread the word! #ProjectDawnPlay #ProjectDawnCommunityInitiative

#### ABOUT PROJECT DAWN

Philadelphia is home to a revolutionary court designed by a passionate and shockingly funny group of women. Every day these lawyers, judges, parole officers, and staff work to transform the lives of women repeatedly convicted for prostitution. In this daring and vital new play in which seven actresses portray multiple participants and members of the court, Karen Hartman probes the thin lines between freedom and slavery, activism and obsession for women on both sides of the law. Inspired by Hartman’s extensive first-hand research inside Project Dawn Court, this play is the first world premiere from our nationally renowned New Play Frontiers Residency & Commission program at People’s Light. *Project Dawn* runs on the Steinbright Stage at People’s Light from June 7 through July 9, 2017.

#### ABOUT PEOPLE’S LIGHT

Founded in 1974, People’s Light serves as one of Pennsylvania’s largest professional nonprofit theatres, known for our resident company of artists, eclectic mix of productions, and innovative work with young people. In our 8-9 play season, we produce classics and contemporary plays, and commission and produce new work: of our 418 productions, over a third (164) have been world or regional premieres. We enhance our stage work with a variety of surround activities that connect us with many Delaware Valley communities near our seven-acre Malvern campus. Our award-winning suite of education programs, Arts Discovery, extends our mission with school residencies and student matinees. Our *Community Matters* program sparks dialogue about vital social issues with free staged readings and town hall-style discussions co-hosted by the Theatre and local service organizations.