
PEOPLE LIKE US: SOCIAL CLASS IN AMERICA TRANSCRIPT – PBS Version

Photo of man on porch dressed in white tank top and plaid shorts

MAN: He looks lower class, definitely. And if he's not, then he's certainly trying to look lower class.

WOMAN: Um, blue collar, yeah, plaid shorts.

MAN: Lower middle class, something about the screen door behind him.

WOMAN ON RIGHT, BROWN HAIR: Pitiful!

WOMAN ON LEFT, BLOND HAIR, SUNGLASSES: Lower class.

BLACK WOMAN, STANDING WITH WHITE MAN IN MALL: I mean, look how high his pants are up—my god! Wait a minute—I'm sorry, no offense. Something he would do.

Photo of slightly older couple. Man is dressed in crisp white shirt, woman in sleeveless navy turtle neck with pearl necklace.

WOMAN: Upper class.

MAN: Yeah, definitely.

WOMAN: Oh yeah.

WOMAN: He look like he the CEO of some business.

OLD WOMAN: The country club set- picture of smugness.

GUY ON STREET: The stereotypical “my family was rich, I got the money after they died, now we're happily ever after.” They don't really look that happy though.

Montage of images: the living situations of different social classes

R. COURI HAY, society columnist: It's basically against the American principle to belong to a class. So, naturally Americans have a really hard time talking about the class system, because they really don't want to admit that the class system exists. But the reality is it does. Sometimes it's based on looks and popularity, sometimes it's based on money, sometimes it's based on how big your house is, or where your daddy works, or if your mother came out at the infirmary ball in New York City, there are all kinds of measures of class in America.

TITLE: FALLEN GENTRY

RICKY ALDRICH: Somehow it's reassuring, to me anyway, to live in a house I've been in all my life, knowing that my forbears lived here too.

Ricky Aldrich shows us around his mansion.

This is John Armstrong, the fellow who built the house, in a general's uniform, War of 1812. Over here is his wife, the former Aliva Livingston.

She had the money - he didn't have any money. This is Sam Ward here, who's my great-great-grandfather. Let's have a look at him. Oops -- he has a veil today.

TITLE: SOCIAL CLIMBER

ALEX KINGSTON: I wouldn't drive a Volvo. Volvo is plumpish middle class middle aged woman, too many children, and uncontrolled dog. I certainly wouldn't drive a Ford. It's probably stolen.

TITLE: WORKING STIFF

BILL BEAR: I love for a salesman to show up for a job in a suit. He never comes to my job again in a suit. I've demanded, take their damn tie off and their jacket off when they're talking to me. And they do!

TITLE: SOCIAL CRITIC

Teen girl assesses kids as they walk through high school corridor

CHERISH: Kinda preppie, preppie, yeah she's preppie, the one in the blue, he's dorky, or loser, he was just preppie, his shoes are kinda like dorky they're kinda like not in style and stuff, he's ghetto, these people coming up are dorks...

MAIN TITLE: PEOPLE LIKE US: SOCIAL CLASS IN AMERICA

Redneck Games: people flop in mud pits

NARRATOR: America is a nation of tribes. And every American is a member of at least one of them.

REDNECK WITH OVERALLS: Are you proud to be called a redneck?

REDNECK WITH BEER: Oh, hell yeah.

REDNECK WITH OVERALLS: When you get a full-fledged redneck to say, “Oh hell yeah,” he really means that, you know what I mean?

Wealthy people mill around at polo game

NARRATOR: They’re the people we live amongst. The people who have similar backgrounds to ours. The people we feel most comfortably with.

GUY IN WHITE SHIRT: There’s definitely a level of people who have attained a lot of success in different fields of endeavor here. Financial markets, different businesses, venture capital, dot-com businesses...

GIRLS IN BRIGHT SUN-DRESSES: Fashion and finance. That’s pretty much it - fashion and finance.

Union men chant in New York City square

(Chanting) We are the union, we are the union, the mighty, mighty union, the mighty mighty union! Union! Union! Union! Union! Union! Union!

NARRATOR: Our tribes can be defined by what we do or how much we make, but also by our opportunities and aspirations.

Two men look at old photographs on deck

REGGIE DANIELS: In my particular case, my father would always say, whatever you choose to do, just try to be the best at it.

BINX WATTS: Wow, that’s what my father used to say. He said I’ll support you in whatever you do, as long as it’s legal.

Man bowls a strike at bowling alley

NARRATOR: As we move through life, we separate ourselves, often unconsciously, from the people who don’t fit in our group, who don’t fit in our social class.

SYLVIA BADGER: To me, there are some people who just, they could just have a bathing suit on the beach and I’d know they didn’t belong.

GORDON BOONE: Didn’t belong? Those are harsh words.

SYLVIA: Yeah, well, to a certain class. No, no, I didn’t mean didn’t belong on this earth...

NARRATOR: In fact, America is a country divided by class, split into a thousand

different social distinctions: the kind of neighborhood you live in, how far you got in school, the type of food you eat, the way you wear your hair. Class is everywhere, yet it's often hard to see.

Shots of various types of people

DAVID PATRICK COLUMBIA, society columnist: I grew up in a small town in Western Massachusetts and the people who lived on the hill were the rich people and the most powerful people and the most respected people and the most prestigious people. And the people who lived at the bottom of the hill or the other side of the tracks were the know-nothings and the do-nothings and that's how they were regarded. And I think that's a very good, ah, image of, ahm, the society in America even today.

BARBARA EHRENREICH, author: It's a hard thing to acknowledge, cause if there are social classes well then there must be kinds of inequality that you can't explain very easily, you know, that just keep perpetuating themselves.

JOE QUEENAN, author: A generation ago when you sent your kids to private school was because you didn't like black people. And now when you send your kids to private school it's cause you don't like poor people. It's all about class, it's all about, "I want my kid to go to school with the right kinds of people so that he can get in to Harvard, or, God forbid, if he's not that smart, which is usually the case, he'll get into one of those schools with one of those names like Sarah something or William something or one of those schools. We'll get you in, we'll get him in, give us some money we'll get him in. But, um, it's all about class.

Women in wealthy house walk through living room, look at portrait hanging on wall

ELEANOR WELLER: I think this is where your own personal sense of taste comes in very very much.

WENDY GRISWOLD: And here we are in the dining room with Ben's grandfather, Benjamin Jr., Benjamin Griswold, Jr. It sort of gives me pause because Ben's looking more and more like him every day.

NARRATOR: In this divided world, where do you fit on the spectrum of class and privilege? What group are you a part of? How have your own class attitudes shaped your life?

Shots of various rooms in different homes. Shot of dining room and kitchen. Couple standing in same kitchen.

TIM HARPER: Tuscany had an influence on us, Southern Italy too. The feeling may be of an old French country kitchen or an English farmhouse--

NANCY (agreeing): Right, an English farmhouse.

TIM: --and we incorporated a lot of those things in the feel of this. We tried to anyway.

Shot of big screen TV

BRYON SMITH: It's a Mitsubishi 50 inch, I'm sorry 60 inch TV. We originally got it because we had a person in this house used to come here to visit us, she was shorter than the TV. That would have been a great comparison.

NARRATOR: Looking at class differences reveals basic things about Americans- about our hopes, our fears, our prejudices. In the great game of social class, we're all players.

Shots of various items displayed in different houses

DAN RODRICKS, columnist: Nouveau Riche? Cell phone, house in the suburb, kids maybe in a public school, only if it's good, private school otherwise. Vacation in the winter, vacation in the summer. When you got it, baby, flaunt it, so they flaunt it and let you know all about it. Lot's of jewelry, maybe a boat, whatever it takes. I'm rich now, pay attention to me!

TITLE: Part One/Bud or Bordeaux?: The Choices You Make Reveal Your Class

Joe Queenan leafs through store catalogue at the mall

JOE QUEENAN: There's the fuzzy logic rice cooker.... the hammered copper risotto pan... and last but not least, the double bladed Mezzaluna and chopping board.. Mezzaluna! (He laughs)

NARRATOR: If you're going to look at class in America, you might start by examining the kinds of things Americans surround themselves with. Whether you like the latest Italian cookware or just a backyard grill, it says a lot about the status you want to project.

Joe Queenan stands in front of Matisse restaurant

QUEENAN: This restaurant is called Matisse. They chose the name Matisse because it evokes class and sophistication. And it's easier to pronounce than Breughel.

NARRATOR: Satirist Joe Queenan grew up in a blue collar household, but landed in the upper middle class. It's given him a unique perspective on the lifestyles of upscale baby-boomers whose consumption patterns have launched a thousand malls

Inside store

JOE QUEENAN (reading bottle label): *Al sapone di Tartufo Bianco*. The great thing about a name like this is that nobody who has any money in the United States speaks Italian or French, because they're too busy making money. But it evokes a concept of sophistication and class. I mean Tartufo Bianco could actually mean engine fluid for all we know, but it's the idea, there's a kind of magical evocative power to the words Tartufo Bianco.

Looking at pottery

JOE QUEENAN: There's a desire in this country to be perceived as being one step ahead of the great unwashed by doing things that the sort of less great unwashed are all doing. Like a perfect example of that is, everybody that I know has Frank McCourt's book, *Angela's Ashes*. Nobody's read it because it's too depressing, you know you get to page twelve, liquor, the Catholic Church, depression, babies dying, you get the idea pretty quick– the standard Irish rant. But, everybody has that book and it's like an imprimatur. It's a little thing you break out and you say, see, I have this book, I was ahead of the curve on this one.

Looking at kitchen items

JOE QUEENAN: One of the differences between upper middle class stores and lower class stores or even middle class stores is if you go into a normal store, if you go into a Wal-mart, there's nothing in there that you can't identify, whereas I don't actually know what that is, and I don't know what that's for. This I assume is an onion peeler for some sort of Franco-Tuscano Mediterranean Lago di Como-type onion. All this says is that "I belong here because I can tell you that this is a gratiniere de Paris whereas you, a working-class person doesn't know what this is so you don't belong here."

JOE QUEENAN: This is a cuisine backpack which is used while you're cooking and it contains a side pocket for Tartufo Bianco balsamic vinegar.

NARRATOR: All these possessions and attitudes add up to a lifestyle. And in America today, having money means having the freedom to create your own lifestyle, as long as you fit it with the tastes of your particular social class.

JOE QUEENAN: Previous societies had to fear death from, you know, Mongols and Vikings and cholera and smallpox, and what we fear most is criticism, you know. "Whom the gods would destroy they first make ridiculous," and that's what people most fear now. "People will think I'm not cool." It's permanent high school. I mean you're 50 years old and you're still worried about what your friends think about you records and stuff like that. It's pathetic.

[End of Queenan story]

“DEFINE CLASS”

BILL BLASS: There is a difference between the rich and the ones who are not rich. But is it class? I don't think so. I don't think that money brings class.

ROBERT STERN: If you were to ask me how you know if somebody has class it's whether they can live with servants.

WOMAN ON THE STREET: It's mostly money because you can have all the education you want but if you don't fit in, you don't fit in. So, it's really about money.

POSTAL WORKER: It's your morals, your upbringing. It's just all combined.

BARBARA EHRENREICH: How to dress, how to speak, how to furnish your home, what to order in a restaurant.

MAN IN BACK OF CAR: Wiping your nose on your sleeve. I mean, manners. How you treat other people is big on class.

HIGH SCHOOL GIRL: Who you grew up with, race has a lot to do with it.

SHARON WRIGHT: I think class is all mental. I really do, I really do. Money, it does help, I won't say it doesn't but I think that class is definitely a state of mind.

NARRATOR: No matter how you define it, coming to terms with class in America means understanding how it shapes most everything about you. Even the things you take most for granted: your clothes, your house, or what you put in your toaster every morning.

Inside supermarket

KAREN HESS, bread expert: This is what bread has come to in America. It's called Wonder Bread, but Wonder Bread is really just a generic term for all of, it could be any of these breads here. It has come to this, you see this, putty, absolute putty. You call this bread? This is just starch and water and air, it isn't bread. Yuck. (Laughs)

TITLE: Americans eat 5 loaves of white bread to every one of whole wheat. The higher a family's income, the less white bread they eat.

Montage of different types of bread in the supermarket

REDNECK: White bread, I eat white bread. You can't get a big old stomach like this if you don't eat white bread.

SULLIVAN ST. WOMAN: I like crusty bread, I like it chewy and tasty.

SMITH SON: Normal bread, like a slice of bread is Wonder bread, Wonder bread's the best.

HELEN FISHER: Seven grain German heavy brown bread.

Shots of people eating many different types of bread

NARRATOR: There's nothing more basic than the food you choose to eat. And if what we eat is what we are, it's not surprising that nobody likes to be told what they should or shouldn't eat. And when one group thinks it knows best, that's when the trouble starts.

TITLE: The Trouble With Tofu, Burlington VT

Inside Burlington Emergency Food Shelf

LEVI SANDERS, assistant manager: The Food Shelf is a place where people are entitled to get five days worth of groceries and they come everyday for bread. And, what's really interesting is that White bread is basically a class issue. This is excellent organic Lillydale. It's sourdough bread. This is bread that would normally cost 3.50, 4 dollars in the store. We can't even give this away at this point in time. We have boxes and boxes of this bread, yet all of our white bread, the bread that costs 99 cents, is totally gone basically because for most folks, they want their sliced sandwich bread. (To customer) How you doing? Would you like some Lillydale bread, it's uh...

WOMAN (Handing it back): I'm sorry.

LEVI: No, you don't want that.

NARRATOR: In Burlington, bread is at the heart of an ongoing food fight that has exposed cultural differences and turned into a mini class war.

Bradi Baker knocks on a door

BRADI BAKER: Hey, I'm Bradi Baker, I want to be your City Council Representative. Do you ever shop at the Co-op?

WOMAN: No.

BRADI: Never, why not?

WOMAN: Because I don't like vegetarian stuff, a meat supply, I get most of...

NARRATOR: When the downtown grocery went out of business, low income residents found themselves players in a city-wide struggle to determine it's successor.

BRADI BAKER: Where are you doing your grocery shopping?

OLD MAN: I go to Shaw's, up in Winooski.

BRADI: You do go to the Shaw's? Do you ever go to the Co-op?

OLD MAN: No. Some of that stuff is way too high as far as I'm concerned.

NARRATOR: The question was, who would get to build the new grocery to serve them? Shaw's, an international chain of supermarkets? Or the Onion River Co-op, mostly organic, politically conscious, and some would say a throwback to another era.

Inside the Co-op

LEA WOOD: This is my favorite store in the world because it's a co-op. It's small, I think small is beautiful. I hate big, I think big is cancer.

CO-OP MOM: I love eating organic food and I want my son to grow up eating healthy organic choices, so.

ED: The co-op was not set up as a health food store, was not set up as an organic food outlet. It was set up as an alternative to the capitalist modes of production. Um, it, it has a co-operative structure so it's trying not too generate capital but, to just sustain itself...

TOM SMITH, city councilman: The image of the Co-op is a very strong one and the idea that there are middle class kind of counter culture hippies who eat strange foods and probably have the idea that that food is better than the food that I eat and that also they want to convert me their kind of food. Um, really grates, I think it taps a whole lot of things that go on in a class society, of who's better than whom.

OAK LOGALBO, artist: What comes up for me is like I'm in junior high school again and the middle class kids are laughing at my clothes and they're looking at my sandwich and they're saying, "What's that?" And it's that kind of feeling I think that the people in the neighborhood think they're going to get when they walk into this newfangled food co-op supermarket, that these people are going to be looking down their nose at them and they're eating white bread.

At Burlington city council hearing

BURLINGTONIAN #1: Please give us a real supermarket. With regular food, low prices, and the great variety that we can have at Shaw's.

BURLINGTONIAN #2: Do we want Shaw's as our good neighbor, given what they have done in the past? I don't think so and I leave it to your judgement...

NARRATOR: At a public hearing of the City Council, it was clear that coming to a polite consensus among Burlingtonians was not in the cards.

BURLINGTONIAN #3: Everybody in Burlington does not have money and we seem to not be getting that.

BURLINGTONIAN #4: The Co-op will be run by people who live in the city, who live in the area, who are concerned about us. And I think you can't ever have a situation any better than that. (cheers)

Inside the Co-op

NED FLINN, manager, Onion River Co-op: We've been starting to do a store tour type of thing where people that have never bought you know out of bulk bins, we show them you just need to have a bag or you can bring your own container in, weigh it first so that we can subtract that from the weight of the product, here's how the bins work, you know you have to write this number on your bag.

Inside Emergency food shelf

LEVI SANDERS: I think a lot of the people at the co-op are very nice, well-intentioned people, but they believe we know what's best for you and we will show you that we know what's best for you. So the bottom line is that we're not going to carry cigarettes because they're hazardous to your health, we're not going to have lottery tickets cause we know ultimately what is best for you.

Tom Smith with Seniors

TITLE: Councilman Tom Smith's Neighborhood Meeting

TOM SMITH: Dislikes, in relation to the Co-op. What is it that you don't like?

OLD MAN: I don't like it being forced down our throats.

VIRGINIA: Yeah. The only thing that I ever bought was lettuce or tomatoes or cucumbers. Everything else was so expensive you couldn't buy it.

TOM: Okay, too expensive. Alright, another one?

KENNETH: People here eat meat and people outside eat meat. Co-op is not, no good for this city and you know it and I know it, but you're not going to say it.

TOM: You're wrong in that you can go to the Co-op right now and you can buy chicken legs and thighs for 99 cents a pound.

KENNETH: You're lying through your you-know-what. You're lying through your teeth.

TOM SMITH: When you look at the people surrounding the Co-op, most of them went to Burlington High School, a lot of them graduated, a number of them didn't. But at the high, the high school was really the last time they came in contact with upper middle class people and who were those people? Well those were the people who were the goody two shoes, those were the people in the A track, the honors classes, the teachers' pets. You know, when there was an argument, the teacher always took their side. So, there are years of resentment that have been bottled up and bottled up for those people.

VIRGINIA: On the Co-op, they voted on it without the people's voice and it wasn't right. You should let the people speak their voice and not pull the shit like you did with the mayor and the council. I don't give a shit.

OFF CAMERA: She's right, she's right, she is.

TOM SMITH: When you are invisible in a culture, and low income people are invisible in this culture, you can't feel good about yourself and you can't feel good about the people who are making you invisible and so the co-op in a sense is one of those institutions, it's run by those upper middle class people who have a whole lot of education and who are trained to look down upon low income people.

VIRGINIA: I'll go to Price Chopper, I'll take a bus and go to Price Chopper and get the sales and the double coupons.

Man stocking shelves with 99-cent white bread

NARRATOR: Class conflict is not talked about much in America. But like the proverbial sleeping giant, when it raises its head, we get a wake-up call about how power and influence are parceled out in our society.

TITLE: The City Council voted to let the Onion River Co-op build the new downtown supermarket.

TITLE: And the Co-op began stocking 99-cent loaves of white bread.

[End of Burlington story]

DAVID BROOKS, magazine editor: The people in the upper middle class have very little direct contact and I would say very little knowledge with people who are in the blue

collar working class. They really have very little contact, very little intermingling except for on the most superficial levels. Maybe at a baseball game or at a football game there will be some, the guy with the tattoos drinking the big beers will be sitting next to you and you'll be able to talk football. Very little knowledge with the idea that life is not an endless series of opportunities. And life is led at a different speed. Because if you're upper middle class you really are grasping opportunities you really are rising through the world. And if you're part of the working class you may stay at the same factory for thirty years or for your whole life or even for three generations. And that is a totally different mentality.

BILL BEAR, plumber: In a sense, it's a caste system, just like they have in India. We have a caste system here in this country. Now, people are reluctant to admit that, but you see it, you know you don't see them socializing together. You know the real test, you don't see them going to church together, you know.

KENYATTA BIRGES, musician: I mean, like some people from the inner city go up to Chester Hill, they won't really know how to act for real. They'll just be looking around—damn it's clean up here. That's what I used to say when I— I mean, if you're used to seeing this your whole life, you go somewhere else it's going to be different so like, damn it's clean up here is the first thing you say. I mean, all the— even the fruit looks more fresh than our fruit. Seriously, their fruit look more fresh. All the little stuff, you know what I mean.

At a cocktail party

BILL BLASS: Well here's one of my new ones. Well I think that looks sensational.

RICH LADY: Mr. Blass...

BLASS: Do you like it?

PAT: Pat Callahan

BLASS: How are you Pat?

PAT: And Patsy's cousin from years ago, Margot Rassus. Do you remember Margot?

RICH LADY: I have a message for you.

NARRATOR: But if you are going to mix with other classes, you have to learn how to blend in. If you know which fork to use, which name to drop, or which vintage to drink, you may not be judged to harshly.

BLASS: I saw Ivana Trump in it the other day. And I thought, I said she looked terrific. Why would you give it up?

RICH WOMAN #2: She's tall. She looks good in everything.

BLASS: No she doesn't...necessarily.

NARRATOR: And for some people, a taste of life in another class is enough to spur some wholesale re-invention.

In lobby of Biltmore Hotel

GINIE POLO SAYLES, self help consultant : When I was in high school, I went to a country club with a girlfriend. And she... I had never been to a country club and we went swimming in the summer and she's said, "Let's go over to the clubhouse and have some fried shrimp and charge it to my daddy." And I'd never had fried shrimp. And I thought, what is that, what will it taste like, what will it look like, will I use the right fork? And what really hit me then was that there are limitations. And that's what I didn't like. I didn't like the idea of feeling less than, ignorant, eliminated, limited by a class.

TITLE: How To Marry The Rich, Beverly Hills, CA

SAYLES: Upper class people will tend to stand from, I'll put it right on your chest, sixteen inches

VESSA RINEHART: That's close.

SAYLES: Which is really good for relationships, alright, to, um, nineteen inches. And I always say nineteen inches is good for business and Boston. In Boston people just don't stand as close, but I love Boston people. Upper class people have a sort of sixth sense, in which they, they can tell if you feel intimidated by them, because people who feel intimidated tend to stand farther away, or maybe talk over their shoulders and behave...

NARRATOR: In America, we like to think that if we're not satisfied with our class, we can change it. To many of us, it seems like the view is always better a couple of rungs up the economic ladder.

SAYLES: So, lets go up together just letting our thigh muscles pull us up.

Ginie handing measuring tape to Vessa

NARRATOR: We know it isn't just about money. There's also the practical matter of mastering the customs of our future social set.

SAYLES: And see now I can do it out of habit. And so can you, here, why don't you try it

VESSA: Okay

SAYLES: You try it with the, There you go

VESSA: Okay

SAYLES: Okay

VESSA: I see, I see

SAYLES: Okay, alright

VESSA RINEHART, museum staffer: On the last date I went on with a man, we were driving and he looks down at the gas gauge and he said, “Oh, we’re below empty, and, uh, could you give me a couple of dollars otherwise I’m not going to be able to drive you home. And I started thinking I must be doing something wrong, what is it that am I doing wrong to attract the type of man who doesn’t have a job and doesn’t have a car.

Ginie and Vessa in a clothes store

NARRATOR: Prompted by her own rise from poor country girl to millionaire’s wife, Ginie Sayles has made a career out of observing the behavior of the rich and trying to replicate it. And in this world, where appearances rule, maybe she’s onto something.

SAYLES: Okay one of the things I want to show you is for instance: a pedigree would not buy any of these belt buckles, because the labels show.

In front of clothes rack

SAYLES: Your eye goes to color.

VESSA: It moved to the blue.

SAYLES: Uhuh, it goes to the blue. When someone sees you, they’ll instantly know that you’re a woman of pedigree vintage because you go for the bright colors. Okay, looks good. I like it.

Walking along the sidewalk, window shopping

SAYLES: Um, one of the things, too, about window shopping, is I call it desire shopping. And desire shopping—ooh, wow, look at these pearls—desire shopping helps you whet your appetite for the finest, and so, it keeps, it keeps you motivated to yes I’ve gotta have that, say, yes I’ve gotta have it. We’re upping the desire level, we’re upping the comfort level.

VESSA: Yes and I think that everything I tried on, I think, the suit, the jacket alone was \$1200, the slacks were a thousand, so the outfit altogether–

SAYLES: –was about a 2, \$3000 outfit. And you're worth it, you're the jewel.

VESSA: I'm starting to feel like that.

SAYLES: There you go.

In a beauty salon, Vessa gets her hair done

SAYLES: It's beautiful, you look gorgeous, look at this. Do you love it?

VESSA: Yes, it looks great. It's the new me.

SAYLES: Absolutely, beautiful.

TITLE: Later that evening...

At a Sotheby's auction

SAYLES: You want to put your toes even with their toes, and that puts your shoulder even with theirs, and automatically put your eye contact even. If I were standing like this, then you'd have to turn your head to look at me and I'd be behind you, so I wanna project I'm an equal, and that I'm confident, and that I have class. Ok so that's what you're going to do. So, go get em, go. Ok.

NARRATOR: Now, it's graduation time. Will the new dress and hairdo attract a better class of suitor?

Chatting with gallery patrons

VESSA: Hi. Are you an artist?

VESSA: Do you see anything you like?

YUPPIE 1: Oh sure, there's always something to like. They're really bidding up a storm.

YUPPIE 2: Yes, poor Michael's been outbid already, he's almost in tears over here

VESSA: He looks rather distraught.

COLOR BLIND GUY: It's a terrific piece, isn't it, for that reason. You know, you see, I'm color-blind, see I can see every color you can but they mix together. Have you ever had, have you ever taken a color-blind test? Where they like have the dots, and you see

the numbers in the book, and...

AUCTION GUY: Do you see anything you like?

VESSA: There's one that looks like a bunch of letters, and when you get close you can read the sentence.

AUCTION GUY: Show it to me.

VESSA: Ok.

AUCTION GUY: Ooh, wow.

VESSA: And it's kind of a powerful piece, because it has the...

NARRATOR: According to the American dream, everyone has a shot at moving up.

SAYLES: You can take anything that isn't selling well and repackage it in bright red...

NARRATOR: But navigating class waters in America can be tricky and it's never quite as easy as it looks.

PAUL FUSSELL: Is it possible to change social classes successfully? I don't think so, it might be possible, but it would take a whole lifetime of study and actor's training, actresses' training to do it. I don't think it's possible. I think you are for a lifetime in the class in which you grew up.

TITLE: Part 2/ High and Low: A Tour Through The Landscape of Class.

CARLOTTA MILES, psychiatrist: I realized as a very young child that it wasn't always about race, sometimes it was about class. And that was probably because I grew up in this very small southern town where we saw people from all different classes and races at some time or another. And we were, we knew that people from all different classes and races at some time or another. And we were, we knew that people on the very bottom were called "poor white trash." And we weren't allowed to talk to them or play with them or associate with them in any way, and we were admonished by our grandmother not to let them ever touch us because they weren't clean. And so we might be walking down to the park or walking down to cut some bamboo to make something, and we'd pass kids and they'd say-white kids- "Kin y'all come play with us? Kin y'all play? Kin y'all stop and play for a little while?" And we would always say, "No, no, we can't," because we didn't want to get in trouble with our grandmother. Um and everyone in the

town was in perfect agreement, black and white, that people on the very bottom were the poor, white trash.

MICHAEL MONTE, city official: I always felt uncomfortable with people with a lot of suits and ties. And I didn't discover that I was working class until I started moving out and got older and I said, "Oh, my God! Some people are born thinking that they'll always be this rich and successful? I thought I just had to work hard." I always thought my whole life you work hard and you do ok. And maybe you don't work hard by busting your back but you just work hard and that's what you do. I didn't realize that some people weren't working so hard and they still had tons of money. How the hell did that happen?

NARRATOR: American society has always consisted of countless levels of class differences. People who reach the top usually possess some combination of money, family name, and attitude. In this rarified air, there are those who belong and those who don't.

Wealthy people on horses

THOMAS LANGHORNE PHIPPS: I am a member of the privileged American class known as the WASPs, the silver spoon people, the people who were handed things from an early age and stepped into a safe, clean, white world. Things were pre-planned for us. We were comfortable. We knew how life was laid out before us. We knew - the parameters were clear and we were always above the fray.

TITLE: WASP Lessons, Long Island, NY

Shots of wealthy homes and people

ELEANOR WELLER: Artificial flower arrangements are an absolute no no in our world and we can't stand them..

PHIPPS (in hoity toity voice): You have to talk about Piping. Piping is the club, Piping
Rock and you
have to call it
Piping and
you do that
thing with
your chin.

DUNCAN STRACHAN: We have the historic house, we have the threadbare Oriental carpets, we have everything you need to be upper class.

SYLVIA BADGER: Madras pants, madras pants.

GORDON BOONE: Some.

SYLVIA BADGER: Oh a lot of people wear Madras pants, Gordy.

HELEN FISHER: I mean, you know, the great joke about WASPs, why don't they have any cockroaches in their house? There's nothing to eat (begins to laugh). It's true. There's nothing to eat in my house. We all starve by dinner time.

Stills of WASPs from throughout history

NARRATOR: Once upon a time, if you spoke of an American upper class, you'd be talking about the White Anglo-Saxon Protestants. For over a century they dominated American cultural and political life. Some would say they ran the place. Even today, although they've been out-flanked and out-earned by other groups, they still have a strong sense of their privileged position in the world.

PHIPPS: We stand better, we walk better, we speak better, we dress better, we eat better, we're smarter, we're more cultured and we treat people better– we're nicer and we're more attractive and that was built into my sense of who I was growing up.

Introductions, banter at outdoor party.

NARRATOR: In one sense, the WASPs are no different than any other social class in America. They're most comfortable with people like themselves and in the process they've perfected a certain tribal solidarity.

Lang Phipps at party

PHIPPS: Did you marry a Californian?

WOMAN: No, no, I married, actually, do you know David Dove? He's from here and the city...

PHIPPS: I know the name.

WOMAN: He was friends with my older brother, Hans.

PHIPPS: So he kept very close - the family had no problem with that.

WOMAN: Exactly

PHIPPS: So slipped right in.

WOMAN: We know the family

ELEANOR WELLER, interior decorator: You grow up with the tradition of who you went to school with, who you went to dancing class with, who you went to York Harbor, or Northeast Harbor, or Nantucket with. You know them. You're familiar with them. One's parents didn't encourage you to bring home people that they didn't know who they were. That's the honest truth - they didn't. "Oh, I don't know them," was a very dangerous thing to hear your mother say.

PHIPPS: I got a phone call from somebody who decided he wanted to become a WASP. He actually asked me if, he would pay me, if I would give him sort of WASP lessons in style. And it was sad because the whole point is you, that's not it, you know you either are it or you aren't, we believe. That's the tribal belief, that you either have it or you don't.

The WASP is always there in the camaraderie and the esprit de corps and the shared memories. The balls that I went to when I was a teenager, everybody looked the same. You know, I mean there was a certain homogeneity to the voices, the language, the look, the sensibility, which now seems limiting to me, but there was a certain beauty to it, aesthetically, that something is pure. I was saying to my wife when we left this Save Venice ball, so much has changed. You had, you had people who just, I couldn't help but I didn't want to be snobby but who were these people? There were the most random people who went to a black-tie ball in business suits. Um, sometimes my lookism comes up. There was a really, very ugly couple, short, fat, and ugly. And they were dancing feverishly to every song and they were having a great time, you know. But I kind of looked at them like, "where did they come from? How did they get in?" You know, because I grew up in a world where you couldn't get in if you looked like that.

Woman with two horses and a jockey statue in the foreground

[end of WASP section]

DAN RODRICKS: When I was a kid my mother pointed to that guy and said, "That's the banker, he's a Republican, he's rich. That guy over there, that's Mario, he works with your father in the foundry, he's poor like us. It was very simple, right? And there wasn't a whole lot of middle, either. Now there's this big middle class and I think part of it strives to get up one more step, just one more step, right. And the bottom says, eh, I'm gonna stay here, I'm here for the rest of my life. Maybe my kids will do better.

TOM SMITH: Everybody's middle class. I mean, people want to say that. Unless you're very rich or you're poor. But everybody else is middle class, it's huge.

JOHN DIJULIO: It's almost as if being something other than middle class is somehow un-American, or you haven't fully assimilated.

DUNCAN STRACHAN: You can go up to Jay Leno, who makes 15 or 20 million dollars a year, he will tell you he's a lower middle class guy or middle class guy. You know.

And he's not. When you make 15 or 20 million dollars a year you are not middle class. But they will never admit that.

In shopping mall

Q: What class would you say you guys are in?

MAN IN GREEN: Middle class, upper middle.

WOMAN: Well, middle, middle middle, middle middle, I'd would say.

TEENAGER: Middle.

FRIEND: Maybe middle

TEENAGER: Middle.

FRIEND: Maybe middle.

Q: Maybe?

FRIEND: Yeah. I say middle. I say pretty much middle.

WOMAN: I would say I'm leading a middle, middle class lifestyle.

TAILGATING WOMEN: Middle class, middle class

GORDON BOONE: I consider myself middle class, even though...

Gordon's mom makes a doubtful face

NARRATOR: For most Americans, being middle class means being part of a vast American center. Your values are shared with millions of others, life is not too hard, and the American dream seems within reach.

Shots of middle class people engaged in various activities

DOLORES: So we're middle class, I guess, ain't we? He said we was.

NARRATOR: But not everyone feels comfortable being in the middle.

Shot of young African American boy biking down the street

BARBARA BRANNEN-NEWTON: I am from the middle class because that's where I was born and that's where I live. Socioeconomically, statistically we are middle class. But we're black middle class, and we will always have that word black in front of us until

the day I die.

At debutante ball

NARRATOR: In a society haunted by race, being both middle class and black poses a special set of dilemmas. Over the last generation, more and more blacks have moved into the ranks of the middle class, highlighting class differences that lurk just beneath the surface of African-American life.

CARLOTTA MILES: Class is a very uncomfortable topic for all Americans and I think it's especially uncomfortable for black Americans. It think it's offensive to some people to think that there is a class structure in black America. I think that's probably rooted in the fact that minorities who have been oppressed in America do not ever want to be perceived as oppressive.

WOMAN IN PINK SUIT: I think that poor African Americans believe that we are like white people and we are uppity

CHARLES GILES: I can't tell you how many niggers I've been called because I just wanted something better.

WOMAN: You think you're better, you think you're cute...

WOMAN IN CAR: You talk funny, or you think that you're white, or you act white...

BARBARA BRANNEN: It was not a compliment for someone to say you're bourgeois at all, because it just put you in a different class.

BENILDE LITTLE: Ok, let me just say this about bourgie. I didn't know bourgie until I was in D.C., which I'm sure bourgie was born in D.C. And I was walking down the street and I hear somebody say, "Are you..." Cause I would speak, you know, cause some guy with no teeth drinking wine on a corner. And they're like, "Yo, hey baby, hey sweetie..." And I don't say anything back, and like, "Ah, forget her, she bourgie." What the heck is that?

TITLE: Bourgeois Blues, Charlotte, NC

In bathroom

DARA COOK: I'm looking for guys who've gone to good colleges.

DARIA SMITH: Smart.

DARA COOK: Smart, smart and went to good colleges because I don't want...

DARIA SMITH: Can't stand a dumb man

DARA COOK: Yeah, can't stand a dumb man, and a guy whose um, gone to a good school, that's pretty much it. Because, um.... Ivy League is the way to go.

DARIA SMITH: In my experience I've just found... I don't think I've ever really dated anybody that didn't go to an Ivy League school. Ok maybe one or two guys, and maybe they were just the exceptions, but...

Shots of African American families and African American people engaged in various activities

NARRATOR: From the privileged children of suburbia to the hardworking homeowners in big cities, at least half of all African Americans can be labeled as middle class. Yet despite all this education and economic diversity, such class distinctions are often overlooked by a country that equates being black with being poor.

Dara in restaurant

DARA COOK: I don't know, like there was this one guy who said– he was talking about something and he said ep-i-tome instead of epitome and it's just like, that can't happen. Because it's very embarrassing.

BENILDE LITTLE, novelist: It's somehow more comfortable dealing with extremes, you know, the jail to Yale stories, you know, oh they had rats for dinner, you know, the mother had 40 children by different men–you know that kind of, you know and that crazy–and he ended up graduating head of his class at Yale. And that's just great. I think that's just where a lot of people are comfortable. I remember when I was working at People, and a guy who, you know, considers himself a card-carrying liberal, who you know, wrote books about what a liberal he was, turned to me and said, oh, I know, you're Cosby show black. And–this was when the Cosby show was on–and I know he wasn't trying to insult me, he thought he was giving me a compliment because he thought that meant he was really seeing me.

RUBY WALLACE, nurse: White people want to give you this backhanded compliment. They say things to you like, “you're so articulate” or “oh you really write well” you know, one of my friends is, uh, Stanford graduate, law school graduate, policy advocate, doing very well, you know, and she mentioned that one of her coworkers said you write so well. Well the assumption is, that she shouldn't be able to write well. Why shouldn't she? And why should we not be articulate?

WAYNE BROWN, radio executive: I mean I always heard it before that, uh, you're not like the other black folks, I mean I heard that when I first started working here, but you're not like the rest of them. And that probably offended me more than anything else...

NARRATOR: These days, many upwardly mobile blacks have moved to the suburbs, far away from the poor and the working class.

In a house

JULIAN: This is my Yeah Julian book, I'll open it. "When I grow up, I want to be a doctor. I want to be able to help other people, like doctors because they are good to people."

NARRATOR: Yet, mindful of how race still rules in America, many upper-middle class blacks have flocked to a group of elite African-American social organizations. One of the most popular is Jack and Jill. For 65 years, Jack and Jill has served as a social incubator for children of high achieving parents.

At art museum

SHELLEY: You're cool, baby, you look good, you look good.

MOM: One exhibit, there's you know a lot of female upper body parts, we're just going to walk right past that one picture.

LAWRENCE OTIS GRAHAM, author: Jack and Jill was a place where a lot of us were expected to find our future spouses, there's no question about it. And I remember whenever the Jack and Jill Up the Hill yearbook would come out, my mom would come home from the meeting and we'd go through it and see who we knew in different cities cause it told what everybody was doing, particularly the graduating Jack and Jill students, who were going off to which colleges. So we'd look to see, well who's going off to our school, and my brother went off to Tufts. We went to see, well who would he know and who would he date and all that kind of stuff. The thing about it, there's no question about it that that was going to be at least a part of the world from which we were going to find our future spouse.

Children posing on steps.

WOMAN IN SALON: You have to be invited to join. And if you don't meet the general group's criteria, you don't get invited.

In a hair salon

NARRATOR: But what seems comfortable to one group can seem exclusive to others. And conflicting viewpoints about clubs like Jack and Jill mirror the dilemma that the black middle class finds itself in.

WOMAN IN SALON: If you want to talk about class, Jack and Jill was a part of it.

BLONDE WOMAN: Here we fought to be invited into the golf clubs, the country club. Then we start our own club, and still, we have to be invited. That's where the rage comes from.

WOMAN: Was there not an air of superiority with that?

SECOND WOMAN: That came along with it, yes.

WOMAN: And that's the part I didn't like.

SECOND WOMAN: If you don't have an MD after your name, guess what? You're kid is not going to get in there.

OFF-SCREEN: Or you're a single parent.

SECOND WOMAN: Or you're a single parent. I talked to a someone who was in Jack and Jill, I said, "send me an application." Did I get one? So, and it's teaching them the wrong values, so, it's teaching the children to be like the oppressor, you know. If you're like them then maybe they'll accept you. But it's never going to happen

Debutante ball

ANNOUNCER: Debutante Morgan Gabrielle Brooks.

NARRATOR: Unlike their white counterparts, middle class African-Americans have to balance their desire for economic and social advancement with the need for racial solidarity and the problems of continuing racial prejudice.

ANNOUNCER: A member of the national honor society, teen secretary for Jack and Jill, her motto is, "Aspire to be the best for myself."

BARBARA BRANNEN, educator: We're just normal people trying to do the same thing you're trying to do wherever you are, Hoboken or wherever, Warsaw. They're all trying for the same thing, to get up by your bootstrap, but you got to have boots first.

VALERIE LANCASTER BEAL, investment banker: We should be encouraging our community to strive. Every group in America has come to America with the goal of becoming middle class so why should we suddenly be the only group that identifies becoming middle class as this nasty word of calling bourgie-ness. I think it's almost a reverse, I mean, black brainwash, that somehow attaining success means losing your roots.

[End of Black middle class story]

Mass of people, Redneck games , spitting contest

TITLE: Redneck Games, East Dublin, GA

NARRATOR: In the great game of American status, somebody has to be at the bottom. Many groups are saddled with low social position, and for those who can't or won't change their class, one way to deal with the situation is to flaunt it.

Bobbing for pig's feet at Redneck games

REDNECK: Just think about it, there ain't many people going to stick their head in a cold bucket of water and get a raw froze pig foot. But to me it's fun.

“L-BOW” TIDWELL, cable installer: When I think about these people, man these people, these people are something else. They all come from hard knocks of life. I mean, when you come from hard knocks of life you learn things the hard way. Yeah, you heard expression of being at the bottom of the barrel, man, a lot of these folks have been at the bottom of the barrel and one thing you can bet that they got friends down there when they get there. And I love them all, man I just love every one of them.

NARRATOR: But what does it mean to be at the bottom culturally and socially? To be reminded day in and day out that you have no economic or political power? Is it still possible to take part in the American dream? To aspire to a better life in a more respected class?

STANLEY CROUCH, critic: People at the bottom, they battle the limitations of life like everybody else. If they're not overwhelmed by the dictates of drugs, and violence, and extraordinarily bad schools, they have exactly the same plans that everybody else has. That is, to become the most that they can become, to get the best that they can get for their kids, to encourage their kids to become the best that they can become, and to be the best kind of person they can be.

TITLE: Tammy's Story, Waverly, OH

Inside Tammy's trailer home

MATT HEID: I'm embarrassed a little bit about living here 'cause the trailer and the yard, it's all messed up. Mom likes the place. I like the place a little bit too but I don't like all my friends and stuff to know where I live at. 'Cause they're like a class up from us and stuff.

TAMMY CRABTREE, Matt's mother: This is my living room. And, he does clean house when I'm at work; he tries to help out and everything. I appreciate that, ok. But things I don't like him to do is move things where I can't find them.

MATT (off camera): I don't like to introduce my mom to a lot of people 'cause I don't

like for them to see her image, what she looks like. She don't fix herself up and that's more or less what people look at, their appearance, not what the hell they act.

TAMMY: And this here is my kitchen. It may not look like much, but it's something. And you can see I don't have a furnace, which I'd like to have one. I'd like to know where it went.

NARRATOR: Tammy Crabtree and her four children cling to the bottom rung of the social ladder in their small Ohio town. But even down here, they're not ready to be counted out just yet.

Outside in the yard

MATT: All this junk and stuff I don't know where to put it and my mom or nobody would tell me so I just throw it over there in a big pile.

BO: This is all junk. We got going down top that bank and junk all over there. Clothes, burnt things, it's messed up.

Q: Why don't you want to clean it up?

BO: Lazy.

MATT: He plain and simple said it.

BO: I like to sit, being a couch potato, that's all.

MATT: My mom, she won't lift a hand, either. I get on her all the time and she says all you can do is move and stuff. And I say, 'I don't want to move but I want you to straighten up and start acting.' We do argue all the time. That's all me and my mom does.

Inside the trailer, Matt sweeping

TAMMY: I was on welfare 18 years. And now, I work at Burger King, and I'm trying to make a living, and make a home for the kids. It ain't my fault cause I'm poor, I grewed up poor. My dad worked hard. He worked 27 years on county engineer, trying to make a living for 22 kids, and it ain't easy. I was proud of my dad. He'd be proud of me now, you know, for just trying.

Tammy puts on her jacket and leaves the trailer

Kids, I'm going to work. See you after a while.

Tammy walks through her yard and up the road

I walk to work, 15 _ miles cause I don't have a car, don't have a license. Even when I'm walkin to work or something, someone'll holler, 'Ey! Trashy bitch! What're you doin?'" I'm just walkin to work. All I want is just a life where I can be happy. But right now, I'm not because the way people treats me, and the way my own kids treat me.

Inside Burger King bathroom, Tammy cleans

TAMMY: Morning! There anybody in here? My friends think I should stay at home, take care of my kids, draw welfare. I said, 'No, it ain't me.'" I'm hoping to go to college and be a school teacher. That was my goal from the time I was five years old up until now.

Inside trailer

MATT: Sometimes I am embarrassed by her, cause she wears that Burger King outfit every day.

TAMMY: No, I don't.

MATT: I have never seen her go to like, a real nice restaurant, and wear not that Burger King outfit. It's either the shirt, or the pants, or it's both. She wears it constantly. It's different outfits, but it's the same damn outfit. Sorry if I used that word.

TAMMY: My son, he thinks he's high class and a preppie. He's the best. He thinks he's better than me, better than his brothers.

MATT: This is my brother Bo, he dresses like this, compared to this. And I don't like how he dresses, that's why I don't hang out with him, I don't talk about him or anything. When people say he's my brother, I go nah, nah, I don't know him. But when he dresses better and stuff, I'll walk around with him. And me and my friend over here—come here—me and Josh, the only way we walk around with him, is if he starts lookin good, and we help him dress good, comb his hair, and make him look better.

TAMMY: Matt think he in a different class. Really he's in the same class I am. He's just trying to prove to his friends that he's in their class but I know different.

MATT: Right here I've got like thirty or forty awards. I got like presidential awards and I got school athletes awards.

Q: Would you like to be like your brother?

BO: Yeh.

Q:What is it about your brother that you would like to be?

BO: Popular.

MATT: I'm gonna go to college, and like, for the lawyer you have to get a four to six. Might go to the four year term to be a basic thing, and architectural design it only takes two years in college, so, I might go down here to Shawnee or Hocking College, somewhere round in there and get a little schoolin goin on, cause I know I ain't no Harvard material or anything like that.

Out in the yard

TAMMY: There's my car. I got short in the wiring somewhere, cause I can't use my lights, and I need tires. I'm trying to get someone to fix it, where I can get on the road, you know? I just basically need to get things a-goin, you know. And get my kids a-goin. They just run to their friends and everything. (Coughs). Excuse me. I don't know what else to do.

[End of Tammy's Story]

TITLE: Part 3/ Salt of the Earth: Blue Collar Life in a White Collar World

DAN RODRICKS, columnist: My mother-in-law has really ugly lawn ornaments. She's got seahorses holding up a birdbath. She's got a couple of cobras—cobras!—in her shrubs. My wife and I, as we're driving up to the house and see the lawn ornaments, we laugh because we would never put that on our lawn. Probably because my community association would get down on us. But to us that's tacky. To my mother-in-law that beautifies her lawn. I'm not gonna get outta the car and say, "Hey Phyllis, you know, what's with the lawn ornaments? Come on, come on Phyllis, move up in class." I'm not gonna say that to my mother in law. Where she grew up—she grew up on a farm—they didn't have lawn ornaments. To her this is what you do when you have a suburban ranch-style house. Ya put a lawn ornament in the front.

At Pat's concrete shop

PAT GULDEN, business owner: Ornamental concrete. People come in and they wanna dress up their yard. Blue collar people like these little colorful things stuck in between their shrubs. It's nice to have something to dress it up, just a little touch here, a little touch there, but don't overdo it. That makes—that cheapens everything.

Montage of dogs, Marys, Jesuses, Jockey

PAT: I can tell you this. It's their yard. If they wanna put a giraffe in it, I sell skunks,

they wanna put a skunk in it, it's entirely up to them. That's why this is America.

Concrete bathtub fountain

PAT: I can sell an angel, when I can't sell anything else. The same way with those gazing balls up there. Some people when their ball gets broke they come back and buy another one. One lady I know of is workin on her sixth ball. So, it's what people like. These are dogs. I mean, dogs are big. Nautical is big. I like blue collar people. They're my people that come back and come back. I sell clothes for them things and they dress 'em. They do, they dress 'em for the seasons. So, uh, I mean, who is, who thinks they have the right to look down on anybody? I mean, I just, I don't see it.

Pat's Concrete sign

[End of Lawn Gnome section]

BILL BEAR, plumber: I'm one of the older Cellular One customers in the Cincinnati area and I'm standing in line and because of the way I'm dressed, I have a tendency to be overlooked, you know? And they don't, they don't really want to deal with me. They want to deal with Mr. Suit-and-tie. Well it wasn't too long ago I almost started a riot in one of them down here in Cincinnati one Saturday, or one, uh, Friday evening. And uh, I had to make it known that I was next, not Mr. Suit-and-tie. If you want to deal with the son of a bitch, make a date with him later, you know? But just because I have on working clothes doesn't mean I can't afford to pay my bill, baby. Well then she got all embarrassed about that, and the manager came out and wanted to know what the trouble was, and I just exploded. And uh, there was about four working class guys in there, and they all started applauding. 'Cause they felt the same way. You know? And society does that automatically. And but if a son of a bitch walks in and he has a suit and tie on, he could be a scuzzy ass Western or Southern, ordinary life, door-to-door insurance salesman, you know, making \$300 a week, and I'll guarantee you, he's going to get the attention. "Oh, he looks so nice."

Stills of working class people

JOHN DIULIO, educator: Prejudice against working class people is the last acceptable prejudice. The fact that it's okay to talk about bubbas, the fact that it's okay to talk about ladies with big hair, the fact that it's okay to talk about trailer trash, you know. Think about those terms applied in any racial or ethnic context, and you know political correctness would absolutely forbid it. But it's not politically incorrect to be patronizing or condescending to working class people. Or to treat them with a lack of basic dignity and respect.

Montage of working people

LAWN CHAIR WOMAN: Well, they think we're slow and we're stupid, backward. We just found a better way of life, that's all.

REDNECK: The working class is the ones that do 80% of the work and draw 10% of the pay that the work produces. That's what my definition of the working class is.

SANTA REDNECK: You need to understand the man that's doing the least work the man what's making the most money.

REDNECK: Always.

LANG PHIPPS: Rough fabrics. Heavy, heavy and rough fabrics were blue collar. Wearing the same clothes all the time was blue collar. Not having a part in your hair was blue collar. Certain roughness to the visage. Loud was blue collar. I should shut up now.

TITLE: Old Bridge, NJ

BRYON SMITH, fireman: Everyone in this development works. It's a lot of middle-income families here. There's a mason down the street, there's a roofer down the street, all, again, all hard working people. There's a few office workers, not that office workers aren't hard working people, but there's...we're all in the same boat.

In front of house, Italian ice truck goes by

BRYON SMITH: We've been here for 25 years, it's been a, it was a three bedroom house when we bought it. I put an extension on it, it's now a seven bedroom house. It had a bath and a half, now it has two and a half baths. I gotta fix that half a bath cause the water keeps running out that side of the tub. It's terrible.

In front of pool

BRYON SMITH: This is the good life. This is suburbia, yeah. Nothing comes easy, you want something you gotta work for it. I'm not patting myself on the back, but I wanted something and this is what I got. I mean, I'd like a few more things but sometimes you just can't get whatever you ask for, you know, what you want in life. What more can I ask for? I come home, I got a healthy family, basically, decent sized house, decent pool, and having a good time.

At bowling alley

NARRATOR: In a world that seems to be full of snobbery, social climbing, and unfulfilled aspirations, it's possible to be satisfied with your lot. No matter what other people think, no matter what your challenges in life, you can make yourself comfortable surrounded by folks like you.

BOWLER: Bowling really appeals to the guy who's nine to five, manual labor, driving

trucks and things of that nature. And it's just a release, it really is, and that's the beauty part, you can come and for some guys it's one night a week, and you just let it all hang out.

BOWLER ON DECK: Get the hell out of the house.

BOWLER WITH BEER: What, no wife, no kids?

BOWLER ON DECK: It's not that we don't love our wives or anything...[*distracted by game*]

BRYON SMITH: Some guys take it serious, some guys don't take it serious. Obviously I take it very serious. Bowling is my life. In fact my wife listens to bowling on the radio. That's how much she is into bowling.

Bowling alley montage

NARRATOR: Because blue collar life sometimes seems full of confidence and openness, Americans of all classes sometimes like to romanticize it. To them, working people are somehow more authentic, they're the backbone of the nation, the real thing.

JOHN DIIULIO: Middle classes and upper classes don't know whether they want to withdraw from the working class or transform it. That's sort of my view of how middle and upper middle class people view the working class. They don't know whether they want to transform them, and make them middle class, or withdraw from them, romanticize them demonize them. I don't think we've ever quite gotten to the point where we just sort of understand each other.

Waitress at Jimmy's walks through restaurant greeting customers

NARRATOR: If you visit the heart of working class Baltimore, you can still find waitresses who will call you "hon," just like they have for generations. Nowadays, most of the real "hons" have retired on or moved away, but their blue collar spirit lives on, with a twist.

TITLE: Friends in Low Places, Baltimore, MD

Stella Gambino on the street, chatting with people on the street

NARRATOR: Today it's members of the middle class who imitate the big hair world of old Baltimore

STELLA: Oh, man look, it's Jim and Phyllis and Douglas. Hey gang, how are ya doing?

Kelly Conway (aka "Stella Gambino) gets ready in front of a mirror

KELLY CONWAY, aka “Stella Gambino”: When I’m Stella, I feel really cool and really famous like a movie star. It’s not like I just pass by as Stella as just “there she goes.” There’s always another head turn. People really want to know what’s going on.

STELLA: I thought this scarf what sort of Zsa Zsa Gabor. Have to get it way up here. Evening wear.

Stella at the annual Hon Fest

NARRATOR: The height of Baltimore’s working class nostalgia comes at the annual Hon fest where anyone can be blue collar for a day. Big hair required.

BLONDE HON: A Pekinese dog went after my hair. I was watching *Wheel of Fortune*, and that dog, I was sitting on the floor and it just came up to me and went a growling and stuff and trying to get my hair. Luckily I had my Aquanet and I sprayed it.

HON FRIEND: And it was stuck there for, how long?

BLONDE HON: Oh, hour and a half, two hours. Never looked so good.

Hon accent contest, “What time does the Bowling Alley open?”

TEX ANDREWS, college professor: I feel a little uncomfortable about this because half of this neighborhood is still the old neighborhood. The other half is gentrifying, like me. And, this is a little weird. If there were nobody here who was a hon any longer, actual hon, I would feel better about it cause you were sort of, like Elvis is dead, you know, so making fun of him is okay.

Two Hons on stage singing

TEX (off camera): The people who are imitating it are coming from a very vanilla sort of culture. They don’t got no culture so they’ve got to find it someplace else.

NARRATOR: If you think that color and earthiness are missing from your middle class lifestyle and hair spray isn’t your thing, there are other ways to soak up blue collar ambiance.

DAN RODRICKS: I suspect that some people who grew up in the suburbs miss being in touch with what they see as a kind of gritty side of life. I think if you miss that kind of color and atmosphere you seek it out and also it drops you down a class, maybe. Maybe I don’ want to grow up, I’m not happy with the way I grew up affluent in the suburbs. Maybe if I come into the city and hang, you know hang a little bit I’ll be more in touch with life in some way.

Out on the street

BAJA BOY: Oh, music, music!

NARRATOR: For intrepid suburbanites who want to drop down a rung or two and rub elbows with the working class, there are opportunities on every corner.

GUYS: Dougie!!!!!!

NATHAN (off camera): Got about 12, 13 people here and what we do is we like to go to the side bars, the dive bars, the corner bars rather than go to the trendier bars that most of the people in the county of Baltimore would know about.

Inside “dive bar”

NATHAN: Basically we’re a bunch of punk kids to them but we’re trying to relate on their level. It’s something, it’s definitely something.

Ryan talking with man

RYAN CASEY (O.C.): So give me a little history on this joint, man.

BAR OWNER: I’ll be 64 in October, so take away.

RYAN: Nice to see you standing tall at 64. I like that. Still boozing.

BAR OWNER: Well, I don’t drink that much unless I’m with somebody or by myself.

RYAN: There ya go. ‘Unless I’m with somebody or by myself.’ You know, I might have a drink then, too.

NATHAN (off camera): I mean I guess we could be slumming it, you know. Case is a mortgage broker. Danielle’s actually a graduate student. Her boyfriend works for Gatorade. Um, but yeah, I guess we call it “Dive Bar Weekends” or “Dive Bar Parties” for a reason but I mean it is taboo to go into them and say, ‘We’re at a dive bar.’ It doesn’t get - it’s not welcomed. You know if you say, like, ‘We’re on a dive bar crawl.’ You know, but that’s pretty much what we do. But you find more genuine people, I’ve noticed.

Playing shuffle board

RYAN: Is this like Bocce Ball?

MARGE: No.

RYAN: It’s not like Bocce Ball. How so?

MARGE: You don't need to be Italian to play!

RYAN (to MARGE): May I buy you a beer? What's your name?

MARGE: Marge.

RYAN: Marge? You're a Wile E. Coyote, aren't ya?

MARGE: Yeah, I swear.

RYAN: She's a Wile E. Coyote. You guys have a nickname for your pool league?

Corner of the bar

RYAN: This is so much fun because our families tried their best to get out and give us a better generation, and we're all coming back in to enjoy the city the way it originally was.

LEAF-PRINT LADY: 23?? Oh my god! God bless you.

NATHAN: Now who's blessing me.

LEAF-PRINT LADY: My son is that old.

NATHAN: No. You're way too young to have a son that old. You're way too young! There's no way.

NATHAN'S GIRLFRIEND: Is he single?

BALDING WITH BEARD: Guess what. They are not from this bar. You may fool somebody that's watching this show with that, but you will not fool somebody that's sitting in this bar that is from this bar and belongs to this family, because we're not buying it. As far as we're concerned, they're yuppies. And yuppies to us - you want a definition? - they're people that live out of this neighborhood that like to come to this neighborhood and spend their money because they can show their ass and not have to worry about their neighbors seeing them when they're acting like they do when they're not home. That's what a yuppie is.

NATHAN: Love.

LEAF-PRINT LADY: It ain't nothin like love, baby, let me tell you something. There ain't nothing like love.

NATHAN: Makes the world go round.

LEAF-PRINT LADY: Yes, it does. I'm ready whenever you are, Nathan. I'll show you what I got, baby.

RYAN: Two hangers to win. We're gonna go to the other side. We're gonna go the hanger, sister. C'mon give me a little touch. Going to the other side. Look at the hanger. We need the hanger, we need the hanger, baby.

RYAN: There's no reason not to come up and give them a high five and to guarantee them the same courtesies that they expect. You know what I mean? She reminds me of my grandmother, you know. I mean, she's sweet as punch. She's playing shuffle ball, on a Thursday night. How beautiful is that. Total community...

PAUL FUSSELL, author: The reason the working class habits and presentation appeal to upper middle class people is that it's a mode of getting rid of self-consciousness. You just act naturally. That's the illusion, at least, though, of course, if you look at it carefully, you'll see that working class, you know, behavior is full of conventions just as much as upper class behavior. You can't escape them.

DAN RODRICKS: Blue collar life has a lot of pain associated with it, you know there used to be 30,000 guys that worked down at Bethlehem Steel, 30 or 40 years ago. I don't know how many of them there are now, maybe 4 or 5,000 maybe. I know guys that are in their late thirties, early forties hoping to do what their father did— get a good job working in the steel mill and it didn't work out and they weren't quite ready for that. Everything in life had prepared them for the blue collar lifestyle and then they had the shift of a jacket and tie. What? That's going to be me? Two years in a community college, I gotta get a college education? Okay. It took some adjusting there.

Men playing instruments in a garage

NARRATOR: Although America is often portrayed as a nation of strivers, in the blue collar world, there can be real cost for trying to better yourself. In places, like rural Appalachia, some people have different priorities.

The men sing

STAR SMITH: I remember when I was in junior high, my teacher got to yackin about class, you know, and high class people and people in Cadillacs, well Dad had just bought a Cadillac. Man, and mom used to come pick us up at school so we could hurry up and get home to feed all the cattle and everything before it got dark. Well, I'd put a stop to it. I'd say, well, we'd meet her down the road, or just, we'll ride the bus, or whatever.

MARY SMITH: But don't pick me up at school.

STAR: Yeah, cause I was embarrassed that dad had a Cadillac!

Montage of Appalachia images

MARILYN KNISLEY, social worker: I don't think that getting ahead is a value here. And I think that's what—I think that's what is hardest for people to understand is that getting ahead is not the important thing. The most important thing is, uh, staying where you are.

TITLE: Don't Get Above Your Raisin', Washington, DC

Dana Felty on subway car

DANA: I'm standing here, I'm alone, I'm a woman, I'm a rural Kentuckian. I'm not supposed to be here.

NARRATOR: Dana Felty is trying to break away from her working class roots in Kentucky. A year ago she moved to Washington to start her career as a journalist. But in many ways, she's still a small-town girl.

DANA: So how did I get here? Like I'm really happy with my road so far, all the decisions I've made, but I still didn't think I was gonna be here, wearin this suit. Um, you know, what would my family think of me if they saw me here, and happy, and doin ok.

Dana inside Office

DANA: My first week here I had somebody in the office like take a picture of me in front of this window here because I thought, given that you could see the offices across the street, and the buildings and you can't see the tops, that it would be a really—that it would be something to send home, you know, it would be a real view outside this window. Well I did, I had the picture taken, and everybody from the family took every copy that I had.

NARRATOR: For Dana, moving to the city is a passport out of her social class. It's the latest and most important thing to mark her as different from her friends and family.

KELLEY HAMMERS, Dana's mother: When I was your age, I wanted to go to Nashville to eat dinner once. I mean, the reaction was

DANA: So you think you're so hot, you can drive to Nashville just to eat dinner.

KELLEY: Exactly, exactly. It's only, you know, an hour and a half away, you know, but there are restaurants there that we've never seen before. I wanted to go eat dinner, but the reaction was like

DANA: You can't just be happy with like “we have a Red Lobster here.” (Laughs)

Images of Morgantown

ANDREW PORTER, Dana's cousin: Morgantown is the ugliest town I've ever seen in my life. It has eight gas stations, three grocery stores, but—literally I mean there are only eight people out of my class that left town. Eight people. Eight! I mean that's only out of a class of like 98, but whatever, that's like eight people, like, uh, that's a pretty local phenomenon.

DANA: There were three in my class of 155.

ANDREW: Life in a very small rural area does not lend itself to answering a lot of the questions you have.

DANA: Being kind of a loudmouth when you're a kid, and right in front of your whole family lookin around and sayin "This kinda sucks! I don't like this"

ANDREW: In essence, that encapsulates it.

MICHAEL BIRDWELL, historian: For many people in Appalachia, the idea of success is being able to have enough money to be able to go out and buy a fishing boat, you know, if you've got the house paid off. But if somebody aspires to more than that, then the question is why? You know? What's the purpose? What good is it? Is it Christian? You know, and you'll actually even hear somebody say something to that notion that somehow that, that if you go out and try to do something that is seen as respectable from other parts of the world, that you are, that you are somehow becoming corrupt, that you are somehow becoming undone by the greater society.

DANA: Now we're coming up on dad's house, here's dad's garden, there's his corn, there's his tomatoes back there, he's got cabbage, oh golly, there's a bunch of tomatoes. He needs to weed those out. Here's dad's truck, there's Lassie, creative name for a collie. Hey Lassie girl, hey Lassie girl.

NARRATOR: When Dana does visit Kentucky, Dana faces that eternal American question: Can you go home again? And how do you keep from being a stranger with the loved ones you leave behind?

Dana and Father chat on the porch

DANA: I remember telling my dad, that I was planning to go to Antioch College and he just said, "Well, what's the school colors?" I was like, "I don't think they have any, Dad." He was like, "Well, what's the mascot?" I was like, "I don't think they got one." So he was quiet for a while. And he just said, "Well, they ain't gonna be as good to ya as they will down here." I think that at the core of a lot of my family it really felt like I was telling them that I was rejecting them and I was rejecting my home, and everything that had been just the essence of who we were.

Dana and Father chat about the garden

DANA: He doesn't ask me about my life. I don't know, maybe he thinks I wouldn't be able to explain it to him or something...

Dana and Father chat

DANA: When I come home, I consciously change my personality. But I think that if I just really opened up and told, you know, my family and my old friends here all of my interests, all the really crazy interests that I have, that make up the person that I've learned since I've left here, I am, I think, um, they would interpret that to be gettin above my raisin.'

At a square dance

MICHAEL BIRDWELL: Gettin above your raisin' is a phrase you hear all the time. I've heard it all my life. And the notion is that you want to change social classes. Most people aren't gonna do that. You try to change social classes, there's this feeling that you're forsaking the family, you're forsaking place, you're forgetting where you came from, that you're gettin' above your raisin'. And here's this real fear that if you leave, that you'll become ashamed of where you came from.

ANDREW: My aunt Barbara was my 7th grade math teacher. And she said, you know, that the kids would work the hardest with, the kids we put the most effort in, the ones we really see that will have potential to do well, all we're doin' is sticking a stamp on 'em and as soon as they get outta school they're gone. And they never come back. And what we're stuck with are the people who take care of us. The people who will run the community are the people who we spent the least psychic energy on, the least effort to build, into citizens, I guess model citizens or whatever.

Dana at a dance in Morgantown talking to a local

DANA: We, like, take all the like great projects that journalists are doin and tell other journalists about it and like put out a newsletter, once a quarter. Yeah, it's alright, I'd rather be writing. You know what I'm talkin about. Do you write at all? Granny was tellin me you're a big writer.

BILL BEAR: I've been put in my place a few times. And I've put people in their place a few times. Don't forget where you came from, you know. Your roots are very important. And your roots is who you are. Yeah, maybe you've worked a little bit higher, maybe you got a little bit of college, maybe you've done this, but don't forget who you are. You know?

DANA: I think I got used to being uncomfortable, perpetually not in my niche, when I decided to leave here for college. Get used to that feeling. Never really a city girl or a country girl, never really fit in to either.

Dana on subway car

[End of Dana Felty section]

TITLE: Part 4/ Belonging: Understanding the Rules of the Game

Girls playing a CD in their car, driving

Montages of teenagers and high school

BLUE SHIRT: Anderson isn't like, the richest school, but it's up there. Definitely a more preppie and a richer school.

PREPS AROUND TABLE: Rich white boys, snobs, preppie, WASPy, snobby, WASPy.

NICKY (*sitting in back of car*): Snobby, rich, preppie kids.

EAST SIDE KIDS: Anderson is mostly white. Anderson is nothing but Anglos, really, rich Anglos...

BRITTANI: I mean, everybody's intimidated by us. It's like, oh my god she goes to Anderson—I have to get away. I mean it's eehhhhh...

BLUE SHIRT: Me and Katie are definitely not the highest class, but, just cause it's because of our friends, we're up there.

NARRATOR: The playgrounds of the rich and famous are hardly the only areas where the battles of class are joined. In every town, big or small, there's a place where social divisions are cast at an early age and where the drama of who's in and who's out is performed on a daily basis. It's called high school.

CURTIS POWELL, teacher: If you look at the parking lots, the student parking lot is a lot nicer than the faculty parking lot. It's frustrating because I went to school twenty years and they're driving off in a car that costs more than I make a year. Uh, that's tough. It's hard sometimes to rely on the intrinsic value of what I do to be satisfied when the kid drives off in the Jaguar.

Shots of high schoolers in school parking lot

JULIE: I have a Grand Cherokee. My parents bought it for me. I pay for my gas.

HILLARY: And, I have a Rav4.

Q: Did you buy it or did your parents buy it for you?

HILLARY: Un-uh, my parents...

(Girls all giggle)

KATIE: I have a Tahoe. My parents bought it for me.

CARLY: I have an Eclipse Spider, but my parents bought it for me. I pay for my gas.

TITLE: Most Likely To Succeed, Austin TX

Teenagers in the hall at school

LISA: You wanna feel accepted, you wanna have a place to sit at lunch, you wanna have a group of people to go out with. Maybe one percent of the people—or maybe nobody goes to school just to learn. You go to school to socialize, to learn who you really are, to become friends with people that will hopefully be lifetime friends. I don't think anyone goes to school just to learn.

RACHEL: Everybody's really close-minded about who they will and will not associate with, and if you're not wearing these clothes, and driving these cars, and if you don't have mommy and daddy's credit card and your own little Structure card, then you can't hang out with us, you know? That kinda thing.

KIM: Very, very impressionable people. One person does something, they all do it. I mean, we thank god there are no cliffs here. This school would be empty. (*Her friends laugh*) I'm so cynical today.

TITLE: Cliques

MATT (Wall Boy): There's jocks, and preps, which are kind of interchangeable. Jocks are, I guess the only real distinction is if you're football you're a jock, if you're baseball, it's a prep.

GIRL: There's the freaks, or the goths.

GIRLS: Preppies, skaters, the Mexicans, the jocks.

HEATHER: There's the loners. That's like a group of five people that everybody's kinda pushed to the point where they would rather just not hang out with anybody.

RICKY: The theater type people, the artsy type people, the nerds, the band nerds...

STUART: Drama queens, people who like to throw shit at me at lunch.

TWO BLONDS: You have the baseball clique, the football clique...

Q: So are you all athletes?

JOCKS: Yeah...

Q: What sports to you play?

JOCKS: Basketball, basketball, basketball, basketball

RACHEL: We are really clique-ish. I mean I guess there are gonna be cliques anywhere, like at any high school, but it just seems like it's worse at a few, and we happen to be one of them.

HILLARY: It's kind of like if you're not part of a clique, it's like, I don't know, it's like, what do they even do, you know?

CARLY: Yeah, I don't even know what they... (laughs)

HILLARY: Like...

TITLE: Intruders

Students in the cafeteria at lunch time

NICKY: If you sit at the wrong table, that's like a death wish.

AUDREY: It's definitely a mine field here. If you say the wrong thing or look the wrong way or give the wrong look to a person, you're in for a hell of a lot for the rest of the year.

NICKY: Especially our bussed-in kids. You know how we were talking about how they have... they feel like they have to come to school kind of like armor on 'em. If you even look at them the wrong way they kinda freak out about that.

SODA GIRL (*condescendingly pointing at the boy*): That's what you call ghetto children; that's what they are.

NICKY: Because they're loud...

AUDREY: They care more about themselves than their mothers. I mean, they would do something - if it's selling drugs, as long as it makes them look hard, as long as it makes them look tough, as long as everyone else is afraid of 'em. They will talk back to their

mothers...

SODA GIRL: I laugh at them, personally.

AUDREY: And it's hilarious because they're so disrespectful you just sit there and think, "You're not gonna be anywhere in five years from now. You're gonna be sittin there beggin me for a job."

IRENE: They automatically think come from broken homes or something, that we don't know what we're talking about. And when it comes to it, you have more people on the East Side who are more respectable and not as snottish as you have some white kids who will sit there and, you know, they snub their nose at you because they think they're better than you, you know. And that ain't gonna work...

GIRL: They tried to change my subject saying no its not even like that they're trying to be talking different and saying that its not like that and trying to explain that they're not like that.

AREZO: Like in the hallway, they be like walking and just like push, just like bump into you. Don't even say, "Excuse me," and you're like, "Excuse you," but they won't say nothing.

BRITTANI: It's the way they dress. I mean I hate to say it but I mean the way they walk and I know you're not supposed to judge a book by its cover but you really do and if they have the walk and they dress...

RACHEL: And they "talk the talk"

BRITTANI: Right. "Yo, homey, wassup??!!"

IRENE: We have to, you know...

AREZO: We have to represent.

IRENE: We have to let them know that we are here, and then like, we have no problem showing off - we are individuals - and if we don't them other kids are just gonna straight up and just punk us for no reason cuz they think they can.

TITLE: Outsiders

Students outside the school

MIA: Anderson, it's like a bag of jelly beans. You put them in all the different colors, you know, you've got your red and your blue and your green. But then you have those ones that manufactured wrong, they've got all those weird colors.

LILLY: Which is us.

MIA: That's us.

LILLY (VO): I don't dress with baggy jeans and baggy shirts so the Hispanics don't like me. And the white people don't know what to make of me. They're like, hm, she's funny. She's funny looking. At times it's lonely, but you get to the point where you really don't care and you don't mind being by yourself. I can go to the library and sit there and read a magazine and it won't bother me that I have no friends around me. Other people they're not like me and they're like oh my god, I wonder if this person likes me and they're all self conscious and they're all freaking out because people don't like them, and that's just not me.

RICKY: We tend to be very judgmental toward them because I guess I feel that they don't frequently try to transcend what they see. They don't try to—they don't try to look beneath the surface.

STUART: Well you know, there's a mutual hatred almost. Not that extreme.

RICKY: I wouldn't call it hatred

STUART: Not really hatred

MATT: More like repulsion, bitterness.

STUART: Yeah, there is repulsion, just cause.

RICKY: And there is a social status. I mean, if you have money you're automatically like connotated with a high class - you're a better person because you have that money, which is a lot of times not necessarily true.

Popular blonde girl enters

BLONDE: I don't think money has anything to do with it, honestly.

REDHEAD: I mean, seriously, y'all might see us differently.

BLONDE: Y'all might see it differently...

BLONDE: Y'all probably think that we're snobby

STUART: No, not really. You're stupid.

BLONDE: Why do you think we're stupid?

STUART: I'm kidding. Sarcasm.

BLONDE: See, like you're being rude to me, and you don't even know me.

STUART: No, that's called being sardonic. SAT word.

BRITTANI: I think the dorks are, like, awesome. I totally respect Bill Gates, you know, seriously, he's so rich. I mean, I'm so serious. I'm so serious. Those dorks are gonna be rich. I think that is so awesome...

TITLE: Insiders

Cut to teenagers at an outdoor bonfire

DAVE WILLIAMS, teacher: There is certainly an in-group, out-group dynamic. You're a part of the in-group, then life is a bowl of cherries. I hate to use the word superiority, but there is something about an economic advantage that they definitely have a grasp on. It may not be something they're consciously aware of, but they definitely understand that the preppie-ness, their economic background does provide them with advantages that not every student that attends this school possesses.

Teenagers at picnic table

PREP WITH HAT: I've been to Europe twice, uh, mostly to play golf. My dad and I travel to play golf all over the nation, and uh, I mean, a lot of it's stuff that he goes on, that business associates hook us up with like the travel amenities and all, the connections. Most everyone in our group is pretty well off.

BOY AT LEFT, FRONT: You see people who are all like you, so, you just naturally have more in common.

HAT BOY: Just by outward appearance alone, because if you look around, just about everyone here has something from Abercrombie & Fitch on, and I mean, but we all have different opinions about things and we're all very different, like in our beliefs and everything, but there's one central quality, and that's like, pretty much our outward appearance.

Cut to group of kids standing in a large circle, clapping, chanting, singing, playing some sort of game in the backyard.

MIDDLE, LEFT BOY: WASPy, WASPy, white, Anglo-Saxon Protestant, just that that's what they label us, I guess. Like looking around the group I know a lot of people fit that description.

Continue with circle game.

NICKI: The majority population is preps. But if you're not part of it, you can't become a part of it. And I don't really know how to define how you become part of the preps. It's

kinda like they grew up together. Their moms and dads went to school together, college together, or they're doctors together, or, yeah, you went to elementary together, all the way up to high school, and you can't just all of a sudden walk in and you're a prep, you're a part of them.

GIRL IN RED & GIRL RIGHT OF HER: You see, did you see them back there? Those are preps. Right there. Those. You see that?

BOY IN PLAID: Yeah, they think they're like higher than us and you know.

RIGHT OF RED GIRL: Yeah that's what I'm saying. Like if we go over there they think they'll be like, what are you doing over here, you know? If you don't wear their type of clothes, you're weird, I guess.

CARLY: Well other kids will probably say "They're snobby." I mean, I don't know, cause we stick together, we don't really hang out with other people, we don't try to, not that, I don't really want to, I mean these are my best friends and I'm pretty happy.

KATIE: I mean, we're pretty exclusive.

JULIE: People get jealous and I understand, I would be too. It just happens to be that I'm lucky. My parents want to treat me to these kind of things.

HILLARY: I think they're jealous too, though because they can look at us and they can see that there's so much too us, it's not just, you know that we're fun and we have nice cars.

LINDSAY: I'm not saying I choose my friends because some have a lot of money and some don't, but I know all these girls here live in the exact same type of neighborhood I do, have, you know, nice cars, nice clothes, you know, you know, just we're all from the same social status, and that's—I would totally accept someone who wasn't the same as me financially, but that's just how it has been, so far.

TITLE: Hopes & Fears

Cheerleaders doing cheer

EMILY: When I step back and look at how I envision my life to be, later on, it's, it just requires a lot of money.

LILLY: I hope that life is not like Anderson, but at the same time, I think that it is.

MIA: It is, yeah.

LILLY: And it's really sad so I'm just hoping that when I go to college—they say that

high school are the best years of your life. I hope they're wrong because I don't have much to look forward to.

JULIE: I think I'll probably go into advertising, communications.

HILLARY: I think I'm gonna be a psychologist.

KATIE: Yeah, I wanna work with children, either be a teacher or like a psychiatrist or anything like that.

CARLY: I wanna be a psychologist or a lawyer, I'm not sure. But something—I wanna work with people.

AREZO: I wanna own my own hair salon, all that stuff.

TINO: I wanted to be lawyer, but I don't think I'll get to be that. That's too much.

IRENE: I wanna be happy when I grow up. I don't wanna be like other people who sit there and they're not happy with the jobs they have, you know. I don't even want a job career, I just wanna be me, ya know?

Cut to rally inside gym with hundreds of students standing and sitting around singing.

BRITTANI: OK, I have a goal. My goal is to get all this money, and then I could come to our 20 year reunion, in like a limo, \$1000 shoes, and everything else, and then they come in like rags. I think that would be so hilarious.

RACHEL: The thing is that's how I was feeling about it too, like the same thing, not exactly the same dreams, but you know, just the fact that those people, they've got so much handed to them that like I said they're gonna have a hard time on their own. But then, like, my sister was looking at it, and it seems like the people in high school that were the ones that were getting everything handed to them, the ones that everybody, just the popular whatever people, they're the people still doing well because mommy and daddy are pulling out their wallets and pulling out as much money as the need to, and I mean it seems so unfair that those are the people that make it but they really are.

LILLY: My mom has always told me, "Be realistic. Be realistic in what you want. Just don't go out there and be like, 'Oh, I dream of being rich and famous and having all these things. Cuz if you're like in the lower class, a miracle will help you.' Like, miracles don't happen in real life. So just keep your head on your shoulders, and you will be fine, and you can achieve really what you want."

Cut to shot of students' arms waving at pep rally, hands clasped in unity and waving back

and forth to the beat of the Cake song which is playing again. “Aw yeah...” Fade out.

TOM SMITH, city councilman: The way class works itself out, say in high school for me, was the cool kids went to a restaurant for lunch. Well I wanted to be part of that. The problem was, I didn't have enough lunch money. And so while my friends were having hamburgers, I was having a waffle. And I disguised it, “Oh yeah, I like waffles, I don't want a hamburger.” But I was dying to have a hamburger. But hamburgers were 79 cents and I had 50 cents so, you know. I was happy to have a waffle and be with the cool kids. Never, of course, being cool. I mean, that was the reality. I was cool compared to those underneath me in the social strata, but among that group I was never a part of that. It really was a charade in many ways. And it was a painful one. And it's probably no accident I don't live in that town.

[End of Anderson High School section]

Montage of still photos of various types of people from various social classes

Middle class family in front of house

COURI HAY: A lot of it has to do with being born in the right house. So, sometimes if somebody lives in the big house on the hill and somebody else is living down in the valley in a smaller house, perhaps they're a little resentful or jealous and perhaps they're just communists. I don't know. Maybe they just want to like, you know. I mean, this is America. It's about free enterprise. It is not Russia. It is not China.

Montage of different families in front of their homes

DAN RODRICKS: I do have this thought as I see a sixty or seventy thousand dollar car go by, say what's the point of that? What is the point of that? Why aren't we all driving, you know, fifteen thousand dollar Toyotas and putting our money towards something else. I have those thoughts. Is that being prejudiced towards rich people? Do I begrudge them their money. I just think we flaunt this stuff in America.

Image of people at a wedding inside a posh carriage

STANLEY CROUCH Americans don't want to believe that it's impossible for them to get beyond where they are. What you want to believe is that it's a turnstile. It's the kind of thing, when you're at the merry-go-round as a kid and you first find out that the brass ring is held in that little slot very tightly. At first you think that you're just going to stick your finger in there and just pull it out. No that's not how that works. It's there. It's within reach but it's not as easy to get as you think it is.

Seniors playing bocce ball

BARBARA EHRENREICH: I think we all lose something when we are all divided. I

don't want to be stuck in an upper middle class ghetto with all my friends being the same sort of people. And smug about where we've gotten to or something. I feel deprived to live in a society that is so segregated by class.

Man belly-flopping into mud pit

African American debutantes with umbrellas

High class man in red coat on horse

Tammy Crabtree walking to work

End credits begin

ROBERT A.M. STERN, architect: The old money is still here and there's more money. There's more money in this country than there was twenty years ago. It's astonishing. Is there any more taste? Any more class?

More end credits

JOE QUEENAN: Things like Starbucks, I just don't think that you should have to pay that much money for a cup of coffee. I think it's too expensive to have to pay that much money for that experience. If it was like, a dollar ninety-five, I would feel like oh, I'm in Venice. that's great. But I mean, four dollars-- they should give you a little bit of plutonium with it to make it worth your while.

More end credits

LANG PHIPPS: If the Spanish maid brings in her boyfriend and he's drunk and he pisses in the driveway or something... That's uncomfortable. Like, how do you deal with that. Um, that's not a particularly good example because WASPs piss in driveways all the time, but...

More end credits

BILL BEAR (off camera): I got some more things I wanna say about the yuppies. How I really feel, you know.

Final credit

[END OF PROGRAM]