

National Geographic Unveils the First Field Ready Class

Nat Geo Taps Premiere Natural History Producers to Serve as Year 1 Mentors Including Nutopia, ICON Films, Plimsoll, and Others Field Ready Program Goes Virtual National Geographic unveiled the Field Ready Program earlier this year to promote diversity and inclusion in global television production, providing a clear path for a new generation of people interested in working behind the camera. National Geographic today presented the first class of this program from around the globe. The announcement was made by National Geographic Global Television Networks President Courteney Monroe at the network's session at the Summer TCA press tour, held virtually.

"I am very proud to welcome the first class of National Geographic's Field Ready Program," said Monroe. "This program is designed to help foster the next generation of world-class natural history storytellers, a genre that has long and notably lacked diverse talent behind the camera." "As the global leader in natural history programming, we are profoundly aware that there is a lack of diversity and inclusion in natural history filmmaking teams," added Janet Han Vissering, senior vice president, development & production, Nat Geo WILD, who is spearheading the program. "To stay on the cutting edge in this highly competitive field, cultivating fresh voices and diverse talent is key. We want to make sure that we are leading in this game-changing endeavor, and are now full steam ahead and embracing the extended program, which is already leading to meaningful mentor and mentee partnerships." In its first year, the Field Ready Program made a pivot to a digital mentorship, given current circumstances, that elevates early career National Geographic Explorers as members of production teams. In partnership with the National Geographic Society, the nonprofit arm of National Geographic, the Field Ready Program will elevate early-career National Geographic Explorers to become impactful members of production teams. The inaugural class of the Field Ready Program is comprised of 10 filmmakers from around the world who have been paired in mentor-mentee relationships with the natural history genre's preeminent producers, directors and storytellers. The six-month program will consist of a series of monthly master classes and digital one-on-one mentorship from leading industry professionals. "The National Geographic Society remains committed to ensuring that historically underserved and underrepresented groups are equipped to share their voices, stories and ideas," said Kaitlin Yarnall, senior vice president and chief storytelling officer at the National Geographic Society. "We launched Field Ready in recognition that our work is made stronger when the people who tell stories on a global stage represent the world in which we live." The inaugural class of the Field Ready Program includes:

- **Kiki Cheptoo Ng'ok — Kenya** — a filmmaker who is passionate about telling untold stories in African communities of conservation and of the continent's spectacular nature and wildlife, including those that elevate indigenous voices.
- **Mauro Sergio Francisco — Angola** — a photographer who is entering into filmmaking to document Angola's natural history and resources from the local perspective, specifically to explore the parallels and interconnectedness of the survival of humans with the survival of other animals.
- **Tamana Ayazi — Afghanistan** — a documentary filmmaker whose short films for Afghani and international audiences inspire awareness and activism, and who is aiming to bring the unique perspective of being a female natural history storyteller from Afghanistan to conservation and environmental issues.
- **Gab Mejia — Philippines**

— an international award-winning photographer and filmmaker, conservationist and mountaineer from the Philippines who is aiming to create discussions and highlight issues in the conservation of Southeast Asia's wildlife to inspire impactful changes and actions in favor of wildlife conservation.

- **Gena Steffens — United States** — a photographer, filmmaker and writer based in Colombia who is exploring the intersection of the human experience, conflict and environmental issues through photography, writing and visual arts.
- **Tessa “Ellie” Eleonore Schmidt — United States** — an underwater photographer and filmmaker, fine artist, sailor and fisherwoman who is telling documentary-style stories of the wildlife management, salmon forests and fish nurseries of southeast Alaska to advocate for their conservation.
- **Daniel Gustavo von Sperling de Vasconcellos Venturini — Brazil** — a science communicator and founder of ECO360. His films, including 360° VR immersions, are introducing the general public to ocean conservancy, empowering local communities to act in favor of ocean conservation and producing effective science communications for research groups and protected areas.
- **Ifeatu Nnaobi — Nigeria** — a photographer and filmmaker whose work aims to mobilize positive change around the themes of identity, migration, conflict, human rights and natural history. Through film, she is exploring the underserved and under-discussed, yet highly important, topic of Nigeria's environmental health.
- **Juan Arias — Colombia** — a photographer and filmmaker investigating human relationships with “the other,” parallels between human and animal natures, and local environmental stories in Colombia, including how indigenous people can share their ancient knowledge about living in balance with our world.
- **Maurice Oniang'o — Kenya** — an award-winning multimedia journalist and documentary filmmaker from Kenya exploring how traditional beliefs, cultures, perceptions and attitudes affect Kenya's natural resources and conservation, as well as how the country's natural history is shared with the world.

The mentors are:

- Vanessa Berlowitz — Wildstar, U.K.
- Ruth Roberts — Talesmith, U.K.
- Luke Wiles — Nutopia, U.K.
- Dominic Weston — Wall to Wall Television, U.K.
- Jeff Garcia — The Best Productions, U.S.
- Laura Marshall — ICON Films, U.K.
- Brian Armstrong — Red Rock Films, U.S.
- Martha Holmes — Plimsoll, U.K.
- Sarah Cunliffe — Big Wave, U.K.
- Brian and Mandy Leith — Brian Leith Productions, U.K.

Each one-hour “master class” is taught by a leader in the industry. The hour includes 30 minutes of storytelling and teaching followed by 30 minutes of Q&A with the mentee cohort. The courses represent a combined 242 years of expertise — knowledge that takes a lifetime to accumulate. This invaluable industry knowledge will be shared to help accelerate each of the mentee's careers in the area of interest that most intrigues them. Topics include:

- The Big Picture with Geoff Daniels (National Geographic Channels)
- Dreaming Up Ideas with Ruth Roberts (Talesmith)

- Being Unstoppable in the Field with Brian Armstrong (Red Rock Films)
- Finding Your Voice with Vanessa Berlowitz (Wildstar Films)
- Narrative Style & Post Production with Dominic Weston (Wall to Wall Television)
- Running a Production Company & Building Strong Teams with Laura Marshall (ICON Films)
- Environmentalism and Humanity's Relationship with Nature with Brian and Mandy Leith (Brian Leith Productions)

Upon graduating from the program, the Field Ready class of mentees will be announced to the wider production community as qualified candidates to be placed on National Geographic productions around the world. The program will become a reliable resource to our production partners as they look to hire and mentor the next generation of talent. By creating a pipeline of qualified candidates and endorsing them as Field Ready, the goal is not only to make an impact on the future of this business, but to be the leaders in ensuring we stand by our commitment to diversity and inclusion. As the first class launches, we are now focused on how to expand the program to include more diverse voices in additional fields representing channel content, including science, adventure and exploration. For inquiries into Field Ready Year 2, please email NGPFieldReady@natgeo.com. For more information, visit www.natgeotv.com or our press site www.natgeotvpressroom.com, or follow us on Twitter using @NatGeoPR. **ABOUT NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC PARTNERS** National Geographic Partners LLC (NGP), a joint venture between Disney 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 <http://natgeotv.com/> or nationalgeographic.com, or find us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), [YouTube](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [Pinterest](#). **ABOUT THE NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY** The National Geographic Society is a global nonprofit organization that uses the power of science, exploration, education and storytelling to illuminate and protect the wonder of our world. Since 1888, National Geographic has pushed the boundaries of exploration, investing in bold people and transformative ideas, providing more than 14,000 grants for work across all seven continents, reaching 3 million students each year through education offerings, and engaging audiences around the globe through signature experiences, stories and content. To learn more, visit www.nationalgeographic.org or follow us on [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#). MEDIA CONTACTS Chris Albert, 202-912-6526, chris.albert@natgeo.com Jennifer DeGuzman, 212-656-0713, jennifer.deguzman@natgeo.com