

When work disappears: the world of the new urban poor review

[Business](#), [Work](#)



The choice of book to review falls under the sociology or social sciences categories. The book, "When Work Disappears: The World of the new Urban Poor" by William Julius Wilson was published in 1997 by the Random House Inc. Wilson is a renowned scholar who has for decades tried to highlight the plight of the poor and the problem of racism that are existing in our society today. In this book, he openly tries to highlight the problem that joblessness has brought upon the inner city areas.

He has also emphasized that joblessness has negatively affected the social and cultural life to a great extent and contributed immensely to the ghetto's problems. Logical reasoning states that unemployment often leads to economic difficulties in terms of raising a family. As financial problems ensue, social stress and tension ultimately leads to the degradation of families as a unit and ultimately leads to the destruction of the society as a whole.

Wilson uses real life stories as well as scientific data and evidence to call attention to the fact that America's inner city concerns such as drugs, violence, social distress and decline in educational levels are due to the reduction and dwindling of jobs for the working people who are located from the center of the cities to the suburbs (When work disappears: The world of the new urban poor, 2008). Wilson informs the readers that this problem affects all of us. He offers solutions that are intended to benefit not only the ghettos of the inner city but also the entire society.

Wilson lends support to the depression era type projects. Discussion: In the book, "When Work Disappears: The World of the new Urban Poor", William Julius Wilson does not only highlight the problem with regards to

unemployment and its effect on the society but also attempts to change the situation by offering solutions at the policy making level. Wilson hypothesizes that the inner city families, which comprised of African-Americans, are part of the impoverished families who are regarded as the center of our social and economic problems.

These people are often desperate due to the high level of poverty, lack of education and lack of jobs opportunities. When incidence of crime, violence and drugs become rampant, the commercial atmosphere are affected and businesses are relocated to economically viable areas. This has a spiral effect as employment rates tend to drop due to a reduction in the number of business and commercial activities. Families of the blacks and whites who hold blue collar jobs move to safer and more family oriented suburbs. Children living in the ghettos do not receive quality education as the children in the suburbs.

As a result, a decrease in the number of qualified work force will ensue for the future generations. In addition, less skilled workers, larger and younger single parent families as well as anti-social environment compounds the problem. According to Wilson, joblessness and despair will increase provided efforts are made to improve the current job situation and government policies would focus on the improvement of the ghetto educational system. Wilson opinionated that government's priorities need to be set in order.

His view is that since businesses have moved out of the cities, there were reductions in the manufacturing job sectors for families living in the inner cities. The middle class has left the inner cities in search of better jobs. What

remains in the cities are low wage earning jobs with less job securities and no union protection. Most black people residing within the area are left with lesser job opportunities. The families that remain in the community comprise mostly of single parents and young children. These mothers or fathers rely on welfare support since they have no jobs to turn to.

However, when they get employed their welfare benefits are cut. Hence, to ensure that their family has a place to live and food to eat, they prefer to rely on welfare benefits. In a survey conducted to the employers, Wilson found out that a very high percentage of employers used tactics to discourage the hiring of the black community or people from public schools (Danziger, 1998). This trend further reduces the jobs for the black population. The Americans believe that only the poor themselves are the ones who can get out of the potholes they find themselves in (Linhardt, E, 2008).

Neither the society as a whole nor the industry can raise the quality of education, build schools and create better paying jobs. Wilson tells us that we can stop the vicious decline and contribute to the improvement of the inner cities. Just targeting one segment of society, i. e. blacks in the ghettos is not enough. In the book, he states that our political system is conservative and it could not appreciate the magnitude of the problems. For example, the policy makers believe that there are sufficient jobs for the blacks who are willing to work.

The liberals assume that racism in schools and in the market are factors that keep the blacks out of work. In the book, Wilson questions both views. He agrees with the liberal's theory but highlights that it is one of many problems

present in the society. Multiple long term and short term solutions must be made available that would cater to the current as well as the next generation. The programs Wilson proposes in his book should cater to the problems of unemployment, lack of basic quality of education, jobs availability and security.

Programs to curtail crimes and drugs should also be activated. Wilson believes that the policies should be race neutral. Partnerships between the public and the private sectors that would combine and integrate the inner cities and the suburbs in order to broaden the job markets should be initiated. He proposes that the development of a national performance standard should be enforced and be appropriate to all public schools. This along with use of equal funding for all the schools will bring about an equal playing field where there are available jobs to complete with.

Hence, families will be encouraged to enroll their kids to schools and the kids would attend classes because they would realize that this could lead to better living conditions for them in the future. The book also floats the idea of national healthcare programs, child support and care programs, and programs for income support (Linhardt, E, 2008.). He further goes on to state that for the positive effects to be felt, these programs should not only focus on the minorities and the poor but also to those who are living across the society. Single parents are usually employed in janitorial jobs that pay minimum wages.

Therefore, the black families need to have two jobs to make both ends meet. They travel to the suburbs to work and travel back afterwards to their

families. This takes away the quality time that parents can spend in developing and nurturing the family bonds with their children if only they had better paying employment opportunities in the cities. Wilson insists that we need to encourage partnerships between the public and private sectors. Focusing on education, he writes that a national education performance standard will enable schools to improve the quality of education.

Wilson is quoted in the book as saying that right now, rich schools spend a lot more money than the poor ones are capable of spending. " Not only this, but in many single parent homes, are children unsupervised when mothers are out working. In France there is a universal childcare program which includes establishments for infant care, high quality nursery schools, and paid leave for parents of newborns. All this would be great to have here in the United States as well. But how can we do this? " (Wilson, p. 219). Wilson feels that we need to integrate our growing suburban areas with the surrounding cities.

They are economically interdependent as suburbs that experienced increases in income during the 1980's tended to be linked to a thriving urban center (Linhardt, 2008). Wilson views that the root of the problem is racism and joblessness. He illustrates this by interviewing people who reside in the inner cities. These people stress that the economic situations are taking them apart. As jobs move out the cities, the educated and the skilled families holding blue collar jobs also tend to move out. The people remaining in the cities are those who could not get jobs that pay well.

Financial crises usually bring upon stresses in the family. People succumb to temptation and other means of obtaining wealth and this tend to degrade the society's well being. The financial burden forces the parents to work at great distances and in multiple jobs. This reduces the time families can spend together to form intimate bonds. Children who are not given the moral, social and ethical values are more prone to social misbehavior. These children are deprived of the moral values because their parents are working double jobs and hardly spend time with their children.

The book shows that these kinds of pressure have led to stress on the family as an institution and cracks can be seen. The families residing in the cities today consist of young children living together with the young single parents. This makes surviving in that environment even more difficult as parents can not work to provide for the family as they tend to stay at home and take care of their children. Therefore the book supports the view that a tight knit family is important as the teaching of moral and social values is necessary if society is to remain on steady footing. Bibliography Danziger, S. , (1998),
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