



Genius:
MLK/X

NEWS

**NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SETS PREMIERE DATE FOR
EMMY® AWARD-WINNING ANTHOLOGY SERIES,
*GENIUS: MLK/X***

**The Powerful, Eight-Part Series Hails From Executive Producers
Reggie Rock Bythewood and Gina Prince-Bythewood’s Undisputed Cinema,
Executive Producers Brian Grazer, Ron Howard and Kristen Zolner of
Imagine Television, Executive Producers and Showrunners Raphael Jackson Jr.
and Damione Macedon, and 20th Television**

***GENIUS: MLK/X* Will Premiere Feb. 1 on National Geographic
and Stream Feb. 2 on Disney+ and Hulu**

First Look Here: <https://youtu.be/SSwoGlaDn-E>

(WASHINGTON, D.C. – Oct. 18, 2023) At National Geographic’s content showcase at Hall des Lumières, Nat Geo executive vice president of Scripted and Documentary Films, Carolyn Bernstein, announced that the first two episodes of the next installment of the award-winning **GENIUS** franchise, **GENIUS: MLK/X**, will premiere **Feb. 1** on National Geographic and stream the next day on Disney+ and Hulu, with two new episodes debuting weekly on all platforms. In a first for the Emmy Award-winning anthology series, the eight-part series will focus on two iconic geniuses — Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X — and how their dueling philosophies helped usher America through the Civil Rights Movement.

This season is once again produced by 20th Television with **Brian Grazer** and **Ron Howard’s** Imagine Television, as well as the company’s president of Television, **Kristen Zolner**, along with the award-winning duo **Reggie Rock Bythewood** (“Swagger,” “Shots Fired”) and **Gina Prince-Bythewood** (“The Woman King,” “Shots Fired”), who are responsible for groundbreaking films and series under their production company Undisputed Cinema. **Raphael Jackson Jr.** and **Damione Macedon** (“Power,” “Mosquito Coast”) are showrunners and executive producers.

As previously announced, the ensemble cast includes **Kelvin Harrison Jr.** (“The Trial of the Chicago 7”) as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., **Aaron Pierre** (“The Underground Railroad”) as Malcolm X, **Weruche Opia** (“I May Destroy You”) as Coretta Scott King, and **Jayne Lawson** (“The Batman”) as Betty Shabazz. The series also marks one of the last roles for Emmy-winning actor **Ron Cephas Jones** (“This is Us”).

With series like **GENIUS: MLK/X**, Undisputed Cinema aims to tell timely and timeless character-driven stories that focus on the humanity of people of color.

GENIUS: MLK/X follows both King and X from their formative years, where they were molded by strong fathers and traumatic injustices, to their rich, parallel stories as they shaped their identities and became the change they wished to see in the world. Influenced as children by different upbringings and experiences: King by the Jim Crow-era South and life in the church before finding his voice at Morehouse and Boston University, and X growing up under the constant, deadly violence of the Klan and falling into a life of vice and incarceration where he was introduced to the Nation of Islam and found his voice. The two visionaries ultimately rose to pioneer a movement.

The docudrama series offers an intimate look into their complex lives as husbands, fathers, brothers and sons, taking them off the iconic T-shirts to show their humanity. **GENIUS: MLK/X** brings their wives, Coretta Scott King and Betty Shabazz, who are often portrayed as peripheral figures, to the forefront and shows them as formidable equals of the Movement. Episodes will explore the moments between the monumental historical events we’ve come to know and shine a light on how each leader and those closest to them questioned their resolve and decisions as they navigated the rigors of balancing a public persona with a private life. While King and X met only once and often challenged each other’s views, neither would have been as successful without the other.

Ambassador Shabazz (producer, writer, diplomat and eldest daughter of Dr. Betty Shabazz and Malcolm X Shabazz) served as consulting producer for the series. A think tank of renowned historians and experts served as production consultants prior to the start of the writer’s room to guide the production, including the following (in alphabetical order): **Jamal Joseph** (“Panther Baby: A Life of Rebellion and Reinvention”), **Peniel E. Joseph** (“The Sword and The Shield: The Revolutionary Lives of Malcolm X and Martin Luther King Jr.,” served as inspiration for the series), **Michele Norris** (“The Race Card Project”), **Dr. Kameelah Rashad** (Muslim Wellness Foundation), **Dr. Barbara Reynolds** (“Jesse Jackson: America’s David,” “No, I Won’t Shut Up: Thirty Years of Telling It Like It Is”), **Jeff Stetson** (“The Meeting,” served as inspiration for the series, wrote the pilot and served as an executive producer), **Jeanne Theoharis** (political science professor at City University of New York) and **Pastor Michael A. Walrond Jr.** (senior pastor of First Corinthian Baptist Church).

GENIUS dramatizes the fascinating stories of the world’s most brilliant innovators, exploring their extraordinary achievements along with their volatile, passionate and complex personal

relationships. In 2017, National Geographic premiered the first season of the anthology series, which starred Geoffrey Rush as the brilliant scientist Albert Einstein. **GENIUS: EINSTEIN** earned 10 Emmy nominations, including Outstanding Limited Series, as well as Golden Globe® and SAG Award nominations for Rush. The follow-up season, **GENIUS: PICASSO**, starred Antonio Banderas as the titular Spanish painter and matched much of the success of its predecessor, earning seven Emmy nominations — and two wins — as well as Golden Globe and SAG Award nominations for Banderas. The third installment, **GENIUS: ARETHA**, starred Cynthia Erivo as Aretha Franklin and premiered as the most-watched telecast for National Geographic in two years. Erivo received Emmy, Critics Choice and Golden Globe nominations for her critically acclaimed role as the Queen of Soul.

For Imagine Television, Brian Grazer, Ron Howard and Kristen Zolner are executive producers. For Undisputed Cinema, Reggie Rock Bythewood, Gina Prince-Bythewood and Francie Calfo are executive producers. Raphael Jackson Jr. and Damione Macedon are showrunners and executive producers. For Madison Wells, Gigi Pritzker and Rachel Shane serve as executive producers. For EUE/Sokolow, Sam Sokolow is executive producer. Jeff Stetson (“The Meeting”) penned the pilot and is executive producer. Channing Godfrey Peoples (“Miss Juneteenth”) directed the pilot episode and also served as co-executive producer. Ambassador Shabazz served as a consulting producer.

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About National Geographic

Award-winning and critically acclaimed National Geographic Content, part of a joint venture between The Walt Disney Company and the National Geographic Society, creates and delivers riveting stories and experiences in natural history, science, adventure and exploration. Inspiring a deeper connection to the world, the content studio reaches 300 million people worldwide in 180 countries and 33 languages across the global National Geographic channels (National Geographic Channel, Nat Geo WILD, Nat Geo MUNDO), National Geographic Documentary Films, and direct-to-consumer platforms Disney+ and Hulu. Its diverse content includes Emmy® Award-winning franchise **Genius**, series **Life Below Zero** and **Secrets of the Whales**, and Oscar®- and BAFTA award-winning film **Free Solo**. In 2022, National Geographic Content was awarded eight News and Documentary Emmys, in addition to **Life Below Zero**’s Emmy win for Outstanding Cinematography for a Reality Program, its sixth Emmy overall. For more information, visit natgeotv.com or nationalgeographic.com, or follow Nat Geo on [Facebook](#), [X](#), [Instagram](#), [YouTube](#) and [LinkedIn](#).

About Imagine Television

Imagine Entertainment, founded by Ron Howard and Brian Grazer, is a multi-award-winning film and television production company with a remarkable track record of creating critically acclaimed and commercially successful content. With numerous hit projects to their credit, Imagine Entertainment has consistently redefined the boundaries of storytelling in the entertainment industry.

About 20th Television

One of the Disney Television Studios, 20th Television is a prolific supplier of entertainment programming, including Hulu’s most-watched comedy ONLY MURDERS IN THE BUILDING from Steve Martin, John Hoffman and Dan Fogelman; the Disney+ hit holiday series THE SANTA CLAUSES starring Tim Allen from Jack Burditt; and upcoming PERCY JACKSON AND THE OLYMPIANS from bestselling author Rick

Riordan and Jon Steinberg; and critically acclaimed limited series THE DROPOUT starring Amanda Seyfried and from Liz Meriwether, and DOPESICK from Danny Strong and starring Michael Keaton; ABC's award-winning hit comedy ABBOTT ELEMENTARY from Quinta Brunson, NOT DEAD YET starring Gina Rodriguez, and WILL TRENT starring Ramón Rodriguez; FX's hit THE OLD MAN from Jon Steinberg and starring Jeff Bridges, its blockbuster series AMERICAN HORROR STORY from Ryan Murphy and Brad Falchuk, and the FEUD anthology series from Ryan Murphy; top network drama 9-1-1 in its new home at ABC and its spinoff, 9-1-1: LONE STAR, at FOX from Ryan Murphy, Brad Falchuk and Tim Minear. In addition to dozens of others. 20th Television shows have amassed a collective 1,996 Emmy nominations and 226 wins, as well as multiple Golden Globes, Humanitas Prizes and Peabody Awards. The studio's landmark series from its 70-year library include such classics as BATMAN, THIS IS US, MODERN FAMILY, HOMELAND, M*A*S*H, GLEE, HOW I MET YOUR MOTHER, BONES, EMPIRE, FRESH OFF THE BOAT, 24, BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER, NEW GIRL and THE X-FILES.

About Undisputed Cinema

Undisputed Cinema produces timely and timeless character-driven stories aimed to challenge audiences' perspectives in different ways. Undisputed Cinema's stories show humanity on-screen and create deep connections driven to build empathy between their characters and their viewers. As longtime advocates for equal representation in film and television on-screen and behind-the-scenes, they have championed many emerging writers and directors including through mentorships along with Reggie Rock Bythewood's industry town-halls on systemic racism and Gina Prince-Bythewood's funding a scholarship for African American students in the film program at UCLA, her alma mater.

Undisputed Cinema produces the acclaimed series "Swagger" with Imagine Television Studios, Boardroom, and CBS Studios, which Bythewood serves as creator and showrunner. Season 2 of the series launched this summer on Apple+ TV to further critical acclaim. "Swagger" explores the world of elite youth basketball clubs, the players, their families and coaches, and "the game within the game." Off the court, the series reveals what it's like to group up in America.

Additionally Undisputed Cinema is "Genius: MLK/X," which Bythewood and Prince-Bythewood serve as Executive Producers. The Disney+ Original limited series is produced by 20th Television, Imagine Television, and Undisputed Cinema. "Genius: MLK/X" will explore the formative years, pioneering accomplishments, dueling philosophies and key personal relationships of Martin Luther King Jr. (Kelvin Harrison Jr.) and Malcolm X (Aaron Pierre). Malcolm X argued forcefully for Black empowerment, identity and self-determination. With their formidable wives, Coretta Scott King (Weruche Opia) and Betty Shabazz (Jayne Lawson), by their sides, King and Malcolm X became synonymous with the civil rights era and the fight for racial and economic justice. While they met only once and often challenged each other's views, neither would have been as successful without the other.

Undisputed Cinema also produced with Imagine Entertainment the critically-acclaimed limited series "Shots Fired," with Bythewood and Prince-Bythewood serving as Creators, Executive Producers along with writing and directing. The ten-hour series aired on FOX in the spring of 2017 and examined the dangerous aftermath of two racially-charged shootings in a small Southern town.

About Showrunners Raphael Jackson Jr. and Damione Macedon

Showrunners Raphael Jackson Jr. and Damione Macedon have worked across multiple genres and source material to tell engaging stories about characters and the systems in which they live. With GENIUS: MLK/X they hope to use their storytelling to help audiences transcend traditional boundaries, and gain insight into these iconic figures, and the complex world and time period in which they navigated. Macedon and Jackson have written and produced multiple quality streaming and cable dramas. Before showrunning and executive

producing GENIUS: MLK/X, they worked on series including MOSQUITO COAST for Apple TV, POWER for STARZ and LOW WINTER SUN for AMC. They have been on multiple overall deals at studios where they have developed character rich dramas that not only entertain, but elevate the worlds in which they live. A native of Detroit, Raphael is the second oldest of seven children and is a graduate of the University of Michigan. Damione hails from the Bay Area and holds a degree in History from Cal State University, Northridge.

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