



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 7, 2019

MEDIA CONTACT:

Krissy Schoenfelder

kschoenfelder@landmarkcenter.org

651.292.3276

Dark Moment in Saint Paul History Coming to Local Stage

A new play from local playwrights

SAINT PAUL, Minn. (January 7, 2019)—An original historical drama, involving a little known episode of racist violence in Saint Paul’s Groveland Park neighborhood, will appear in Landmark Center’s F.K. Weyerhaeuser Auditorium during Black History Month, February 2019.

“Not in Our Neighborhood!,” written by Central High School graduates, Tom Fabel and Eric Wood, is the true story of vicious neighborhood opposition to a home purchase by African American Saint Paul residents in 1924. The victims, attorney William Francis and his civil rights activist wife Nellie, aroused segregationist sentiment from white neighbors when they sought to relocate from the Rondo neighborhood to a home on Sargent Avenue. Protesting neighbors employed petitions, demonstrations, death threats and ultimately, two cross burnings on the 2000 block of Sargent in their efforts to dissuade the Francis family from the intended move. With help from the NAACP and belated protection from city authorities, the Francises made the move and remained in the home until William Francis was appointed to an ambassadorship in 1927. That position ended with William’s death in 1929, following which his body was returned to Saint Paul for a funeral service at Pilgrim Baptist Church. The play begins at that funeral, and then flashes back to the events in 1924.

“The play is timely despite taking place in 1924. Segregated housing patterns in both Saint Paul and Minneapolis were enforced through much of the 20th century, effects of which remain evident in current housing in both cities,” explained Wood, himself raised in the Rondo neighborhood. “Understanding where we came from is essential for our communities to move forward towards racial harmony.”

“Not in Our Neighborhood!” is produced by Minnesota Landmarks and directed by co-author Eric Wood. Public performances are scheduled for February 14 – 16, with additional daytime performances

for local high school students. A panel discussion with local legal professionals is scheduled for after the Friday evening performance and a CLE credit is pending.

Tickets are \$10. Tickets can be purchased on Landmark Center's website, by phone (651.292.3063), in person in the Minnesota Landmarks /Landmark Center office, and at the door each evening of performances, while supplies last. Support for "Not in Our Neighborhood!" is provided by the Minnesota State Bar Foundation, Ramsey County Historical Society, Mitchell Hamline School of Law, the Pioneer Press, and a Saint Paul Cultural Star grant.

About Landmark Center

Landmark Center is a dynamic, historic cultural center and central gathering place in downtown Saint Paul. It is owned and sponsored by Ramsey County and managed by Minnesota Landmarks, the nonprofit programming and management agency for the building. Landmark Center is located at 75 West 5th Street, on Rice Park and is accessible to those with impaired mobility. Parking is available on street and in nearby Lawson, Science Museum and RiverCentre Ramps. For more information call 651.292.3063 or visit www.landmarkcenter.org.

###