

Film Review: Miscarriage of Justice Befalls ‘The Central Park Five’

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on December 7, 2012 - 11:03am

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CHICAGO – It takes a provocative subject to capture the attention of famous documentarian Ken Burns. There are few things more provocative than the story of “The Central Park Five.” Burns, his daughter Sarah Burns and son-in-law David McMahon were co-directors for this exploration of justice denied.



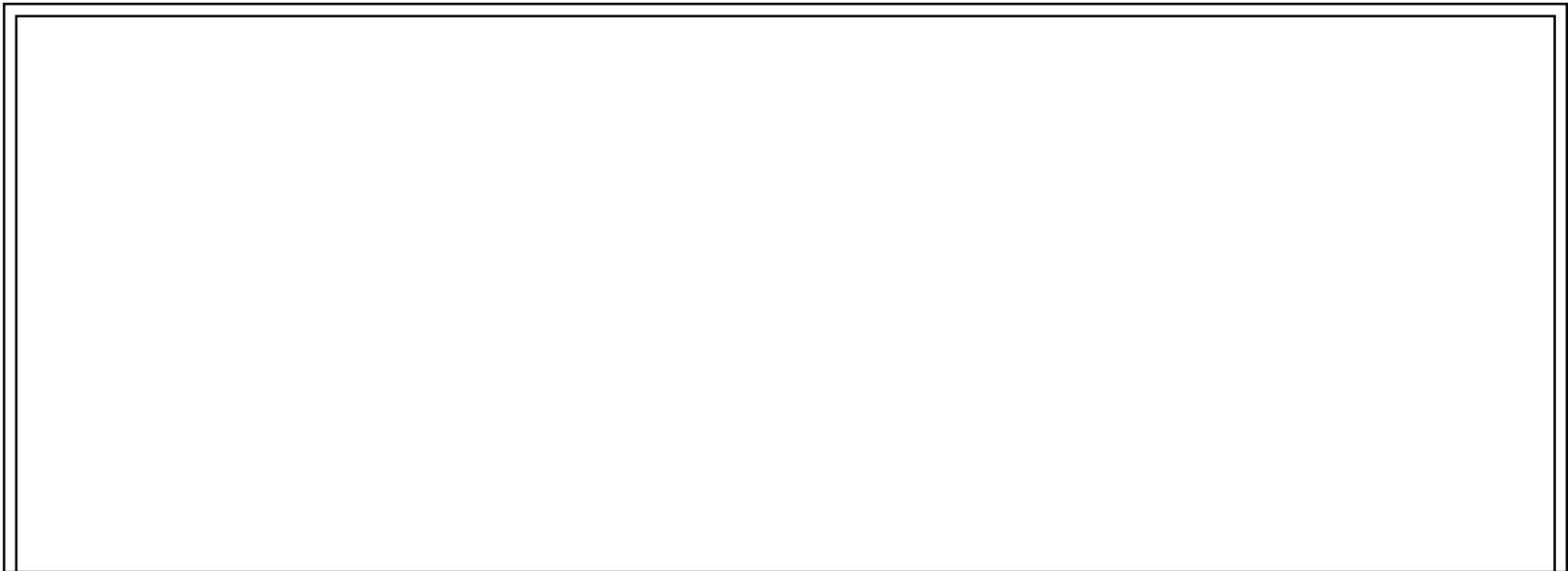
“The Central Park Five” is the true story of five teenage boys in New York City, circa 1989. They are fooling around late at night in Central Park on April 19th of that year, and find themselves arrested for the sexual assault of a female jogger within the park. The film breaks down the case, the prosecution of the boys and their unjust incarceration afterward. The process of the teenagers’ trials in the documentary has larger themes of race, media exploitation and authoritarian fear mongering, and the three writer/co-directors break down the case to expose the sheer injustice of the prosecution, and how fear of the other yet again punishes the innocent. This is a magnifying glass on a racial profiling incident 23 years ago, but echoes through the canyons of those two decades back to now.

Antron McCray, Kevin Richardson, Raymond Santana, Kharey Wise and Yusef Salaam were New York City teenagers in the Spring of 1989. While hanging out in Central Park on the night of April 19th, they are chased and brought in for questioning by the police. There has been an assault on a female jogger, a white investment banker living in the city, and the boys are coerced into becoming the prime suspects. With rights and the rule of law thrown out the window, they become scapegoats for a city paranoid about being under “siege,” racially judged for the color of their skin and railroaded into a guilty verdict replete with weak due process.

The story of the boys is broken down into the step by step events of the era, with the now grown men speaking about their trials. It had been proven after many years of their unjust jail time that another man committed the crime, but it is too late to regain their lost youth. That theft of time and reputation is a blight upon the New York City legal system, but the atmosphere of the initial trial was manipulated further by a compliant press, who condemned and stereotyped five scared teenage boys.

“The Central Park Five” continues its limited release in Chicago on December 7th. See local listings for theaters and show times. Written and directed by David McMahon, Sarah Burns and Ken Burns. Not Rated.

 [Continue reading for Patrick McDonald’s full review of “The Central Park Five”](#) [17]





Raymond Santana, Antron McCray, Kevin Richardson, Kharey Wise and Yusef Salaam are 'The Central Park Five'

Photo credit: Sundance Selects



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