

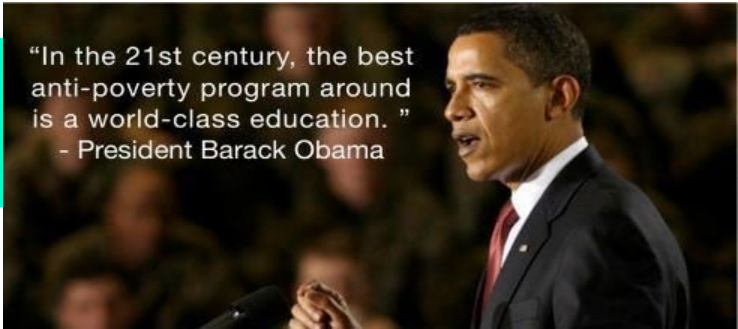
WAITING FOR SUPERMAN

By: Allison, Caroline, Emily and Jaxson

SUMMARY

This film took place in the United States and was released in 2010. This documentary explores the public education system in the United States. It begins by following Anthony, Francisco, Bianca, Daisy, and Emily who are different elementary aged students who are having poor luck in their respective schools. We watch these students throughout the documentary and are provided more insight into the struggles their families are having when it comes to getting their children a quality education.

POSITIVE SOCIAL CHANGE



"In the 21st century, the best anti-poverty program around is a world-class education."
- President Barack Obama

- Presidents have attempted to tackle education reforms in the hopes of providing an effective and affordable education
 - George Bush, Clinton, Reagan, FDR, Obama
 - ★ "It's up to you to demand not one child is left behind"-President Bush
- Families want their children to have better lives than they had, giving the children better job opportunities through education which leads to a more productive society
 - Families hope for their children to be lotteried into charter schools
 - Parents want a better life for their children
- Education and neighborhoods contribute to the success of future generations
 - Failing schools because of failing neighborhoods or failing neighborhoods because of failing schools?
 - A better U.S. education can lead to more productive/trained adults, which can reduce poverty, homelessness, unemployment
 - A stronger U.S. education system leads to more intellectual capital for the U.S.

ADVOCACY

In this documentary, we see an unfortunate educational set up that sometimes puts certain groups of students at a severe disadvantage. As the speaker said at one point some of the children “have been handed the short end of the stick, and they don’t know why.” (Geoffrey Canada) Children who grow up in poor communities attend schools with fewer resources than those who grow up in affluent communities. They then grow up to be less able to progress in society and their communities continue the cycle of poverty.

“There is this unbelievable willingness to turn a blind eye to the injustices that are happening to kids every single day in our schools in the name of harmony amongst adults.” Michelle Rhee was the chancellor of the Washington D.C. public schools. She serves as an advocate for children because even when it does please her associates or the teachers, she tried to do what was best for the children in the schools that she had control over. We see Michelle Rhee work in D.C. to try to make the education of higher quality in her area. She fires a great number of people and closes down many schools in her district in attempt to reform the school systems. The teachers and their unions rebelled against her attempts. She also tried to establish a system that rewarded teachers financially that did not join the unions. The unions trapped schools with poor performing teachers and it affected the students. However, Michelle Rhee’s idea was shut down even before it got a vote. Michelle continued to be an advocate for children, even when it was not the popular thing to do.



COMMUNITY

- Families featured in the film were supportive of their children's goals for education
 - Parents wanted better education for their children then they received growing up



Failing neighborhoods are blamed on failing schools

- School dropouts more likely to end up in jail
- Money that could be going to children's education is going to prisoner's

- Schools in low income neighborhoods have to overcome more issues than middle and upper class schools
 - poverty
 - crime
 - broken homes

- National Government has given more money to education over the years but the results have not improved
 - States also have control over education
 - Conflicting laws and regulations make it difficult for quality education to be achieved



SERVICE

Michelle Rhee

- Chancellor of the D.C. Public School System, the 7th in 10 years.
- Proposal to remove the poor teachers from the school system
- Teacher's Union felt so threatened that they would not even allow a vote
- Other attempts to improve the schools (extend school days, effectively evaluate teachers, change tenure procedures) also thwarted.

Geoffrey Canada

- Petitioned to open a charter school in the poorest parts of New York City
- 97 blocks of crime, poverty and desperation

David Levin and Mark Feinberg

- Two very frustrated teachers hoping to invoke change
- Notice a coworker who teaches multiplication tables to her students in rap form
- Decided to open to Knowledge Is Power Program (KIPP) Public Charter Schools in Houston and New York City
- Society assumed these would not be universally successful, however at the time of the documentary there were 82 KIPP schools across the country and now it has spread to 162 KIPP schools.

WHAT PARTS ARE RELEVANT TO CURRENT DAY TOPICS/EVENTS?

- ❖ The No Child Left Behind Act stated that the country would reach 100% proficiency by the year 2014, however the last released data on proficiency, 2013, shows that only 34% of the nation's students were proficient in both reading and math.
- ❖ With the election approaching, the topic of children's education is at an all-time high and is hotly debated every day. All of the candidates, no matter what party they associate with, must make the topic of children's education a first-class priority for their campaign.

WHAT PARTS OF THE FILM DID YOU CONNECT TO THE MOST?

- ★ Growing up without a father for many of the first few years of my childhood, my mother and I also experienced the same struggles of trying to find good schools and daycares while surviving off of the limited resources that my mom was bringing in.
- ★ Seeing the lotteries that the children had to participate in made me grateful for the opportunities I had with my education. My family was able to afford a quality education because my father worked at my grade school. I attended private school throughout my whole life and thinking about education being left to chance does not seem fair.
- ★ I have had the opportunity to travel a lot with my grandparents and I have seen firsthand the effect that a poor education system can have on a community. The desire to be educated is universal and it would be so scary to feel trapped in a school that could not fulfill its purpose properly. You can see how concerned the parents in this documentary are about making sure their children get a quality education and it is heart breaking to see them stuck without options.
- ★ The lottery scene shown at the end of the film was stressful to watch. I personally connected with the hopefulness of each family and the passion displayed by each child. I think this documentary expresses that a great education seems to be a privilege when it should be readily available to all people. The part where Anthony leaves for school also relates to our college experience because we too look for an education that will provide opportunities for the future.

WHAT CRITIQUES DO YOU HAVE ABOUT THE FILM?

* This documentary made teachers' unions out to be very detrimental to the success of the educational system. I think that they should have gone into more detail about why the unions were started in the first place. They were started to ensure the fair treatment and payment of teachers which is a noble cause even if they went about it the wrong way.

WHO WOULD BENEFIT FROM WATCHING THIS FILM?

A nation's education system impacts society on every level. A strong education system leads to strong communities which then leads to a strong nation. There is not a group of people that would not benefit from watching this documentary. However, it most closely ties with people whose careers are involved in education. People who feel that everyone has an equal opportunity in their education in this might appreciate having this differing point of view to take into consideration.

WHAT COURSE OF ACTION DOES THIS FILM CALL FOR OR ENCOURAGE?

This film draws attention to the failing public school system in America. It encourages progressive ideas towards education and providing today's youth with ample opportunities to succeed. We should not leave the fate of today's children to a lottery ball. Rather, we should take responsibility for the future by discouraging outdated thinking, encouraging the engagement of students and teachers, and participating in positive change. This film calls for a positive outlook on the future, an open attitude to change, and a realistic attitude towards finances and balancing the needs of teachers and students.

