



DAWN PORTER AND FOCUS FEATURES SET TO MAKE DOCUMENTARY WITH FORMER CHIEF OFFICIAL WHITE HOUSE PHOTOGRAPHER PETE SOUZA

Produced by Oscar Nominee and Emmy Winner Laura Dern and Oscar Winner Evan Hayes, Documentary Will Feature Rare Behind-the-Scenes Photos from Souza’s Time Covering President Obama and President Reagan

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NEW YORK, NY, November 12, 2019 – On the heels of last year’s sensation *Won’t You Be My Neighbor?*, Focus Features is set to produce an upcoming documentary about former Chief Official White House Photographer Pete Souza. Sundance Special Jury Prize and Peabody Award-winning director Dawn Porter (*Gideon’s Army*, *Bobby Kennedy for President*, and the upcoming film *Good Trouble* about Congressman John Lewis) will direct and produce the film about the prolific and outspoken photojournalist. Academy Award®, BAFTA® and Emmy Award® winning producer Evan Hayes (*Free Solo*) will produce under his ACE Content banner alongside Academy Award®-nominee and Emmy Award®-winner Laura Dern and her Jaywalker Pictures partner Jayme Lemons, in association with Platform One Media.

As Chief Official White House Photographer, Pete Souza spent more time alongside President Barack Obama than almost anyone else, and his years photographing Presidents Obama and Reagan gave him an intimate behind-the-scenes view of the unique gravity of the Office and the tremendous responsibility that comes with it. And as the official White House photographer for two administrations – both Democratic and Republican – Souza had unprecedented access to Presidencies on both sides of the political spectrum which has given him a unique vantage point on our current political landscape. This view provided Souza with insights not related to policy or politics, but instead relating to the office of the Presidency more broadly, forcing him to confront challenging questions: What is leadership? What does it mean to be “Presidential?” American? Empathetic? A leader of a global superpower?

The film will track Souza’s journey from a man with top secret clearance and total access to the President, whose job description meant he was required to be invisible, to a man who has turned his focus on the present day and who uses his art as commentary to help us understand where we are now as a country and what we might be missing.

Souza's past published works of photographs, *Obama: An Intimate Portrait*, and *Shade: A Tale of Two Presidents* both debuted at #1 on the New York Times bestseller lists. He is a professor emeritus at Ohio University's School of Visual Communication and was a winner of the Pulitzer Prize for explanatory journalism in 2001 as part of the Chicago Tribune staff.

"For eight years during the Obama presidency, I was inside the room where it happened. My job was to visually document his Presidency, making more than 1.9 million photographs for the historical record. But I also strived to capture the fleeting moments of President Obama's life to show what he was like as a human being," said Pete Souza. "On January 20, 2017, I left the White House and resumed my most important role in life – citizen. And it's as citizen that I have chosen to speak out, using my photographs as commentary of where we were and how that contrasts with where we are today."

Filmmaker Dawn Porter said, "Pete Souza is the voice we need now. His unprecedented access to the office of the President is a sober reflection on the importance of American leadership. I've spent my career highlighting heroic voices, and I could not be more thrilled to be working with Evan, Laura, Jayme and Focus Features to tell Pete's heroic story. Their commitment to this story reflects a dedication to honor as well as art and I am so grateful to be working with this team."

Producer Evan Hayes commented, "For fans of *Hamilton*, you want to be in the room where it happens, and as an Official White House Photographer Pete Souza was in that room with two Presidents from opposite ends of the political spectrum. His observations about the Office of the Presidency have resonated with me and millions of others in powerful & unexpected ways and I'm thrilled to partner with Dawn Porter & Focus, and also my very good friends Laura & Jayme, to bring Pete's story, and his photography, to life."

Producers Laura Dern and Jayme Lemons said, "Pete Souza is an American treasure. Jayme and I couldn't be more excited to partner with Evan Hayes, along with the brilliant team at Focus Features, to bring to the screen his remarkable story, images, and expression of empathy and compassion through his indelible work chronicling two presidents." – Laura Dern

Focus Features will distribute the documentary domestically, and Universal Pictures International will handle foreign distribution.

About Focus Features

Focus Features acquires and produces specialty films for the global market and holds a library of iconic movies, with 127 Academy Award Nominations and 25 wins from fearless filmmakers. Current and Upcoming releases from Focus include *Harriet*, about the legendary freedom fighter Harriet Tubman starring Cynthia Erivo and Leslie Odom Jr. and directed by Kasi Lemmons; Working Title and Blueprint Picture's new adaptation of *Emma* starring Anya Taylor-Joy and Johnny Flynn; the Kevin Costner and Diane Lane led *Let Him Go*; Jon Stewart's *Irresistible*

starring Steve Carell, Rose Byrne, and Chris Coopers; Todd Haynes' *Dark Waters* with Mark Ruffalo and Anne Hathaway from Participant Media; Edgar Wright's psychological thriller *Last Night in Soho* from Working Title; the female-led *Never Rarely Sometimes Always*, from acclaimed writer/director Eliza Hittman, *Promising Young Woman* produced by LuckyChap Entertainment; the music industry set *Covers* starring Dakota Johnson and Tracee Ellis Ross; heartfelt comedy *Half Brothers* from director Luke Greenfield; and *Downton Abbey* - the movie starring the entire original cast. Universal Pictures International has led distribution in select markets for titles including *Harriet*; *Downton Abbey*; *Emma*; *Let Him Go*; *Irresistible*; and *Last Night in Soho*.

Focus is part of Universal Filmed Entertainment Group (UFEG), which produces, acquires, markets and distributes filmed entertainment worldwide in various media formats for theatrical, home entertainment, television and other distribution platforms, as well as consumer products, interactive gaming and live entertainment. UFEG's global division also includes Universal Pictures, Universal Pictures Home Entertainment, Universal Brand Development, Fandango, DreamWorks Animation Film and Television. UFEG is part of NBCUniversal, one of the world's leading media and entertainment companies in the development, production and marketing of entertainment, news and information to a global audience. NBCUniversal owns and operates a valuable portfolio of news and entertainment networks, a premier motion picture company, significant television production operations, a leading television stations group, world-renowned theme parks and a suite of leading Internet-based businesses. NBCUniversal is a subsidiary of Comcast Corporation.

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About ACE Content

ACE Content is an award-winning integrated entertainment company that develops and produces premium original content for studios, distributors, media networks and brands including episodic television, feature films, digital, print & publishing, social media and experiential/live events. With offices in New York and Los Angeles, ACE combines the storytelling of an award-winning production company with the brand sensibility of a world-class communication agency. ACE is currently in production on an *Untitled* feature documentary about Jacques Cousteau for National Geographic with two-time Academy Award-nominee Liz Garbus, and it has projects in development with Netflix, Amblin Partners and ABC, among others.

About Jaywalker Pictures

Jaywalker Pictures is a Los Angeles-based production company formed by partners Laura Dern and Jayme Lemons. The company has a first-look television deal with Platform One Media, where they have multiple series in development. In addition, Jaywalker Pictures will produce *The Dolls* for HBO alongside Issa Rae and *The Most Fun we ever Had* alongside Bond Group Entertainment

and a drama from Alex Gibney. Jaywalker is developing a robust slate of feature films, along with series spanning an array of platforms.

About Dawn Porter

Dawn Porter is an award-winning documentary filmmaker whose work has appeared on HBO, PBS, Discovery, and Netflix among others. A two-time Sundance festival Director, her film *Trapped* explored laws regulating abortion clinics in the South. The film won the special jury social-impact prize at the 2016 Sundance Film Festival, in addition to a Peabody and numerous other awards. Her 2013 documentary *Gideon's Army* premiered on HBO and won best editing at Sundance. *Gideon's Army* was nominated for an Independent Spirit Award and an Emmy, and is part of the U.S. Department of State's American Film Showcase. She just completed a feature documentary about Congressman John Lewis which will be distributed by Magnolia Pictures and CNN Films. Dawn has been commissioned to create films for the Center for Investigative Reporting, Time and Essence Magazines, The New York Times Op Docs, and Amazon. Her work has received generous support from the MacArthur Foundation, the Ford Foundation, Tribeca Film Institute, Sundance Film Institute, Chicken & Egg Pictures and other esteemed organizations. She is a member of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, the Television Academy of Arts and Sciences, and the Directors Guild of America.

About Pete Souza

Pete Souza was the Chief Official White House Photographer for President Obama and the Director of the White House Photo Office from 2009-2017. Previously, Souza was a national reporter for the Chicago Tribune from 1998-2008, a freelancer for National Geographic and Life, and the Official White House Photographer for President Reagan from 1983-1989. His books include *Images of Greatness: An Intimate Look at the Presidency of Ronald Reagan*, the New York Times bestseller *The Rise of Barack Obama*, which documents President Obama's meteoric ascent from his first day in the United States Senate through the 2008 presidential primary, and the #1 New York Times bestsellers *Obama: An Intimate Portrait* and *Shade: A Talk of Two Presidents*. Pete also published the children's book "*Dream Big Dreams*" which also debuted on the New York Times bestseller list. Souza is a native of South Dartmouth, MA. He graduated cum laude with a bachelor of science degree in public communication from Boston University and received his masters degree in journalism and mass communication from Kansas State University. He is currently based in Madison, WI and is a Professor Emeritus at Ohio University's School of Visual Communication.

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Contacts:

Brad Thompson / FOCUS FEATURES – Brad.Thompson@focusfeatures.com

