



For Akheem

Film Study Guide

Director: Jeremy S. Levine, Landon Van Soest

2017 | Documentary | English | 2017

<http://forakheemfilm.com/>

Synopsis: Daje Shelton, a 17-year-old girl from St. Louis, just wants to do the right thing. But growing up in a tough neighborhood, she can't catch a break: she's struggling in school; she's distracted by boys; and she's surrounded by a culture of violence and brutality. The fatal shooting of Michael Brown Jr. provides a powerful backdrop for this masterfully crafted portrait of working-class urban life.

Post-Screening Discussion Questions

1. Daje says in the documentary that she often acts out because she's already been labeled as a 'bad kid.' What are the dangers of labeling people too quickly? Is there a way to overcome a reputation others have thrust on you?
2. Why do you think Daje is scared to have a baby boy? Do you think she is right to be afraid for his future? What has Daje experienced to make her more hesitant towards giving birth to a boy rather than a girl?

3. What cycles do you see in this film? An example could be Daje's mother wanting more for her daughter and Daje wanting more for her son Ahkeem. Which cycles do you notice are positive? Which are negative?
4. This documentary included the ruling in Ferguson which did not hold the police officer, Darren Wilson, accountable for shooting an unarmed teenager, Michael Brown. What was your reaction to seeing this happening in real time on the news? How do you think the director chose which shots to present while representing the protests in Ferguson?
5. Do you see any similarities between St. Louis and Chicago concerning the attitude towards police and the justice system? How did the people in Daje's community view police officers and court justices? Did they trust them?
6. What is the most important thing this film presents that you believe needs to change?
7. Daje speaks a lot in the film about how many friends she's lost to gun violence. How would you fix this problem? Was there something she said that you agreed or disagreed with?
8. What scene in the film spoke to you the most? Why? Did it have something to do with how the scene was presented cinematically or the subject matter itself?
9. How are Daje's experiences and difficulties different from Antonio's?
10. Daje's mother encourages her early in the film to follow her dreams, and she also speaks to her dream of opening a restaurant which she was not able to fulfill. Do you think there is an expiration date on achieving your dreams? Is there an encouraging sentiment you think of when people try to get in the way of you achieving your goals?