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English 101

22 February 2014

Analytical Response to a Documentary

The PBS *Frontline* documentary, *On the Streets of Seattle*, examines the difficulties teenagers face after they leave foster care. The documentary, which aired on April 20, 2009, follows the lives of three 18-year-old boys who ended up homeless because they no longer qualified for foster care and had no source of income. One of the boys remained living on the streets and spent his evenings at various shelters. The second boy found part-time employment at a restaurant but still could not afford housing. The third boy joined the military, primarily out of desperation. This was the time of the Great Recession, a time when it was especially hard for people without a college degree to find work. An important issue raised in the documentary, therefore, is whether the foster care system should be reformed to allow teenagers to remain with a family until the age of 21. Ending foster care at age 18 may have made sense 50 years ago when a high school degree practically guaranteed a job, but in the 21st century that is no longer the case.