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From Separate to Equal: The Creation of Truman Medical Centers

A film about the long struggle for racial equality paved by dedicated black and white physicians and nurses and the ultimate creation of Truman Medical Centers

KANSAS CITY, MO – At the turn of the last century, African-American doctors, nurses and patients were excluded from most Kansas City area hospitals. The realities of segregation created the need for specific healthcare institutions to care for and educate African-American physicians and nurses. ***From Separate to Equal: The Creation of Truman Medical Centers*** is a documentary that tells the dramatic history of some of greater Kansas City's African-American health care pioneers and their efforts that led to the creation of black hospitals such as Douglass, Wheatley and General Hospital Number 2, and ultimately the integration of the health care system with the creation of Truman Medical Centers (TMC).

"This documentary offers many lessons to be learned and understood. One of the most important lessons is the awareness of the origin of current healthcare disparities that impact many communities around the country. The reasons these disparities exist don't necessarily rest solely on the backs or behaviors of the affected populations," said TMC President and CEO John W. Bluford. "Instead, they are explained in the systematic disregard for many segments of our community. Now those communities in Kansas City have reasonable access to some of the finest care and wellness services available at a renewed Truman Medical Centers that is ever increasingly being recognized for its excellence."

The film features compelling interviews with medical staff, patients and Kansas City community leaders who share their stories and personal experiences of this historical and transformational period in healthcare in Kansas City. The film was produced by TMC and written and directed by award winning filmmaker Kevin Willmont. Willmont is a native of Junction City, Kansas and is currently an Associate Professor in the Film Media Studies Department at the University of Kansas. He is a producer and screenwriter whose

work includes **The Only Good Indian** and **C.S.A. – The Confederate States of American**, both accepted at the Sundance Film Festival.

“I was interested in telling this story because healthcare is a little known aspect of segregation,” Willmont said. “Most people I don't think realize that in some parts of the country literally everything was separate. Hospitals are one of those overlooked areas and TMC's evolution and creation puts a human face on that reality.”

In an effort to make the film as widely available as possible, it can be seen in several different ways. The film will be shown at the Kansas City Public Library - Plaza Branch (4801 Main Street) on Thursday, April 7 at 6:00 p.m. in the Truman Auditorium. The screening is free and open to the public. It will also air on KCPT – Kansas City Public Television on Thursday, April 14 at 9 pm and again on Sunday April 17 at 6 pm. On Monday, April 18, a new website, www.FromSeparateToEqual.org, launches, offering The full-length film for free viewing, as well as, information about the film, filmmakers and TMC.

For more information about the film, please call TMC Public Relations & Marketing at (816) 404-3785.

About TMC

Truman Medical Centers is a not-for-profit two acute-care hospital health system in Kansas City. The TMC Health System includes TMC Hospital Hill, TMC Lakewood, TMC Behavioral Health, the Jackson County Health Department and a number of primary care practices throughout Eastern Jackson County. Recently named one of the nation's top academic medical centers, TMC is the primary teaching hospital for the University of Missouri-Kansas City Schools of Health Sciences and specializes in asthma, bariatrics, diabetes, women's health, and trauma services. Please visit www.trumed.org for more information about TMC.

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