

Whitney Jones

Professor Li

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*Roger & Me* Depicts the American Dream as Shattered

Everyone has the right to pursue their “American Dream.” Or do they? What happens when a company wipes out thousands of peoples’ chances at their dream? Is this fair? These are a few of the questions that Michael Moore seems to be posing to his audience and even those working in the higher ranks of General Motors, the huge automotive company that once employed nearly all of the workers in his hometown—the now poverty-stricken and run down Flint, Michigan. In his documentary *Roger & Me*, Moore tries to get interviews with the president of GM, Roger Smith. He makes much of how Roger Smith refuses to speak with anyone who will make him face up to what he has done, and he points out what happens when one company (embodied in Roger Smith) has the power to take away all possibilities for a whole town.

Through sensitive interviews with the residents of his hometown, Moore demonstrates that the “American Dream” for most of the people in Flint, Michigan is not anything extravagant. A house, a car, and some job security will suffice. Unfortunately, this dream becomes impossible when GM closes its plants and cuts thousands of jobs in order to increase the bottom

line. The company wants greater profits, and its president Roger Smith seems willing to do whatever it takes to make an extra penny. Moore suggests that when GM shuts down a plant in Flint, it takes people's dreams down with it. We see this destruction when Moore points out the empty and deserted houses, infested with rats, and also when he interviews the countless poor, hungry and now homeless. He even shows a scene of one woman's desperation to keep on working and making money. She has begun to sell rabbits, for "pets or meat." Moore makes this all the more real for his audience when he shoots a scene of her actually beating one fluffy rabbit to death and then skinning it. Moore most likely shows this scene so as to disgust his viewers into understanding the desperation of the times. Moore shows us that being without a job and living with the possibility of not having a home is scary, and through the unforgettable "Rabbit Woman," he shows us that it can drive a person to desperation. This is also a scene that certainly stays with a viewer, reminding him or her of the desperation and tough times in Flint, all because of Roger Smith and GM.

Roger Smith's large GM factory in Flint, Michigan, together with the people of Flint were making one another's dreams possible; however, when the plant suddenly shuts down, it is like the company threw everybody out, and did not even care what the fate of those people would be. It is a sad and hopeless society when a company is willing to let its local and loyal workers go, simply for a minor increase in profit. Moore shows this sort of selfishness

by using juxtaposition. He juxtaposes a scene of the rich life and a scene of people being kicked out of their homes. That is, he shows a scene of older wealthy women playing golf at their country club, followed by a scene of a family being evicted from their home. By doing this, Moore leads his audience to be angry at these wealthy people. He makes it out to seem like they do not care at all that they have ruined countless families' dreams, and, admittedly, it does indeed appear this way.

*Roger and Me* does an excellent job getting across the point of view of the people of Flint, Michigan. It shows the viewer that large companies need to realize the damage they could be doing before they close down. By putting himself in the documentary, the viewer has actual narration. We have some sense of the attitudes in Flint. The narrator also has the good ole American, *Wonder Years*, working class tone of voice. This seems to connect well with the audience and sort of puts us on his level, and it helps us toward his understanding of things. Overall, Michael Moore certainly succeeds in his aim. He points out and shows evidence that large companies do have the power to take away many of our dreams. This is undeniably unfair, but as of now, it is simply how life seems to work, and just like it was for Moore, there is not a lot that we, the working class, can do about it.