

# The Raising of America

## EARLY CHILDHOOD AND THE FUTURE OF OUR NATION

### THE DOCUMENTARY SERIES | Video Release Early 2015, PBS Broadcast TBD

**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, more prosperous and equitable nation.

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

The U.S. is a can-do nation. So why is child well-being in the U.S. so much worse than in other rich countries? How does the growing stress on many young families and caregivers—the squeeze for time, money and resources—‘drip down’ on their infants and young children, literally altering the wiring of their developing brains with potential lifelong consequences for their socio-emotional and intellectual development and physical health? How might we do better?

This hour-long episode interweaves the latest discoveries from neuroscience with the stories of families and communities doing all they can to provide the nurturing environments all babies and young children need to thrive. But too often individual efforts are hindered by social conditions that affect children’s developmental trajectories. If we aspire to a healthier, safer, better educated, more prosperous and equitable nation, we must invest in all our infants now. They won’t fail us, but we can’t fail them.

### **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 classic economic studies of Perry Preschool and other initiatives conducted by Nobel laureate James Heckman, former Federal Reserve economist Arthur Rolnick and others which illustrate how we can either invest early for success 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 fetal and early childhood environments quite literally change brain architecture and other bio-regulatory systems—from the stress response to metabolism. Early environments—be they chemical or socio-economic—can alter not the genes babies inherit but the epigenetic “volume controls” which turn genes on and off. These epigenetic switches can influence the self-regulation of emotions and behaviors, cognitive function, even the susceptibility to chronic diseases as people age.

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

Just imagine how things might be different if for the past four decades all American children had access to high-quality early care and ed. It almost happened. Back in 1971, Congress passed a bill providing high-quality, universal childcare, home visiting and other services from birth to age five to every family that wanted it. Pres. Nixon’s 11th hour veto marked the first time ‘family values’ was invoked to undermine pro-family and child initiatives. The veto marked a critical inflection point from our path towards a more inclusive nation to today’s ‘you’re-on-your-own’ society.

WOUNDED PLACES:  
Confronting Childhood PTSD in  
America’s Shell-Shocked Cities

Too many of our children, especially children of color in neighborhoods of concentrated poverty, experience adversity, 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 chronicles the stories of children shook by trauma and asks not “What’s wrong with you?” but “What happened to you?” and how can traumatized children and neighborhoods heal.

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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 the opportunity for a strong start.

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, 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 lift up local initiatives and policies 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 might concentrated power and wealth harm children?
- 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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- **Contact us:** [info@raisingofamerica.org](mailto:info@raisingofamerica.org)

*The Raising of America* developed out of a rigorous consultation with the field. For a copy of the *Needs Assessment Report*, please visit: [raisingofamerica.org/project#assessment](http://raisingofamerica.org/project#assessment).

*The Raising of America* is produced by **California Newsreel** with **Vital Pictures**. [www.newsreel.org](http://www.newsreel.org)