

The pursuit of happyness



America is a land of great hope and opportunity, but with its many benefits, there are also flaws, such as a large homeless population. The Pursuit of Happiness is a movie based on a true story about a man named Chris Gardner, and his struggle to live a happy life. Jonathan Kozol's essay, "The Homeless and Their Children" is about Laura and her struggle to maintain a good life for herself and her family. Will Smith, as Chris Gardner, in The Pursuit of Happiness is very similar to Laura from "The Homeless and Their Children" because they both are unable to provide for themselves or for their families, and do not have a stable place to live thus, supporting Kozol's picture of homelessness. Both have different causes for being homeless, but share similar effects. Chris Gardner's story starts in 1981, in San Francisco. He is a very smart and hard worker who deeply cares about his wife, Linda, and son, Christopher. Gardner takes a chance and invests his life savings into a device called a bone-density scanner. He goes around selling these from door to door. Soon the people stop buying it, due to it being expensive. This leaves Chris on his knees, with his wife leaving him and moving to New York, with very little money, and being kicked out of his apartment. His wife tries to take her son, but Gardner refuses. He then applies for a stockbroker position at Dean Witter, but in order to get that position he has to go through training for six months without pay. At the same time, the government takes what little money he has left in his bank account for his taxes. This makes him unable to pay for the rent, leaving him and his son homeless. From this point on, Gardner goes through numerous hardships such as sleeping in a bathroom, searching for a job day by day, and finding a way to feed himself and his son. Chris does not give up at all, but rather works even harder for that one and only position, which is also

being pursued by nineteen other people. In one scene, he tells his son " Hey! Don't ever let somebody tell you... You can't do something. Not even me. All right"? Chris finally gets the job, goes to his son, and embraces him. In " The Homeless and Their Children, " Jonathan Kozol visits the Martinique hotel and interviews one of the homeless families. He decides to call the mother Laura. She has four children and they face many difficulties. Her oldest son has been diagnosed with lead poison, and the youngest daughter with scabies. The hospital keeps sending letters to her, but due to her illiteracy, she is not able to read them, thus preventing her from helping her children. She also has many problems with her home. Her room's radiator is broken, and the bathroom plumbing has overflowed. Laura has four rooms in her apartment and each is more dangerous than the other one. The screws are loose in the crib; the corners of the beds are sharp and unprotected. Just by being homeless, she has enough problems, but also being illiterate only adds more. Her apartment also has big rats that come out at night and bite sometimes. Laura has gotten into many arguments with the manager of the building and complained to him about fixing the problems " Why you give my son lead poison and you didn't care? "(Kozol, p. 308) of her apartment, but he just ignores her and says that she is causing trouble for him. On Christmas, her children complain that they did not get any presents, but Laura tells them you will get something soon. Laura faces many numbers of problems each day, but she does not give up. She says " I figure: Go to church. Pray God. Ask him to help. I go on, my knees, I ask Him from my heart". (Kozol, p. 309). Chris Gardner and Laura are similar in that they have both made wrong decisions in their lives. Gardener invested in the bone density machine, Laura, being young, got drunk with a boy, and that lead to <https://assignbuster.com/the-pursuit-of-happyness-2/>

her having a child. Laura did not believe in abortion so she kept the child however; she should not have had any more children since she was not capable of taking care of them by herself. Gardner on the other hand had to only worry about his one son and his son become a motivation for him to exceed in life and be a good father. Another similarity is that both individuals tried to make things better for their families. Laura did her best to read and since she could not read, she tried to understand the pictures she saw in the newspapers, grocery store etc, to help better her life. Gardner was capable of reading but he had a change in career even though he did not possess the right education for the job that he was going for, he taught himself many things and ended up getting the job. The cause of Gardner's ending up homeless was a bad financial decision. The effect of his homelessness was that he was unable to find a suitable place to operate from. He had to bounce around from motels after motels and eventually homeless shelters, which made his life more difficult. Laura ends up being homeless because she never got a chance to be educated, and then she got married very early and had kids, and this became a burden for her. The cause and effect on the society are that people can appreciate the little things they take for granted just by imagining themselves in Laura's situation, and learn how harsh a life of a homeless person is. The society can learn from this, and thus, choose to help people like Laura by volunteering. The effect of Gardner's story is that his patience and perseverance became an inspiration to the society. The Pursuit of Happiness portrayal of a homeless person is very similar to Kozol's portrayal of homelessness. They both are unable to support their families, Gardner cannot find a job, due to Laura's illiteracy she is unable to reply to the hospital or the welfare department. In this situation for both

characters, many things can be done to improve their lives. First of Laura should have done something to keep her children's father around all the time. When a family supports each other, they are successful and are able to prosper through many hardships. In case of Mr. Gardner, he should have made his early decisions carefully and through consulting family members and other who might have knowledge in the product that he was investing in. These two stories are very similar but with very different endings. In the end, people should not blame problem on themselves or others, instead they should come together and find a solution.