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ABOUT THE FILM



Film Synopsis

At San Francisco's Lowell High School, the seniors are stressed out. As they prepare for the emotionally draining college application process, students are keenly aware of the intense competition for the few open spots in their dream colleges. They scrutinize how every element of their application, from their classes to their extracurricular activities to their racial identities, might be read by admission officers. At Lowell—where cool kids are nerds, nearly everyone has an amazing talent, and the majority of the student body is Asian American—the things that usually make a person stand out can feel not good enough, even commonplace.

With humor and heart, director Debbie Lum takes us to the reality of the American college application process and the intersection of class, race, and educational opportunity as experienced by high school seniors living through it. *Try Harder!* is a portrait of young adults in the most diverse American generation ever as they navigate a quintessential rite of passage and make it their own.

How to Watch the Film

Indie Lens Pop-Up Screenings:

April 2–May 15, 2022

Independent Lens Broadcast Premiere ([check local listings](#)):

Monday, May 2, 2022

Stream online at video.pbs.org:

May 2–May 15, 2022

ABOUT THE FILM

Screening Objectives

Your community screening events for *Try Harder!* are an opportunity to bring youth, parents, and educators together to discuss and reflect on how the pressures of high school and the college admissions process are impacting American children from a diversity of backgrounds. While the school featured in the film is located in the San Francisco Bay Area, many students at public and private high schools in your region will surely relate to the feelings of stress and anxiety that Lowell students experience, especially during an academic year made more difficult by the pandemic. They may also relate to peer, family, and societal pressures to be high-achieving and struggle with racial stereotypes that permeate the education system. We hope your screening event will meet the following impact objectives for the film:

- Promote student mental health and share tools that can help students, parents, and educators cope in high-pressure environments.
- Support students in defining their paths, values, and personal understanding of success after high school.
- Provide a platform for underrepresented voices by increasing the visibility of stories from people identifying as Asian American, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and/or people of color.
- Encourage understanding and solidarity across racial groups when it comes to education and opportunity, and challenge racial stereotypes that affect student self-esteem and mental health.
- Bridge intergenerational and intercultural gaps between students and their parents, spotlighting immigrant communities.

Relevant Themes

- Achievement
- Anxiety and stress
- College and college admissions
- Coming of age
- Diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging
- Education
- APIDA (Asian Pacific Islander Desi American) and BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and people of color) identity
- Mental health and self esteem
- Parenting
- Stereotypes

Potential Audiences

- Middle school, high school, and college and graduate students, especially medical students
- Parents, grandparents, and guardians
- High school and college educators
- High school counselors and college advisors
- Parent, teacher, and student associations
- Mentors and tutoring centers
- College admissions officers
- Psychologists, psychiatrists, and mental health providers

“The whole, ‘You have to be successful in high school, you have to be successful in college, you have to get a good job that pays a lot of money,’ I feel like it leaves a really important thing out, and I think that’s happiness.”

— Ian, Lowell High School Student, *Try Harder!*

ABOUT INDIE LENS POP-UP



Indie Lens Pop-Up is a neighborhood series that brings people together for in-person and virtual film screenings and community-driven conversations. Featuring documentaries seen on PBS's *Independent Lens*, Indie Lens Pop-Up draws local residents, leaders, and organizations together to discuss what matters most, from newsworthy topics and social issues to family and community relationships. Make friends, share stories, and join the conversation at an Indie Lens Pop-Up screening: pbs.org/indielenspopup.

FROM THE FILMMAKER



The students of Lowell High School captured my heart. Initially, I planned to explore the topic of elite college admissions through the perspective of mothers and specifically investigate the stereotype of the “tiger mother”—the so-called Asian mother who pushes hard for her children’s academic achievement by any means necessary.

I had just finished my last documentary, *Seeking Asian Female*, which explores stereotypes and the fetishization of Asian women, and was going through the process of getting my daughter into preschool. Around me, parents, especially moms, were stressing out about what they could do to set their 3-year-old on a path that would lead to admission into an elite college, especially Harvard. With ITVS Diversity Development Funding and a research and development grant from California Humanities, I set off on a path to make *My Tiger Mom*, filming mothers, principals, psychologists, and college advisors—and then discovered LSRP, the Lowell Science Research Program, where kids as young as 14 do graduate level science research at the world-renowned UCSF medical research labs. There, I was introduced to the community of Lowell High School.

At Lowell High School, the students, faculty and administration opened their doors to us. **Their outpouring of thoughts and feelings about college acceptance, as if it were (and at times it is) a life or death matter, struck me.** I realized I had to switch gears and tell the story of how to get into a top American college from the perspective of today’s high school students.

In all the headline-grabbing reports on the insanity of the college admissions process, the young people who are at the heart of the story seem to be the last ones given a voice. The voices of Asian American students are particularly invisible, despite Asian Americans being spotlighted in the media due to the ongoing lawsuit alleging anti-Asian discrimination practices in Harvard admissions. For decades, Lowell High School has had a majority Asian American



and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander student body. But although this iconic San Francisco institution, founded in 1856, is the oldest public high school west of the Mississippi River, it had never had a feature movie made about it. I couldn’t help thinking that perhaps this was because of the historic under-representation of Asian American stories in media and film.

So I set out to ask Lowell’s student body what they had to say about the college admissions process. What does it mean for Asian American students to be pressured by high-priced college counselors to “appear less Asian” in order to improve their chances of being accepted into any elite college? What does it mean for Black students who encounter stereotypes that imply that they don’t measure up academically? **What does it mean for teens as they enter young adulthood to see the college journey as one that will most likely lead to failure?** Studies show that stress and anxiety levels have gone through the roof for high school and college-aged students. **What does this mean for our society’s future leaders?**

I’ve dedicated my filmmaking career to telling marginalized stories. I’m particularly drawn to original, untold, authentic stories, and this story really resonated with me.

—Debbie Lum, Director and Producer, *Try Harder!*

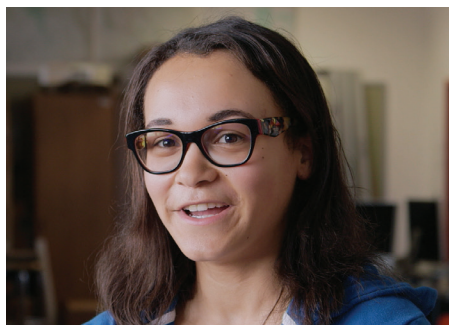
WHERE ARE THEY NOW



Alvan is a dabmaster, an aspiring surgeon, and a son of Taiwanese and Chinese immigrants. At Lowell High School, he was the class clown—he was also selected to be an intern for the UCSF Lowell Science Research Program, in which kids as young as 14 do graduate-level medical research at the UCSF's world-renowned medical research labs.

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Alvan graduated UC Berkeley with a BS in biology. He is an emergency medical technician and is working his way toward medical school.



Rachael is a biracial African American and white student who is a PSAT whiz and an aspiring writer. While in high school, she was an editor for *The Lowell*, the school paper, and lived with her single mother, an African American woman with roots in Huntsville, Texas.

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Rachael continued her passion for writing while attending Brown University, with a column in the *Brown Daily Herald*. She graduated from Brown University with a BS in biology and is currently applying to medical schools.



Ian was Lowell's resident satirist and always ready with a witty remark. Ian's parents also attended Lowell, and his ancestors came from China to California in the 1800s. While in high school, he founded the Lowell Investment Club, played volleyball, and wrote for the student paper, *The Lowell*.

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

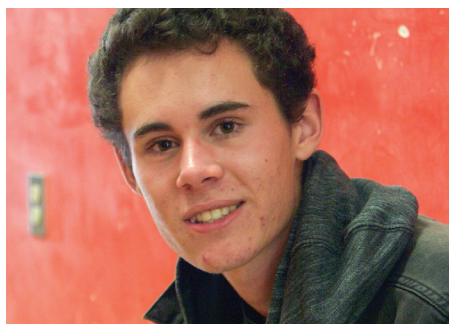
Ian graduated from Emory University with a BBA in strategy and management consulting, information systems and operations management and minors in economics and political science. He is currently a teacher with Teach for America in Atlanta, Georgia.



Gifted in math and physics, **Jonathan**, who was class president or student body president all 4 years of high school, was idolized as the highest-achieving student at Lowell. He is also an accomplished violinist and pianist.

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Jonathan graduated from Harvard University with a BS in math and physics. He's now earning his Masters at Harvard in computer science.



Shea is a white student who never regretted the sacrifices he made to attend Lowell High School. He feels that he thrived in a majority Asian American high school, cultivating a great passion for physics, and he plans to become a climate leader.

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Shea is now a senior at Stanford University, just an hour south of San Francisco.



Sophia was captain of her tennis club, editor of the school paper, and ice cream scooper who rarely flinched under pressure.

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Sophia graduated from UCLA with a BA in business and managerial economics and a minor in global studies, environmental systems, and society. She works at a climate change startup and is also a freelance writer.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION



Help establish context for the film by reviewing some background information with your event partners and/or guests before the screening.

- **Youth mental health is in a state of emergency.** The U.S. Surgeon General recently announced that the current youth mental health crisis in the United States is caused not only by the COVID-19 pandemic, but also by mental health challenges that existed long before the pandemic, such as toxic levels of pressure and competition. For Asian Americans, the exponential rise in anti-Asian hate is yet another component.
hhs.gov/about/news/2021/12/07/us-surgeon-general-issues-advisory-on-youth-mental-health-crisis-further-exposed-by-covid-19-pandemic.html; acttochange.org/mental-health-in-the-aanhpi-community/1-2/
- Challenge Success, a nonprofit organization affiliated with Stanford University, surveyed 250,000 middle and high school students nationwide and found that **school is a major source of stress**. Overall, 95 percent reported feeling sleep deprived, and 77 percent said that they experienced stress-related health symptoms. Nearly two-thirds said that they are constantly worried about academics or that their school workload is a major source of stress. Furthermore, a 2020 study found that the **pressure to excel is now among the top four high-risk factors for adolescent mental health**, along with exposure to poverty, trauma, and discrimination.
[Source: challengesuccess.org](https://challengesuccess.org); psycnet.apa.org/record/2019-65949-00; washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/2019/09/26/students-high-achieving-schools-are-now-named-an-at-risk-group/
- **Mental health concerns in high school students are common.** In any given year, up to one in five kids living in the United States shows signs or symptoms of a mental health disorder, including depression, anxiety, and substance abuse. Most children, nearly 80 percent, do not have access to the mental health services they need.
[Source: npr.org/sections/ed/2016/08/31/464727159/mental-health-in-schools-a-hidden-crisis-affecting-millions-of-students](https://www.npr.org/sections/ed/2016/08/31/464727159/mental-health-in-schools-a-hidden-crisis-affecting-millions-of-students)
- In nearly all states, **schools are under-resourced when it comes to student mental health services**. The National Association of School Psychologists recommends one professional for every 500 students—only Maine meets that standard. A handful of states have tried providing more flexibility for students. For example, Arizona, Colorado, Connecticut, Illinois, Maine, Nevada, Oregon, and Virginia implemented laws that allow students to miss a certain number of school days for mental health reasons.
[Source: pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/blogs/stateline/2021/11/08/covid-harmed-kids-mental-health-and-schools-are-feeling-it](https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/blogs/stateline/2021/11/08/covid-harmed-kids-mental-health-and-schools-are-feeling-it)

BACKGROUND INFORMATION



- **People who face discrimination are more likely to have mental health challenges, including anxiety, depression, and sleep deprivation, than those who do not.** The American Academy of Pediatrics issued a policy statement that linked the impact of racism to chronic stress and mental health problems in children and adolescents. They stated that racism is a core social determinant of health.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, politicians and others have been scapegoating entire ethnic groups for causing the pandemic. According to Act for Change, a nonprofit dedicated to ending bullying, eight out of 10 Asian American youths have been bullied in-person or online, and reports of discrimination and **hate crimes against members of Asian American (AA) and Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander (NHPI) communities have increased.** At the same time, AA & NHPI communities have the lowest help-seeking rate of any racial/ethnic group.

Sources: publications.aap.org/pediatrics/article/144/2/e20191765/38466/The-Impact-of-Racism-on-Child-and-Adolescent; acttochange.org/bullyingreport; acttochange.org/mental-health-in-the-aanhpi-community/1-2/

- Since 2010, according to **college enrollment and student demographic statistics**, enrollment in undergraduate school among students identifying themselves as Black or African American has decreased by nearly 13 percent. At the same time, enrollment of students identifying with more than one racial classification has increased year over year since 2010 (data are not available for prior years), and they now represent roughly 4 percent of all students. In ethnic groups, the fastest-growing rate of enrollment among ethnic groups—more than 47 percent since 2010—is students who identify as Hispanic or Latinx.

Source: educationdata.org/college-enrollment-statistics

- The **“model minority” myth** is a stereotype that portrays people of Asian heritage as highly successful, particularly in academics, in contrast to other racial groups. This problematic stereotype is used as evidence to undermine the role that systemic racism plays in the struggles of other ethnic minorities in the United States. It pits people of color against each other, and belief in the myth perpetuates anti-Black racism. Furthermore, the myth ignores the diverse experiences and realities of Asian Americans and lumps them into a singular narrative. It creates excessive pressure for Asian Americans to excel and live up to the stereotype of success, exacerbating worsening mental health conditions in AA & NHPI communities.

Source: npr.org/2021/05/25/999874296/6-charts-that-dismantle-the-trope-of-asian-americans-as-a-model-minority

- **It is harder to gain admission to college** than ever before, especially to Ivy League schools. For example, in 2019, Yale had an admission rate of approximately 6 percent—or about 2,200 students out of 36,843 applicants. At the University of Southern California, 11 percent of applicants were accepted in 2019, approximately 7,260 students out of 66,000 applicants. Admission rates are among the criteria that annual college surveys use to rank schools, and exclusivity can enhance a school's ranking by making it seem highly desirable. There is growing criticism of both the college admission system and the ranking system.

Source: nytimes.com/2019/03/29/us/college-admissions-rates.html

DISCUSSING THE FILM



An audience discussion with a facilitator or guest speakers is a popular way to engage your local community in a conversation inspired by the film. These suggested tips and questions will help you plan your discussion.

Framing the Conversation

Try Harder! beautifully presents both the joy and playfulness of Lowell students and their families alongside the effects of the pressure of attending high school. People who attend your screening event will have had varied and multilayered experiences in high school as well. Be mindful of this, and take care not to make assumptions about anyone's experiences based on the stories in the film. Also be aware that the film may bring up difficult emotions. Many high school graduates have described a feeling similar to post-traumatic stress when thinking about the stress of academics. Be thoughtful about creating a caring and restorative atmosphere for your guests by inviting counselors, wellness facilitators, and/or mentors to your event or by offering refreshments and breaks.

Your event is an opportunity to provide a platform for underrepresented voices. Reach out to Asian American, Pacific Islander, Black, Indigenous, people of color, and immigrant communities to talk about their experiences within the education system, their mental health, and their definition of personal success.

The themes of race and education may bring up topics that are trending right now in the United States. Topics such as

affirmative action and selective high school admissions can evoke debates about education equity and racism in America. In these conversations, be mindful about who is speaking and allow people who have been most affected by racism to lead the conversation. Offer tools for those who have been historically silenced to help them participate. Prepare a few basic facilitation tactics to help your group navigate the conversation:

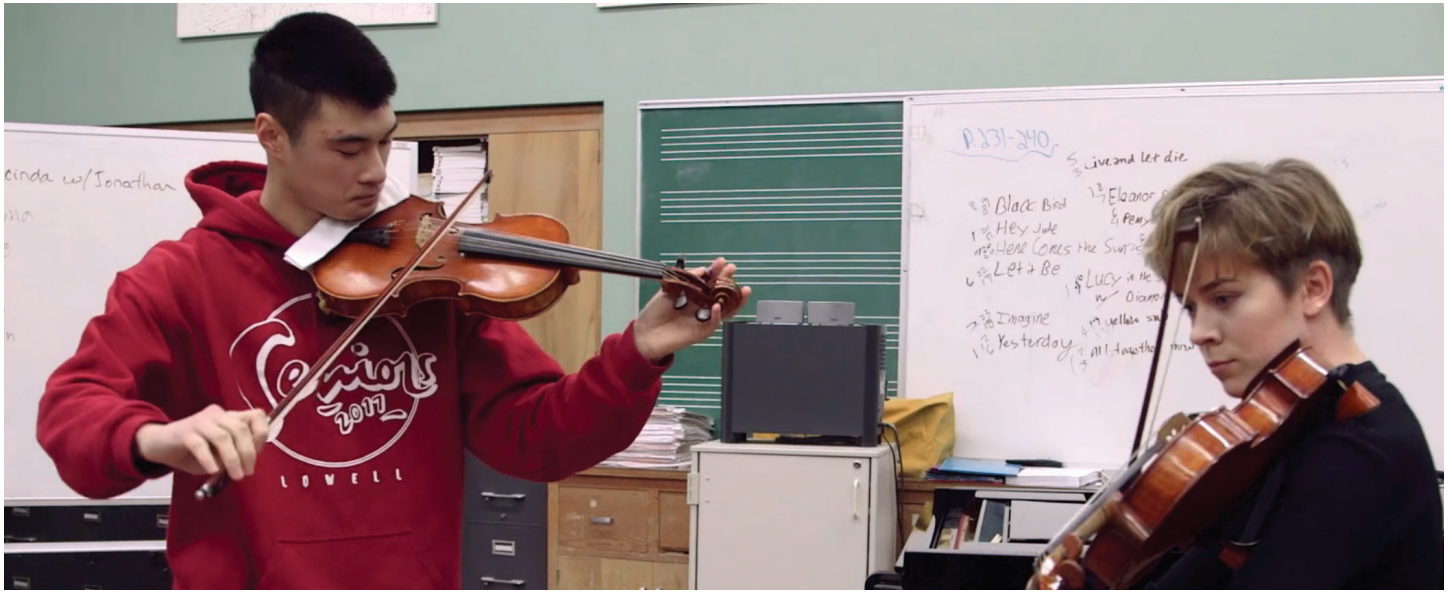
- Encourage people to speak from personal experience by using “I” statements, such as “I think” or “I feel.”
- Ask your audience to try using people-first language ([see here](#)) and, when in doubt, to ask a question about how to respectfully refer to someone else in the group.
- Ask people to “step up and step back,” that is, to have courage in speaking their opinion, but also to be reflective of how much space they are taking up in the conversation. Ask people not to interrupt others when they are speaking.
- Look for common ground and common values that emerge from the conversation. Pointing these out can help bring the audience back together if opinions dramatically diverge.

DISCUSSING THE FILM

You could invite a moderator to pose questions to the audience and facilitate a conversation or arrange for a group of guest speakers with relevant experience to respond to the questions. Here are some suggested discussion prompts.

1. What were your responses watching *Try Harder!*? How did you feel watching the film?
2. Could you relate to the stories of Lowell students, parents, teachers, or counselors? If so, whom and how?
3. What have been your major stressors while growing up? How did you cope with rejection and failure?
4. How did this stress affect you? How did you cope?
5. What school resources are available for students dealing with mental health disorders, such as anxiety, depression, or substance abuse?
6. Do you think students have enough mental health resources in school? Why or why not? What resources or support system would you like to see?
7. Shea struggled, often without having a family support system. Alvan and his mother sometimes had differing viewpoints on the college application process. Sophia balanced school, extracurricular activities, and a job. *Try Harder!* shows us the often invisible lives of students outside the classroom. How can we acknowledge and support these aspects of students' lives?
8. What needs to change in the education system to create more supportive environments for students?
9. What is the most stressful aspect about college admissions in your state? What should change, if anything?
10. What does college represent for the students and the parents in the film? What does college mean to you and your family?
11. For students, do you share the same goals as your parents in terms of college and high school success? And vice versa? Please explain.
12. Many of the students at Lowell felt that attending a private or out-of-state university was essential to achieving their dreams. How can we create conversations that encourage students to pursue admissions opportunities that fit their individual needs (interests, finances, etc.) rather than checking prestige-influenced boxes?
13. How do you think racial stereotypes affect a child's self-esteem? How did this show up in the film?
14. Rachael felt that other students saw her admission to an Ivy League school as being largely due to her racial identity. What can we do to cultivate a community in which every student feels valued, supported, and welcomed?
15. What is needed to build more racial solidarity across groups? What have you seen that is working?
16. Lowell's student body is largely Asian American. Too often AA & NHPI students are put into one large, monolithic group yet they represent a multitude of individual and unique backgrounds. How can we better understand how diverse AA & NHPI students are and how to be culturally sensitive and aware of their needs?
17. How has the film deepened your understanding of the perspectives of Asian American students?
18. What factors are important to your family identity? How does education influence your family identity?
19. What factors influenced the Lowell parents' attitudes toward their children's education?
20. What role does happiness play in the college search for students? What are some ways in which we can further this conversation about emphasizing joy and contentment in selecting a college?
21. What advice would you give to your high school self?

POTENTIAL PARTNERS



Inviting groups of students, parents, educators and/or advocates to partner on your event will make for a dynamic conversation and help you reach more people. Partners can help you design the event, participate as speakers, and promote the event. In exchange, you can promote their work through your outreach channels. We recommend about two to three strong partners who will help you build your event.

- Ask **students, alumni, and their parents** from high schools and college to share their education experiences. Invite students from a diversity of backgrounds to share their stories. We recommend that you make sure the speakers you invite have an opportunity to preview the film before the event. Some may have difficult emotions or memories come up while watching the film that require time to process.
 - Reach out to the Lowell Alumni Association to find students in your area: www.lowellalumni.org
 - See the list of top high schools nationally ranked by U.S. News: usnews.com/education/best-high-schools/national-rankings
- Invite **university advisors and admission staff** to talk about their process for selecting and supporting student applicants. These staff will likely be familiar with discussions on admissions trends, affirmative action, and student achievement. Look to see if your university has a diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) specialist that can help educate your audience about racial dynamics in the education system.
 - Reach out to the National Association of College Admission Counselors to inquire about a local representative: nacacnet.org/contact/staff-directory
 - Find a local chapter of the American Association of University Professors: aaup.org/chapter-resources/find-a-chapter
- **High school educators, counselors, and mental health professionals** can share local experiences of preparing students in their pursuit of higher education. Ask them to share their strategies for helping students manage stress and their perspectives on how the education could change to be more supportive of student mental health.
 - Consult with the American Federation of Teachers: www.aft.org
 - Reach out to your American Counseling Association region leaders: counseling.org/about-us/divisions-regions-and-branches
- Invite **education advocates** to discuss efforts to change the education policy and school culture to better support students. Teachers unions, for example, are sources to find professionals that regularly advocate for change in the education system. Reach out to your local or statewide union affiliate or see if there is a local affiliate of the National Education Association: nea.org/nea-affiliates

ENGAGEMENT IDEAS

Incorporating an activity into your event can help make it more memorable. Any of these suggested engagement activities would be a good complement to an audience discussion.

- **Host a student-focused screening** of *Try Harder!* to explore different approaches and ideas for identifying the best post-high school plans and to engage in wellness and stress management within the school context. We recommend you use the following student workbook developed by the film team: www.tryharderfilm.com/impact
- The mentorship of an adult role model is an important part of healthy childhood development. You could partner with a mentoring organization or a DEI or affinity group from an organization to pair mentors with interested students—or lead your own **mentor match-making** activity. We also recommend pairing students with recent graduates, college or graduate students, and parents of high school students with parents whose children have recently completed the college application process. It is important to select mentors that understand the expectations of the role. Consider asking leaders in your own organization to be mentors. Here is how a mentor match-making activity might work:
 - Ask mentors to submit biographies about themselves at least a month in advance of the event.
 - Partner with a high school counselor to share mentor biographies with students.
 - Students could work with a counselor to review the biographies and submit their top choices for a mentor.
 - Before the event, work with your high school counselor partners to make matches between mentors and students.
 - Introduce mentors and students at the event and create time for them to have one on one conversations together or with their parents.
 - Provide mentor contact information to the students and their families if they would like to continue the mentorship after the event.
- **Organize a self-care day or activity** for students who may feel the stress of school. You can invite a facilitator to lead a wellness workshop or mindfulness exercise. Or you could have a chef cater healthy, gourmet snacks or ask your local animal shelter to bring well-trained pets for animal therapy. Get the students involved in planning as a way to encourage them to think about ways they can practice self-care for the benefit of their mental health.
- **Showcase student work**, such as short films, music, art, or journalism. For example, consider inviting students to make a short film about how students in their own school are feeling about their future, their education, school environment, and their mental health. You could present media projects before the screening or on social media leading up to the screening. Please be mindful to talk to your students and make sure the activity feels like a therapeutic activity, rather than a stressful assignment. Some questions they could consider for creating their student work include:
 - How would you describe your school experience?
 - What messages do you hear from your parents about your education?
 - What makes you feel stressed about school?
 - How do you manage stress as a student?
 - What advice would you give to the younger students at your school who will someday be in your position?
- **Help build bridges in your community by organizing a racial solidarity workshop** designed to help people understand the experiences of community members across identity groups. It is recommended to work with a facilitator that has plenty of experience leading community conversations about the subject. Look to see if your local school district or university has a diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) specialist that can help educate your audience about racial dynamics in the education system.
- **Host a support group for parents** who are concerned about their child's education or their response to it. Create a space for parents to come together and share advice with each other. You can invite a local school counselor to help guide parents through a conversation about their students and what they might be feeling. Schools should have dedicated resources to engaging immigrant parents. Make sure all parents know their rights when engaging with their child's school. For example, you can distribute this fact sheet with more information: ilctr.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Factsheet_LEP_Parents.pdf.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



Learn more from organizations and media that relate to the film *Try Harder!*

Articles

- *The College Pressure Cooker: High Achieving Students, High Mental Health Risks*, by Kirk Carapezza: wgbh.org/news/education/2019/11/19/the-college-pressure-cooker-high-achieving-students-high-mental-health-risks
- *The Model Minority Myth Hurts Asian Americans, Leads to Violence*, by Margaret M. Chin and Yung-Yi Diana Pan: washingtonpost.com/politics/2021/04/19/model-minority-myth-hurts-asian-americans-even-leads-violence/
- *The Path to Social Equity in Higher Ed Doesn't Run Through Harvard*, by Jay Caspian Kang: nytimes.com/2022/01/31/opinion/affirmative-action.html
- *How It Feels to Be an Asian Student in an Elite Public School*, by Michael Powell: nytimes.com/2022/01/25/us/selective-high-schools-brooklyn-tech.html
- *The COVID-19 Pandemic and Students of Color*, by Lisa Pao: authconn.com/COVID_and_Students_of_Color.html

Media

- **PBS Independent Lens website** for the film *Try Harder!* with more information about broadcast and streaming. pbs.org/independentlens/try-harder

- **Filmmaker website** for *Try Harder!* has more information about past and future film screenings and more impact campaign information. tryharderfilm.com
- **Center for Asian American Media (CAAM)** website for the largest collection of films by and about Asian Americans in the country. caamedia.org
- ***The Graduates/Los Graduados*** explores pressing issues in education today through the eyes of six Latino and Latina students from across the United States. pbs.org/independentlens/documentaries/graduates

Books

- *Where You Go Is Not Who You Will Be*, by Frank Bruni: grandcentralpublishing.com/titles/frank-bruni/where-you-go-is-not-who-youll-be/9781455532704/
- *The Sum of Us: What Racism Costs Everyone and How We Can Prosper Together*, by Heather McGhee: penguinrandomhouse.com/books/564989/the-sum-of-us-by-heather-mcghee
- *The Asian American Achievement Paradox*, by Jennifer Lee and Min Zhou: russellsage.org/asian-american-achievement-paradox

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Organizations

- **Act to Change** is a national nonprofit organization working to address bullying, including in the Asian American and Pacific Islander community. acttochange.org
- **American Counseling Association** is a not-for-profit, professional and educational organization that is dedicated to the growth and enhancement of the counseling profession. counseling.org
- **American Federation of Teachers** is a union of professionals that champions fairness, democracy, economic opportunity, and high-quality public education. aft.org
- **American School Counselor Association** supports school counselors' efforts to help students focus on academic, career, and social/emotional development so they achieve success in school and are prepared to lead fulfilling lives as responsible members of society. schoolcounselor.org
- **Asian American Psychological Association** was founded in 1972 by Asian American psychologists to promote mental health research, education, and clinical work and to provide networking and mentorship. aapaonline.org
- **Asian Pacific American Medical Student Association** is a national organization of medical and pre-medical students committed to addressing the unique health challenges of AA & NHPI communities. apamsa.org
- **Center for Parent & Teen Communication** helps parents raise teens prepared to thrive. Adolescence is a time of opportunity, and parents matter more than ever. We strive to ensure that every caring adult has the knowledge and skills to promote positive youth development and foster strong family connections. parentandteen.com
- **Challenge Success**, affiliated with the Stanford University Graduate School of Education, provides schools and families with proven strategies that promote well-being and engagement with learning in order to transform the student experience into one where all kids can create their own paths to success. challengesuccess.org
- **Crisis Text Line** offers free, 24/7 mental health consultations. Text HOME to 741741. crisistextline.org
- **Lowell Alumni Association** maintains and enhances relationships that serve and support Lowell alumni, students, school, and community. lowellalumni.org
- **National Alliance for Mental Illness** is the nation's largest grassroots mental health organization dedicated to building better lives for the millions of Americans affected by mental illness. nami.org
- **National Association of College Admission Counselors** empowers college admissions counseling professionals through education, advocacy, and community. nacacnet.org
- **National Education Association** is made up of educators, students, activists, workers, parents, neighbors, and friends who believe in opportunity for all students and in the power of public education to transform lives and create a more just and inclusive society. nea.org
- **The Youth Mental Health Project** educates, empowers, and supports families and communities to better understand and care for the mental health of our youth. ymhproject.org

Credits

GUIDE WRITER

Renee Gasch

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Joan D. Saunders

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Jr. Designer

INDIE LENS POP-UP TEAM

Kristy Chin

Senior Manager, Engagement & Impact

Zoe Stahl

Associate Manager, Engagement & Impact

Beatriz Castillo

Senior Director, Engagement Operations

ADVISORS

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Director and Producer, *Try Harder!*

Un Kyong Ho

Impact Producer, *Try Harder!*

Nico Oppen

Producer, *Try Harder!*

Anna Yeo

Associate Producer and Designer,
Try Harder!

Donald Young

Director of Programs,
Center for Asian American Media

INDEPENDENT LENS

Independent Lens is an Emmy®

Award-winning weekly series airing
on PBS Monday nights at 10:00

PM. The acclaimed series, with Lois

Vossen as executive producer,

features documentaries united by

the creative freedom, artistic achievement,

and unflinching visions of independent

filmmakers. Presented by ITVS, the

series is funded by the Corporation

for Public Broadcasting, a private

corporation funded by the American people,

with additional funding from PBS, the John

D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation,

Wyncote Foundation, and the National

Endowment for the Arts. For more visit

pbs.org/independentlens.

Join the conversation:

With #TryHarderFilmPBS at [facebook.com/](https://www.facebook.com/independentlens)

[independentlens](https://www.facebook.com/independentlens) and on Twitter

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ITVS

ITVS is a San Francisco-based nonprofit

organization that has, for over 25 years,

funded and partnered with a diverse range

of documentary filmmakers to produce and

distribute untold stories. ITVS incubates

and co-produces these award-winning films

and then airs them for free on PBS via our

weekly series, *Independent Lens*, as well as

other series through our digital platform,

OVEE. ITVS is funded by the Corporation for

Public Broadcasting. For more information,

visit itvs.org.

CENTER FOR ASIAN AMERICAN MEDIA

The Center for Asian American Media

(CAAM) presents innovative, engaging Asian

American works on public television through

our dynamic documentary programs. CAAM's

award-winning public TV programs are seen

by millions of viewers a year across the

United States, including 47 documentary

shows in the last four years and more than

200 films since 1982. CAAM is a member of

the National Multicultural Alliance (formerly

the National Minority Consortia), designated

by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting

to provide diverse programming to PBS. For

more information, visit caamedia.org.

CORPORATION FOR PUBLIC

BROADCASTING

The Corporation for Public Broadcasting

(CPB), a private, nonprofit corporation

created by Congress in 1967, is the steward

of the federal government's investment in

public broadcasting. It helps support the

operations of more than 1,500 locally owned

and operated public television and radio

stations nationwide. CPB is also the largest

single source of funding for research,

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