

Critical Response 11

Charlie Simons:

How did the film make you feel about education in America?

Is there a thought or feeling that has stuck with you that you'd like to share or discuss?

The film made me feel sad about education in America, as growing up I had been exposed to very little content which went against the notion that "America has the best schools", but didn't realize that this was limited to schools which served certain people, and excluded others. It also frightened me as I can see trends in education which happened historically, and led to increased bigotry and hatred, and I can see those trends taking place in America today. It's a difficult to think about but it's easily the most important thing to think about as a nation, since our school systems ultimately define our class hierarchy, which we most certainly have—and social mobility within it.

My interest group is of course as a student, but in roles where I had to teach, given they were not of vital importance, like when I was a camp counselor, I also should think consciously about what I could do to help kids advocate for themselves, and identify areas for improvement in myself and in the institution I worked for.

I had very little knowledge of the Little Rock school crisis initially, but after learning about it and contrasting it against what's happening currently in New York City and Los Angeles, it's obvious the road which we're headed down. It reminded me of seeing instances of bigotry passed down from parents to children in my day to day, which can be particularly clear when working with kids.

"I was one of the kids 'approved' by the school officials. We were told we would have to take a lot and were warned not to fight back if anything happened. One girl ran up to me and said, 'I'm so glad you're here. Won't you go to lunch with me today?' I never saw her again."

(Brown, Minnijean; Moskin, J. Robert (June 24, 1958). "One Girl's Little Rock Story". Look)

This quote in particular demonstrates how children as a baseline can be accepting and kind, but it's safe to assume that her parents or peers were not as happy about this kindness

Chapter 3 – New York City:

What are the school resources like where you went to school? Do you know if it's the same as other schools in your district?

Chapter 4 – Los Angeles:

What are ways to promote student and parent activism in your community at the local, state and federal level?

Chapter 5 – All of Us:

- Describe the idea of Tikkun Olam in your own words. What does this mean for your community and the country at large?
- Are there examples ideas and strategies you can share from your own experience or someone you know that have been successful or unsuccessful in fighting for education equity?
- At the end of the film Senator Joyce Elliot urges those who are doing, in their eyes, what's best for their own children to also take "some responsibility for the whole." Is this possible?

Altruistic? Realistic? If not now, how can our efforts make the environment change to make it so?