

National Geographic to Broadcast Five-Part Critically Acclaimed Series 'City So Real' From Academy Award®-Nominated Filmmaker Steve James in an Unprecedented One-Night, Five-Hour, Commercial-Free Event

National Geographic Documentary Films announced today that the critically acclaimed five-part documentary series from Participant and Kartemquin Films, **CITY SO REAL**, will air in an unprecedented one-night, five-hour, commercial-free event on Thursday, October 29 beginning at 7:00 p.m. ET/PT. All five episodes will then be available on Hulu the following day – Friday, October 30. From twice Academy Award®-nominated filmmaker Steve James (“America to Me,” “Hoop Dreams”) and his longtime producing partner Zak Piper (“Life Itself,” “The Interrupters”), the fascinating and complex portrait of contemporary Chicago delivers a deep, multifaceted look into the soul of a quintessentially American city, set against the backdrop of its history-making 2019 mayoral election. **CITY SO REAL** was an official Indie Episodic selection at the 2020 Sundance Film Festival where it had its world premiere. Vox hailed the series as “an engrossing portrait of a city—and a country—at an inflection point, and a love letter to Chicago, too,” while IndieWire raved that **CITY SO REAL** is “substantial, engrossing, and declarative.” The premiere on National Geographic will exclusively feature an epic fifth episode that follows the COVID-19 pandemic and social uprising following George Floyd’s death. As part of Walt Disney Television’s civic engagement campaign, National Geographic is partnering with **I am a voter.** to encourage viewers to vote in the upcoming election. Across the network leading up to the election including during the five-hour, commercial-free broadcast of **CITY SO REAL**, **I am a voter.** PSAs will air and National Geographic will leverage its social media accounts to promote the important message of voting. To further spark critical conversations surrounding voting and other significant themes from the series, National Geographic is also launching an educational campaign which will provide **CITY SO REAL** to classrooms across the country through virtual screenings. Educators will be equipped with a discussion guide to help further the dialog, voter resources and a voter guide to highlight the importance of local elections. In the five-part documentary series **CITY SO REAL**, Oscar®-nominated documentarian Steve James (“America to Me,” “Hoop Dreams”) delivers a fascinating and complex portrait of Chicago, America’s third-largest metropolis and his longtime hometown. The series begins in the haze of mid-summer 2018 as Mayor Rahm Emanuel, embroiled in accusations of a cover-up related to the police shooting of an African American teenager, Laquan McDonald, shocks the city by announcing he won’t seek reelection. An unprecedented 21 candidates emerge in a diverse and crowded field as they engage in a no-holds-barred battle for a chance to shape the city’s uncertain future. The final episode of the series picks up a year after the mayoral election in 2020, as the city simultaneously grapples with the COVID-19 pandemic and the widespread social upheaval following the police killing of George Floyd. An already fractured city is further divided by the economic, political and social fallout, which plays out on the city streets as police clash with protesters, bringing rise to a generational moment that promises to change the city forever. In candid interviews with residents throughout the city, the series captures Chicago’s indomitable spirit as well as its seemingly insurmountable challenges. **CITY SO REAL** is a gritty and loving depiction of a quintessentially American city that is at once fiercely unique and a microcosm of the nation ? and our world ? as a whole. Official episode descriptions are as follows: **EPISODE 1 – “WELCOME TO CHICAGO”** Facing a growing chorus of activists, incumbent Rahm Emanuel must choose whether to run for

reelection against a large and diverse field of candidates in the most contested mayor's race in Chicago history. Influencing his decision is the beginning of the high-profile trial for the murder of Laquan McDonald by a white police officer. **EPISODE 2 – “BLOOD SPORT”** The Laquan McDonald trial unfolds and dominates media attention. With Rahm Emanuel now out of the race, a record 21 mayoral candidates submit their petitions to replace him. They must navigate the highly politicized and contentious petition challenge process to make the ballot. Chicago is famous for its rough- and-tumble politics that is considered a “blood sport.” **EPISODE 3 – “WITH ALL DUE RESPECT TO THE CANDIDATE”** During a bitterly cold Chicago winter, the petition process results in a mayoral ballot with a record 14 candidates. A historic verdict is reached in the Laquan McDonald murder trial, and the longest-tenured city alderman in Chicago history is federally indicted on corruption charges. **EPISODE 4 – “IF YOU WANT TO BREAK THE MACHINE”** No clear front-runner emerges in the historic mayoral race. Over a dozen candidates intensify attacks on each other and jockey for votes, culminating in a surprising and historic outcome that promises to profoundly shape the city's uncertain future. **EPISODE 5 – “YOU GOTTA MAKE IT OR YOU GOTTA TAKE IT”** One year after the mayoral election, the mayor and city residents must grapple with both the devastating COVID-19 pandemic and the widespread social upheaval following the police killing of George Floyd. An already fractured city is further divided as police clash with protesters, giving rise to a generational moment that promises to change the city forever. For more information, visit Citysoreal.film or our press site www.natgeotvpressroom.com, or follow us on Twitter using @NatGeoPR. National Geographic Documentary Films and Participant Present a Kartemquin Films Production: **CITY SO REAL** – Directed by Steve James; Produced by Zak Piper and Steve James; Cinematography by Jackson James and Steve James; Edited by David E. Simpson and Steve James; Field Producers – Sylvetta Christmas, Janea Smith; Executive Producers – Jeff Skoll, Diane Weyermann, Alex Kotlowitz, Gordon Quinn, Betsy Steinberg, and Jolene Pinder; Original Music Composed by Will Miller and Resavoir; Music Supervisor – Dawn Sutter Madell. **ABOUT STEVE JAMES** Director, producer, cinematographer and editor Steve James is a two-time Academy Award nominee who has earned four Directors Guild of America (DGA) Award nominations, winning for 1994's *Hoop Dreams*. That film marked his first Oscar nomination (Best Film Editing), as well as an Independent Spirit Award win, and James received his second Oscar nod (Best Documentary Feature) for 2016's *Abacus: Small Enough to Jail*. The latter film was named one of the National Board of Review's "Top 5 Documentaries of the Year" and won Best Political Documentary at the Critics' Choice Awards. James' other notable credits include *Stevie*, an Independent Spirit Award nominee and Sundance prize winner; *The Interrupters*, which won an Emmy, Independent Spirit Award and the duPont-Columbia Journalism Award; and the Roger Ebert biography *Life Itself*, named best documentary by the National Board of Review and the Producers Guild of America (PGA), as well as winning an Emmy winner for Best Editing. The director's Starz docuseries *America to Me* premiered at Sundance and was one of the most acclaimed TV shows of 2018. **ABOUT NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC PARTNERS LLC** National Geographic Partners LLC (NGP), a joint venture between The Walt Disney Company and the National Geographic Society, is committed to bringing the world premium science, adventure and exploration content across an unrivaled portfolio of media assets. NGP combines the global National Geographic television channels (National Geographic Channel, Nat Geo WILD, Nat Geo MUNDO, Nat Geo PEOPLE) with National Geographic's media and consumer-oriented assets, including National Geographic magazines; National Geographic studios; related digital and social media platforms; books; maps; children's media; and ancillary activities that include travel, global experiences and events, archival sales, licensing and e-commerce businesses. Furthering knowledge and understanding of our world has been the core purpose of National Geographic for 132 years, and now we are committed to going deeper, pushing boundaries, going further for our consumers ... and reaching millions of people around the world in 172 countries and 43 languages every month as we do it. NGP returns 27% of our proceeds to the nonprofit National Geographic Society to fund work in the areas of science, exploration, conservation and education.

For more information visit natgeotv.com or nationalgeographic.com, or find us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), [YouTube](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [Pinterest](#). **ABOUT PARTICIPANT** Founded by Chairman Jeff Skoll and under the leadership of CEO David Linde, Participant (www.participant.com) combines the power of a good story well told with real world impact and awareness around today's most vital issues. Through its worldwide network of traditional and digital distribution, aligned with partnerships with key non-profit and NGO organizations, Participant speaks directly to the rise of today's "conscious consumer," representing the well over 2 billion consumers compelled to make meaningful content a priority focus. As an industry content leader, Participant annually produces up to six narrative feature films, five documentary films, three episodic television series, and more than 30 hours of digital short form programming, through its digital subsidiary SoulPancake. Participant's more than 100 films have collectively earned 74 Academy Award® nominations and 19 wins, including Best Picture for *Spotlight* and *Green Book*, Best Documentary Feature for *An Inconvenient Truth*, *The Cove*, *CITIZENFOUR* and *American Factory*, and Best Foreign Language Film for *Roma* and *A Fantastic Woman*. Participant's digital division, SoulPancake (www.soulpancake.com), is an award-winning provider of thought-provoking, joyful, and uplifting content that reaches an audience of more than 9 million fans. Follow Participant on Twitter ([@Participant](#)) and on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#). Follow SoulPancake on Twitter ([@soulpancake](#)) and on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#). **ABOUT KARTEMQUIN FILMS** Sparking democracy through documentary since 1966, Kartemquin (www.kartemquin.com) is a collaborative center empowering filmmakers who create documentaries that foster a more engaged and just society. The organization's films have received four Academy Award® nominations, and won six Emmys® and three Peabody Awards, among several more major prizes, including multiple Independent Spirit, IDA, PGA and DGA awards, and duPont-Columbia and Robert F. Kennedy journalism awards. In 2019, Kartemquin was honored with an Institutional Peabody Award for "its commitment to unflinching documentary filmmaking and telling an American history rooted in social justice and the stories of the marginalized." Recognized as a leading advocate for independent public media, Kartemquin has helped hundreds of artists via its filmmaker development programs and championing of the documentary field. Kartemquin is a 501(c)3 not-for-profit organization based in Chicago. Follow Kartemquin on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [Vimeo](#). **MEDIA CONTACTS:** Chris Albert, 310-880-1250, chris.albert@natgeo.com Fowzia Iranpur, 562-900-0632, Fowzia.Iranpur@natgeo.com