

JULY 1, 2025

Poorland

THE LAST STRAW

More than a movie

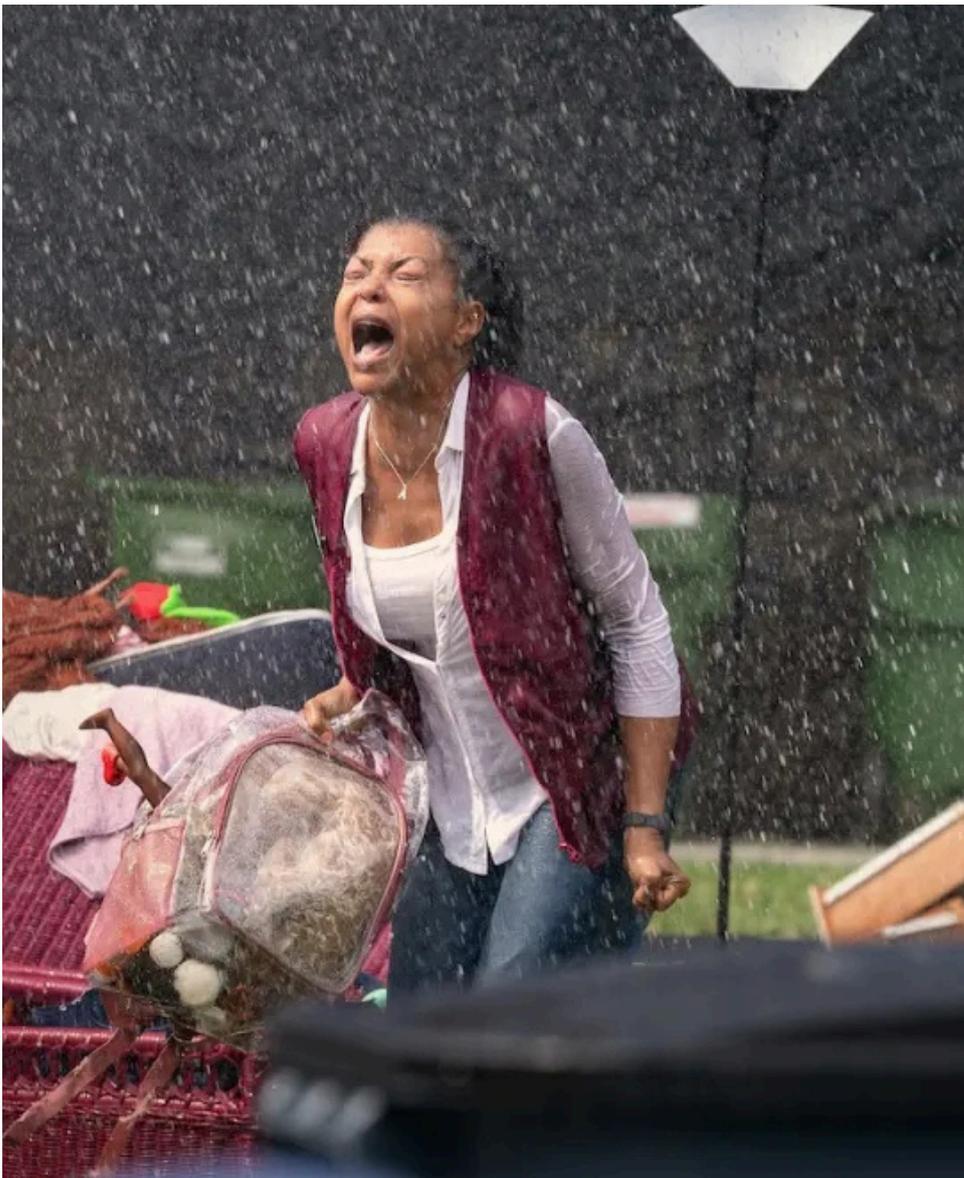
**THE SCREAM
OF A SYSTEM
CRACKING
UNDER
PRESSURE.**

"She didn't
snap.
The system
did."



One bad day. A lifetime of being ignored.

A POORBES MOVIE REVIEW



There's a moment in *Straw* where Janiyah (played by a blazing Taraji P. Henson) sits on the edge of her bed, her daughter coughing in the next room, the landlord's eviction notice still fluttering in her hand, and you can feel it — the weight, the grief, the silence after too many screams.

And that's when it hits you:
We're not watching fiction.
We're watching the last straw.

THE PLOT IS SIMPLE — TOO SIMPLE TO BE FAKE

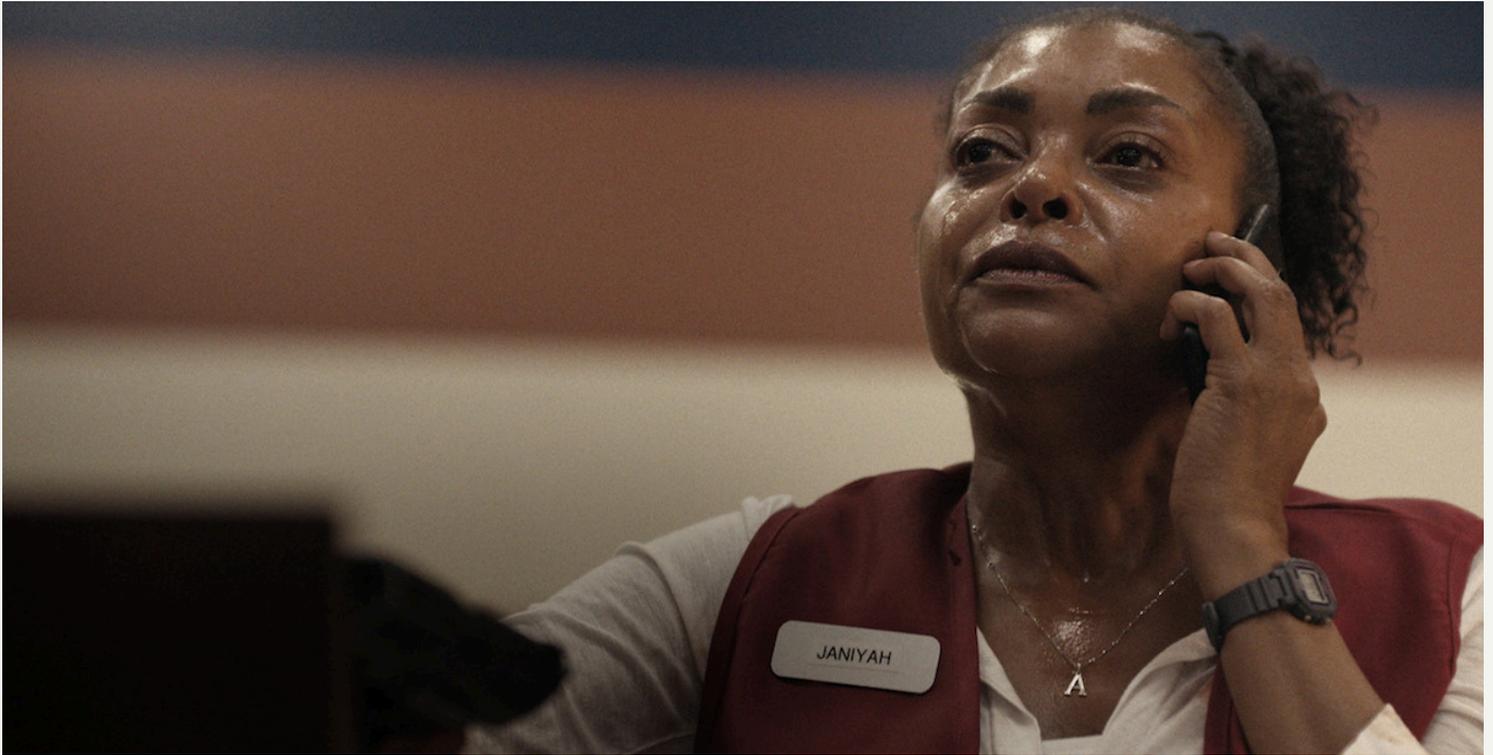
Janiyah is a single mother. Her daughter is sick. Her job is on the line. Her bank account is empty. The city she lives in doesn't care. The systems designed to protect her are the same ones that chew her up and spit her out.

In a matter of hours, she loses everything — But the real hostage is her hope.

And maybe ours, too.

Tyler Perry's new Netflix drama is more than a movie — it's a mirror of a world at its breaking point

A SOCIAL JUSTICE STORY IN DISGUISE



On the surface, *Straw* is a slow-burn thriller. But at its core, it's a manifesto about how close people live to collapse — and how society blames them when they finally fall apart. This isn't a movie about a villain. This is a movie about a woman who's been handed broken tools and told to fix her entire life anyway.

“She’s just trying to survive, just trying to be a great mother to her daughter, and then the circumstances in her life cause her to be in this situation,” the director tells Netflix. “I think that a lot of people around the world, no matter if you’re a Black woman or not, will be able to relate to that feeling of, ‘I’m at my last straw.’”

POVERTY ISN'T A PLOT DEVICE. IT'S A DAILY TRUTH.

Straw doesn't show “rock bottom” — it shows the layers beneath it. The micro-decisions. The last-minute bus fare. The ignored clinic form. The 15th phone call to HR. The babysitter who bails. The paycheck that never lands.

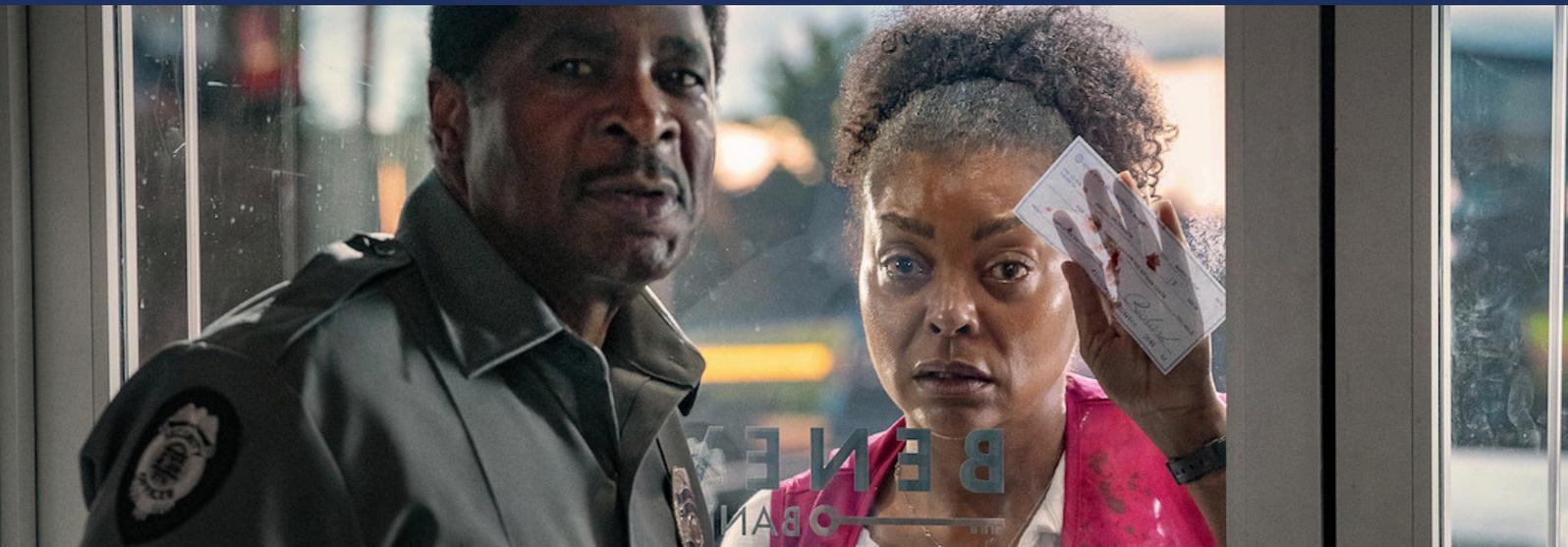
If you know, you know. If you don't, Straw might be your first uncomfortable glimpse.

In the world of *Poorbes*, we've said it before: Poverty isn't passive. It's a fight. And the poor are fighting every single day. Perhaps the most haunting part of *Straw* is how Janiyah's mind unravels — not into violence, but into grief. Her daughter holds Janiyah's hand. She whispers courage. She keeps her grounded. It's a metaphor — one of the few poetic choices Perry nails — for how the poor survive:

With memory. With love. With the people lost still speaking through.

Taraji P. Henson doesn't act, she testifies. Her face tells stories the script forgets to write. She's not playing a character. She's carrying every woman who's ever been blamed for surviving.

WHAT STRAW GETS RIGHT



The exhaustion of being broke.

Straw captures the constant mental math of poverty — the kind where every decision is a trade-off:

- *“If I skip lunch, can I afford the bus?”*
- *“Do I pay rent or buy my kid’s medicine?”*
- *“Can I call in sick without losing the job?”*

It’s not just tiredness. It’s grind-fatigue — where waking up already feels like a loss. Janiyah moves through the film in survival autopilot, and that weariness is too familiar for anyone who’s had to stretch \$11 for three days.

This is not the cute kind of tired. This is the soul-drained, no margin for error, sleeping with one eye open kind. The movie doesn’t sensationalize it — it just lets us sit in it.

The emotional tax of caregiving while struggling.

Janiyah’s daughter is sick. Really sick. But instead of being able to focus on her child, Janiyah is pulled in ten other directions: rent, job threats, medical costs, and getting kicked out of her home.

Straw shows the invisible load caregivers carry — especially Black and Brown women in low-income communities. It’s the burden of needing to hold everything together while no one holds you.

There’s no break. No backup. Just decisions that come with guilt no matter what.

She can’t cry because if she breaks down, who’s going to fix anything?

The violence of institutions that abandon you quietly.

There are no villains with mustaches in Straw. Just systems that ignore her until it’s too late.

- *The landlord who won’t give her more time.*
- *The ER that sends her daughter home without care.*
- *The employer who replaces her instantly.*
- *The government forms she doesn’t qualify for.*
-

This is structural neglect. The kind that doesn’t shoot you, but leaves you bleeding slowly.

The kind that says, “We’re sorry, there’s nothing we can do” — when what they really mean is, “We were never planning to do anything.”

The film’s power is in showing how cruel silence and bureaucratic delay can be just as deadly as direct harm.

THE REVOLUTION STARTS WITH EMPATHY”

Straw is hard to watch — not because it’s a stretch of the imagination, but because it’s not. For millions of people, what happens to Janiyah in this film isn’t “drama.” It’s a Tuesday for many people.

This movie echoes in the silence after eviction notices. In the overworked mother zoning out on the bus. In the friend who ghosted because she couldn’t afford to show up. In the family member who’s always “strong” — until they’re not.

What Straw gets right is what too many stories miss:

The crushing exhaustion of poverty, the emotional tax of caregiving, and the slow violence of being abandoned by systems that were never built for you. And it doesn’t give us a savior. It gives us grief, exhaustion, and a woman who kept everything together — until the world dropped her.

But more than anything, Straw is a plea. A cry for empathy in a world that’s forgotten how to look someone in the eye and truly ask, “Are you okay?”

Because the truth is: we’re all human. We all bleed. We all carry unseen traumas and impossible loads. And too often, we judge each other from the outside — never knowing how close someone is to their last straw. So here’s the real takeaway: let’s stop asking why she broke. Let’s ask why she had to carry so much alone.

If Straw teaches us anything, it’s that empathy isn’t soft. It’s urgent. And in this world?

It’s revolutionary.

You don’t need to fix the whole system overnight. But you can start by listening. By seeing people. By being kind. Because right now, compassion is no longer optional — **it’s survival.**



Poorbes is a monthly publication of the non-profit Social Ventures Foundation a non-sectarian non-partisan organisation

