

The Missing Class: Portraits of the Near Poor in America

Katherine Newman, Victor Tan Chen

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THE MISSING CLASS

Portraits of the Near Poor in America

KATHERINE S. NEWMAN and VICTOR TAN CHEN



Foreword by SENATOR JOHN EDWARDS

"A vivid, close-up, and often moving look at the urban 'near poor.'"
BARBARA EHRENREICH, author of *Nickel and Dimed*

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Katherine Newman, Victor Tan Chen : The Missing Class: Portraits of the Near Poor in America before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Missing Class: Portraits of the Near Poor in America:

5 of 6 people found the following review helpful. A fair minded view of those we choose to ignoreBy Jason StokesYou see them every day. You deal with them at the doctor's office, the bookstore, and everyone else you go. They're those people that ensure that life runs smoothly for the rest of us - people working hard in not always that

rewarding jobs, often in professional or nearly blue collar environments - they're the people who get things done. This book presents some of their stories in an engaging, interesting read that pulls no punches. I appreciated the multiple stories of families living in these situations, through their triumphs, their heartbreak, and some challenges brought on by their own decisions. The authors don't make these people out to be perfect, nor do they demonize them. They simply tell the stories and let the reader draw their own conclusions. I appreciate that. The book doesn't spout statistics, charts, or graphs - all of which can be effective - but it does provide a firsthand look at how these people live, struggle, and thrive. Too often do we focus on the rich (who are becoming richer) or the desperately poor, while ignoring the rest. One story stood out to me - the woman working for low wages in a doctor's office, who had her job threatened by taking too many days off to care for her kids. I wonder how much those doctors make? I wonder if they could take a cut in pay to cover her health insurance? It's striking and maddening how the haves can so easily exclude the have nots.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Great insight
By cache money
This book focuses on lives of individuals we forget about on a daily bases. The book explains the hardships that the near poor face and explain how difficult their lives really are. Yet, at the end we are given ways on how to fix this problem that is devastating our society as a whole. Come on America, we can do better.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Must read
By Patricia T. Greaves
I am big on social justice and giving back this book should be read by everyone, please pick up a copy today.

Named one of the Best Business Books of 2007 by Library Journal
The Missing Class gives voice to the 54 million Americans, including 21 percent of the nation's children, who are sandwiched between poor and middle class. While government programs help the needy and politicians woo the more fortunate, the "Missing Class" is largely invisible and ignored. Through the experiences of nine families, Katherine Newman and Victor Tan Chen trace the unique problems faced by individuals in this large and growing demographic-the "near poor." The question for the Missing Class is not whether they're doing better than the truly poor-they are. The question is whether these individuals, on the razor's edge of subsistence, are safely ensconced in the Missing Class or in danger of losing it all. The Missing Class has much to tell us about whether the American dream still exists for those who are sacrificing daily to achieve it.

From Publishers Weekly
In this compassionate and clear-eyed analysis, sociologist Newman and journalist Chen posit that the middle class gains of the 1990s have been imperiled by the recent rollback of New Deal style government aid. Millions of Americans climbed above the poverty line at the end of the 20th century, but since then, the risk of falling back has grown substantially. This policy-oriented collection of case studies addresses the plight of the 57 million near-poor, a largely overlooked missing class just out of reach of public assistance. Despite decent wages, the authors argue, the near-poor are saddled with various burdens that keep them hovering one disaster away from outright poverty and put their children at high risk of sliding down the economic ladder. Drawing on interviews conducted from 1995 to 2002 with families and public service professionals in the New York area, the authors chart in alternately uplifting and dismal detail the distinct perspectives of several low-income households. While they don't address those entering the missing class from above and perhaps too easily extrapolate from their conclusions, Newman and Chen contribute significantly to the dialogue on America's widening inequities. (Sept.) Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

From Booklist
Although the poverty rate in the U.S. is the highest in the industrial world, there is a much larger segment of the American population that virtually no one pays attention to: the near poor. Fifty-seven million Americans live in this nether region, beyond the ranks of the "working poor," yet still struggling financially to maintain a decent standard of living. This is what the authors dub the "Missing Class." Through a series of profiles of families living on the financial edge, the authors demonstrate the challenges this group faces when it comes to housing, education, health care, and debt. Although this group has largely been left out of the rush to home ownership, these cash-starved households have proven to be cash cows for credit-card companies, whose biggest profits come from those who can only afford to make the minimum monthly payments. Too poor to enjoy the comforts of the middle-class and too wealthy to qualify for government assistance, the Missing Class is often trapped without a safety net. This revealing expos gives voice to this growing segment of the population.

Siegfried, David
In this compassionate and clear-eyed analysis . . . Newman and Chen contribute significantly to the dialogue on America's widening inequities. Publishers Weekly
"The Missing Class is a call to action to change America."
Senator John Edwards
"At last, a focus on people who struggle from month to month with housing, health care and education costs but don't fit into the government's comfortingly minimalist definition of poverty. Newman and Chen give us a vivid, close-up, and often moving look at the urban 'near poor.' An excellent follow-up to Newman's essential body of work on America's economic anxieties."
Barbara Ehrenreich, author of Nickel and Dime
"Just above the artificial 'poverty line,' millions of hard-working people struggle invisibly to gain a foothold on the promise of the American Dream. Their raw hardships and persistent hopes, collected in this book of unflinching portraits, ought to sound the alarm for an America grown complacent."
David Shipler, author of The Working Poor: Invisible in America