Paper #5

Research Paper

English 10

The True Pursuit of a Man Who Lost Everything

"Don't ever let somebody tell you, you can't do something, not even me" (The Pursuit of Happyness). The thought that anything can be achieved if enough determination is present is what truly fuels man to be successful in the pursuit of a goal. The sheer determination and hope of a man named Chris Gardner, fueled the efforts to overcome many economical and social trials in the 1980's that would be later known throughout society. The trials that Chris overcame were to be known throughout the world reflected by the 2006 movie called The Pursuit of Happyness, directed by Gabriele Muccino. The film follows the story of father and son, Chris (Will Smith) and Chris Jr. (Jayden Smith), who must fight against society to survive and establish a place amongst the middle-class citizens. Although not all the characters are described accurately in the film, Hollywood does a superb job of analyzing and presenting the accuracy of social discrimination in the 1980's, the poverty stricken social and ethnic classes of San Francisco, and the hardships Chris went through to achieve true happiness.

The Pursuit of Happyness is a very interesting story of the past to modern day struggle for distinguishing a comfortable lifestyle. The movie was released on

December 15, 2006, and won the Capri Award for Movie of The Year. The whole base of the movie was discussed by the writer of The Pursuit of Happyness, Steven Conrad, and Chris Gardner himself in Chris's apartment. The movie is actually based off of Chris Gardner's memoir that was written for the inspiration of others to strive for a better life, even against all odds. The trials that Gardner overcame in the 1980's consisted of battling against racism for risen opportunities, trying to father a son while forced to live on the streets, and the struggle to gain a job while competing against 20 other experienced men. What is interesting is that so many people have been affected by Chris's story that some groups of people have started charities in his honor, just by hearing the story of man who built a life from almost nothing.

Social discrimination is a reoccurring theme throughout The Pursuit of Happyness that makes Chris's struggle harder. Even though many races were looked down upon in the 1980's, the African Americans were the most threatened by Racism. According to John Pearson, African Americans were generally told off from job opportunities, social activities, and some racists took the level of threat to an extreme by causing bodily harm to African Americans. The main racists were Caucasian citizens, both aristocrats to even lower-class citizens. Peggy Whitley, a researcher on social discrimination, says that Caucasian people became so engrossed with racial discrimination, that

brutal action was taken during the 1980's. An example is the Atlanta Child-killings of 1982 where African American man Wayne Williams killed 29 other African Americans, both young men and children (Charles Williams).

In the movie, racism is apparent and Hollywood takes the opportunity to portray racism in the 1980's with great interest. When Chris sleeps on the streets with Chris Jr., he finds a spot to take shelter in, but is kicked out by another poverty stricken citizen. Another example of racism, is when the scenes in the movie often depict Caucasian people walking in business streets, where the poverty and homeless streets are filled with other ethical groups. When Chris applies for an internship at a law firm, at first the superiors looked upon Chris as a poor African American man. By reviewing The Pursuit of Happyness and multiple research sites, the fact that racism was apparent in the 1980's is captured and portrayed beautifully by Hollywood. Hollywood showed that wherever African Americans went, even rich and of higher-class, they were looked at by faces of judgment.

During the hard times of the 1980's, many couples split up and many parented a child as a single parent. According to Elaine McCrate, a researcher in divorces, the average percentage of divorces through the 1970's to 1980's went up 6.4% per year. One of the main reasons why divorces occurred in the 1980's was because of economical troubles. Many parents went off to different cities to start a new life and earn better wages. However, some parents got better jobs and came back to help parent the child or children. If the parent that left did not return, sometimes the single parents would lie to the children to ease the mental pain of being left behind. The main problem that single parents faced was related back to why the couple had originally split up. Economical issues often either forced both the parent or child to be homeless, or the parent would give the child up for adoption into a better life.

In the Pursuit of Happyness, Chris had the case of his wife, Linda Gardner (Thandie Newton), leaving to go find a new life with a better job. The affect on Chris from Linda leaving shattered some of the remaining hope in Chris's life. The only thing that kept him from totally breaking down is the survival of his son and the want for a better life. There are many examples of when Chris relied on hope and inner instinct to father his son. During the movie, Chris is often seen telling his son that "Ms. Gardner is conveniently not present." Even though Chris was lying to his son, sometimes lying was the only way that Chris could feel better about Linda leaving him and their son. Hollywood did an excellent job in capturing the emotional relationship between a single part and his young son.

Even in the 1980's, people relied on connections to aid them in finding jobs. Finding a paying job was a hard task to accomplish even back then. So people relied on friends, family, or whoever would get them a shot for a job (Lois M. Plunkert). The only problem was that the people who were homeless, probably had other family or friends that were homeless, so they sometimes kept their connections secrets (Laura Finley). However sometimes, family or friends would get a job and then proceed to help others in finding a job. This process makes more sense to researchers such as Ms. Finley, but it is possible that people were desperate to get money (Laura Finley). In the movie, Chris had some connections such as Reverand Williams, a friend who invited Chris and his son to soup lines in the church and Chris's friends from his times in the Navy.

Other connections came later through Chris's progress in training to be a stockbroker.

The hardships of the many people in the 1980's and even to today could be described as the pursuit of happiness. The pursuit of happiness is world-wide supposed to be the pursuit of money, as money is thought of as the world's true happiness (Ty Burr). Although, according to (Christopher Borelli), the true pursuit of happiness is the journey to get to the happiness. The journey to thrive for a better existence is what drives the human nature in pursuit of attaining what any man/woman wants. If humans did not first taste defeat, how could true victory or happiness be attained? The pursuit of happiness is the hardships and the events that take place in order to achieve whatever is desired (Homelessness: Guide to Critical Review). Back in the 1980's, the main happiness was indeed the journey to become economically stable.

In Chris Gardner's situation, he had to overcome more than just a couple events to attain happiness. Chris had to grow up without his real parents and he usually felt lonely due to only having his one sister as his true family. Chris had to father a son as an early adult while trying to figure out, "Where his next meal was coming from." Chris had the full intent on establishing himself economically so he studied night and day, hours on hours, just to get a job for his family. If Chris's life is compared to that of the average American lifestyle, it is apparent that Chris's struggles were quite common. However, the fact that he had to build his life from sitting in bathrooms at night is quite admirable. Especially since Chris succeeded in his pursuit.

The happiness that is desired by Chris Gardner was a great accomplishment that shows the struggles in normal society, and that is exactly what Hollywood did in the The Pursuit of Happyness. The details of Gardner’s life and his rise to “happyness” were, for the most part, done with great accuracy and attention to detail. Gardner endured a lot of hardships in his time, but after all was said and done, he kept alive the dream that stories do have happy endings.