



**Critical Acclaim For
'AMERICAN PROMISE'**

By Joe Brewster and Michèle Stephenson

“Dazzling. . . . [Subjects] Idris and Seun turn out to be adorable little boys who become impressive young men. More importantly—and perhaps unintentionally—filmmakers Joe and Michèle make for fascinating subjects as well. . . . *American Promise* . . . offers plenty to ponder.”

—Stephanie Merry, *The Washington Post*

“Not only provides illuminating insights into racial and cultural issues, but explores family dynamics common to all.”

—Peter Keough, *The Boston Globe*

“Fulfills . . . the great, mostly unmet, promise of television: to acquaint us with other lives, minus prejudicial comment but with genuine curiosity. . . . Above all, it’s a close . . . look at the flowering of two normal kids—neither of them a ‘child at risk’—as they move to the verge of adult life. . . . It’s a story of identity and the change that takes place within it.”

—Robert Lloyd, *Los Angeles Times*

“A hard-edged and inspiring account on how African American males can attain academic success. . . . This massive undertaking . . . illuminates the mistakes, the challenges and the personal growth of not only the two boys, but of the parents as well. . . . In its 13-year scope, *American Promise* shows the strength and potential that minority males possess, and how that may be successfully directed.”

—Duane Byrge, *The Hollywood Reporter*

“A reminder of the kind of programming that’s absent from commercial outlets and only found on PBS.”

—Rob Owen, *Pittsburgh Post Gazette*

“Idris Brewster and Seun Summers . . . [were] selected to attend the Dalton School, a private school I went to as a child. . . . We get to know these boys and their families in a truly intimate way. . . . This film offers an inside look at two families of color the everyday challenges and choices they face. . . . The door for critical discussion for all of us is left wide open. . . . Fascinating.”

—Anderson Cooper, “AC 360,” CNN

“An intimate look at what it's like to be young, black and male in a largely white private school. Riveting. . . . Idris and Seun . . . are on-camera naturals. . . . Condensing more than a decade . . . into a two-hour movie is a tall order, but *American Promise* succeeds in touching on a wealth of subjects.”

—Geoff Berkshire, *Variety*

“As the film progresses, we see it’s not just academics that can be challenges, but issues of race and class. . . . Idris is treading a fine line between two vastly different communities. . . . Michèle Stephenson turned the camera on her family and the Summers’ so other black families might learn from their experiences.”

—Karen Grigsby Bates, “Morning Edition,” NPR

“In his State of the Union address this week, President Barack Obama spoke about making the American Dream possible for everyone. He noted that minorities still face challenges that other Americans do not. The documentary *American Promise* explores race, class and opportunity in America. . . . Tough . . . heartbreaking.”

—**Anne-Marie Green, CBS News “Up to the Minute”**

“While they didn't set out to make a film about what newspaper columnists refer to as the ‘black male achievement gap,’ Brewster and Stephenson have done just that, and it's hard to imagine a more penetrating and powerful one.”

—**Godfrey Cheshire, RogerEbert.com**

“Engrossing. . . . The image that will linger in your head long after the film ends is how excited the boys are for kindergarten, how happy and fearless they are about going to school.”

—**Mark Perigard, Boston Herald**

“Because Brewster and Stephenson have had the great courage to expose their own mistakes and excesses along the way, the film is revelatory as an embedded report from the front lines of parenting.”

—**Jennifer Dworkin, Film Comment**

“In a little over two hours, the film conveys the complexities and rich texture of the boys’ inner and outer lives. It is hard not to fall in love with Idris and Seun. . . . The boys are young men now and in college. . . . They are lucky to have grown up in homes where they were loved and nurtured.”

—**Suzanne McCabe, Scholastic blog**

“Delivers a sharp message on race and education. . . . An enthralling new documentary.”

—**Matthew Wright, Jet**

“Compelling. . . . *American Promise* draws on an impressive accumulation of 13 years of footage to distill insights about families and children that otherwise would go unnoticed in the rush of day-to-day life. [The film] elicits lessons that apply not just to African-American children, but to all children as they navigate the shoals of childhood and adolescence.”

—**Govindiny Murty, The Huffington Post**

“I’m so excited to see this. You’ve got to DVR or sit down and watch it.”

—**Alex Witt, “Weekends with Alex Witt,” MSNBC**

“[You’ll] feel the pleasure of these kids’ triumphs, the pain of their tragedies or the pressures of ambition, affecting parents as much as students.”

—**David Fear, Time Out New York**

“Parents will see much that they recognize from their everyday struggles to raise confident, well-rounded kids. . . . But . . . the film offers an intimate look at the additional burdens of cultural bias and the social typecasting of young black men.”

—**Maggie Caldwell, Mother Jones**

“*American Promise* documents the challenges faced by all sides as they grapple with a clash of cultures, abilities, and assumptions about race and class in America.”

—**Christian Science Monitor**

“A compelling and sometimes devastating film. . . . In a bold and revealing move, Brewster and Stephenson, both Ivy-League educated, are careful to show the pressures they put on their son.”

—Eric Eidelstein, *Indiewire*

“Letting us see two kids grow from 6 to 18 in 120 minutes is the film’s real achievement, and its appeal is less a document of race in America than as one of parenthood and childhood and their often-conflicting desires. Watch this.”

—Michael Hewitt, *The Orange County Register*

“A new documentary and companion book offer a heartfelt solution to the problems facing African-American boys in our education system. . . . Through screenings across the country, and now their PBS airing, the filmmakers are working to end subtle discrimination in the classroom.”

—Alexis Stodghill, *TheGrio.com*, *MSNBC*

“Provocative. . . . There’s no other art form that can capture growth in this way, and like the *Up* documentaries, *American Promise* aims to capture the disjunction between where these kids start and where they go.”

—Ben Kenigsberg, *A.V. Club*

“Brewster and Stephenson offer a timely and essential rejoinder to efforts aimed at dismissing the lives of black youth, especially black boys, as fungible and expendable.”

—Cynthia Fuchs, *PopMatters.com*

“Says a lot about race, color, class, competition, and plain human nature in success-driven contemporary urban America.”

—Kelly Vance, *East Bay Express*

“Compelling. . . . “*Promise* can spark strong debates.”

—Mike Hughes, *Lansing State Journal*

“A pretty amazing documentary.”

—Upworthy.com