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For immediate release.

**CENTER THEATRE GROUP TO HOLD SIX COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS FOR “ZOOT SUIT”
Conversations Will Discuss Youth Activism, the Making of “Zoot Suit,” Chicano Art,
Fashion and Politics, the Music of Lalo Guerrero and Bias in the American Media**

Center Theatre Group’s “Zoot Suit” Plays January 31 – March 19, 2017 at the Taper

Center Theatre Group will host six Community Conversations for “Zoot Suit,” which returns to the Mark Taper Forum to celebrate Center Theatre Group’s 50th Anniversary. This series of panel conversations on selected nights throughout the run will be open to the public and feature local thought leaders in dialogue about the context, issues and ideas finding voice on our stages.

“Zoot Suit” began previews January 31, opens February 12 and runs through March 19, 2017 (extending one week from the originally announced closing date). Written and directed by Luis Valdez, “Zoot Suit” is presented in association with El Teatro Campesino.

“The Community Conversations are that moment when we ask people in our community to help us make relevant the themes and ideas that are alive on our stage,” said Leslie K. Johnson, Center Theatre Group’s Director of Social Strategy, Innovation and Impact. “Asking thought leaders to come and spark that conversation is exciting. By inviting them into the room, we are able to hear someone who lives these topics every day discuss them in the context of the show.”

The “Zoot Suit” Community Conversations will kick off on Wednesday, February 8 from 7 to 8:30 p.m. with **#YouthPower: Young Artists Keep Changing the World**. The panel conversation will discuss the power of groups of young people across the globe uniting to make themselves seen and heard throughout the 20th century, from swing-dancing teenagers in Nazi Germany to the activists who used social media to rise up during 2011’s Arab Spring. The Mexican-American pachuco youth of 1940s Los Angeles who are depicted in “Zoot Suit” are part of a long and important tradition that continues to have an impact on all of us today. Young artists, and activists and scholars will discuss how young people respond to issues affecting their community – in Los Angeles today and around the world throughout history. This event will take place at the AltaMed Health Services Corporation Corporate Headquarters, 2040 Camfield Ave, Los Angeles, CA 90040. Panelist to be announced. Free to the public.

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On Saturday, February 11 from 1 to 2 p.m., the pre-show panel conversation **The Making of the “Zoot Suit” Revival** will include a member of the creative team behind the first major Los Angeles revival of “Zoot Suit” at its birthplace – the Mark Taper Forum – and will discuss the process of remounting this historic show. This event will take place at The Music Center Annex building, 601 W. Temple Street, Los Angeles, CA 90012, in Rehearsal Room A. Panelists to be announced. Free to the public.

On Thursday, February 16 from 6 to 7:30 p.m., the pre-show conversation **The Song and Swing of “Zoot Suit”** will discuss the music of the 1940s that propels “Zoot Suit” and features a blend of swing, boogie-woogie, R&B, jazz and Chicano big band tunes. Participants will dive into this music, learn about Lalo Guerrero – one of the most influential and important Chicano musicians of the 20th century whose work features prominently in “Zoot Suit” – and maybe even learn a few dance steps. This event will take place at The Music Center Annex building, 601 W. Temple Street, Los Angeles, CA 90012, in Rehearsal Room A. Panelists to be announced. Free to the public.

On Saturday, February 18 from 3 to 5:30 p.m., the panel conversation **“Zoot Suit” in Dreamland** will discuss the deeply intertwined relationship between art and politics in Chicano culture in Los Angeles and beyond, from the 1940s era of “Zoot Suit” to the 1970s, when “Zoot Suit” writer and director Luis Valdez and visual artist Frank Romero were rising young stars. As the Museum of Latin American Art (MOLAA) presents “Dreamland: A Frank Romero Retrospective” and Center Theatre Group produces Valdez’s “Zoot Suit,” the panel will explore the way politics has inspired the work of Valdez, Romero and other Chicano creators. This event will take place at the Museum of Latin American Art, 628 Alamitos Ave, Long Beach, CA 90802. Panelist to be announced. Event included with the cost of admission to MOLAA.

On Saturday, March 4 from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m., the panel conversation **Dress for Unrest: From the Zoot Suit Riots to the Hoodie** will discuss the intersection of fashion and politics. In 1943, the Zoot Suit Riots erupted when thousands of Anglo servicemen and civilians in Los Angeles assaulted young Chicanos, many of whom wore zoot suits that their attackers considered unpatriotic. In 2012, after Trayvon Martin was shot while wearing a hooded sweatshirt, the hoodie became a symbol of the #BlackLivesMatter movement. Panelists will discuss how we show our affiliations, communicate beliefs and make social statements through fashion. This event will take place at The Music Center Annex building, 601 W. Temple Street, Los Angeles, CA 90012, in Rehearsal Room A. Panelists to be announced. Free to the public.

On Thursday, March 9 from 6 to 7:30 p.m., the pre-show panel conversation **Has News Ever Been Fair and Balanced?** will explore the history of American journalism and whether it’s ever truly objective. Fake news has been in the spotlight these past few months, but headlines that bend, stretch or completely disregard the truth are nothing new. In the 1940s, the Los Angeles press called Mexican-Americans in zoot suits “hoodlums” and “gang members,” and played a role in the conviction of the young men on trial for the Sleepy Lagoon murder as well

as the Zoot Suit riots that followed. This event will take place at The Music Center Annex building, 601 W. Temple Street, Los Angeles, CA 90012, in Rehearsal Room A. Panelists to be announced. Free to the public.

“Zoot Suit” was originally commissioned and developed by Center Theatre Group, playing for nearly a year in Los Angeles first at the Taper from August 6 to October 1, 1978, then from October 10, 1978, through July 1, 1979, at the Aquarius in Hollywood. It went on to become Broadway’s first Chicano play, was made into a major motion picture and became a cultural phenomenon.

Bank of America is the title sponsor for “Zoot Suit.”

Center Theatre Group, one of the nation’s preeminent arts and cultural organizations, is Los Angeles’ leading nonprofit theatre company, programming seasons at the 736-seat Mark Taper Forum and 1600 to 2000-seat Ahmanson Theatre at The Music Center in Downtown Los Angeles, and the 317-seat Kirk Douglas Theatre in Culver City. In addition to presenting and producing the broadest range of theatrical entertainment in the country, Center Theatre Group is one of the nation’s leading producers of ambitious new works through commissions and world premiere productions and a leader in interactive community engagement and education programs that reach across generations, demographics and circumstance to serve Los Angeles.

RSVPs for the Community Conversations are encouraged. For more information, please visit www.CenterTheatreGroup.org/ZootSuitCommunity. Please note an RSVP to a Community Conversation does not include a ticket to a performance of “Zoot Suit.”

Tickets to “Zoot Suit” are available by calling (213) 628-2772, online at www.CenterTheatreGroup.org or at the Center Theatre Group box office, located at the Ahmanson Theatre. Tickets range from \$25 – \$99 (ticket prices are subject to change). The Mark Taper Forum is located at the Music Center, 135 N. Grand Avenue in Downtown L.A. 90012.

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February 1, 2017