

in confrontation. The third fire signifies that the problem is not isolated to this situation, that it is a problem of national proportions.

In the final scene of the movie, Drazen spoon-feeds the audience with preachy monologues from Zack and Nikki, in the words of Michael Sragow of *The New Yorker*, "reducing them to poster kids promoting racial understanding." *Film Journal* even calls *Zebrahead* "an Afterschool Special, only with the f-word." These criticisms recall the standard critique of the "Viet Nam" films of Oliver Stone. But J. Hoberman of *The Village Voice* half-justifies Stone's "maddening propensity to nudge the audience" because "the incidents ... have the authority of events that have been witnessed."

Anthony Drazen may be one of the new breed of political, responsible filmmakers, but it seems that in the political climate of today's society, he'll need to shout in order for his message to be heard. And although, as Karen Kreps points out, Drazen offers no solutions, at least he points his accusatory finger in the right direction—at ourselves.

Join in a Century of Equal Opportunity
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It is my honor to stand before you today not only as president of this great nation but as the first woman president of the United States of America. Our nation was founded on the principle that "all men are created equal." Thomas Jefferson believed that all people should participate in government and have the right to vote. Women have struggled for these rights since this nation's birth.

In the 1800s social reformers such as Elizabeth Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Lucy Stone, formed organizations that sought better education, property rights, and suffrage for women. Their dedication and hard work slowly led to reform, and in 1920 the 19th amendment to the Constitution was passed, granting women the right to vote. In the 1960s a new wave of women activists banded together to seek equal pay for equal

work and the passage of laws banning sex discrimination in jobs and education. Women joined the work force in large numbers and became more active in government. These innovative women paved the path for my and future generations of women. In 1896 only four states allowed women to vote. Now one hundred years later not only can women vote but they are members of both houses of Congress as well as the Supreme Court and can hold the highest office of the country (Giele 386-390). To me, being President of the United States means that women have proven they can do any task to which they set their minds. Susan B. Anthony said, "We ask justice, we ask equality, we ask that all civil and political rights that belong to the citizens of the United States be guaranteed to us and our daughters forever...The fight must not cease until we achieve these rights." As the first woman president, I am pleased to have fought for this equality. Women can now demonstrate their ability to succeed in every facet of government. For the last two centuries, women have fought for their rights. With this new spirit of equality, this coming century is the time for men and women to work together to meet the new challenges facing America.

Throughout its history, America has encountered many threats to its success as a nation. In the 20th century, these threats have taken the form of two World Wars, punctuated by a depression, two conflicts in Asia, and the manifestations of an ongoing Cold War. Each time the government and the people have rallied together to meet the crisis and find solutions. The ability of the country to change and reform its programs and ideals has been a major factor in its ability to remain a world power. As we approach the 21st century, our biggest threat is not from other countries but lies within our own borders. Unless we recognize the importance of our growing internal threats and take action to solve them, our nation will be unable to reach its full potential. Drugs, gangs, crime, teenage pregnancy, and racism are severely damaging this country. These problems are on the rise in our youth. We are living in violent times, and much of this violence is aimed towards our children. Socially and economically we cannot afford to ignore these threats. The question is, what can we do to stop these threats? The answer is education. Education will prepare this nation for a successful 21st century by helping to solve our social problems and by ensuring equal opportunity.

Former Secretary of Education Terrel Bell wrote in 1983, "If an unfriendly foreign power had attempted to impose on America the mediocre educational performance that exists today, we might well have viewed it as an act of war." Picture this situation. You are living in a part of New York City where drugs, gangs, and crime are rampant. You go to your public school in order to get an education so that you can work your way out of these dreadful living conditions. The school is overcrowded by

hundreds of students, and classes are being held in closets, gyms, and bathrooms. There are not enough seats for all forty-five students in your classes, but your teachers are counting on half of the class dropping out by Christmas. The blackboards are so cracked that the teacher is afraid that someone will cut himself he writes on them. After heavy rainfalls, you have to avoid the stairwell because waterfalls course down the six flights of stairs, and wild mushrooms grow in the corners. After school, you usually will need to take a shower because of the plaster that falls in your hair. This is the American educational experience for 16-year-old Israel in the South Bronx. He wants to go to college but is not getting much help. He has a hard time studying because he often does not get text books until months after the start of school or else has to share them with multiple people. Israel comments, "People on the outside may think that we don't know what it is like for other students, but we visit other schools and we have eyes and we have brains. You cannot hide the differences. You see it and compare..." (Kozol 104). These children feel that they are of little worth and that we expect them to fail, so they play into our expectations. We need to give these children hope for their future (Kozol 99-112).

Education prepares young people to take advantage of the opportunities they will meet in life. For too many young people the opportunity to go to college or find a meaningful job is very remote from their experiences because they get little education. Why try to prepare for a nonexistent opportunity when the street offers plenty of opportunities and requires a lot less preparation. Children see that their chance of spending time in jail is greater than their opportunity to spend time in college, young women see that their chance of having a high school pregnancy is greater than getting a high school diploma, and young inner city men see that their chance of dying from a gunshot is greater than their chance of living in a decent neighborhood in a house of their own. Feelings of despair and powerlessness to change their lives lead uneducated youth into drug use, crime, and gangs. Inner city principal James Carter says, "if they do not give these children a sufficient education to lead healthy and productive lives, we will be their victims later on. We'll pay the price someday—in violence and in economic costs" (Kozol 89). Education can give hope and encouragement as well as choices. Many schools do turn out well educated children amidst troubled urban neighborhood because the school creates its own nurturing and orderly environment. The good news is that good schools can be an antidote to violence. Education gives the means to achieve and succeed to America's youth.

To solve the educational crisis, we must first realize how the education system has failed us. Much of its inadequacy stems from segregation and inequality. For the first time since *Brown vs. Board of*

Education, racial and ethnic segregation is worsening. Segregation is associated with inequalities such as low test scores and low college attendance among poor and minority students. By the year 2000 nearly 40% of our nation's school children will be minorities, and half our public schools will be mainly black and Hispanic. Poverty and race are currently statistically inseparable. If there is no improvement for racially isolated, poverty-stricken schools, we will lose a large amount of our human resources. If we do not fully develop our human resources, this country will have great trouble in sustaining its leadership role in the global community. The courts knew that by passing Brown in 1954 they were calling for major social changes that would begin with the schools. That is where we must begin too.

The education system can be successfully reformed with cooperation between the community, businesses, parents, and government. My plan will help our nation work together for positive change. First we must equalize funding. Historically, education has been funded by local property taxes creating huge distortions between the amount of money per pupil spent on suburban children compared to inner city children. We instead need to pool money at the state level through income taxes for more equitable distribution to the schools. A national standard of how much money needs to be spent per pupil so that each student will get a good education will be set by a panel of experts on education. If districts decide to put in more than this standard, then they may use extra local money from property taxes for their schools. A more equal distribution of money will begin to alleviate glaring discrepancies in teacher salaries, school facilities, and supplies. Money alone cannot cure our problems, but it is a huge step into the right direction. As funding becomes more equalized, we must start to cut down on bureaucracies. In many school districts bureaucracies use money wastefully and at times are corrupt or unconcerned about helping their principals. Central administrations are useful to watch for mismanagement and to buy items in bulk, but they need to leave more decisions to the schools. Principals know their school's needs better and can often find better ways to design curriculum and decide allocation of funds. School administrations must hire good principals, give them support, and then hold them accountable for the success or failure of schools. Accountability needs to be demanded. We cannot afford to let leadership stay the same in schools where children fail year after year. We must also employ teachers that are qualified and make sure that teaching is seen as a well-respected profession.

Professional development for teachers is a good way for teachers to learn the broad range of instructional strategies necessary to teach more effectively. Efforts to promote teacher learning will lead to improved practice by teaching teachers to focus more on getting students to analyze

and think critically instead of just memorizing and repeating information. Curriculums need to be rigorous for students. A "C" in an average suburban school often equates to an "A" in an average inner city school. Remedial courses alone are insufficient to guarantee that talented children will succeed. We must expect more and not less from our youth. To succeed, children must have basic skills and knowledge as well as discipline. A national curriculum should be established for clear-cut subjects like math and science, but subjects such as history and English could be decided locally. Clear objectives and goals for our students would be balanced with the aim of preserving our much-celebrated diversity. Charter schools should be supported in their experiments to find innovative techniques to promote learning. We must also incorporate technology into our educational systems. Business can help by offering to share resources and develop partnerships with education. The better our youth can use computers and technology, the better trained they will be to enter the business world. Citizens can also contribute to education by becoming involved in schools as volunteers, mentors, and role models. An involved parent or a caring tutor can make a tremendous difference in a child's educational experience. As a community we must view children not as a cost but as an investment in our future. We must have an unshakable belief that all children can learn and a commitment to making it happen.

Currently this country is threatened by high drop-out rates, teenage pregnancy, poverty, violent crimes, gangs, and drugs but the way to counter these threats is through education. As a society we must save our children and share the responsibility for raising them to become responsible, productive adults. Thomas Jefferson called children "the voices of the future," and we must educate these voices. We have to help prepare children for the future so that they can achieve their goals and dreams. Everyone deserves an equal chance to get ahead. If we do succeed in educating our youth, think of their incredible potential. A well-educated America would help solve our social problems and create a better work force. Education not only prepares successful workers and citizens but ensures equal opportunity to determine the economic and social health of our country. It also provides a common space where in a country fissured along lines of race and class, children of all backgrounds can meet, interact, and learn to understand each other. Our nation has proven that we can change to meet the changing times. I stand as proof as a woman president that equality can be achieved when we set our minds to the task. Author Benjamin Barber once said, "The great country, the great society, the great community is, first of all, the well-educated country, the learned society, the community of excellence. This nation knows it, proclaims it, even rhapsodizes about it. Then it busies itself with other matters." The United States of America can no longer busy itself with

other matters. I declare that from this day forward we will have an unwavering commitment to improving and equalizing education. Please join me in a century of equal opportunity. Join me in better preparing students for the 21st century and for a lifetime of success.

Main Works Cited

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LOOKING BACK: OUR COUNTRY'S HEROES (INAUGURAL ADDRESS)

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As I stand here today, I face you as your newly elected leader. I am anxious to look toward our future with hope, but I can't help but look back to the men and to the experiences that shaped this great country. I think about what the great men who preceded me said to you the people, on this important day, and I realized that they all focused on what had shaped their lives. They looked back to the American Revolution, to the Civil War, to the lives of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Thomas Jefferson. With this realization, I have decided to focus on the things that shaped my world. My first thoughts are of my parents and my teachers. I think of my early schooling and the impact that it had on my impressionable mind. I recall one event more clearly than all of the rest. I remember exactly where I was and how I felt on one fateful day in 1986. I was in third grade, so young, but it was a day that changed my view of America forever. The entire elementary school had been crowded into the multipurpose room where a huge television was set to show the launch of the space shuttle Challenger. We all watched in anticipation as seven heroes boarded the shuttle full of hope and excitement. Then, we watched in horror as the shuttle exploded in a ball of flame just minutes after takeoff. The silence in the room was chilling. All of America seemed to come to a halt; the