

ACTION TOOLKIT

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ACTION TOOLKIT



It is easier to
build strong children
than repair broken men.

—Frederick Douglass

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(they sound something like this...)
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A Note on Terminology

We've borrowed a lot for this project from many brilliant and generous experts, not just concepts and counsel but even terminology, and we are thankful and fortunate.

“What surrounds us shapes us,” was developed by Lori Dorfman and the [Berkeley Media Studies Group](#).

“Toxic stress” is an explanatory concept developed by the [Center on the Developing Child](#) with [Frameworks Institute](#) and now in widespread use.

“The squeeze on parents” is an apt expression coined and elaborated upon by [Paul Kershaw](#) of the University of British Columbia and founder of Canada's [Generation Squeeze](#).

“The best parenting programs may have nothing to do with parenting at all” is a paraphrase of language used by Sendhil Mullainathan and Saugato Datta in their article “[Stress Affects Good Parenting](#),” and then further developed by Mullainathan and Eldar Shafir in their best-selling book, [Scarcity: Why Having Too Little Means So Much](#).

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CHANGING THE CONVERSATION ABOUT THE EARLY YEARS

The way we talk changes the way we work. *The Raising of America* can help you change the conversation about why some children thrive while others flounder.

This is important because the predominant ‘story,’ or way of talking about early child development in the U.S., places a disproportionate focus on parents making right or wrong choices. If parents only “knew better,” or had the grit and determination to make the “right” choices in the face of adversity, the conventional narrative goes, their children would do better. The Frameworks Institute and a growing number of researchers suggest that this emphasis on parenting actually stands in the way of change. When parenting behaviors are seen as the driver of childhood outcomes then solutions are limited to changing parenting behaviors.

If parents only “knew better,” or had the grit and determination to make the “right” choices in the face of adversity, the conventional narrative goes, their children would do better.

But families don’t live inside a bubble. Our lives and opportunities are enhanced or constrained by the larger social ecology we inhabit: housing and neighborhoods, availability of services, wages and income, workplace and public policies, social norms, and economic and racial arrangements. For example, how can even the best teaching about breastfeeding make significant changes if we don’t also enact policies that ensure working mothers have the time, privacy and access to a refrigerator so they can pump at work?

As a nation, we are well-versed on promoting positive parenting behaviors. But if we really want to improve early child outcomes, we need to expand the conversation beyond parenting to include how the social conditions, public policies and racial and economic inequities which impede parental efforts to nurture, care for, and guide their youngest children.

Middle class parents are in a constant struggle against the seemingly implacable constraints of time and money—facing long workweeks, stagnant wages, debt, and short vacations. Most lack paid parental leave, have little or no paid sick leave, and face rising childcare costs. The working poor and the unemployed face even greater adversities.

Advancing a compelling new narrative capable of changing the way parents, practitioners, policy makers and the public think about society's responsibilities and interests in these first crucial years will help open a space to entertain new initiatives and debate the transformative changes needed to give all our infants the opportunity for a strong start.

The Raising of America tells this new story. We hope it will help you widen the locus of attention from the individual child and family to how our larger society structures opportunities for healthy child development.

Here are six elements of that story.

Six Elements of a New Conversation

ELEMENT 1

What surrounds us shapes us

We are born with most of our 86 billion brain cells (neurons), but those cells are only weakly connected.

It's our experiences during the very first years of life which literally wire together and shape the architecture of our developing brains, building a strong or weak foundation for future learning, earning, and mental and physical health, and affecting whether our stress management system responds appropriately or not to real or perceived threats.

This is why safe, stable and nurturing relationships and environments are among the most powerful and protective forces in a young child's life.

ELEMENT 2

Blaming parents is the easy way out

Too many parents in the U.S. are cut adrift without paid family leave, high-quality affordable child care, affordable housing, living wage jobs or social supports.

Without these kinds of family friendly policies, parents with young children are increasingly squeezed for time, for money and for resources. These societal stressors create anxiety and worry in parents which in turn impedes their efforts to provide focused and responsive attention to their baby's emotional states and needs.

Because of attunement between baby and parents, when parents are stressed by social circumstances (often beyond their control) that stress can quite literally "drip down" on their babies, altering the wiring of their developing brain.

ELEMENT 3

The best parenting programs may have nothing to do with parenting at all

Many are quick to advocate for programs that teach parenting skills—but managing adversity, chronic stress and the pressures on our lives is not the same as reducing the sources of that adversity and stress.

Improving conditions for parents, caregivers and communities—living wages; quality, affordable housing; paid parental leave; high-quality childcare; flex time; social inclusion and desegregation; better transit—can improve young children’s chances for growing into healthy, compassionate and responsible adults.

ELEMENT 4

Young children are one of the most prudent investments our nation can make

To predict how our nation will fare tomorrow, we only need look at how our youngest children are doing today—and the numbers show we are falling behind.

Many studies suggest that investments which improve a child’s, her family’s and her neighborhood’s circumstances in the earliest years of a child’s life have the best chance of putting that child on a strong developmental path—emotionally, intellectually, and socially. Today’s children are tomorrow’s parents, friends, neighbors, workers, citizens and leaders.

ELEMENT 5

**We all
stand to gain**

Parents, rich and poor alike, report being plagued by chronic anxiety: Will my children have enough? Can I keep them safe? Can I provide what they need to succeed? Will they feel my love and learn to love in return?

As we have increasingly become a fend-for-yourself society, even affluent families fear not having enough—while middle and low-income families, stressed for time, money and resources, struggle every day to be the parents they want to be for their young children. If we as a community, a state, a nation better assure the conditions that improve all children's chances to realize their capabilities, we and our children will all benefit from a healthier, safer, better educated, more prosperous and more equitable future. And when we make the needs of young children and their families a national priority, anxiety and fears for our own children can give way to a sense of hope and possibility.

ELEMENT 6

**Change is
possible**

The conditions and policies that make parenting so stressful in the U.S. aren't natural or etched in stone. They are the result of decisions we as a body politic have made—and can make differently.

The U.S. has a long history of social movements which have tackled social inequities and driven social change. There are many things we can do—large and small—to improve social conditions for families with young children.

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A NEW TOOL TO EDUCATE, ORGANIZE AND ADVOCATE

The Raising of America seeks to encourage a national conversation that links early child relationships and environments to their impact on the biology of young children, and how these in turn influence adult outcomes as well as the future of the nation.

The series was created in the context of a national public engagement campaign, with partners across the nation at the national, state and local level committed to using the series to generate dialogue about what we can—and should—do to make a strong start the birthright of every infant in the United States.

You can use *The Raising of America* to educate, organize and/or advocate for change:

1. Educate & Inform

- Raise awareness about the importance of safe, stable and nurturing early child experiences and environments.
- Recognize that existing social inequities enhance or constrain how families are able to provide for their young children depending on where they fall on the socioeconomic pyramid.
- Connect the future prosperity of the nation to the health and well-being of our youngest generation.
- Demonstrate that it doesn't have to be this way, that we as a society can make different policy choices.

2. Organize & Empower

- Get people involved, connect them to initiatives for change and impel a sense of urgency.
- Strengthen organizational capacity and readiness to demand that all our youngest children have the conditions that can better provide a strong start.
- Strengthen alliances among child advocates, educators and provider organizers.
- Reach out and build partnerships with organizations in other arenas—affordable housing, racial justice, living wage jobs, etc.—so they can use the lens of early childhood to advance their work.

3. Advocate

- Bring mobilized constituencies together to educate civic leaders, the media and press for specific policy changes.
- Draw attention to innovative, community and workplace-based initiatives which improve conditions for young children and their families.
- Ensure that anyone running for office makes improving children's chances a priority.

We invite you to join the **hundreds of public engagement partners** who are screening *The Raising of America* to change the conversation within their organizations, their communities, among policy makers, and the general public.

Ultimately, the success of *The Raising of America* will be measured by how effectively educators, providers, organizers, parents, public officials, advocates, and people like you use the series to educate, organize and advocate for change.

***The Raising of America* has hundreds of national, regional and local partners including:**

The American Academy of Pediatrics	Head Start Association
Zero to Three	League of Women Voters, Oregon
Healthy Start Association	USCF Benioff Children's Hospital
First 5 of California	Oakland
Illinois African American Family Association	Colorado PTA
Association of Maternal and Child Health Programs (AMCHP) Kentucky	National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO)
	<i>and so many more!</i>

See the complete list at
www.raisingofamerica.org/our-partners



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HOW TO USE THE RAISING OF AMERICA

The Raising of America documentary series and accompanying website have been designed as tools to change the conversation about early child development in the U.S.

Here's a five-step process which can help you plan a great screening and inspire audiences to action:

- 1. Build internal consensus and capacity**
- 2. Choose your audience**
- 3. Prioritize ways your audience can take action**
- 4. Find success stories to spotlight**
- 5. Choose what to show, which speakers to invite, and which co-sponsors to engage**

Consider the difference between watching and using the series. Watching is a passive activity; audiences receive information and afterwards might have some time for a Q&A. Using the series engages participants in active, results-oriented, critical and creative thinking from the moment they arrive, even before the film screening begins.

Consider how you might ask audiences to examine or articulate their preconceptions about early child development before they watch. What do you want them to keep in mind as they are watching? How will speakers challenge and inspire? What concrete actions can audience members do immediately? What actions can lead to a leadership role over the long term?

[See Discussion Guides](#) for ideas specific to each episode

1. Build Internal Consensus and Capacity

What role is your organization best positioned to play?

Before bringing people together, clarify who you want to reach and who from your organization or coalition needs to be engaged first so you can have full support to create a strong and effective event.

Use the following questions to assess and increase the level of commitment and expertise within your organization and/or planning committee. How you answer these questions will help you plan internal screenings and discussions which can lay the groundwork for an effective education campaign, for building partnerships or for advocacy.

Knowledge & skill

How knowledgeable, skillful and committed to improving social conditions for families with young children are leadership, staff, and your constituents? Does everyone know how to move the conversation beyond parenting behaviors to the ways structures and systems impact child wellbeing? Where are areas of resistance?

Mission & vision

How does advancing equity and social justice fit into the mission of your organization? How do these translate into practice?

Inclusivity

How inclusive is your membership or your staff and leadership? How can you reach a wider audience and/or share power, particularly with groups who are most impacted by your work? Whose voices are included and heard?

Existing programs

How do your existing programs, policies and partnerships address and tackle social conditions for families with young children? What will it take to re-align them?

Link to early child development

Is it clear to your leadership, staff, members, constituents and/or clients how your work fits into the larger context of early child health and development? What would it take to make this connection?

Opportunities & roadblocks

What activities, organizations, trends and media coverage outside your organization are advancing or hindering initiatives that benefit young children and their families? How might you tap into the momentum other groups bring to this issue?

Buy-in

Whose backing would help you champion this conversation across sectors and siloes, across impacted communities and to other levels of your organization?

Point person

Who within your group has the time, resources and capacity to take the lead in developing an action plan for your event(s), supervising publicity and logistics, and overseeing follow-up activities? Do they have the backing and full support of the leadership and members?

2. Choose Your Audience

The Raising of America can be used with a wide range of audiences to advance many goals: winning support for a specific policy, building alliances across sectors, and beginning community dialogues among others.

The key to planning a screening that is focused, relevant and inspiring is:

- Determine who your audience is
- Set clear goals (*what you want to accomplish*)
- Define clear objectives (*concrete outcomes you can use to measure success and learning among participants*)

On the following pages are eight ways you can use the series to advance your work and your mission.

Eight Ways to Use the Series to Advance Your Work

ONE

Align your own organization

Use the series to improve staff and leadership knowledge, skills and commitment to addressing the social determinants of child well-being. You might use a child equity lens to consider the impact of your own programs, policies and partnerships on staff and the community. Or ask how your organization can take a leadership role in drawing attention to the inequities that harm our youngest children—and to initiatives which can put children on a stronger developmental path.

Facilitate In-Service Training for Providers (including Grand Rounds)

Screening the films and using their accompanying discussion guides can provide modules for trainings of all kinds.

Brown-Bag Lunches

Many workplaces hold lunchtime events and provide release time for voluntary activities. Suggest a series of brown-bag lunch events devoted to screening and discussing episodes of *The Raising of America* and how early life conditions affect your co-workers—either as parents, someday parents, or as the children we all were and how that shaped us into the adults we are.

TWO

Foster community dialogues

Public screenings at churches, schools, libraries, theaters, high school auditoriums and elsewhere provide opportunities to engage broad and diverse publics and to inspire them to support specific initiatives which affect families and their young children, as well as demand greater accountability from government and business leaders. Consider reaching out to the media, especially your public radio or television station, to cover your event or even produce a show of their own rooted in your community.

THREE

Engage members and constituents

Many members and constituents are not well-connected to their organization, nor involved in its mission. Screenings can bring members together, help them scrutinize their own preconceptions, strengthen their commitment, and become adept themselves at informing and involving others.

At Conferences

Professional and academic conferences are an excellent place to screen and discuss the implications of *The Raising of America*.

Plan workshops

How can you help your members and constituents use the film as a tool in their work? Rather than including the film as an ‘evening event’ with little time for dialogue, plan a longer workshop that provides strategies for using the series as one tool to advance your work.

FOUR

Strengthen alliances with natural partners

Screenings can bring together many organizations who work with children but rarely communicate with each other—pediatricians, counselors, child care providers, scholars, nurses, PTAs and school volunteers, foster care providers, child and working family advocates, educators, public health workers, social workers—and strengthen partnerships, or begin new ones.

FIVE

Engage policymakers

Once allies are brought together eager for change, they can convene policy forums and screen an episode of the film, or even a few clips, as part of a healthy discussion with civic leaders and policy makers about initiatives that can make a difference in your community, your county, your state—making clear the benefits to all.

SIX

Build new allies across sectors

Many organizations don't appreciate that their work is ipso facto child development work. But to the extent those working for living wage jobs, racial justice, affordable housing, transit and infrastructure improvements, zoning, food access, environmental justice, more green space, workforce development, philanthropy, even criminal justice, military readiness and campaign spending reform succeed in their efforts, then the conditions for families, caregivers and children are likely to improve. Using the lens of early childhood can help stitch this work together and build a stronger, broader base of support. Don't forget to reach out to your public television and radio station community affairs directors.

SEVEN

Generate student involvement

The series can be used in a wide range of courses—sociology, social work, child and human development, the family, labor studies, public health, education, psychology, medical schools (especially pediatrics) and nursing. Films can be screened in class or assigned outside class as readings. They can also be used in residence life programs. The [Discussion Guides](#) and [Discover section of the website](#) provide additional resources for classroom learning.

EIGHT

Engage the media

Invite selected members of the media to attend your events. Help them appreciate how any discussion of children and parenting is incomplete unless it also includes how social conditions, history, racism, corporate policies and government action can help or hinder child development. Invite your local PBS radio or TV station to produce a wrap-around show focusing on local issues to accompany the broadcast of *The Raising of America*.

3. Prioritize Ways Your Audience Can Take Action

How will you translate the energy generated during your screening into concrete action?

It is essential offer your participants a range of concrete ways to take action, from simple steps that can be done immediately to longer-term efforts that can make a larger impact. Be sure to consider who your audience is, their expertise and areas of focus to tailor “next steps” that build on their strengths.

Your participants can...

Organize screenings within their own organization

Identify programs and initiatives within their organizations that can incorporate the series as a training tool

Plan local screening events with PTAs, book clubs, neighborhood associations, churches, tenant groups, racial justice groups, etc.

Partner up with local organizations working on the key struggles for children and families in their neighborhoods

Broker partnerships between child-focused organizations and organizations from other sectors (e.g., housing, education, employment, political orgs)

Change the conversation through op-eds, letters to the editor, call-ins to radio shows, blog posts, etc.

Organize a policy forum for government officials and civic leaders to learn about early childhood

Create messages for social media (newsletter, Facebook posts, Twitter feed, Instagram, etc.)

4. Find Success Stories to Spotlight

How will you inspire your audience to action?

What success stories from their own communities and from organizations like theirs will help your audience feel connected and empowered and show that change is possible. Consider these suggestions—what kind of stories will your audience connect with?

Find Success Stories to Spotlight

Improving conditions directly related to early childhood

Increase social supports for families such as child support payments, paid parental, family and sick leave, low-cost or free universal, high-quality child care and preschool, home visiting programs, increase the earned income credit, quality schools, and safe places to play.

Improving working conditions

Decrease job strain; increase job autonomy and worker participation; provide flexible work hours to parents who need them while ensuring reliable work hours; encourage businesses to hire locally; strengthen and enforce occupational safety laws; guarantee paid sick leave, parental leave and paid holidays and vacations; ensure employees don't feel 'on-call' after hours; provide time and private areas at work for new mothers to nurse and pump.

Advancing living wages

Raise the minimum wage to a level that can support a family; provide income, education and training for the under-skilled and unemployed; support collective bargaining rights; invest in needed infrastructure which improves communities while creating jobs; support the right to reliable work hours; ensure healthcare for all; restore a progressive income tax and inheritance taxes; constrain financial speculation; encourage worker-ownership.

Improving schools

Require smaller class sizes; equalize school spending; increase teacher pay, training, and prep time; reform educational policies based on high-stakes testing; create partnerships with families; keep facilities open in the evenings for community use; introduce trauma-informed practices

Improving social inclusion

Decrease social inequality; struggle against discrimination and segregation; encourage democratic decision-making; strengthen participation in community organizations and local governance; promote the creation and use of public spaces; organize support groups for parents, including home visiting programs.

Improving the physical environment

Create more quality, low-cost housing; improve air quality and reduce exposure to toxics, especially lead and air particulates; create more parks and green spaces; promote farmers' markets and fresh produce in local stores; ensure safe sidewalks and streets; provide reliable and low-cost public transit; encourage "green" development and pedestrian-oriented planning.

Promoting racial justice

Strengthen existing anti-discrimination laws and their enforcement; desegregate schools and equalize funding; build diverse neighborhoods; ensure that neighborhoods of color are well-served by transit, parks, fresh food markets and other resources; provide resources for jobs and educational access and retention; end unequal enforcement of minor drug, traffic and other offenses; stop racial profiling and policy brutality; build awareness of implicit bias; use an equity lens to evaluate projects and initiatives, including development and transit.

**Note: Promoting racial justice is also intrinsic to all the efforts above.*

5. Choose What to Screen, Which Speakers to Invite and Which Co-sponsors to Engage

The episode or video clips you choose to screen and the speakers you invite should be decided based on the goals and objectives for your event and the actions you'd like audience members to consider.

What to Screen?



Be creative. Be intentional. Ask yourself:

- What are we trying to accomplish with this screening event? What kind of conversation are we trying to spark?
- How much time do we have? Should we show a few five-minute clips, a full episode, or multiple episodes over several sessions? The Signature Hour or another episode?
- What issues are most relevant to our audience? Should we stick to the most relevant parts of the series or show segments that will broaden the conversation? What will provide your audience a fresh perspective?

For example, rather than show childcare advocates a clip about how hard it is to find affordable, quality childcare (they presumably know that already), why not engage them around a point of history: why was a bill that provided quality, affordable childcare for all passed by Congress but vetoed back in 1971?

Or engage them in the science: how does the social environment literally get under the skin and alter the wiring of the developing brain?

Or foster conversation about the effects of poverty: there are strong biological reason why children who grew up in poverty or were injured by trauma might have a harder time managing their anger or regulating their reactivity to stressors.

Who Are the Right Speakers & Panelists?



Speakers and panelists can go a long way toward creating a powerful conversation.

Be sure speakers and panelists can demonstrate how larger social conditions affect children, parents and caregivers and point to solutions that go beyond parenting choices.

Ask yourself:

- Which speakers and panelists help audience members connect their aspirations for young children to a vision of how change might occur?
- Who can link the content of the film to your local landscape for families with young children?
- Do you need a policy perspective? A community perspective? Business? A cross-sectoral perspective? The big picture?

- Do you need expert voices to share the stats and figures specific to your geographic area? Community organizers who can connect social conditions to who has power?
- What expertise/experience/perspective will inspire audience members?

Be sure panelists have previewed the film before the screening so they have a chance to process their reactions prior to the event.

Which Co-sponsors?



One of the critical points of *The Raising of America* is that raising America's children is not an issue solely for early childhood advocates—it is the concern of those across the spectrum. Ask yourself, what would a cross-sector of sponsors look like?

- People and policies in transportation, business, housing, wages, urban development, public health, and economic policy?
- Co-sponsors from a variety of organizations, across sectors, issues and communities?
- Local racial justice advocates, school boards, housing organizations, women's groups, pediatrics departments, environmental groups, business leaders, transportation authorities, and public health organizations?

Reaching across these sectors will not only diversify the views you bring to the screening conversation, it will diversify the audiences that join the conversation—something that will benefit us all.

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ENSURE A PRODUCTIVE DISCUSSION

While *The Raising of America* explores how larger forces and conditions affect child development, the conversation about children and parenting can easily slip back into the dominant, conventional story about how parents need to make better choices.

To ensure a productive conversation about how we as a society might give all babies the opportunity for a strong start, we must:

1. Ask new questions

Questions which transfer the group's locus of attention from the individual (e.g. "How do we increase the number of mothers who breastfeed?") to systems (e.g. "How can we ensure mothers have the time and privacy to pump at work?") to help change the conversation and open up a space to discuss new initiatives and solutions.

2. Recognize and avoid pitfalls

These are common limiting questions or comments that can quickly derail the conversation into talking about what "those" people should be doing better!

3. Prepare your facilitator(s)

The facilitator should understand the big picture and be able to guide a conversation to connect the dots between social conditions and child outcomes.

1. Ask New Questions

Ask questions that pivot the conversation to changing social conditions. Here are some examples.

USUAL QUESTION	BROADER QUESTION
How can we increase the number of mothers who breastfeed?	How can we ensure that mothers have the time and privacy to pump at work?
How do we ensure more children are kindergarten-ready?	How do we ensure all families have access to affordable, high-quality early care and education?
How can we help children in neglectful or abusive situations?	Why do parents struggle to provide a loving, nurturing environment for their babies?
How do we help low-income families, especially families of color, make better parenting decisions?	How do we advance racial justice and improve socioeconomic conditions and opportunities in low-income communities of color?
How do we get policymakers to understand the importance of investing in the early years?	How can we build a movement that will impel policy makers to listen and act?
What policies can improve conditions for young children?	Who's at the table making decisions? Who's left out? Who decides?
How do we buffer children from adversities?	What's causing these adversities and who benefits?
What's wrong with you?	What happened to you?

2. Recognize and Avoid Pitfalls (they sound something like this...)

“ We’re preaching to the choir. What we really need is to convince others...”

When staffers immediately focus on how to persuade others, they miss a valuable opportunity to explore what it would mean to their own practice if they took a systems-based approach.

How are they affected as parents and children themselves, and not just in their role as service providers or advocates? How can they make the greatest impact in their current role? For example, parents receive informational pamphlets from their pediatricians. What if pediatricians also informed parents about local initiatives designed to improve community conditions?

How can child advocates, a core constituency for change, receive the time and training to connect the dots between child outcomes, social injustices and the future health, prosperity and equity of the nation?

“ We need to talk about parental responsibility...”

Actually, we don’t, other than to acknowledge it. Not at this event at any rate. Ask most parents and they will tell you the information available about how to parent is exhaustive (even if not always effective). From pamphlets, magazines, books, the web, and the growing number of parent education and training programs, the ‘how-to parent’ conversation is covered by others.

What’s not yet been addressed is how, as economist Robert Dugger says in *The Raising of America*, “Our policies actually actively discourage parents from being able to take care of their children when they’re very young.” It’s not just that being a parent can be hard—just as it can be incredibly rewarding—it’s that U.S. policies and (and their absence) make a hard job even more difficult.

“ This is about low-income families, especially low-income families of color...

Yes, the data are clear that those exposed to the most threats to their well-being are children of low-income families, especially low-income families of color who are further burdened by the additional stressors of racism. But too often this statement implies that middle-income families and white families are immune to our lack of family-friendly policies. When research tells us that many middle class and even affluent kids aren't doing as well as they could be.

Middle class families lead an increasingly stressed existence, squeezed for time, for money and for resources. Studies show that these stressors on parents can literally get “under the skin” of their young children, altering their emotional, intellectual and social development as they grow up—even if parents no longer feel stressed.

What would it be like for middle class parents if quality childcare cost \$200/month? If you could take a paid year of time to be at home with your new baby? If you could work flexible schedules, take four weeks paid holidays and vacations a year, and still advance in your career? Other rich countries guarantee these benefits by law. They do so because it's not just about low-income families or families of color. It's about all of us—and the nation's future.

“ Government just messes things up...

Government actions are usually welcomed or dismissed as ‘good’ or ‘bad.’ But isn't the real question who government is held accountable to? Too often government is captured by corporate and monied interests. But the Civil Rights, Women's Rights and Gay/Lesbian Rights movements indicate the power of countervailing social movements to shape government priorities and policies. But holding government accountable is a continual process, not something that happens just once. Ending child labor, the 8-hour work-day—these didn't just spring out of the ground.

These outcomes were the result of many small and big—but always intentional—efforts to make change, that no matter the bumps and defeats on the journey, to “keep one’s eyes on the prize.” Let’s make it clear to all parents that it doesn’t have to be this hard, that advocating for family-friendly policies can be a chapter in one of your favorite parenting books.

Ultimately, the struggle is over what should be public goods or a private commodity. In the U.S, we’ve decided that a K-12 education is a public good, available to all. But with some notable exceptions, early care is treated as a commodity to be purchased in the market.

3. Prepare your facilitator(s)

It's important to have an effective facilitator. Because *The Raising of America* challenges long and deeply held assumptions, viewers may react quite differently: some may be disturbed and overwhelmed, while others may feel validated and inspired by what they see.

An effective facilitator will be attentive, set clear directions, engage people, maintain an environment of calm and mutual respect, and is knowledgeable about group dynamics as well as the social determinants of early childhood.

Here are some facilitation tips to help you anticipate the conversation and create a successful experience.

Pre-Screen the Film and Background Materials

- “Pre-process” the film ahead of time so you are not managing your own reaction while trying to facilitate a discussion. Transcripts are available on our website.
- Read background materials to develop your own understanding of how the social conditions families experience affect the trajectory of their young children—for better or for worse. Come ready to share additional information to “ground” discussion and move people towards action.

Know Your Audience

- If you are bringing disparate groups together for the first time, know what their issues are and where their areas of difference and resistance might be.

- Make sure your goals and expectations are appropriate for the audience present in the room, not the group you wanted to have. Be flexible about outcomes.
- Consider your audience's interests and vulnerabilities. Tailor your language and your framing of the issues to their knowledge and experiences. Let their needs determine the topics and style of discussion.

Guide the Discussion

- Allow time for processing and acknowledging people's reactions.
- Take the time to make people feel comfortable and allow them to be heard. Various audience members may have a different stake in the issues, especially if it's a diverse group, and believe that their struggle or perspective is the most important. As a result, discussion about the film can become fraught with emotion.
- Create group agreements so that everyone knows they will be heard and no one can dominate the discussion or silence others. Ask the group to explore ideas together rather than debate positions.
- Encourage active listening without judgment. Manage but don't avoid disagreements, remembering that conflict can be constructive.
- Invite people to participate, allowing for different styles of engagement. Ensure that different stakeholders are given voice.
- Encourage people who experience power in their work—executives, managers, policy makers, service providers—

to listen as a student and consider how they can use their power to widen opportunities for families with young children.

- Encourage professional audiences to bring their whole selves—not just their professional side but also their experiences raising young children while trying to balance the demands of work. Where do they fit on the continuum of advantage and how would a transformative child-centered approach to policies benefit or have benefitted them and their children?
 - Take advantage of teachable moments. Ask someone speaking to say more, go deeper, rephrase or consider an alternative or opposing view. Guide the group towards opportunities and solutions.
 - Remind everyone at key points during the event of our common goal: to assure the conditions that can provide all our kids the opportunity for a strong start.
 - Given the tight timeframe of most events, be sure to save enough time to share ways to get involved, and provide audience members the opportunity to participate. Too often speakers run long at the cost of audience voices. It is up to you to organize the time effectively and efficiently, assuring audience members the opportunity to be heard and engaged.
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It is our hope that *The Raising of America* documentary series can be a media tool you use to link individual aspirations for strong, healthy, happy children to a language of social connectedness and equity.

May all babies in the United States have the opportunity for a strong start, and may all families have the time, money and resources to enjoy the amazing adventure that is parenting.



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CALIFORNIA NEWSREEL

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

California Newsreel produces and distributes cutting-edge social justice films that inspire, educate and engage audiences. Founded in 1968, Newsreel is the oldest non-profit, social issue documentary film center in the country, the first to marry media production and contemporary social movements.

Award-winning titles include *Unnatural Causes: Is Inequality Making Us Sick?*, *RACE-The Power of an Illusion* and *Ethnic Notions*.

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