Global Artist Michael Mwenso Kicks Off New ALL ARTS Initiative, *The First Twenty*, with Performance Event Honoring the Impact and Legacy of George Floyd on Tuesday, May 25

The First Twenty explores how 2000-2020 changed American art, culture and consciousness

*The First Twenty*, a new content initiative from ALL ARTS, explores how the first two decades of the 21st century have forever changed American art, culture and the collective consciousness. The initiative launches Tuesday, May 25 at 8:30 p.m. ET on ALL ARTS with *Michael Mwenso Honors George Floyd*, a powerful concert homage featuring some of today’s greatest Black artists, on the one-year anniversary of George Floyd’s killing. The special will stream nationwide on the ALL ARTS app and allarts.org, and in the New York Metro area on the ALL ARTS TV channel (channel lineup).

Curated by ALL ARTS Artistic Director James King, *The First Twenty* invites artists from diverse and traditionally underrepresented communities to create original content that reflects their insights, discoveries and hopes after the quantum shifts of the last 20 years. Artists will share their lived experiences, including how the creation and consumption of art has changed. “With his international roots and inspiration from American music legends, Michael Mwenso is the perfect artist to launch ALL ARTS’ *The First Twenty* initiative,” said James King, Artistic Director of ALL ARTS. “We want to break down the barriers many members of underserved communities have with the arts and offer entry points for engagement that feel personal and reflect their unique perspective on American culture and social justice.”
Born in Sierra Leone, raised in London and currently residing in Harlem, New York, renowned global artist Michael Mwenso gathered special guest vocalists Brianna Thomas and Vuyo Sotashe, curator Destinee Ross-Sutton and poet Harold Green to join his performance troupe, Mwenso & the Shakes, for this new, half-hour ALL ARTS The First Twenty special examining how Floyd’s story galvanized the world. The special includes interviews and performances of “Mountain Top,” an original poem by Green, Irving Berlin’s “Super Time,” Bob Marley’s “Redemption Song” and Mwenso’s original “Stop Playing Them Games.”

“It’s an incredible honor to be the first artist to contribute to ALL ARTS’ groundbreaking The First Twenty initiative,” said Michael Mwenso. “By paying tribute to George Floyd, ALL ARTS has shown true understanding of our collective human condition and the pivotal moments that define us. This transition and permanent change give me hope and aspiration for what the future holds for Black creativity.”

The First Twenty aims to make fine, visual, performance and literary arts more accessible to diverse audiences. Future artists featured include playwright Enda Walsh (in partnership with Irish Arts Center), photographer Jeremy Dennis, National Black Theatre, poet Samira Sadeque and the Ma-Yi Theater Company. New commissioned works will be augmented by a curated playlist of related public media content on the ALL ARTS app and website. Additional programming will be announced at a later date.

Created by The WNET Group, ALL ARTS launched in 2019 to offer access to all forms of creative expression from New York and around the world. As a free, on-demand service ALL ARTS reduces barriers to experiencing the arts and builds new audiences for cultural organizations. The New York Emmy-winning arts and culture platform’s programming illuminates the emerging to the established, the hybrid to the pure, in dance, film, stories, music, theater, visual art, design and all other forms of creative expression.

Michael Mwenso Honors George Floyd is a production of Electric Root & Black Lion TV. Sing Lathan is Director. Michael Mwenso is Artist, Bandleader & Curator. Brianna Thomas and Vuyo Sotashe are Vocals. Harold Green is Spoken Word. Destinee Ross-Sutton is Art Curator & Gallerist. Larry Ossei-Mensah is Curator & Cultural Critic. For ALL ARTS: Anna Campbell is Multimedia Producer. Kristy Geslain is Senior Producer. Joe Harrell is Senior Director. James King is Artistic Director. Diane Masciale and Neal Shapiro are Executives in Charge.

Leadership support for ALL ARTS is generously provided by Jody and John Arnhold and the Arnhold Foundation, Sue and Edgar Wachenheim III, the Kate W. Cassidy Foundation, The Jerome L. Greene Foundation, The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, Rockefeller Brothers Fund, Anderson Family Fund and Doris Duke Charitable Foundation.

About ALL ARTS
ALL ARTS is breaking new ground as the premier destination for inspiration, creativity and art of all forms. This New York Emmy-winning arts and culture hub is created by The WNET Group, the
parent company of New York’s PBS stations. With the aim of being accessible to viewers everywhere, ALL ARTS’ Webby-nominated programming – from digital shorts to feature films – is available online nationwide through allarts.org, the free ALL ARTS app on all major streaming platforms and @AllArtsTV on YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. New York area TV viewers can also watch the 24/7 broadcast channel. For all the ways to watch, visit allarts.org/everywhere.

About The WNET Group
The WNET Group creates inspiring media content and meaningful experiences for diverse audiences nationwide. It is the nonprofit parent company of New York’s THIRTEEN – America’s flagship PBS station – WLIW21, THIRTEEN PBSKids, WLIW World and Create; Long Island’s only NPR station WLIW-FM; and ALL ARTS, the arts and culture media provider. The WNET Group also operates NJ PBS, New Jersey’s statewide public television network, and newsroom NJ Spotlight News. Through these channels and streaming platforms, The WNET Group brings arts, culture, education, news, documentary, entertainment and DIY programming to more than five million viewers each month. The WNET Group’s award-winning productions include signature PBS series Nature, Great Performances, American Masters, PBS NewsHour Weekend and Amanpour and Company and trusted local news programs MetroFocus and NJ Spotlight News with Briana Vannozzi. Inspiring curiosity and nurturing dreams, The WNET Group’s award-winning Kids’ Media and Education team produces the PBS KIDS series Cyberchase, interactive Mission US history games, and resources for families, teachers and caregivers. A leading public media producer for nearly 60 years, The WNET Group presents and distributes content that fosters lifelong learning, including multi-platform initiatives addressing poverty, jobs, economic opportunity, social justice, understanding and the environment. Through Passport, station members can stream new and archival programming anytime, anywhere. Community-supported, The WNET Group represents the best in public media. Join us.

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