



January 7, 2015 – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Lotus Education & Arts Foundation Launches One Million Stars to End Violence Project

BLOOMINGTON, INDIANA – The Lotus Education & Arts Foundation officially launches its year-long 2016 initiative, “One Million Stars to End Violence: Lotus International Star-Weaving Project” on Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day 2016.

Lotus is one of only two US partners with the Australia-based project “One Million Stars to End Violence,” an international effort inspired by a quote by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.: “Returning hate for hate multiplies hate, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars. Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate, only love can do that.” Lotus has committed to weaving and contributing at least 10,000 eight-pointed stars made from ribbon and recycled materials, in support of the larger international goal to create and display 1,000,000 stars.

The free kick-off event will take place on January 18th from 1:00-3:00pm at the Mathers Museum of World Cultures (416 N. Indiana Avenue) and is supported with funding from the City of Bloomington Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Commission. Participants will learn to weave an eight-pointed star and find out more about its ties to Samoan weaving traditions as well as to the worldwide movement. Drop-in; recommended for ages 8 to adult.

Over the coming year, Lotus will bring together Bloomington and the wider region in support of this effort, leading star-weaving workshops throughout the local area and inviting a broad range of community partners to get involved with their own “weave jams.” Stars woven by our community will be featured in an installation at the 23rd Lotus World Music & Arts Festival, at an exhibit at Bloomington City Hall in December, and then as part of a worldwide installation of 1,000,000 stars in 2018.

The “One Million Stars” project originated as a response to a widely decried violent crime in Queensland, Australia that happened around the corner from the founding artist’s studio. In the aftermath of the tragedy, project founder and textile artist Maryann Talia Pau found resonance between Dr. King, Jr.’s statement and the importance of stars and weaving in her own Pacific Island heritage. Weaving traditions are strong throughout South Pacific culture, especially with the indigenous peoples of the Torres Strait and Samoa. Additionally, symbolism stems from “Matariki”, a Maori word referring to the Pleiades star cluster. Like many South Pacific islanders, the Maori relied on stars to navigate across the sea between interconnected islands. This navigation can reference our own human journey, spanning cultures around the world and exercising our “strength to love” over violence.

“These beautiful stars are symbols of light, courage and solidarity to end all forms of violence, including violence against women, bullying, and racism,” says Pau. “Every woven star reminds us that we have to MAKE peace and safe spaces and that it doesn’t just happen. Every star is a commitment to resist violence and revenge, to believe in forgiveness and healing.”

More details about the Lotus project and kick-off are available at <http://www.lotusfest.org/events/>

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