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“Kingdom of Dust: Drought & Decline in California’s Central Valley” chronicling human effect of the state’s ongoing drought opens Feb. 2 at the California Museum

Featuring original work by TIME magazine’s 2014 “Instagram Photographer of the Year,” exhibit explores how the ongoing drought has compounded some of the state’s most entrenched poverty & threatens to turn productive farmland into a modern day dust bowl

SACRAMENTO, CALIF., (Jan. 19, 2016) – Featuring the work of Tulare County-based photographer Matt Black, “Kingdom of Dust: Drought & Decline in California’s Central Valley” chronicling the human effects of the state’s ongoing drought opens on Tues., Feb. 2, 2016 at the California Museum. A visual exploration of places seemingly light years away from the California most of the world sees, the all-new exhibit explores how the ongoing drought has compounded some of the state’s most entrenched poverty and threatens to turn some of the world’s most productive farmland into a modern day dust bowl.

Over the past four years, the worst drought in California’s recorded history has amplified the poverty that has plagued communities across the Central Valley for generations. In 2015, over 500,000 acres of farmland went unplanted due to water delivery cutbacks imposed by the drought, resulting not only in reduced wages for farm workers but the loss of over 20,000 jobs across the Central Valley. In addition to economic problems, the drought has also caused wells in some towns lacking residential water infrastructure, such as Tulare County’s East Porterville, to run dry, forcing residents to survive on as little as 30 gallons of water a month, trucked in from elsewhere.

“The Central Valley is in rough shape,” said photographer Matt Black. “The recession never really ended, and there’s a drought right now that’s crippling the place. But for the rest of California, life goes on more or less as usual. There are communities in the Central Valley without even the basics: the schools are in bad shape, the water is undrinkable, the air is dirty and the roads go unmaintained. Something as simple as not having clean water can be devastating. I wanted to put these forgotten, marginalized communities in the spotlight.”

One of the richest farming regions in the world, California’s Central Valley produces billions of dollars’ worth of food each year but is also home to many of the nation’s poorest communities. Three out of the top five poorest metropolitan areas in the U.S. are located in the Central Valley, and one in five residents faces hunger at home. An estimated 90% of the region’s 500,000 farm laborers are undocumented.

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"Matt's photos provide an incredibly intimate yet profoundly respectful glimpse into the lives of real people in rural California," said Amanda Director, Executive Director of the California Museum. "The California Museum strives to tell all the state's stories, paying special attention to those that are rarely heard. These photos tell a gut-wrenching story, revealing the human costs of entrenched poverty and making us consider how events like our current drought impact people already living on the margins in our communities."

"Kingdom of Dust: Drought & Decline in California's Central Valley" continues through May 1, 2016. A current resident of Exeter in Tulare County, Black has explored the connections between migration, poverty, farming and the environment in his native rural California and in southern Mexico over the last two decades. In 2014, he was named *TIME* magazine's "Instagram Photographer of the Year" for his project "Geography of Poverty," a digital documentary combining geo-tagged photographs with census data to map and document poor communities. He has taught photography with the Foundry Photojournalism Workshops, the Eddie Adams Workshop, Leica Fotografie International and the Los Angeles Center of Photography, and his work has been featured in numerous national media outlets including MSNBC.com, *TIME* magazine and *The New Yorker*.

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ABOUT CALIFORNIA MUSEUM

A self-supporting 501(c)3 non-profit, the California Museum — home of the California Hall of Fame — engages, educates and enlightens people about California's rich history and unique contributions to the world through ideas, innovation, the arts and culture. Through interactive and innovative experiences, the Museum inspires visitors to make their own mark on history. Open Tues.-Sat. 10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. and Sun. 12:00 - 5:00 p.m.; closed Monday. Admission: adults \$9.00; college students /seniors 65+ \$7.50 with valid ID; youth 6-17: \$7.00; children 5 and under free. For more information, visit CaliforniaMuseum.org.

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PRESS KIT: Downloadable press kit press including images and more available at:
<http://www.CaliforniaMuseum.org/press-kit/kingdom-dust-press-kit>