

Good intentions. Unintended consequences.

(not about me)



GIVER MEDIA AND SHOT IN THE DARK PRODUCTIONS PRESENT "NOT ABOUT ME"

IN ASSOCIATION WITH MIDNIGHT LIGHT MEDIA

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A Documentary Study Guide

For educators and students
to explore ideas on child rights,
humanitarian aid and social justice issues.



WATCH. TALK. TAKE ACTION...



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A Film for Social Change

Not About Me is a feature documentary about good intentions and unintended consequences. When Morgan Wienberg, a well-meaning Canadian teenager, volunteers at a Haitian orphanage in the aftermath of the 2010 earthquake, her plans take a turn. She is part of an army of NGOs and volunteers with billions in promised aid, all rushing to respond to the disaster. But once on the ground, she begins to see their earnest actions have their own devastating impacts.

Determined to make a more lasting difference, Morgan stays in Haiti to establish an alternative, community-based nonprofit for vulnerable children and their families. Through footage that spans a decade, we see Morgan challenge her own perceptions and privilege to become a more meaningful ally to Haitians working to build a better future. This is Morgan's story. But it's also about the rest of us, rethinking how we help and give.

With the benefit of hindsight, we can do better moving forward...

Documentaries are a powerful gateway to engaging minds, hearts and actions. *Not About Me* invites audiences to relate to Morgan's good intentions while also realizing her privilege and experiencing how Haitians challenged people like her (and us) to listen, learn and transform.

Youth & Social Justice Students

Traveling abroad and volunteering in developing countries is an ambition of many high school students. Motivated to help others and gain personal experience, these youth are often targeted by for-profit orphanages and tour businesses for travel and volunteer trips that can ultimately harm vulnerable children. In recognizing their unique position to learn before they leap, screening *Not About Me* in classrooms can help students make informed decisions to impact positive change.

Goals For Social Impact

Create awareness and understanding

Educate about the reality of orphanages and how supporting them financially or as a volunteer can negatively affect children, their families and communities.

Promote informed generosity

Encourage respectful and sustainable advocacy and philanthropy that is rewarding for children, families, communities, volunteers and donors.

Motivate behaviour and policy change

Redirect funding for orphanages to family and community-based initiatives led by locals that address the root causes of family separation.



Learning Themes

Orphanages, Volunteering & Humanitarian Aid

As North Americans, our support for orphanages in other countries - both financial or as volunteers - has an impact on children, their families and the broader community. We need to start questioning our behaviours and humanitarian aid policies to see more clearly how we can help children by addressing the root causes that break families apart.

Importance of Family & Community

Institutions are never a good solution for children. While a well-run facility can provide basic material needs such as food, education and shelter, it is proven that institutions cause devastating long-term harm because they cannot provide care that is critical for a child's mental and emotional development. When children live with their families, they can receive the protection, love and sense of belonging they need for safe, healthy and successful connections in life.

Power & Privilege

Colonial and neo-colonial attitudes have and continue to affect international relationships. The underlying role of white privilege and systemic racism must be acknowledged if we are to start addressing the roots of injustice and inequality. Local people must lead the change process with foreigners accepting a supporting role.

Changing Mentality & Behaviour

If we want to be helpful and provide meaningful support to others, we need to understand the importance of humility, listening, and embracing critical thinking. By being open to learning from past mistakes, we can find ways to redirect aid to address the causes of family separation while promoting dignity and self-determination, not dependence.



Before You Watch...

Before watching the film, take time to activate your students' background understanding of the key learning themes. This will help to make the most of the learning experience.



BRAINSTORM | Learning Themes

Activate students' background understanding and pre-conceptions with these brainstorms:

- What comes to mind when you hear the word **orphanage**?
- Would you consider **volunteering overseas**? Why or why not?
- What do you know about **disaster relief** and/or **humanitarian aid**?

**Go to the Toolkit section for details on each resource below*



TOOLKIT | Student Engagement Surveys

This short survey is a great way to engage students from the get-go and help educators gauge the learning outcomes later.



TOOLKIT | Backgrounder: Haiti 101

Not About Me unfolds in Haiti. It's a place with a remarkable history and ongoing challenges that can help students understand the film and frame broader social justice issues.



TOOLKIT | A Case to Improve International Aid

In the context of the 2010 earthquake, familiarize students with the scale of the disaster, the surge of goodwill and the flawed distribution of aid. Then consider what we have learned.



TOOLKIT | UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

This film is a gateway to understanding and advocating for child rights and keeping families together. Use this resource to provide a global framework for discussion.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

A sunset scene with silhouettes of palm trees, power lines, and a stadium structure against a bright orange sky. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a strong glow and casting long shadows. The sky is filled with soft, golden light and some wispy clouds. The silhouettes of the palm trees and power lines are dark against the bright background.



ACTIVITY | Orphanage Perceptions & Misconceptions

The film reveals many misconceptions we have about orphanages. This activity asks students to consider the perspectives of four groups of people with respect to orphanages.

Part 1: Ask students what the word “orphanage” might mean to each of the four groups represented in the table below.

Here are some examples of what students might come up with:

<p>Donors and volunteers who support orphanages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Orphanages are a place of care for children without parents- It's good to give money to help orphans- I would like to visit or volunteer at an orphanage	<p>Parents who send children to “orphanages”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- The orphanage promised to provide education, food and medicine- It's not an orphanage. It's a boarding school.- I want to keep my child but the orphanage is a better future
<p>Children living in the orphanages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- I miss my family- I am often left alone without food- Sometimes they hurt me- Volunteers come and take pictures and then they leave	<p>Orphanage owners and operators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Foreign donors will send me money- Volunteers will bring more money- I can sell children to make more money- I need to find poor children to live at the orphanage

Part 2: Come together as a class to share and discuss responses.

- How has your understanding of what an orphanage is changed from the initial brainstorm?
- What are some myths and misconceptions about orphanages?

ACTIVITY | Notable Quotes

Not About Me features interviews with Haitian authorities, orphanage survivors and experts on global development and social justice issues that can help students reflect on the film's learning themes.

Part 1: Working in small groups or as a class, have students read and discuss the quotes. Why are their voices important to the story? How do they help us understand different perspectives? You can use the digital version of the study guide to project the images and quotes to the classroom.



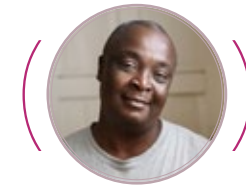
"We don't want to be known as an NGO nation."

— **Laurent Lamothe,**
Prime Minister Haiti (2012-2014)



"The manager of the orphanage came to my village... She could help with school, change their lives. She made the parents trust her alot. My parents thought it would be good so they sent me with her."

— **Odyanne Lordain,**
Orphanage Survivor



"It's not good when you do something bad. But it's worse when you do a good thing badly."

— **Saint-Louis Jean Robert,**
BPM National Child Protection Service



"Are we going into a situation that we don't know to do what we think can help? It may help, but mostly it makes us feel good. Or are we thinking, really, how can we accompany people as they recover? It's their journey, not ours. We are just coming in for a short time."

— **Nigel Fischer,**
United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator, Haiti 2010-2013



"For Haitians who are not informed, they think that [orphanage] means a place with a lot of help and resources - with food, clothes, everything.... But the children are going to suffer and the parents aren't even aware of it."

— **Wilner Noël,**
Former Orphanage Worker



"The repeated turnover of young, unskilled volunteers is harmful to development. In Canada you would not accept a busload of young people coming in and visiting our nurseries or schools and allowing them unfettered access without proper supervision and correct vetting and criminal checks... it's a recipe for disaster."

— **Chloe Setter,**
(former) Head of Policy, Lumos Foundation

TOOLKIT RESOURCES



TOOLKIT | Background: Haiti 101

Geography: Caribbean country that shares the island of Hispaniola with the Dominican Republic to its east.

Language: Haitian Creole and French.

Demographics: 11.26 million people

Economics: An estimated 60% of the Haitian population lives on less than \$2 (USD) per day.



“Neocolonialism is the practice of using economics, globalisation, cultural imperialism and conditional aid to influence a country instead of the previous colonial methods of direct military control or indirect political control” – Wikipedia

Haiti history: The Haitian Revolution was the only successful slave rebellion in history. Enslaved Africans forced to work on the island’s plantations fought for a decade to end French control over the colony and in 1804 established Haiti as the first free black republic in the Western Hemisphere. In return for diplomatic recognition of the new country, France demanded Haiti pay the equivalent of \$21 billion in today’s dollars for “lost property” – including the Haitian slaves themselves. For well over a century, one-third of the country’s annual income went to meeting this financial obligation. Haiti made its last payment in 1947, but the impacts on the national economy are still felt today.

Go Deeper:

The film’s website provides additional information about key historical events that shape our understanding of Haiti.

notaboutmefilm.com/reframing-history



TOOLKIT | UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

In 1989, world leaders adopted the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. It is an international treaty that provides a legal framework to protect the rights of every child “whatever their race, religion, abilities, whatever they think or say, whatever type of family they come from.” (Article 2)



Children Have the Right To Family

The Convention outlines a range of important children’s rights that – taken together – powerfully advocate for keeping children and families together.

- It is the primary responsibility of parents to raise their children
- It is the responsibility of the state to support parents to take care of their children
- It is the responsibility of richer countries to help poorer countries protect children’s rights

The Convention adopts 54 articles. There are several articles specifically related to child rights that can help keep families together.

(9)

Children should not be separated from their parents unless it is for their own good. For example, if a parent is mistreating or neglecting a child.

(24)

Children have the right to good quality health care, clean water, nutritious food and a clean environment so that they will stay healthy. Richer countries should help poorer countries achieve this.

(26)

The Government should provide extra money for the children of families in need.

(27)

Children have the right to a standard of living that is good enough to meet their physical and mental needs. The government should help families who cannot afford to provide this.

(28)

Children have the right to an education. Discipline in schools should respect children’s human dignity. Primary education should be free. Wealthier countries should help poorer countries achieve this.



IDEAS TO
TAKE ACTION



TAKE ACTION | Pledge to End Orphanage Volunteering

Students who are passionate about helping protect vulnerable children from exploitation, abuse and the long-term negative effects of institutional care can be advocates for positive social change.

- Print this pledge and present it to your class, student council or social justice club for their support.
- After you secure support from your school, complete the online form so we can recognize your school's commitment to ending orphanage volunteering on the #notaboutmefilm social channels and impact website.

notaboutmefilm.com/impact-take-action

In recognition of the harm caused by institutional care for children (such as so-called 'orphanages'), and the role that foreign volunteers play in perpetuating the existence of orphanages, our school commits to the following:

Create awareness and understanding

Educate about the reality of orphanages and how supporting them financially or as a volunteer can negatively affect children, their families and communities.

Promote informed generosity

Encourage respectful and sustainable advocacy and philanthropy that is rewarding for children, families, communities, volunteers and donors.

Motivate behaviour and policy change

Redirect funding for orphanages to family and community-based initiatives led by locals that address the root causes of family separation.

SCHOOL NAME

SCHOOL LOCATION

City: _____

Province/State: _____

Country: _____

STUDENT ADVOCATES

- Class
- Student Council
- Social Justice Club
- Other:

DVD CONTENTS

In addition to the documentary, your classroom DVD contains short videos that can help you further explore the social justice issues and backstories from the film.

Not About Me Documentary

FULL LENGTH: 94 minutes

CHAPTER 1: Nothing You See Is What It Seems (18 mins)

CHAPTER 2: Behind Mountains, More Mountains (18 mins)

CHAPTER 3: Every Person Is A Person (25 mins)

CHAPTER 4: Hope Lets You Live (27 mins)

The Issues

Social Justice: Learning to Do Better (11 minutes)

Humanitarian Aid: Insights from International Experience (8 minutes)

Orphanage Policy: #HelpingNotHelping (10 minutes)

Backstories

Finding A Balance: All About Morgan (12 minutes)

Together We Are Stronger (4 minutes)

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LEARNING TO DO BETTER

