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GET FREE FILM IN FEBRUARY AND MARCH ON EDUCATION REFORM AND 1968 YALE SUMMER HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAM

In the summer of 1968, 140 students from inner city and rural America gathered at the Yale University Divinity School to participate in an educational experiment. White, Black, Puerto Rican, Indian American, and Asian American students, labeled by New Haven newspapers as “underachievers,” were introduced to a “Great American Books” curriculum that included The American Constitution, Native Son, Antigone, and The Communist Manifesto. No one told them they weren’t supposed to excel, and so they did.

The group of 110 boys and 30 girls (the first women to attend Yale before it went co-ed) participated in “T” (therapy) discussion groups to tackle the messy topic and tensions of race and social justice following the largest period of civil unrest in America after the assassination of Martin Luther King. Safe within the walls of Yale’s Divinity School, the YSHS students, encouraged by the staff, found their voices and the inspiration to succeed academically.

Larry Paros, the YSHS director from 1967-68, has captured the impact of this transformational summer in a documentary entitled “Walk Right In, The Story of Yale Summer High School (www.walkrightinthemovie.com). Using his own funds, he located former students, teachers, and staff whose testimonies prove his belief that education transforms lives. Yale Summer High School succeeded because it set high expectations and encouraged students to rise and learn. It offers a template for establishing a successful learning environment and a model of education reform.

The film explains why Yale University fired Paros and discontinued a program that all agreed, including Yale’s outside consultant, was a success. Many YSHS alumni went on to college and became a university president, lawyers, community organizers, educators, counselors, therapists, and transportation employees. Most have children who went attended college.

Paros has bet his life’s saving that the film holds a message for today’s efforts to reform education. He is distributing free copies during February (Black History) and March (Women’s History) to inspire a national conversation on race and education reform.

In exchange, he asks recipients to post their screening dates and reviews on the film’s website and Facebook page. The film has been accepted by Culture Unplugged for free streaming on its website: (<http://www.cultureunplugged.com/documentary/watch-online/play/11452/Walk-Right-In>).

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