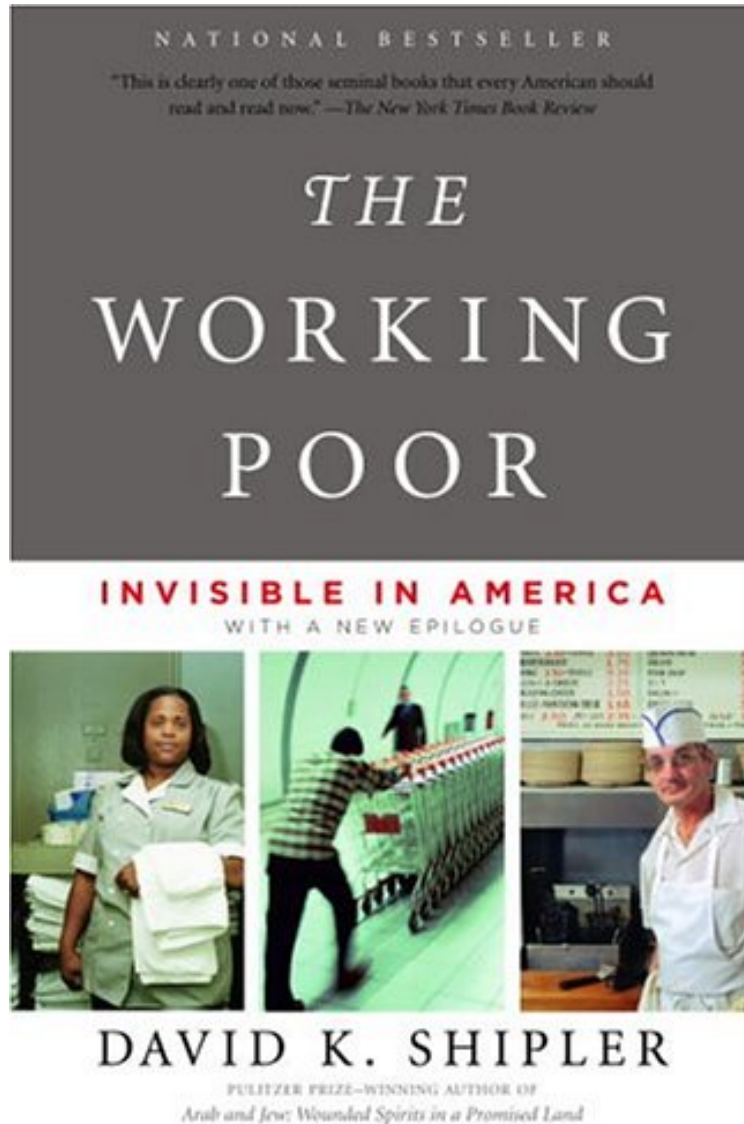


[Ebook free] The Working Poor: Invisible in America

The Working Poor: Invisible in America

David K. Shipler

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David K. Shipler : The Working Poor: Invisible in America before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Working Poor: Invisible in America:

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. An eye-opening bookBy Sal Nudo"The Working Poor" by David Shipler is not an easy read. Densely written, it covers the lives of many poor people living in the U.S., struggling to subsist. The book's title is apt, because in many cases people in poverty truly do work. They work hard in their menial

jobs where they often aren't promoted; they work hard to escape brutal pasts; in short, lots of them work hard to keep their lives together. Shipler conveys in a stark way how common social issues can lead to poverty and how various problems within poor families affect each other negatively, like dominoes falling down. A woman who is sexually abused as a child may have a habit of picking bad men later in life or getting pregnant as a teenager, which leads to monetary problems in adulthood. Hardened men with rough, criminal pasts may have difficulty getting hired for jobs and experience low self-esteem. A lady who suffers through a lifetime of poverty forgoes dental work, leading to a mouth with no teeth, hindering her chances of getting promoted at work. Then there are the babies and kids who are severely malnourished because food is a more flexible expense -- these hardships just scratch the surface of Shipler's book. Shipler reveals that poverty is prevalent across ethnicities. Some of these people have made foolish decisions in life that have resulted in bad outcomes. Sometimes, however, social policies are out of whack or companies fleece the poor, leading to further degradation. Shipler shows how those who don't have money problems can be condescending, unforgiving and cruel, though he also writes about people who extend helping hands. Luckily, the author doesn't lionize the poor or overly criticize the powers that be. He simply tells one dismal story after another, presenting hidden lives in a matter-of-fact way that resonates. I found Chapter 9, "Dreams," to be interesting. It talks about bright-eyed poor kids in less than ideal schools. One of the teachers, labeled in the book as "Mrs. C," relates how the students under her tutelage were constantly late, not motivated and rowdy in class due to never getting attention at home. They received poor grades because of these issues, possibly depriving themselves of decent futures in already difficult circumstances. Parents who fail to help their children with homework or who don't convey the importance of education hinder the prospects of their offspring, according to Shipler. Oftentimes these parents had miserable experiences when attending school themselves. Teachers interviewed in the book discuss how they are rudely treated by certain parents and students alike -- one said she feared for her life. Conversely, many parents fail to communicate with teachers at all, skipping parent-teacher conferences no matter how poorly their son or daughter may be doing academically or behaviorally. In students' defense, many poor ones are malnourished and must deal with issues at home that would make learning at school very hard. Shipler found some teachers in low-income schools who were subpar, simply not good at relating information to students. Others covered material too fast, leaving many students in the class befuddled and blank. The last few chapters have stories of help, hope and success. The formula for achievement is given, though the author admits it's often elusive: a close family with two wage earners; self-confidence and the ability to find and hold a job; and strength when things go off course. Shipler says a major issue like poverty should be attacked all at once, not piecemeal. Figuring it out will take lots of sacrifice, political will and a willingness to redistribute money. He encourages poor people to vote, saying it would make a huge difference in who is elected and by what margins, but he knows many at this income level are disinterested in and disillusioned by politics. This book was written in 2004, so it would be interesting to know how much of the policy discussed within it has changed, and whether poverty in the U.S. has increased or decreased in succeeding years. It's obviously not a feel-good book, but it definitely makes you think about helping those in need.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Everyone should read this book!!!
By Gina_D This book was "recommended reading" for my Teaching In A Diverse Society course at Palomar College. The book arrived in perfect condition, so the price just added to my list of pro's, making it a STEAL! Even if you aren't in college I truly recommend this book to everyone. It taught me valuable life lessons about how often we take things for granted. It tells some inspiring stories that you'll never forget. Even if you open up the book in the middle, you'll still be able to follow along and immediately be hooked. Shipping was also quick and easy. I'll definitely be buying from this seller again!

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. It is books like these that we need to see to bring the ...
By Elizabeth W Phenomenal look into the lives of "forgotten Americans." This is captivating, eye-opening and makes one re-evaluate their own troubles. It is books like these that we need to see to bring the voices of the underserved to the forefront. Capitalism requires that we keep these people at the bottom, but this book looks directly into their eyes. Each voice is unique and each story is compelling and captivating. I read this book as part of a vocational counseling course, but would highly recommend it to anyone.

From the author of the Pulitzer Prizewinning *Arab and Jew*, an intimate portrait unfolds of working American families struggling against insurmountable odds to escape poverty. As David K. Shipler makes clear in this powerful, humane study, the invisible poor are engaged in the activity most respected in American ideology: hard, honest work. But their version of the American Dream is a nightmare: low-paying, dead-end jobs; the profound failure of government to improve upon decaying housing, health care, and education; the failure of families to break the patterns of child abuse and substance abuse. Shipler exposes the interlocking problems by taking us into the sorrowful, infuriating, courageous lives of the poor: white and black, Asian and Latino, citizens and immigrants. We encounter them every day, for they do jobs essential to the American economy. This impassioned book not only dissects the problems, but makes pointed, informed recommendations for change. It is a book that stands to make a difference.

.com The Working Poor examines the "forgotten America" where "millions live in the shadow of prosperity, in the twilight between poverty and well-being." These are citizens for whom the American Dream is out of reach despite

their willingness to work hard. Struggling to simply survive, they live so close to the edge of poverty that a minor obstacle, such as a car breakdown or a temporary illness, can lead to a downward financial spiral that can prove impossible to reverse. David Shipler interviewed many such working people for this book and his profiles offer an intimate look at what it is like to be trapped in a cycle of dead-end jobs without benefits or opportunities for advancement. He shows how some negotiate a broken welfare system that is designed to help yet often does not, while others proudly refuse any sort of government assistance, even to their detriment. Still others have no idea that help is available at all. "As a culture, the United States is not quite sure about the causes of poverty, and is therefore uncertain about the solutions," he writes. Though he details many ways in which current assistance programs could be more effective and rational, he does not believe that government alone, nor any other single variable, can solve the problem. Instead, a combination of things are required, beginning with the political will needed to create a relief system "that recognizes both the society's obligation through government and business, and the individual's obligation through labor and family." He does propose some specific steps in the right direction such as altering the current wage structure, creating more vocational programs (in both the public and private sectors), developing a fairer way to distribute school funding, and implementing basic national health care. Prepare to have any preconceived notions about those living in poverty in America challenged by this affecting book. --Shawn Carkonen

From Publishers Weekly

This guided and very personal tour through the lives of the working poor shatters the myth that America is a country in which prosperity and security are the inevitable rewards of gainful employment. Armed with an encyclopedic collection of artfully deployed statistics and individual stories, Shipler, former New York Times reporter and Pulitzer winner for Arab and Jew, identifies and describes the interconnecting obstacles that keep poor workers and those trying to enter the work force after a lifetime on welfare from achieving economic stability. This America is populated by people of all races and ethnicities, whose lives, Shipler effectively shows, are Sisyphean, and that includes the teachers and other professionals who deal with the realities facing the working poor. Dr. Barry Zuckerman, a Boston pediatrician, discovers that landlords do nothing when he calls to tell them that unsafe housing is a factor in his young patients' illnesses; he adds lawyers to his staff, and they get a better response. In seeking out those who employ subsistence wage earners, such as garment-industry shop owners and farmers, Shipler identifies the holes in the social safety net. "The system needs to be straightened out," says one worker who, in 1999, was making \$6.80 an hour 80 cents more than when she started factory work in 1970. "They need more resources to be able to help these people who are trying to help themselves." Attention needs to be paid, because Shipler's subjects are too busy working for substandard wages to call attention to themselves. They do not, he writes, "have the luxury of rage." Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

From Bookmarks Magazine

"Nobody who works hard should be poor in America," writes Pulitzer Prize-winning author Shipler. Few would disagree with that statement, yet even fewer would agree on how to reduce the factors that cause poverty in America. Presenting individual case studies, Shipler exposes the vicious social and economic injustices that define the working poor. (How can you buy false teeth if you don't have a job? But how can you get a job without teeth?) At times, he lets his frustration get the better of him, and makes sweeping judgements about single mothers, divorce, and race--even though the racially diverse cast we'd expect is largely absent. And since his reforms are convincing but uncontroversial, we're not left with much but despair. But if Working Poor lacks some long-range vision, it "begs our attention. Read it and be ashamed" (San Diego Union-Tribune). Copyright 2004 Phillips Nelson Media, Inc.