

# 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 a 5-part documentary series and public engagement campaign that explores how a strong start for all our kids can lead to a healthier, safer, better educated and more prosperous and equitable America.

### THE DOCUMENTARY SERIES | Video Release June 2015, Public Television Broadcast TBD

#### Signature Hour: *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 do the growing stressors 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 30-40 minutes each

Episode 2: *ONCE UPON A TIME  
When Childcare for All  
Wasn't Just a Fairy Tale*

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 on our path towards a more inclusive nation to today’s ‘you’re-on-your-own’ society.

Episode 3: *ARE WE CRAZY ABOUT  
OUR KIDS?*

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?

Episode 4: *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 violence and adversity and asks not “What’s wrong with you?” but “What happened to you?” and how can traumatized children and neighborhoods heal.

Episode 5: *DNA IS NOT DESTINY  
How the Outside Gets Under the Skin*

New scientific discoveries reveal how fetal and early childhood environments—chemical, family, socioeconomic—literally become part of us. They 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.

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# THE PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT CAMPAIGN

Hundreds of campaign partners are planning to use *The Raising of America* as a tool to foster dialogue and action toward what we as a society can—and should—do to ensure *all* our children the opportunity for a strong start.

## How can you use *The Raising of America* to change the conversation?

### Use the series to talk about:

- ... how what surrounds us shapes us
- ... why blaming parents is the easy way out
- ... how the best parenting programs may have nothing to do with parenting at all
- ... why young children are one of the most prudent investments our nation can make
- ... how change is possible

### Screen in these ways ...and more!

- To staff, students, members, and constituents
- At trainings, workshops, and conferences
- To mobilize partners and build alliances across sectors
- As part of community dialogs and policy forums
- To lift up local initiatives and engage the media

### The Companion Website (in development)

- Interactive Magazines:** Our Babies, Families, and Society
- Downloadable/Shareable** video, interactives and resources
- Action Guide:** Move beyond watching to using video as a tool
- Discussion Guides** for each episode
- Publicity** templates
- Social Media:** 10 things to do in under 10 minutes

## What can you do now?

**Post the 11-minute trailer on your website and social media.** [raisingofamerica.org/preview-series](http://raisingofamerica.org/preview-series).

**Plan a Launch Event.** Host a large, cross-sectoral screening of the Signature Hour prior to broadcast and change the conversation in your area. Visit [raisingofamerica.org/plan-screening](http://raisingofamerica.org/plan-screening) for ways to get started.

**Screen Episodes 2-4.** *Are We Crazy About Our Kids?*, *Once Upon a Time* and *Wounded Places* are now “pre-released” on DVD. For discussion guides and to purchase, visit [raisingofamerica.org/documentary](http://raisingofamerica.org/documentary).

**Become a Partner.** Partners are organizations eager to use *The Raising of America* as a tool to advance their work. Sign up at [raisingofamerica.org/join-campaign](http://raisingofamerica.org/join-campaign).

### STAY IN TOUCH

- Newsletter:** [raisingofamerica.org/newsletter-signup](http://raisingofamerica.org/newsletter-signup)
- Facebook:** [facebook.com/RaisingofAmerica](https://facebook.com/RaisingofAmerica)
- Website:** [www.raisingofamerica.org](http://www.raisingofamerica.org)
- Contact:** [info@raisingofamerica.org](mailto:info@raisingofamerica.org)

### BACKGROUND

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