

“\$2.00 A Day: Living On Almost Nothing In America” Book Analysis

Posted on October 24, 2019

Welfare Reform and Extreme Poverty in America

Presently, there have been debates on how welfare should be incorporated, eliminated, or reformed in society. This comes after the “\$2.00 a Day: Living on Almost Nothing in America,” authored by Eden and Luke Schaefer, explores the legacy of reforms of welfare and its effects on the poorest members of society. Their findings are horrifying and unpleasant. There is an increase in extreme poverty, which has made some members of the families become vulnerable; hence, there is rising homelessness, hunger, and physical abuse (Edin and Schaefer).

In the view of the authors, one out of fifty-nine households in American society with children has an income that amounts to \$2 per person on a daily basis, which is the popular threshold of high-level poverty. More notably, after the reforms, they established that the number increased steadily by about 150% within 15 years. By 2011, the majority of families with children were found to live in extreme poverty (Edin and Schaefer).

Homelessness, Survival Strategies, and Policy Failure

Some of the mothers and children were found to be homeless. Moreover, due to a lack of resources, these families occasionally engaged in selling plasma as well as scrapping obtained metal, as well as exchanging sexual favors in order to survive or cater to their families. Thus, members of these poor families go for many days without food (Edin and Schaefer 7). The welfare reform was believed to create a more conducive environment for these families. However, not much was achieved.

In spite of the noticeable long-term disappointment of welfare reform, the authors Eden and Schaefer emphasized that “reverting to the old welfare system is not the answer.” In their view, AFDC was not going to make anything better because it was out of sync with the values of America’s values as well as the government programs, which are out of sync with the values that help to distinguish the poor from other members of society and fail to integrate them into the culture.” Therefore, rather than proposing welfare advantages to cut the disturbing rise in soaring poverty, the government briefly gave up unclear policy concepts around growing private as well as public job creation, enhancing the pay and arrangement of jobs, as well as providing more affordable housing (Edin and Schaefer).

According to the authors, welfare reform was a catastrophe because it did not meet its objectives. The rate of extreme poverty will still grow to soaring heights (Edin and Shaefer).

Family Stress and the Consequences for Children

Presently, in the United States, there are many families with children who are extremely poor. In the view of the authors, these families with children live under severe stressors. For instance, their children often undergo distress because of the absence of their parent's attention and care. This is because some of their parents are moving up and about. They seek better employment opportunities as well as food for their children. More critically, the authors claim that one of the greatest stressors for these children is that they can go for many days without food (Edin and Shaefer 8). The movie also exposes how the lives of the young ones are disrupted because of poverty. Resultantly, they have been compelled to live in abject poverty, suffering, and discrimination. Moreover, they experience their parents' distress and suffer mental and physical health.

Further, the parents of these children suffer economic problems that limit their ability to afford better housing and food. Also, the book reveals that the children of poor families do not access health care services, though they are legally allowed. Some of these children lack health care insurance. Furthermore, these children do not enjoy their rights to get social services such as food stamps for U.S. children. Overall, the children's citizens experience accumulated trauma because of the uncertainty about their lives and their future. Hence, extreme poverty in families has affected the emotional health of these children. These children need a lot of care and support from their parents... Health professionals should be invited to evaluate the health of the children (Edin and Shaefer).

Domestic Labor, Low Wages, and Working Poverty

Domestic labor, however, is undervalued and inadequately regulated, and many private employees are overworked, underpaid, or unprotected. There have been several accounts of maltreatment as well as abuse, particularly of live-in and migrant home employees, which are regularly denounced by the media. The paid domestic work is virtually undetectable as a type of employment in several countries. Local labor does not occur in a factory or an office but in the home. Notably, the workers are female breadwinners but rather overwhelmingly women. Additionally, they do not toil alongside the rest of their co-workers, although in isolation behind closed doors. Importantly, their work is not focused on producing additional value except on providing care to many households.

Therefore, domestic labor typically involves the otherwise unpaid work traditionally done in the home by women. This gives an explanation as to why local labor is undervalued in monetary terms and is frequently informal as well as undocumented. Domestic work is often perceived as somewhat other than usual employment as it does not fit the general framework of present labor laws in spite of its origins being traced back to the master-servant relationship. Consequently, the domestic service

relationship is not specially addressed in several legislative enactments, therefore rendering private employees vulnerable to rough, unfair, and repeatedly abusive treatment.

Other people consider taking manual jobs, including working in hotels and double it with other duties so that they can make ends meet (Edin and Shaefer 6). The low wages that employers have been giving their employees have rendered many youths hopeless. They, therefore, seek to look for money by doing everything possible. Moreover, many people have felt depressed when they have failed to get huge money that they have been looking. They have associated money with success and, consequently, happiness. To make ends meet, many people struggle; they have to meet different customers they serve, and some show respect while others do not show them respect. Also, while working in different departments, there are different management practices. Some managers are so harsh and do not care about giving off to the staff. Thus, our times are just occupied with running for jobs from one point to another, yet we cannot pay our bills and have something that can make ends meet. Edin and Schaefer highlight the extent to which the greed for money has attacked our system. In conclusion, Barbra Enrich is a journalist with PhD in Cell biology; she was concerned by the persistently low wage market as well as the unfair treatment of workers.

Experiential Research and the Debate Over Welfare

To find out the truth about the experience workers undergo, she looked for employment in the hotel where she served with their employees; she figured out that the situation was not any better. Employees perform quite a lot, yet they are given meager payments. She says that workers are sacrificing almost everything for their employees. They leave their children behind as those children of their employees are well cared for. They buy unhealthy and expensive foods. Finally, she hopes that one day, workers will demand fair treatment. That time will be the beginning of better things. The agent is the one who pays them and gets the difference in the amount that employees pay his employees.

They add that many employees, despite the fact that they were working hard, were mistreated, yet their employees gave them stipends that they could not afford to pay their bills. The authors believe that money paid to the employees could not be able to pay their bills. Additionally, it exposes us to a lifestyle we can never allow to make money. The authors seek to see a committed government that is caring for all its citizens. Additionally, the authors believe that the reforms have done very little to positively change the lives of the poor members of American society. For instance, they argue that most of the family members go without food for many days. Moreover, some of the poor family members do not have homes, and thus they are homeless. As a matter of fact, poor states of the poor state of family members are wanting, and the government should come in acinandnge the situation through whatever means including changing the policies. According to Kathryn and Luke, a committed government takes care of all its cities (Edin and Shaefer 7).

In summary, Welfare within American society has stirred controversy. The majority of the citizens in America hold the view that poor members of society should be given assistance by the government. The welfare system was put in place to improve the situations and conditions of living for poor members of American society. Edin and Schaefer inform people that many families with children in American society live in extreme poverty. The implication is that they live below 2\$, which tests the threshold of poverty per individual. Additionally, the authors believe that poor families who are working are also given meager wages. This small wage cannot adequately support their families. This begs the question of why reform welfare is purported to change the situation and the rate of soaring poverty, yet that does not seem to change anything (Edin and Shaefer).

Works Cited

Edin, Kathryn J., and H. Luke Shaefer. *\$2.00 a day: Living on almost nothing in America*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2015.