



THE RAISING OF AMERICA
Early Childhood and the Future of Our Nation
Premieres on Public Television and Online November 2015

**How Our Nation Thrives Tomorrow Depends
on How Our Youngest Children Fare Today**

Program Part of the Public Media Initiative American Graduate: Let's Make It Happen

(San Francisco) — We all want what's best for our children, so why has the wellbeing of American children fallen to 26th place in the world? How can the growing squeeze on parents — for time, for money and for resources — literally alter the developing brains of their babies and young children? What are the implications for children, their families and the future of the nation? And how might we do better?



These questions and more are explored in ***The Raising of America: Early Childhood and the Future of Our Nation***, a new documentary special probing how conditions faced by young children and their families form the foundation for a child's later success – both in school and in life. The film premieres online from Monday, November 9 through Monday, November 30 at raisingofamerica.org/watch and on public television beginning November 2015 ([check our Public TV Broadcasts](#) or [your local listings](#)).

Along with four additional companion episodes and a public engagement initiative involving more than 600 partner organizations supported by an ambitious companion website at www.raisingofamerica.org, ***The Raising of America*** seeks to reframe the way Americans look at early childhood health and development and spark a much-needed national conversation: Will the U.S. better assure the conditions that all children need for a strong start and put the nation on a path towards a healthier, safer, better educated, more prosperous and more equitable tomorrow? Or will it squander its own future?

Interweaving stories of parents with discoveries from neuroscience, ***The Raising of America*** shows that many families are struggling to provide the nurturing environment all babies and young children need to thrive. Mothers and fathers feel increasingly stressed in a fend-for-yourself society, working long hours for low or stagnant wages, and lacking access to resources like high-quality childcare or even affordable housing, all of which make it more difficult to provide the nurturing environments critical to the developing brain.

And when parents are squeezed, their babies pay the price. “Our policies actually discourage parents from being able to take care of their children when they’re very young,” says economist and former hedge fund partner Robert Dugger.



Interviews with Dr. Renee Boynton-Jarrett, a trusted pediatrician and researcher at Boston Medical Center, Dr. Jack Shonkoff, director of the Harvard Center on the Developing Child, Nobel Prize-winning economist James Heckman, and former multi-billion dollar hedge fund partner Robert Dugger, bring a variety of perspectives to the importance early childhood experiences have on our nation’s wellbeing. But each emphasizes that for children to do better in school and in life, we must start during the very first years, when crucial brain development is occurring. And the myth that investing in young children and their families drains the economy is just not true; starting early pays dividends not just for individuals but for our national economy.

Living in the only rich or middle-income country *not* to guarantee paid parental leave, many mothers must return to work earlier than they would like. The film follows Ann Waterman Roy, who is joining the 40% of mothers who go back to work by the time their babies are only three months old, as she drops off baby Sylvie at childcare for the first time. And just when parents have to cope with their own separation anxiety, they’re faced with another daunting challenge: where to find affordable, high-quality childcare?

That’s the question facing David Linhart and Yaminette Diaz-Linhart, who are searching for a spot for their four-month old. At \$10,000 a year or more, most high-quality childcare is beyond their reach. Yet only 10% of childcare centers are even accredited. David and Yaminette and millions of other American families wouldn’t face this problem today had President Nixon not vetoed a bill passed by Congress back in 1971 assuring quality early care and education for every family that wanted it.

Erica Burks-Cummings and Leroy Campbell work 100 hours a week between them to make ends meet and depend on friends and relatives to care for their three-year-old daughter. And they’re not alone. Americans now work more hours annually than workers in almost every other peer nation. And the U.S. is the only rich nation not to guarantee by federal law a single paid vacation or holiday — or even a paid sick day.

Dr. Boynton-Jarrett observes: “Parents are juggling, shifting, trying to balance a variety of competing demands. Is this what we’ve decided as a society, that this degree of tension, these complex trade-offs are the norm, to be expected, just a part of raising a child?”

This anxiety and stress can be passed from parent to child. “We’re talking about processes here that are at a biological level,” says Marilyn Essex, co-director of the Wisconsin Study of Families and Work.

The Wisconsin studies, which followed 500 mostly white, mostly middle class families for 20 years, found that chronic stressors faced by parents could get under the skin of their infants and young children and alter the architecture of their developing brains with enduring consequences. They observed higher levels (an important stress hormone), changes in key brain circuits, and a more reactive ‘fight-or-flight’ stress response in the children of parents who reported lack of time, financial worries, and role overload. Those biological changes in turn increased the children’s chances for developing emotional, behavioral, and learning problems as they grew up, including substance abuse, teen pregnancy and depression.



But those most at risk are the one in four American babies born into poverty, a rate placing the U.S. 34th out of 35 nations, according to a 2011 United Nations report.

Ashley Walker is a loving mother of two in rural Maine who left a physically abusive husband. Now, like many other single mothers, she struggles to raise her daughters while juggling bills and debts, gripped by fear that she’s not providing what her children need to feel secure and happy.

But change is possible. Childcare centers on U.S. military bases, once plagued by scandal, are now a model, providing the highest quality childcare in the nation, all of it affordable, thanks to a law Congress passed in 1989.

Dr. Boynton-Jarrett believes that if we can create safe and reliable social environments for young children “the capacity of the brain and human spirit to thrive and develop is beyond what any of us could predict.” And Nobel Prize-winning economist James Heckman cites his studies demonstrating that quality investments in early childhood pay for themselves many times over.

But perhaps pre-school teacher Aiyauna Terry puts the challenge best as she points to her students — tomorrow’s neighbors, workers and leaders: “This is the future right here. Invest in them. Invest in their parents. If you want America to get back on top, invest in these children now. They’re not going to fail you — but we can’t fail them now.” The fate of the nation may hang in the balance.

ADDITIONAL EPISODES

(View clips and trailers at raisingofamerica.org/watch)

EPISODE 2: *Once Upon a Time: When Childcare for All Wasn't Just a Fairy Tale* Imagine how American life might be different today if high-quality early care and education had been available to every family that wanted it for the past four decades. It almost happened! (32 minutes)



EPISODE 3: *Are We Crazy About Our Kids?* demonstrates how investing in high-quality early care and education pays for itself in many ways and many times over. So why aren't we doing it? (32 minutes)

EPISODE 4: *Wounded Places: Confronting Childhood PTSD in America's Shell-Shocked Cities* reveals that too many children, especially children of color in neighborhoods of concentrated poverty, show symptoms that resemble post-traumatic stress syndrome – except for many there is no 'post.' How might they and their neighborhoods heal from the trauma? (42 minutes)

EPISODE 5: *DNA Is Not Destiny: How the Outside Gets Under the Skin* explores the exciting new field of epigenetics, and the evidence that fetal and early child environments literally become part of us. They change not our genes but the epigenetic “dimmer switches” that turn genes on and off — with enduring consequences for mental and physical health. (35 minutes)

The Raising of America was produced by the San Francisco-based film production and distribution center, California Newsreel, in association with Vital Pictures of Boston, and

is distributed by American Public Television (APT). The presenting station is Twin Cities Public Television (TPT). **California Newsreel** is the nation's oldest, non-profit documentary production and distribution center, dedicated to the dissemination of social interest films and videos. Past series include *Unnatural Causes: Is Inequality Making Us Sick?*, winner of a duPont Columbia Award, Best Film / Radio / TV Program of the Year by the National Academy of Sciences and the Institute of Medicine and other honors, as well as the acclaimed series that interrogates the idea of race, *RACE-The Power of an Illusion*.

The Raising of America received major funding from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and the California Endowment. Additional funding from Kaiser Permanente and the Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota Foundation. The companion web site was funded in part by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control. The program is part of the public media initiative ***American Graduate: Let's Make It Happen***.

More than 600 Public Engagement Partners are using *The Raising of America* as a tool to change the conversation about how we can better assure the conditions that all babies and young children need to thrive. Partners include the American Academy of Pediatrics, American

Public Health Association, Association of Maternal and Child Health Programs, the Center for the Study of Social Policy, ChildCare Aware, National Association of County and City Health Officials, National Healthy Start Association, Zero to Three and [hundreds of others](#).



EXPERTS FROM THE FILM

Ellen Bravo is Executive Director of Family Values @ Work, a national network of coalitions advocating for family-friendly workplace policies.

Cory Burghy is a researcher studying the impact of parental stress on children at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Renée Boynton-Jarrett, MD, ScD. is a Boston Medical Center pediatrician and researcher. She is founding director of Vital Village, a network of residents and agencies committed to maximizing child, family and community wellbeing.

Robert Dugger is an economist, former hedge fund partner, and co-founder of ReadyNation, a business oriented child-advocacy group. He is a former partner of Tudor Investment Corporation and former policy director of the American Bankers Association.

Marilyn Essex is a Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, School of Medicine and Public Health. She is the director of the Life Stress and Human Development Lab, and co-director and principal investigator of the Wisconsin Study of Families and Work.

James Heckman is the Henry Schultz Distinguished Service Professor of Economics at the University of Chicago, a Nobel Prize winner in economics, and an expert in the economics of human development.

Judith Lichtman is an attorney, past president of the National Partnership for Women & Families and a family leave advocate.

john a. powell is director of the Haas Institute for a Fair and Inclusive Society, and professor of law, University of California-Berkeley School of Law.

Arthur Rolnick, former Senior Vice President of the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis, is now a Senior Fellow and Co-Director of the Human Capital Research Collaborative at the Humphrey School of Public Affairs, the University of Minnesota.

Jack Shonkoff, M.D., is director of the Center on the Developing Child, Harvard University and co-editor of *From Neurons to Neighborhoods: The Science of Early Child Development*.

Aiyauna Terry is an early childhood teacher at Ellis Memorial Child Development Center in Boston.

Edward Tronick is Professor of Psychology at the University of Massachusetts-Boston. Chief of Research, Child Development Unit; conducted the classic “Still Face Experiment” with Dr. T. Berry Brazelton and colleagues.

THE FILMMAKERS

Larry Adelman (Series Creator and Executive Producer) is co-director and head of production for California Newsreel, the country's oldest non-profit, documentary production and distribution center. Adelman was the creator and executive producer of *Unnatural Causes: Is Inequality Making Us Sick?* (2008), which explores the root causes of the nation's alarming inequities in health. The series won a duPont-Columbia Award and the 2009 Best Film / Radio / Television Award from the National Academy of Sciences and Institute of Medicine, among other honors. Adelman was also the creator and executive producer of the pioneering series broadcast by PBS, *RACE—The Power of an Illusion* (2003). Other award-winning documentaries broadcast by PBS he has produced, co-produced, and/or directed include *The Business of America...* (1984), *Collision Course* (1988) and *The Road to Brown* (1990).

Christine Herbes-Sommers (Producer), president of Vital Pictures, has produced more than 100 hours of documentary, dramatic, and educational programming for PBS broadcast since 1976. Her film *Joan Robinson: One Woman's Story* won a duPont-Columbia Award in 1981. She produced the opening episodes of California Newsreel's series *Unnatural Causes: Is Inequality Making Us Sick?* and *RACE – The Power of an Illusion*, and was executive producer of *Herskovits at the Heart of Blackness*, winner of the John E. O'Connor Award from the American Historical Association, and *American Denial*, both broadcast by *Independent Lens* on PBS. She is currently project director/producer of the forthcoming *Coming of Age in Aging in America* project.

ABOUT AMERICAN GRADUATE



The public media initiative, [American Graduate: Let's Make It Happen](#), is helping communities across America identify and implement solutions to address the high school dropout crisis. Made possible by the [Corporation for Public Broadcasting](#) (CPB), the multi-year campaign is designed to raise awareness and dialogue through national and local multiplatform programming. Targeting communities with highest dropout rates, the initiative also increases local engagement and action through collaborations and partnerships, and increases student engagement through teacher professional development and classroom curricula. Public radio and television stations – locally owned and operated – reach 99% of the country over the air, have built models for successful intervention in early learning, and have deep connections in the communities they serve. More than 600 partnerships have been formed locally through American Graduate and CPB is partnering with America's Promise Alliance and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Visit American Graduate on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) or [AmericanGraduate.org](#).

ABOUT TWIN CITIES PUBLIC TELEVISION (TPT)



The mission of TPT is to “enrich lives and strengthen our community through the power of media.” As one of the nation’s leading public media organizations, TPT uses television, interactive media, and community engagement to advance education, culture and citizenship. Over its 50-plus-year history, TPT has been recognized for its innovation and creativity with numerous awards, including Peabody awards and national and regional Emmys. Based in St. Paul, MN, TPT is one of the highest rated PBS affiliates in the nation, reaching over 1.3 million people each month through multiple broadcast and online channels. The organization's particular areas of focus include: the educational readiness of children; serving the needs and unleashing the potential of America's aging population; engaging a new generation in the power of public media; and being the preferred media partner for organizations that align with our mission to enrich lives and strengthen community.

ABOUT AMERICAN PUBLIC TELEVISION (APT)



American Public Television (APT) has been a leading distributor of high-quality, top-rated programming to the nation’s public television stations since 1961. In 2014, APT distributed one-third of the top 100 highest-rated public television titles in the U. S. Among its 300 new program titles per year, APT programs include prominent documentaries, news and current affairs programs, dramas, how-to programs, children’s series and classic movies. *America’s Test Kitchen From Cook’s Illustrated, Rick Steves’ Europe, Live From the Artists Den, Doc Martin, Nightly Business Report, Midsomer Murders, Vera, NHK*

Newsline, Lidia's Kitchen, Globe Trekker, Simply Ming, and P. Allen Smith's Garden Home join numerous documentaries and performance programs popular with public television viewers. APT licenses programs internationally through its APT Worldwide service. Now in its tenth year, Create® TV — featuring the best of public television's lifestyle programming — is distributed by APT. APT also distributes WORLD™, public television's premier news, science and documentary channel. To find out more about APT's programs and services, visit APTonline.org

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<http://raisingofamerica.org/press-kit>