

Will “Superman” Come?

Davis Guggenheim directs an informative documentary regarding how corrupt and inadequate the American education system truly is throughout the United States of America. While many Americans fight for a decent education for their children the film delves into the lives of five satisfactory students and the necessary measures needed to make an adequate education possible. As Guggenheim highlights key issues in our education system the reasons why “*Waiting for Superman*” was such a success begin to surface in a multitude of ways.

From the beginning of the film I immediately was drawn in by the children who were experiencing a variety of educational hardships including incoherent educators’, diminishing classrooms, and unambitious peers. Not to mention the facts presented by the narrator such as the students probability of graduating or simply the completion of their current grade. An educator himself, Geoffrey Canada also experienced these same conditions during his adolescences as he believed “...even in the depths of the ghetto, he (Superman) is coming I just don’t know when, but he always shows up and saves all the good people...” explaining the title of the documentary “*Waiting for Superman*” and embedding a necessary form of personalization into the film.

Noticing how effective these events were at capturing my attention I concluded that Guggenheim had successfully expressed a tremendous amount of pathos with each of the children’s stories. As the viewers’ emotions are consistently affected by the misfortunes throughout the film there is also the logic and facts supporting each of the students’ unfortunate encounters with our education system. While the logos and pathos work hand-in-hand to uncover the degree to which our schools are failing I began to remember my elementary school, the teachers, and all the crucial lessons being taught during that time. What if I had never learned those lessons? Would I be an entirely different student? Pondering on these questions for longer

than I should have I realized how these forms of persuasion allowed the observer to not only understand the situation, but also to associate their own educational experiences to create a more personal perspective on the issues involved in America's education system.

Another important convincing factor shown throughout the film was how our education system is affecting the brightest of students due to insufficient teachers. For example, Francisco's mother, Maria was faced with the fact that her son was struggling with reading comprehension and was at risk of falling behind. After working with him for countless nights and enrolling him into two after-school reading programs she is running out of options as his teacher cannot give him the necessary one-on-one attention he desperately needs. Knowing Francisco needs to be transferred into a school that can provide him an adequate education Maria began applying to charter schools throughout the Bronx. During the application process, Francisco's reading comprehension was assessed to determine the amount of help Francisco truly needed. During this time is when Maria was told her that son's reading comprehension was academically acceptable for a student his age. Maria was then convinced that Francisco had never been the problem; it had been the low-quality education that his school is enforcing. Being denied admission into all seven-charter schools due to shortage of space, Francisco's mother made the decision to apply for Harlem Success Academy. Harlem Success is a charter school with only 40 available spaces not to mention a 45-minute daily commute. Although this would be an extreme inconvenience, it would ensure a sufficient education to Francisco.

Francisco's story in "*Waiting for Superman*" reminded me of when my nine-year-old sister was receiving failing marks very early last school year. After weeks of tutoring both at home and school my parents could not understand why her grades had all of a sudden plummeted from straight A's to almost completely failing. Although Lewisville Independent School District

is by no means a failing district it does have its fair share of mediocre educators. As a result, my sister was moved into the hands of a different teacher and within weeks her grades jumped right back up to all A's. Experiencing this issue first hand of a child struggling due to an insufficient teacher this evident issue is displayed consistently throughout Guggenheim's film expressing the idea that not every teacher is whole-heartedly educating the children of America whether it is due to tenure, laziness, or lack of desire to teach.

As viewers are taken through the heart-wrenching stories of these children fighting to have the upper hand in their education, "Waiting for Superman" appropriately informs spectators about a variety of reoccurring factors that are contributing to our failing education system throughout each of the fifty states. With the help of cold hard facts, convincing narrators, and real situations that these families are encountering the documentary allows us to sincerely understand, relate, and crave a dynamic change for these knowledge-hungry children across the United States. Of the seven Superintendents in Washington D.C., "Lieutenant Julius W. Becton Jr., who was awarded two purple hearts and a silver star for heroic acts in battle said he's never faced a more difficult task than reforming the schools of Washington." Although Washington D.C. has the lowest percentage of successful schools, film director Davis Guggenheim still incorporates the continuous perception that hope is still attainable throughout his film, *"Waiting for Superman"*. While the documentary was intended to inform Americans about our failing education system the film established a foundation built upon much more than just too much homework, unmotivated students, and flaws within state mandatory testing. It is developed by real problems that are desperate for solutions and reaches out to viewers in a way that is not commonly seen in many documentaries'.

Works Cited

Waiting for "Superman" Dir. Davis Guggenheim. Paramount Vantage, 2010. DVD.