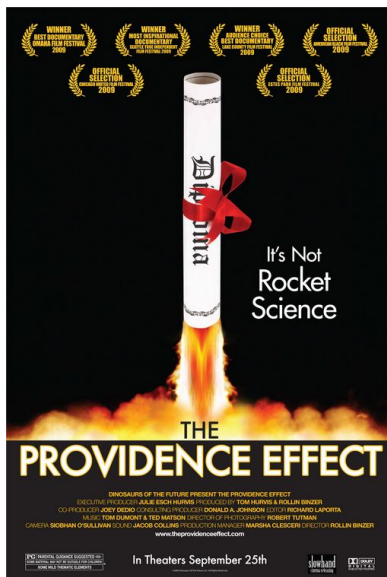


Review: The Providence Effect

Written by Dave Crackpot



If you or a friend have a kid the Beverly Hills private school system, you have noticed a disturbing trend. Kids are now playing games where everyone is a "winner." Halloween Costumes must be made in class so the richer kids don't have an advantage. There is a general lack of discipline and respect given to the adults. These dumb conditions were probably instated when some parent complained. As a result, our children are getting a Ph. D in pussification.

There is none of this at Providence St. Mel, an inner city school that is the subject of the fascinating new documentary "The Providence Effect." For the last 30 years, the inner city Chicago K-12 has a 100% college acceptance rate. Led by Paul Adams III the school's history and philosophy makes one wonder "Why doesn't everyone do it this way?"

After being blacklisted in Alabama for being involved in the civil right movement, Adams moves to Chicago to find St. Mel's which is close to being shut down by the Catholic Church. He leads a fund raising drive to buy the school. Establishing his own goals of getting each kid into college (starting with the Kindergarteners) he demands only the highest marks, not only from the kids, but from the teachers and parents. A strict code of conduct is implemented that has inspired the best teachers in the state to join his ranks. His short motto - "Do the work."

And that is the inspiring message of the film. With quality mentorship and hard work, even a child left behind can rise to the occasion.

The story is a motivational one but the filmmaking is just okay. I find that the doc is a little too self-congratulatory focusing on the "no-brainer" aspect of the Providence Effect. Sure, we would love to see this happen in all of our schools, but the exceptional manpower is simply not there. There needs to be money involved to pay people and an involved community with their eyes on the prize. In most cases it is simply not there.

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Providence Effect is definitely worth a watch for anyone interested in giving our kids the best education possible. The next step is for folks to implement the effect in their own lives.