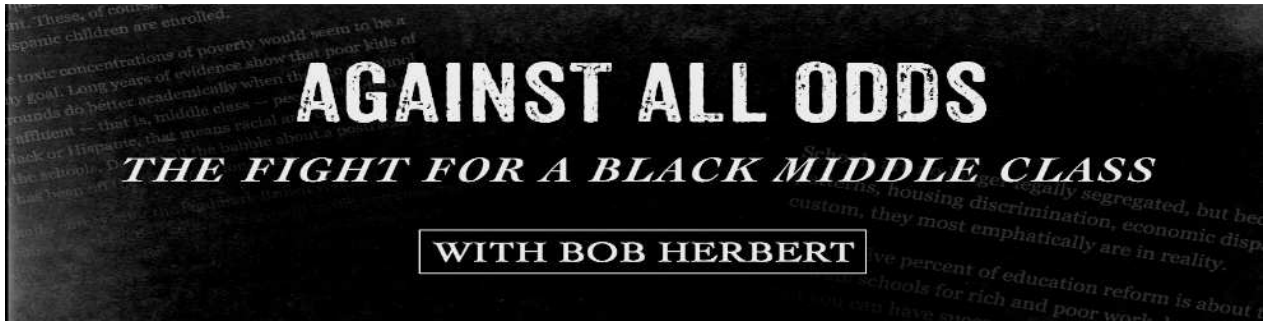


FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Air date: March 6, 2017

PUBLICITY CONTACT: Anne Sullivan

anne@miracleworkerpr.com • 646.373.0382



**AGAINST ALL ODDS: The Fight for a Black Middle Class
Premieres Monday, March 6th at 10 pm on THIRTEEN**

“Have African Americans had a fair shot at the American dream?” asks acclaimed journalist Bob Herbert as he examines the often heroic efforts of black families to pursue the American dream in the face of unrelenting barriers

New York, NY – February 22, 2017 – **AGAINST ALL ODDS: The Fight for a Black Middle Class**, premiering on Monday, March 6th at 10 pm on THIRTEEN, probes the harsh and often brutal discrimination that has made it extremely difficult for African-Americans to establish a middle-class standard of living. As Bob Herbert notes in the film’s opening, “Whites talk about working hard and playing by the rules. But blacks have always had to play by a different, hateful set of hideously unfair rules. Working hard has never been enough for black Americans to flourish”. Through dramatic historical footage and deeply moving personal interviews, the documentary explores the often frustrated efforts of black families to pursue the American dream.

AGAINST ALL ODDS will air on NJTV on March 11th at 7:00 pm and premiere to a national audience on April 25th at 9 pm EST on WORLD channel.

Today many African American families are still digging out of the recession that followed the Great Crash of 2007-08 and although some are doing better, black wealth remains meager compared to the white middle class. Nearly 40 percent of black children are poor, and for every dollar of wealth in the hands of the average white family, the typical black family has only a little more than a nickel.

This revealing and sometimes shocking documentary connects the dots of American history to reveal how the traditional route up the economic ladder by attaining a job that pays a living wage and then buying a house is a financial ascent that has been systematically denied to black families. Reduced educational opportunity, rampant employment discrimination, the inequitable application of the GI bill, mortgage redlining and virulent housing segregation are among the injustices that have converged to limit the prosperity of black families from generation to generation.

(over)

Bob Herbert has been covering and commenting on American politics, poverty, racism and social issues for over 45 years through his tenure as a nationally-syndicated op-ed columnist for *The New York Times* as well as work for other newspapers and broadcast media. Growing up in New Jersey, the son of an upholsterer whose prosperous business was hobbled by banks unwilling to offer loans to blacks, Herbert had an intimate view of the barriers that faced striving black families. His interviews with prominent African Americans, including Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist and author Isabelle Wilkerson, Congressman Elijah Cummings, renowned psychologist and author Alvin Poussaint, and policy activist Angela Glover Blackwell, as well as other accomplished black professionals, uncover generational stories of profoundly damaging economic and social prejudice.

In **AGAINST ALL ODDS**, Herbert looks back at the uphill struggle facing black families freed from slavery over a century and a half ago and emerging from life as uneducated sharecroppers in the South. He traces the barriers to employment and housing designed to keep black people “in their place” both in southern states and in northern states as African Americans migrated throughout the country in search of opportunity and a better life. Shocking footage from Chicago in the 1950s and 60s shows how black families trying to escape overcrowded ghettos faced riots if they moved to a white block or a white suburb. Beryl Satter—an author whose father, a white lawyer, fought against discrimination in Chicago— tells Herbert, “This whole history of white rioting and white violence has been historically buried. When people think of violence and riots in the street, they always think of the 1960s when black people rioted, but when white people rioted, it doesn’t even have a name.”

For those blacks who have been successful in acquiring a middle class lifestyle in suburban neighborhoods such as Prince George’s County, Maryland, the foothold feels tenuous. Brent and Karla Swinton live there in a stately home and both have good jobs. But Brent says, “We may have arrived to a degree but we just got here so it’s still not quite the same.” The reality behind that sense of insecurity was abundantly clear following the Great Recession when widespread foreclosures stripped wealth out of the black community.

Yet through it all, Herbert reports, black Americans have shown time and again in the face of cruelty, systematic discrimination and injustice a tremendous resilience and determination to get their fair share of the American dream. Herbert says, “There are no barriers that can’t be overcome. When dreams remain unrealized, it simply means the fight goes on.”

AGAINST ALL ODDS: The Fight for a Black Middle Class is being presented in conjunction with *Chasing the Dream: Poverty and Opportunity in America*, a coordinated multi-platform public media initiative from WNET that provides breadth, depth and context and a deeper understanding of both the causes of poverty and the creation of jobs and opportunities at all levels and institutions of our society.

AGAINST ALL ODDS: The Fight for a Black Middle Class is a production of The Schumann Media Center, Inc., Public Square Media, Inc., Okapi Productions, LLC, and Bob Herbert. Written and produced by Bob Herbert. Producer, Tom Casciato. Executive producer, Sally Roy. Executive Editor, Bob Herbert. Executive in Charge, Judy Doctoroff O’Neill.