

## ‘Generation Wealth’ Tells Us What We Already Know

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on August 8, 2018 - 10:00am

- [Documentary](#) [2]
- [Donald Trump](#) [3]
- [Excess](#) [4]
- [Filmmaker](#) [5]
- [Generation Wealth](#) [6]
- [Hedge Fund](#) [7]
- [High School](#) [8]
- [HollywoodChicago.com Content](#) [9]
- [Iceland](#) [10]
- [Lauren Greenfield](#) [11]
- [Los Angeles](#) [12]
- [Magnolia Pictures](#) [13]
- [Money](#) [14]
- [Movie Review](#) [15]
- [Patrick McDonald](#) [16]
- [Photographer](#) [17]
- [Plastic Surgery](#) [18]
- [Porn](#) [19]
- [Pregnancy](#) [20]
- [Rich](#) [21]
- [Wealth](#) [22]



Rating: **4.0/5.0**

CHICAGO – When it comes to really being rich, what do we already know? Money doesn’t buy happiness. Family and friendship connections are more important than accumulation. Yet those simple lessons keep being broken up by the excess of more, the values of which are in the documentary “Generation Wealth.”

Directed by photographer/filmmaker Lauren Greenfield, “Generation Wealth” is a hodge podge of different stories that eventually add up to those truths that we all know. However, the journey to get there takes different paths, and often those paths are paved with gold. Attitudinally, we all currently live in a society that values the benefits of wealth over anything else (if we’re being honest with ourselves). And basically, the profiles in the film are about those values... the ones that elected a “rich” (yet fundamentally sociopathic) man as president, the ones that have two billionaires running for a state governor’s office that becomes only an excuse to own something else, and the ones that have people waiting in line to buy a thousand dollar phone (trading in one that works perfectly fine) while in another part of the city 50 people are shot in one weekend. Yeah, the film will make you think about all this.

Lauren Greenfield has spent over 25 years as a successful photographer, cultural essayist and filmmaker. What she began to realize is that the major theme of all her work was the lifestyles of the wealthy in America and internationally. To make the film (along with the book companion and gallery display) she begins to examine the victims in the pursuit of wealth, and even herself as their photographer.



Mother and Child Reunion on Display in ‘Generation Wealth’

*Photo credit: Magnolia Pictures*

Profiled in the film is Cathy, who obsessed on plastic surgery; Florian (and his son Conrad), a hedge fund manager who eventually defrauded his clients; Kacey, a porn star who tasted the good life with Charlie Sheen; Valbjörn, an Icelandic fisherman turned banker turned fisherman; three now-grown high schoolers that were the subject of Greenfield’s first look at Los Angeles excess; and Suzanne, a driven hedge fund exec who finally had time for a baby at 40, but found she couldn’t get pregnant. All came to some conclusions, but do they all stick?

On the outside, the story seems to be about the extreme excess of wealth in our society, but eventually – in experiencing all the victims of it – the documentary becomes about our own personal attitudes regarding wealth and how the society’s worship of money reflects back to us in Alice-through-the-looking-glass ways (Trump’s election being a perfect example). The film should be experienced just to understand your thought processes through it, and what does it all mean to you? Most likely you’ll come to the conclusions you already know, but it will also be impossible not to think about your position within the sticky web of that excess.

There was a redundancy to the victim’s cries, including the filmmaker herself. Sacrifice is something that comes with the territory, and would Lauren Greenfield done less as a cultural chronicler if it had been all laid out for her before the journey began? The answer sways one way (her kids are pretty judgmental) and another (a successful 30 year marriage), and the conclusion is resolute but vague. We all make our choices.





Reflections in a Golden Mirror: Director Lauren Greenfield of ‘Generation Wealth’  
Photo credit: Magnolia Pictures

Of all the stories, maybe the porn star was the most wrenching, but the that’s the nature of the business. Who is the say she’s not happier to have survived that versus the hedge fund guy who described his situation as a “hamster in a diamond-studded-gold wheel.” As Cathy (the plastic surgery victim) expressed after her own tragedy, “you still have to live.” And maybe that is the eventual lesson, we all still have to live, and those compromises in life overshadow the time wasting of wealth excess.

It is all very fascinating, this time in the Empire. There are many speculations in the film as to if we are like Rome, wallowing and spinning in an impossible gold hamster wheel, waiting for the end... of either the compromised life or the whole goddamn world.

*“Generation Wealth” is currently in limited nationwide release, including Chicago. See local listings for theaters and showtimes. Written and directed by Lauren Greenfield. Rated “R”*



[23]

By [PATRICK McDONALD](#) [24]  
Editor and Film Writer  
HollywoodChicago.com  
[pat@hollywoodchicago.com](mailto:pat@hollywoodchicago.com) [23]

© 2018 Patrick McDonald, HollywoodChicago.com

**Source URL (retrieved on Apr 25 2024 - 4:47am):**

<http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/28729/generation-wealth-tells-us-what-we-already-know>

#### Links:

- [1] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/users/hankq>
- [2] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/documentary>
- [3] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/donald-trump>
- [4] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/excess>
- [5] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/filmmaker>
- [6] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/generation-wealth>
- [7] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/hedge-fund>
- [8] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/high-school>
- [9] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/movie-review/hollywoodchicagocom-content>
- [10] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/iceland>
- [11] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/lauren-greenfield>
- [12] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/los-angeles>
- [13] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/movie-review/magnolia-pictures>
- [14] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/money>
- [15] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/labels/review.html>
- [16] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/movie-review/patrick-mcdonald>
- [17] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/photographer>

- [18] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/plastic-surgery>
- [19] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/porn>
- [20] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/pregnancy>
- [21] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/rich>
- [22] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/reviews/wealth>
- [23] <mailto:pat@hollywoodchicago.com>
- [24] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/about#PAT>