



Guide for Youth Educators and Parents

An inspiring story of the life-saving power of the arts

In the opening scene of ***River City Drumbeat***, viewers are reminded that the earliest sound each of us hear is a drumbeat--the sound of our mother's heart. It is the kind of lyrical moment that this film captures so well, whether through its gorgeous and engaging cinematography or the conversations between the compelling characters. This multigenerational story of music, love, and legacies set in the American South is ideal for older children (11+), teens and adults.

The film follows five stories of teachers and students, and how they overcome systemic forces that raise obstacles to fulfilling their dreams of creating art and living a life with purpose. Edward "Nardie" White has devoted his life to leading the African-American drum corps he co-founded three decades ago with Zambia Nkrumah in Louisville, Kentucky. Albert Shumake, whose destiny was shaped by the drumline, must take up the mantle of leadership for the next generation. Student drummers Imani, Jailen, and Emily navigate adolescence and life changes.

The film celebrates the value of community, heritage, the arts, and resilience. ***River City Drumbeat*** provides personal perspectives on what it is like growing up in a primarily low-income, Black neighborhood centered at the crossroads of the American South and the Midwest and working to overcome the systemic legacies of racism and

economic oppression that affects their daily environment. Kids will especially relate to the stories of the students, and the way the drum corps has shaped their lives, and adults will appreciate the way the film captures how it takes an extended community of teachers, mentors, friends, and peers to raise healthy, strong children to successful adulthood.

The story addresses violence in the community, including one difficult scene where a character describes the violent death and funeral of a relative, and there is minimal use of profanity (s--t), including a racial slur (N-word) used in historical context.

Discussion Guide Questions:

1. What are some of the issues this documentary addresses? How are these issues brought to light? Did you learn anything new?
2. How does the film convey themes of sacrifice and perseverance? Why are these important character strengths?
3. What makes mentorship important? Who can be a mentor? Who are the mentors in this film? Have you ever been a mentor to someone in your own life? Talk about your experience and what you learned from it and how you felt doing it.
4. What does Mr. White mean when he says, 'it's all about economics?' How does the theme of economic disenfranchisement play a role in this film?
5. In the film, senior student drummer Imani says, "I'm a girl and I drum, so what?" How do you think traditional gender roles impact extracurricular activities?
6. What challenges do you think the filmmakers faced in presenting the story of the River City Drum Corp?
7. Families can talk about the intent of documentaries: to entertain, inform, inspire, and persuade. Which of these categories best describes River City Drumbeat? Why?
8. How did the film's depictions of violence affect you? Did they have more or less impact than what you might see in an action movie? Why do you think that is?
9. What parts of this film and/or which characters do you personally relate to and why?
10. What role does music play in your life? What does music mean to you personally and how has it helped you during times of need?