

Film the poursuite of
happiness



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A Review of the film " The Pursuit of Happyness" The Pursuit of Happyness was inspired by the true story set in 1981 of a San Francisco struggling freelance salesman and single father called Christopher Gardner (played by Will Smith) who was trying to make a living selling bulky, expensive and unnecessary medical equipment to doctors that did not need it. After his wife (played briefly by Thandie Newton) left him, Gardner was evicted from his apartment and became homeless. The challenge unfolds when he has to tow his five-year-old son, Chris Jr. (played by Will Smith's son, Jaden Smith) to a dodgy daycare center during the day in a suit and scour for a safe place to sleep at night. The turning point happens when Gardner joined a training program at a prestigious stock-broking firm, Dean Witter. Despite having neither Wall Street experience nor a college degree, Gardner defied all odds of being homeless and became a success stockbroker and ultimately, a millionaire. This review will explore the rags-to-riches journey and examine the film's true pursuit of happiness in the context of the significance and meaning of happiness from the perspective of a child and an adult, in addition to dissecting the writer and director's vision in presenting the obstacles Gardner faced and allowing the audience to find their own interpretation of happiness.

The United States Declaration of Independence pronounce " all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness." (The Declaration of Independence 2008) When Thomas Jefferson wrote this, it meant a basic right and a goal of life and this film's objective was to capture the essence of these two notions. Even though the ultimate setting for happiness starts off as the pursuit of money as the solution to his

problems, the fact that Gardner accepted an unpaid six months internship with a one in twenty odd of getting the final job offer dispels this view. What started as the pursuit of money was then morphed into a pursuit of a means to an end when Gardner's meeting with a successful stockbroker in Wall Street slowly puts into progress a chain of events that unravels the true meaning of happiness as peace of mind and the ability to support oneself and your family, often seen through the eyes of Gardner and his son, Chris Jr. While Thomas Jefferson may have intended the Declaration to mean goal of life, the unfolding of the "Pursuit of Happiness" may also express the goal of everyday life, that is, the everyday struggles that lead to the final goal of life.

The first symbol in the film that sets the tone for helplessness and obstacles to come is the errant "y" in the word "happiness" which is misspelled in the daycare center Chris Jr. attends. The facility leaves the children in front of the television for the entire duration the children are there, and no learning opportunities are apparent. Another sign was to show repetitive scenes where Gardner runs from one point to another lugging the medical equipment and highlighting how Gardner moved from one bad situation to another without giving up.

In the film, Chris Jr. is depicted as a five year old although the real Chris Jr. was only a toddler during the time frame depicted in the film. While this move may have been made to ease the production of working with a toddler, the result has actually managed to provide a better appreciation for the predicament for both father and son (Gardner, Troupe, & Rivas 2006) and the ability to build meaningful dialogue and bonding between the two in facing constant adversity. The bond between the two actors (Will and Jaden

Smith) also played a big part in displaying genuine devotion. In one scene, Chris Jr. turns to Gardner and says " you're a good poppa", sealing his trust in his father. In another scene, Gardner tells his son " don't ever let somebody tell you you can't do something. Not even me. All right" (The Pursuit of Happyyness 2006) This cements Gardner's earlier comment in the film that he did not know his father and was determined not to let that happen to his children. In repeated scenes where Gardner is looking for shelter for both him and his son, the devotion and deep care for Chris Jr. is reflected in his desperate attempt to shield his son from poverty, while spending some nights at a shelter and others on the bathroom floor in a train station.

Another consistent direction for the film was firmly rooted in expressing the personal struggles and triumphs of one man, without diluting it with political, racial or social biasness. One example is in the scene where he has to impress a potential employer in a limited amount of time, and Gardner solved the Rubik's cube to display his intelligence, sales skills and personality (The Pursuit of Happyyness 2006). The only implication that suggested any hint of political stance was in showing the hopelessness of the poverty of the time that resulted in the homeless situation. The final sequence where the real-life Gardner makes a cameo appearance provides a face to the story and makes the tale truly personal.

The Pursuit of Happyyness is a heartfelt film on the power of desperation, the conviction to pursue a goal of life, and the devotion for children - a true claim to the American Dream where the moral of the story is to set goals and to not rest until those goals are achieved. The real-life Chris Gardner has battled numerous challenges not depicted in the film like domestic violence,

alcoholism, sexual abuse, and family illiteracy, and his real claim to fame is to prove that these challenges do not define a person (Gardner 2008).

Work Cited

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