

# The issues of welfare woven into the issues associated with low-wage jobs

[Business](#), [Human Resources](#)



1. I guess this quote describes the situation in the American society when female welfare recipients need to survive within low-wage job market. The welfare reform introduced at the turn of the century (back in 1996) suggested that the lifetime limit of 60 months was set for the benefits that the recipients of the welfare work to get cash assistance. As Simmons, the author of “Welfare, the Working Poor, and Labour” explains, that program directed the lives of poor women into the domain of low-wage workforce (Simmons, 2004, p. xv). This is how the issues of welfare appeared to be inextricably woven into the issues associated with low-wage jobs. Indeed, the labor market which opened its door for the welfare women hardly had any job opportunities that would help such women flee from poverty. Therefore, ‘welfare mothers’, the word Odessa, Dodson’s heroine, hates, are placed into a difficult position when the opportunities for jobs are just enough to keep them in poverty, not of it (Dodson, 1998). While this is true about the United States that offers scarce support for caregiving (as a part of gender equity strategy), this does not necessarily need to be supported any longer. In other words, the gender equity strategies based on sound welfare policies need to be copied from other developed states, such as Sweden and France, for example. This strategy is called “the earner-carer strategy” and it enables men, as well as women, act as earners and carers (Janoski, 2005, p. 37). Therefore, Dodson is right saying that it is the business of policymakers to “determine which jobs at what wages are needed” (Dodson, 1998, p. 182)

2. After the passing of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, the lives of the poor as well as vulnerable were affected dramatic changes. The welfare reform, which was introduced by

Clinton under the motto “ to end welfare as we know it”, in practice turned out to be the flawed strategy that literally brought the end to welfare. While welfare recipients were made to look for jobs instead of being given cash assistance from the state, the opportunities at the job market were scarce and only for low-wage jobs. Women like Odessa from Dodson’s book went through nightmares of coping with the changes the reform brought. Fruitless and desperate job searches, the need to pay for housing, food, as well as child care, meager amounts of assistance from state agencies made many women grow the hearts of iron so that they could survive. This however is hardly acknowledged by the state or former state officials. On the contrary, in his 2006 book “ How we ended welfare, together” ex-President Clinton boasts how he ended welfare for millions of his countrymen (Hutchinson, 2011, online). To make the matters, women – former welfare recipients – had to carry the welfare stigma as they juggled their survival options.

Popularized by Reagan, the mythical stigma of welfare queens made poor women feel horrible. Therefore, there is a need to revisit the outcomes and real effects of the welfare regime and bring it into public discussion.

#### References

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