



March 4th Event Explores Paris Terror Attacks and Modern Issues Facing Fundamental Freedoms

Hartford, Connecticut (February 25, 2015) – The deadly January attack on the Paris magazine *Charlie Hebdo* has heightened passions and concerns around freedom of speech and religious sensitivity throughout the world. On Wednesday, March 4, a panel event presented by Hartford Public Library will explore the four fundamental freedoms outlined by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1941 and what they mean to us in 2015. The event, which launches a year of special programming, will take place at 6 p.m. in the Downtown Library's 3rd floor Hartford History Center, 500 Main Street, Hartford.

The January 7 attack on the satirical French magazine by two masked jihadist gunmen resulted in more than 12 deaths, including much of the staff at the magazine. The shooters, who were brothers, later died in police gunfire, and the massacre at *Charlie Hebdo*, a weekly publication with a history of courting controversy, has become an international symbol of freedom of speech and the dangers of murderous religious extremism. Four days after the attack, 40 world leaders and an estimated 2 million people rallied in Paris for a show of national unity. The expression *Je suis Charlie* quickly became an expression of solidarity with the murdered magazine staff.

Nearly every form of world religion and political belief has been lampooned in the pages of *Charlie Hebdo*, which translates to *Weekly Charlie* in English and has been described as stridently nonconformist and left-leaning.

In his famous pre-World War II speech to Congress, Roosevelt made an impassioned plea for American support of European nations then under attack from Nazi leader Adolf Hitler. He argued that the four fundamental freedoms – freedom of speech, freedom of worship, freedom from want, and freedom from fear – all were under assault by the forces of German dictatorship and Facism. The challenge to them in Europe was also a challenge to American democracy, and in distinctly modern terms, Roosevelt's address was a statement of "Je suis Charlie."

As part of what will become an ongoing series of public events about the four freedoms and what they mean to the contemporary world, author and journalist Susan Campbell will moderate the March 4 evening discussion with the following guests:

- Dr. Saud Anwar, co-chair of the American Muslim Peace Initiative and mayor of South Windsor
- Chris Doucot, co-founder of The Hartford Catholic Worker and adjunct professor of Sociology and Religion at Central Connecticut State University and University of Hartford
- Dr. Reza Mansoor, founding president of the Muslim Coalition of Connecticut and president of the Islamic Association of Greater Hartford (Berlin Mosque)
- James H. Smith, president of the Connecticut Council on Freedom of Information and a retired newspaper editor

Hartford Public Library Chief Executive Officer Matthew K. Poland was in France shortly after the shootings and explained that he felt “galvanized” to make the Library a fulcrum for public discussion and debate on these issues of freedom.

“In 1941 Franklin Roosevelt said, in essence, that the United States could not afford to be isolationist in the face of what was happening in Europe, and I think we are having a moment like that in the world today,” Poland said. “The assault on the offices of *Charlie Hebdo* in Paris is an attack on all our freedoms of expression, and we need to talk about it urgently. We need to talk about religious extremism and dangerous ideas and what, in our culture today, needs protection.”

In the months ahead, the Library will host special book displays, a competition challenging artists to re-interpret the four freedoms and other programming designed to explore the modern meaning of religious freedom and free speech.

For more information about this event, visit hplct.org.

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As a finalist for the 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.

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