

Undertaker-poet, pro basketball star, and bestselling author will discuss 'The Body' at 2011 Spirit & Place Festival

Anita Diamant, Thomas Lynch, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar
to close city-wide event

Sunday, Nov. 13, 2011

Congregation Beth-El Zedeck, 5:30 p.m.

INDIANAPOLIS -- Bestselling author Anita Diamant, retired undertaker and poet Thomas Lynch, and basketball star Kareem Abdul-Jabbar will lead the Public Conversation for the 16th annual Spirit & Place Festival on Sunday, Nov. 13. This year the festival runs from Friday, Nov. 4 through Sunday, Nov. 13.

Now celebrating its 16th year, the Spirit & Place Festival is an extensive civic celebration that engages more than 20,000 people throughout Central Indiana in dozens of programs presented by more than 100 organizations. Its mission is to promote civic engagement, respect for diversity, thoughtful reflection, public imagination, and enduring change through creative collaboration among arts, humanities, and religion.

This year's theme for the city's largest collaborative festival is *The Body*.

Anita Diamant is an author and freelance journalist. Her first work of fiction, *The Red Tent*, became a bestseller with editions in more than 25 countries worldwide. She has written about Jewish practice and community for *Reform Judaism* and *Hadassah* magazines and for jewishfamily.com. In recent years, Diamant spearheaded the creation of Mayyim Hayyim Living Waters Community Mikveh.

During her visit to Indianapolis, Diamant will also be featured in a festival program organized by Congregation Beth El-Zedeck called *Anita Diamant: Stories of the Body* on Sunday morning, Nov. 13. The program will explore how the strengths and vulnerabilities of the female body shape women's experience, identity, freedom, and spirituality.

Thomas Lynch is a critically acclaimed poet from Michigan, who recently retired from a lifetime as an undertaker. His writing has appeared in *The Atlantic*, *The New York Times*, *Times of London* and *The New Yorker*, among others. His work has been the subject of two film documentaries. PBS *Frontline*'s "The Undertaking" aired nationwide in 2007 and won the 2008 Emmy Award for Arts and Culture Documentary. Lynch will also do a reading of his poetry in an additional festival event at North United Methodist Church on Saturday evening, Nov. 12.

Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, perhaps best known for his indefensible "skyhook," is an NBA all-star, author, Muslim and lifelong yoga practitioner. His life experiences and love of history have resulted in several books, including *On the Shoulders of Giants: My Journey through the Harlem Renaissance*; *A Season on the Reservation: My Sojourn with the*

White Mountain Apache and *Brother in Arms: The Epic Story of the 761st Battalion, WWII's Forgotten Heroes*, as well as two autobiographies.

The Public Conversation is made possible by The Indianapolis Foundation, an affiliate of CICF; North United Methodist Church; IU School of Medicine; Hilton Indianapolis Hotels & Suites; Indiana Humanities, Muslim Alliance of Indiana; and Congregation Beth-El Zedeck.

For details on these and all Spirit & Place programs and events, visit www.spiritandplace.org.

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The Spirit & Place Festival stimulates conversation, collaboration, community building through collaboration among arts, religious, and civic organizations. Spirit & Place is a collaborative community project managed by The Polis Center, part of the IU School of Liberal Arts at IUPUI. Major financial contributors include Lilly Endowment Inc.; Allen Whitehill Clowes Charitable Foundation, Inc.; the Indianapolis Foundation, an affiliate of CICF; Marian University; IUPUI; and the University of Indianapolis, as well as more than 200 other community partners and donors. For more information, call The Polis Center at (317) 274-2455 or visit www.spiritandplace.org. This year's Festival takes place November 4-13, 2011.