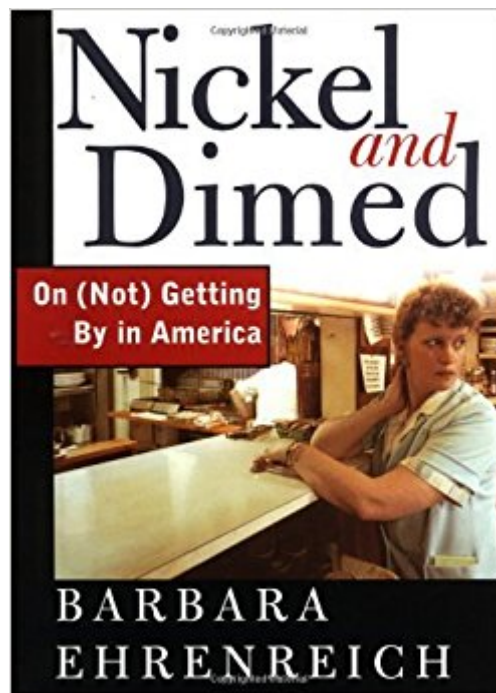




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By Barbara Ehrenreich - Nickel And Dimed: On (Not) Getting By In America (First Edition) (4.8.2001)



Synopsis

book

Book Information

Hardcover

Publisher: Metropolitan Books; First Edition first Printing edition (2001)

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Customer Reviews

book

On the one hand this work is as ground breaking as it is bleak. On the other hand it feels a bit artificial, that is, the situations she puts herself in. However, I don't see how she could have avoided that.

I read this book in almost one sitting. I worked my way through college doing many of the same jobs as "Barb" but I always knew it was just a way to get by and my eye was on the bigger goal of getting out of school. Her look at these jobs from a more mature vantage point gave me a real cause to pause and think. The mark of a good book is the way ideas and thoughts keep coming back to you in odd moments and they are directly related to what you just took in from the author. I found myself discussing the book with my lunch buddies, my husband and even my boss. The gentle way she presented the problems faced by the working poor didn't preach, just teach. I found myself in a national chain variety store buying cat treats yesterday and I almost put them back thinking that the lady ringing me out would look at this as a waste of money as she probably is making due on a small budget. Being a childless woman in a world that makes kids the golden calf I fully understood the comments of her co-workers while they cleaned for or served a meal to the "client". Longing can come from any everyday situation, a running shoe display as seen from the low angle of a wheel

chair, a cart full of kids back to school supplies passing a lady who's childless, or a holiday spent in an empty house. But this book brings us back to the all too often hidden longings of thousands of people for simple things like a safe place to live, a hot dinner, and a chance to rest a sore back. I'll keep this book to read again and again. I'll also go from tipping 15% to 20% and be even nicer to the folks that stand behind counters. I never had a maid, for many of the same reasons bought out in the book, but if I ever need household help I will not be the boss, just the very thankful person being helped.

I read it at a time when I spent about \$0.50 each day for all my meals and looked often into trash and yard sales for everything I need. I felt even then that others had it so much harder.

This is well done but it still leaves me a little uncomfortable. Ehrenreich always had a safety net. She could choose to pull the plug on the product anytime and go home to her lovely upper middle class existence and privilege whenever she wanted. Because of this, she really can't identify with the panic that comes from being truthfully in this position. Her sticking it out means nothing.

Although written in 2002, this book has a lot to say at this time. As questions are being currently raised about a living wage and upping the minimum wage, not much has changed since 2002. As I am about to hit retirement and live on a much smaller salary than I do presently - about minimum wage. It certainly means tightening one's belt and then some.

This book is very interesting overall and I'd say worth reading. It starts out with what I thought would be a very minimal bias, which is necessary on the author's part or she wouldn't even know to ask the question, but it does show a pretty liberal bent which either living through the experience created or enhanced, or was repressed in the beginning chapters to keep less liberal types reading. Anyway, I think the points made are the same. Today in 2014 the issue is more on the radar of the average citizen than ever but the dynamics have changed greatly. Other than a very few boom times WW2 and maybe the early to mid 50's the problems discussed here seem to be the "baseline" of existence. The default human condition is poverty. Circumstances of birth and location can change that obviously but I'm just saying. The big issue is opportunity cannot be forced on anyone whether receiving or the folks being asked to pay more, give more and accept more of the burden to make the opportunity available. Anyway.....it's worth reading. The most tedious part is the evaluation at the end but even that is worth a slightly focused skim. We can after reading, go back

about our business I guess.

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