

WORLD  
PREMIERE

What would you do with  
the last year of your life?



# UNTIL 20

A FILM BY PAKSIMA PRODUCTIONS DIRECTED BY GERALDINE MORIBA JAMILA PAKSIMA PRODUCED BY JAMILA PAKSIMA GERALDINE MORIBA  
CO-PRODUCED BY MIKHAL ABOU-SAYED OMAR ABOU-SAYED DOBSON FAMILY CHARLES HICKS SUSAN HICKS ED HICKS GLORIA HICKS SUPRIYA KANG MELVYN N. KLEIN ANNETTE KLEIN DEBBIE LAYTON MATT LAYTON SUSSEY FAMILY  
TAYLOR HENNESSEY ZACHARY HENNESSEY WRITTEN BY JAMES A. RAGAN GERALDINE MORIBA DIRECTED BY CHRISTOPHER BEAUCHAMP STEVEN BUCKWALTER EDITED BY STEVEN BUCKWALTER DITA CRUZE PRODUCTION ASSOCIATE WILL STRATHMANN ORIGINAL MUSIC JOHN PISCITELLO  
SUPPORTED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS MD ANDERSON CANCER CENTER TRIUMPH OVER KID CANCER WHATABURGER

THE PARAMOUNT THEATRE • 713 CONGRESS AVE, AUSTIN, TX • FRIDAY, OCTOBER 30 AT 5:30 PM

SCREENING PRESENTED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS  
MDAnderson Cancer Center®

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James and another patient waiting for an appointment

## GENERAL INFORMATION

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### FILM TITLE

*Until 20*

### LOG LINE

What would you do if you were living the last year of your life?

### TRAILER

<https://goo.gl/Z6aRFM>

### TECHNICAL INFO

Running Time: 89 min  
Shooting Format: HD  
Exhibition Format: DVD, Blu-Ray, DCP  
Aspect Ratio: 16:9  
Languages: English  
Year of Production: 2014  
Filmed in: USA

### CONTACT INFO

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## SHORT SYNOPSIS

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“Until 20” is a documentary film about James Ragan and his courageous quest to live a full and meaningful life. When James was 13, he received the most devastating news. He had a rare childhood cancer. What he did after he heard that news is the basis for the film “Until 20.” It is the story of James's choices in life and his ambitious approach to living and making a real difference in the battle against rare childhood cancers before his own time runs out.

## LONG SYNOPSIS

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James Ragan was diagnosed with osteosarcoma, a rare and deadly form of cancer, at the age of 13. He was told he wouldn't live to see adulthood. “Until 20” is a feature-length documentary produced and directed by award-winning filmmakers Geraldine Moriba and Jamila Paksima. This story follows James through the last year of his life as he grows from a promising young athlete blindsided by disease into a passionate advocate for childhood cancer research.

In 2006, James, a Texan and a rising tennis star, is at his peak competing in Europe and dreaming big. Then, what first starts as a swollen knee soon becomes unbearable pain that forces him out of a competition. Local doctors present the unexpected diagnosis – osteosarcoma, a rare connective tissue cancer in the bone. This is the beginning of years of surgeries, treatments, and medical trials.

Even though James is sober and realistic about his deteriorating condition, he is also relentlessly positive. He wants golf, not grief. He wants toga parties, not tears. And along his mission to do good, he wants pure unadulterated fun, not pity. He carves his own legacy as he grows as a passionate cheerleader for other teens fighting for their lives. Wanting to do more, he and his sister, Mecklin, launch the Triumph Over Kid Cancer Foundation (TOKC), dedicated to raising money for pediatric cancer research.

James was 19-years-old when he met the filmmakers. He and his family granted the “Until 20” production team unrestricted access to their daily life. We've gone along on road trips with Gloria, James's mom, to get treatment for her son's quickly advancing cancer. We are there when Mecklin steps in to take over TOKC, unwilling to let her best friend go. We see Jim, James's dad, desperately trying to find experimental procedures to help his son, while teaching him what it means to be a man. And as in a final cruel joke, James meets the girl of his dreams at the same time he learns he has just one more month to live.

Fundraising, playing competitive golf, attending Rice University between chemo treatments, writing a book, and making this film were part of James's last year. This is James's story, narrated in his own voice. It's the kind of film to watch with those you love most.

### GERALDINE MORIBA

At age 38, I was given six months to live. I had sarcoma, a rare cancer that can occur in bone or soft tissue, with no known cause and no cure. My lingering questions about sarcoma fuels my motivation to produce "Until 20," a documentary that follows James Ragan's quest to live his few remaining days of life fully.

When I met James, he was about to turn 20. We had both won the sarcoma cancer lottery. For me, after getting to know James, the mystery of why I survived and many people do not triggered "survivor's guilt." This is the guilt that can occur when someone survives a traumatic event that others do not, such as accidents, war, natural disasters, and even illnesses like cancer. Guilt is a complicated emotion. My cancer fight lasted a year and a half, and now, as far as my doctors know, there are no active tumor cells in my body.

I survived. James didn't. He said, "It's all about perspective. I'm constantly told that's what I provide to people when they hear my story. I'm told that I give them new perspective on their life." Like James, I prefer to ask, "now that I've been marked by this disease, what can I do to make a difference?"



James and his sister Mecklin

### JAMILA PAKSIMA

When the phone rang, I was elated because it was Geraldine, my former office mate from my NBC News days. Every time we speak, I feel a sense of a miracle in her presence. She is one of my closest friends, and she is a sarcoma survivor. Geraldine is still collecting clean scans every six months since that terrible year in 2004. We celebrate each clean scan in person with a laugh or high five or by text messages filling our iPhones with rows of exclamation points. This call from Geraldine was different. This time she said: "Hey, I've got something important to ask you to do for me." In an instant, my heart sank, but she wasn't calling me to talk about her illness. It was about young patient named James, living in Corpus Christie, Texas. Someone neither of us knew but many thought we should know. After seven resilient years of surgery and experimental treatment, his time was running out. Geraldine said, "I think this kid has a story to tell, but it might be too close to home for me for tell his story on my own."

The day I met James Ragan and his family in person, I was committed to his film. I had to know, how can a boy facing death for so many years still find so much joy living? I would carefully observe every kind act and word that came from his mother and father and wonder, could I do the same for my son? Could I stay this positive and strong? Could I translate the essence of giving and loving I was experiencing around James and his family in a film? I was in because this story is about hope, optimism, and living outside of fear. It's about taking on a monster called "rare cancers" and saving the life of the next guy.



Jamila and James while filming "Until 20"

### 1. What inspired you to make *Until 20*?

**Moriba:** I was diagnosed with sarcoma, and I was told that I had six months to live. But I had chemo, and radiation, and surgery, and I survived. Research and funding go towards the biggest cancers, like breast cancer, prostate cancer, and lung cancer. Rare cancers like sarcoma are the ones that get the least funding. There must be meaning in my survival, and I believe that I'm here to create awareness, to use the skills that I have to help others.

**Paksima:** As a filmmaker, I want to make films that ask audiences to think about challenging topics and feel deeply. It's my hope that "*Until 20*" is the kind of film that inspires people to consider how they might want to live with purpose. "*Until 20*" might also support families and loved ones as they navigate a health crisis. My ultimate wish is that our film will help infuse much needed awareness and research dollars into new treatments for rare cancers like osteosarcoma.

### 2. How did you know people would want to watch this film?

**Moriba:** Supporters who have come around James Ragan funded the "*Until 20*" Kickstarter campaign in astounding five days, with an average donation of \$240 per person. "*Until 20*" also received remarkable press coverage during the post-production and Kickstarter campaign in Texas, where James is a beloved local public figure, and in media outlets like CNN and The Huffington Post UK. Young adults and parents relate to James's story because they see true potential in his vision of finding treatment for the forgotten pediatric cancers.

**Paksima:** James Ragan has a huge fan base, including sports celebrities like golf legend Jack Nicklaus, CBS sportscaster Jim Nantz, and New Orleans Saints of NFL punter Thomas Morestead. They genuinely liked James as a person and found him so inspiring that they all happily agreed to be interviewed for "*Until 20*" and shared their stories about James and his impact on their lives. We continue to receive letters from medical professionals and parents of children with cancer, all saying how a film like "*Until 20*" will help improve lives of people and families living with rare cancers.

### 3. What was it like to follow James and his family with cameras everywhere during his last year of life?

**Paksima:** James is a fun, courageous, and charismatic young man. He seems to rarely buckle under pressure, and he is seriously funny. James is one of those individuals that sees sunshine and optimism in any situation. I also found I could really identify with Gloria, James's mother. Her honesty and vulnerability are inspiring and give me strength as parent.

### 4. What was the hardest part about filming *Until 20*?

**Moriba:** The biggest challenge was building trust with James and his family. To make "*Until 20*" meaningful, we needed to be with the Ragans at their most difficult, intimate moments. They had to accept that we would treat his story with truth, even when it was painful, and with dignity. In the end, this film is an extension of James's legacy.

### 5. How did you film the opening scene in the ocean?

**Moriba:** The inspiration for the opening sequence is an African fable about a man made of salt who tries to swim to the bottom of the ocean. He believes that by finding out the depth of the ocean he can save his village. Tragically, as the answers become more clear he melts away slowly swimming down to the ocean's floor.

**Paksima:** Our opening scene was perhaps one of the most challenging shoots I've ever planned and directed. We had a crazy vision to not only have James seek his answers at the depths of the ocean but also watch his life pass him by as he swims deeper into the darkness of an unknown underwater world. After several test runs, we figured out how to get a lifetime of photographs and memories float upright toward the surface, as we see James dive deeper and deeper into his life history. We had an incredible team of divers and a very talented underwater cinematographer, Frazier Nivens, who never gave up until we got the shots right.

### 6. How long did this project take?

**Moriba:** We've been working on this project for about two years now.

### 7. What impact would you like to make with this film?

**Paksima:** James stood up for the underdogs when he didn't have time. He fought for cures and treatments for diseases like sarcoma and rare pediatric cancers so others won't have to face what he experienced. We hope that our film will help people facing a health crisis learn how to talk to each other and support family and friends through the cancer journey. We will have really done our job if James's story encourages researchers, oncologists, and families to slay the cancer monsters.

### 8. What did you learn from meeting James and making this film?

**Paksima:** You can make great choices every day no matter how difficult your circumstance. He also taught us that it's better to fight for the impossible. We learned that courage is strengthened when you advocate for others instead of yourself and that there is always time in life for love.

## FILMMAKERS

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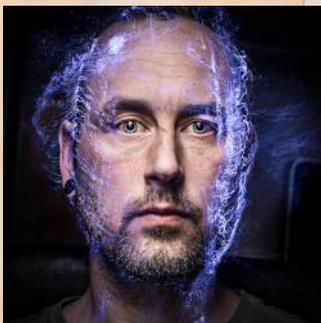
### **GERALDINE MORIBA | Co-Director / Producer**

Five-time Emmy award-winning producer Geraldine Moriba Meadows is an original program development executive producer at CNN and the vice president of diversity and inclusion for all of CNN Worldwide. Prior to that, she served as the executive producer of CNN's "In America" documentary series. She also worked at NBC News and MSNBC. In addition to her Emmy Awards, she's won an Alfred I. DuPont Award, two Peabody Awards, two RTNDA-Unity Awards, two National Association of Black Journalists First Place Documentary Awards, and several more. As a rare sarcoma cancer survivor herself, she is in a unique position to tell James Ragan's story from both personal and professional perspectives. She believes that curing a child means investing in the future. "This is the most important story I've ever worked on in my career," she says.



### **JAMILA PAKSIMA | Co-Director / Producer**

Jamila is a two-time Emmy Award nominee and an independent documentary filmmaker, video director, and journalist. Some of her most prestigious awards are three Webby Awards, RFK Journalism First Prize in Domestic Television Broadcast, CINE Golden Eagle, and the OMMA Awards for Best Medical Animation Series. For 14 years, Jamila has been the Executive Producer and Creative Director at Paksima Productions. She directed videos for a \$1 million advertising campaign for IMS Health's successful IPO offering in March 2014. She produced a series of short documentary films in China, South Africa, Columbia, Argentina, and the United States for Janssen Pharmaceuticals and Johnson & Johnson. Jamila believes that "this is not a sad story - this is a story about living." Her expertise in healthcare video and documentary film production is crucial in making "Until 20" a relevant and thought-provoking human tale.



### **CHRISTOPHER BEAUCHAMP | Director of Photography**

Christopher Beauchamp is a Connecticut-based location photographer specializing in dramatic environmental portraits and dynamic adventure sports imagery for advertising, editorial and corporate clients. Growing up on the tail end of Cold War, his childhood was spent digging underground fallout shelters. This later developed into a passion for cave exploration, both domestically and internationally, and for investigating the often overlooked subterranean environments beneath cities. It was his efforts to document these spaces that ignited his drive to create unique imagery and led him to a career in photography. Whether for a personal or a client project, his years of experience creating compelling images in adverse conditions allow him to maximize the potential of a shoot regardless of circumstances.



### **STEVE BUCKWALTER | Director of Photography / Lead Editor**

Steve Buckwalter is an experienced filmmaker, videographer and editor who has worked in movies, commercials, documentaries and corporate video production. Some of his clients include The Walt Disney Company, Showtime, the U.S. Army, Glaxo, and the AARP. Steve and Jamila have worked as a creative team for seven years, and Steve has helped create and complete campaigns for Janssen, Johnson & Johnson, Sanofi Pasteur, BabyCenter.com, and other healthcare clients. Steve has a truly unique combination of deep technical expertise and the eye of a gifted visual artist who captures exquisite images while crafting compelling visual stories.

## FILMMAKERS

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### **FRAZIER NIVENS | Underwater Cinematographer**

Frazier is a multiple Emmy award winning underwater filmmaker living in Key Largo, Florida. He is CEO of Ocean Imaging Inc. filming with state of the art RED Epic cameras underwater for the best in quality imaging. Frazier has filmed for Discovery's Shark Week, Animal Planet, Mutual of Omaha's Wild Kingdom, BBC, Nature, CBS, ABC, and NBC at around the world locations. Frazier also judges the Documentary Emmys and is a Silver Council Telly awards judge yearly. Frazier has been in the production business for over 30 years and has completed thousands of video productions for various clients.



### **DITA GRUZE | Second Editor / Associate Producer**

Dita has more than 15 years of international media experience, writing for newspapers, magazines, and publications in her native Latvia, Spain, and the U.S., as well as working as a producer, assistant director, script supervisor, and editor on more than 50 documentary and narrative films, commercials, and corporate videos in the U.S., Latvia, Canada, Russia, UK, and India. Some of the films that Dita has worked on have won the Best Short Film at Slamdance, premiered at Sundance and Tribeca, included in the Sundance Institute Screenwriters Lab, and featured on the PBS series FutureStates.



### **WILL STRATHMANN | Assistant Editor / Associate Producer**

Will is a Philadelphia based photographer and videographer with over eight years of experience in the field. He has worked extensively in the non-profit and environmental research sector, most recently as a staff photographer and marine research videographer at the Cape Eleuthera Institute in The Bahamas. Will also currently serves as the Creative Director for the Entidaled Project, a media based non-profit that aims to connect conservationists from around the world through shared stories and visual media.



Annual fundraiser golf tournament for TOKC

**KHOU-TV CHANNEL 11**

“James Ragan's courage and compassion will inspire many.”  
- <http://goo.gl/KgRIHT>

**THE HUFFINGTON POST UK**

“Both his charity work and honesty in the film will leave an impressionable legacy.”  
- <http://goo.gl/s8bDHI>

**HOUSTON CHRONICLE**

“The cancer research activist supported others with osteosarcoma and fought for more funding to cure the disease in children. Eventually, this public battle became another focus of the documentary.”  
- <http://goo.gl/vpNKim>

**CNN**

“James changed my life. In his deliberate quest to live a life worth living, he reminded me to live as though my days are numbered and to make every day count.”  
- <http://goo.gl/pd3Ui9>

**LONE STAR GOLF**

“Anyone who met James will do whatever it takes to see Until 20. It's important for you to see it, too. Learning about James and seeing how much he cared about other people will change your life.”  
- <http://goo.gl/xlc047>

**THE RICE THRESHER**

“In providing a close-up glimpse into James' battle against his cancer, this film will show that James was always positive and trying to help others.”  
- <http://goo.gl/utgYwb>

PHOTOS



James recording voiceover narration for "Until 20"



James at age 13 - the first of many hospital stays



James and Mecklin accepting a donation for TOKC



On set filming a dream sequence at Rice University in Houston, TX