



LET THE LITTLE LIGHT SHINE

A FILM BY KEVIN SHAW

A high-achieving elementary school in **Chicago's fastest growing neighborhood** is a lifeline for Black children—until **gentrification** threatens its closure.

The opening scene introduces the woman soon to become the public face of the school's fight with City Hall: Elisabeth Greer, a longtime professor at Harold Washington College. We meet her, along with her fellow NTA protesters, outside the home of then-Mayor Rahm Emanuel who, in 2013, oversee the closing of 49 public schools serving mostly low-income black and brown families.

View the Trailer [here](#).

SYNOPSIS

When a thriving, top-ranked African American elementary school is threatened to be closed and replaced by a new high school that favors the community's wealthier residents, parents, students and educators fight for the elementary school's survival.

The story follows everyday parents-turned-organizers alongside NTA students and staff as they advocate to keep their elementary school, which is a safe haven for children and a community bedrock in Chicago's fastest growing neighborhood - The South Loop.

The film also posits the point-of-view of residents in favor of changing NTA into a high school that is sorely needed for its neighborhood. The theme of gentrification is rarely viewed through this lens of education, where "well-intentions" are critically seen as privileged desires, creating a disconnect dividing and reshaping communities across the country.

Under-resourced schools across the United States have been closed due to underperformance, but **LET THE LITTLE LIGHT SHINE** tells **a unique story of a high performing school with a 100% graduation rate potentially being shuttered for the benefit of a higher social strata.**

"I made this film to understand why there was a movement in a booming Chicago neighborhood to close a high-performing, top-ranked elementary school that serviced a majority Black student population and transform that institution into a high school, potentially causing more harm than good to neighborhood families. 'If it ain't broke, don't fix it,' the adage goes. Race, obviously and unfortunately, figured into the equation, but there were other factors at play – class, which is intertwined with race, gentrification, power, privilege, and politics all had a hand in creating discord amongst a community that wanted the same thing -- the best possible education for their children. The ways to achieve that goal was different for each set of residents, reminding us of harsh inequities and bias existing in our country. This story is not unique to Chicago; it is reflective of our American experience, one where Black and Brown communities still must fight for not only a seat at the table, but in this instance, an equitable place to learn."

Kevin Shaw (Director/Producer)