

# The Raising of America

## EARLY CHILDHOOD AND THE FUTURE OF OUR NATION

**The Raising of America**, by the producers of *UNNATURAL CAUSES: Is Inequality Making Us Sick?*, is an ambitious documentary series and Public Engagement Campaign that seeks to reframe the way we look at early child health and development. It illustrates how a strong start for all our kids leads not only to better individual life course outcomes (learning, earning and physical and mental health) but also to a healthier, safer, better educated and more prosperous and equitable nation.

### THE DOCUMENTARY SERIES | PBS Broadcast and DVD Release 2014

#### Opening Episode: *The Raising of America* 60 minutes

We all want what's best for our children, so why is child well-being in the U.S. so much worse than the other rich nations? Why do we allow our most vulnerable children to fall so much further behind the median? How does the squeeze on young families and caregivers—the squeeze for time, money and services—'drip down' on infants and young children and alter the wiring of their developing brains with potential long-term consequences?

This hour-long episode moves back and forth between the science of human development and the stories of families and communities struggling to provide the rich and responsive environments all children need to thrive — while too often hindered by social conditions and public policies which impede their every effort. It doesn't have to be this way. How might we provide all our children the opportunity for a strong start while building a more prosperous and equitable future for our nation?

#### Supporting Episodes 30 minutes each

ARE WE CRAZY ABOUT OUR KIDS?  
The Cost/Benefit Equation

Investing in high-quality early care and education pays for itself in many ways and many times over. This episode brings to life the compelling studies of Nobel laureate James Heckman, Art Rolnick and others which make clear we can either invest for success now or pay more for failure later. So, what is holding us back?

DNA IS NOT DESTINY:  
How the Outside Gets Under the Skin

New scientific discoveries reveal how the fetal environment and early childhood experience quite literally 'wire' the rapidly developing brain and other bio-regulatory systems, changing not our genes but the epigenetic 'volume controls' which turn genes on and off. These epigenetic changes can influence not only cognitive function but the self-regulation of emotions and behaviors, even the susceptibility to chronic diseases as we age.

HEALING THE HURT:  
A Trauma-Informed Approach

Too many of our children, especially poor children of color, are exposed to poverty, violence, neglect and other forms of trauma and show symptoms similar to PTSD. Except there is no 'post.' Traveling to Philadelphia and Oakland, this episode asks not "What's wrong with you?" but rather "What happened to you?" and explores how we can help traumatized neighborhoods and individuals heal.

STRESSING OUT THE POOR?  
Building Community Resilience

Poverty takes a special toll on families and their young children, appropriating scarce psychic as well as material resources. The result is a pile-up of risk rather than an accumulation of advantage. Yet some poor communities are beginning to organize, not just to buffer children from the consequences of poverty but for the resources and power to ensure access to opportunity structures that provide hope.

ONCE UPON A TIME: When Childcare  
for All Wasn't Just a Fairytale

Back in 1971, Congress passed a bill which provided high-quality, universal childcare and other services. Nixon's 11th hour veto marked the first time family values was invoked to undermine pro-family initiatives and marked a critical inflection point on our path from a more inclusive nation to today's 'you're on your own' society.

**The Raising of America** developed out of a rigorous consultation with the field.

For a copy of the *Needs Assessment Report*, please visit: [www.raisingofamerica.org/project#ascertainment](http://www.raisingofamerica.org/project#ascertainment)

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# Change the Conversation. It's Easier than You Think.

## The Public Engagement Campaign

*The Raising of America* is being created in the context of a national Public Engagement Campaign to expand the debate about what we as a society can—and should—do to ensure every infant has an equal opportunity childhood.

Hundreds of Engagement Partners will use *The Raising of America* as a tool to change the conversation—because a strong start for all our kids leads not only to better individual life course outcomes (learning, earning and physical and mental health) but also to a healthier, safer, better educated and more prosperous and equitable United States.

### Types of Screenings

#### **Show *The Raising of America*:**

- To staff, students, members, or constituents
- At trainings, workshops, or conferences
- To mobilize partners and build alliances across sectors
- As part of town hall meetings or policy briefings
- To support a specific policy target and engage media

### Change the Conversation

#### **Ask new questions:**

- What do babies “remember”?
- How does the outside literally get under the skin?
- Why is it that some of the best parenting programs have nothing to do with parents at all?
- How do concentrated power and wealth actually harm kids?
- Why, when we know so much, do we as a nation do so little?

### The Companion Website

- Interactive Magazines:** Our Babies, Families, and Society
- Downloadable/Shareable** clips, interactives and resources
- The Action Toolkit:** Move beyond watching to using video as a tool
- Discussion Guides** for each episode
- Policy Guide** to advance early child health and development
- Promotional** templates
- Social Media:** 10 things to do in under 10 minutes

**Join us!** [www.raisingofamerica.org](http://www.raisingofamerica.org)

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*The Raising of America* is produced by **California Newsreel** with **Vital Pictures**.  
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