

Books by the Stack

KATHRYN J. EDIN AND H. LUKE SHAEFER

"A remarkable book that could not only change the way we think about poverty in the United States, but also how we live."



\$2.00 A DAY

Living on Almost Nothing in America

\$2.00 a Day: Living on Almost Nothing in America by Kathryn J. Edin & H. Luke Shaefer

A revelatory account of poverty in America so deep that we, as a country, don't think it exists. After two decades of research on American poverty, Kathryn Edin discovered the number of American families living on \$2.00 per person, per day, has skyrocketed to 1.5 million households, including about 3 million children.

Why you'll like it: *Thought-provoking, bleak, investigative.*

About the Author: Kathryn J. Edin is one of the nation's leading poverty researchers, recognized for using both quantitative research and direct, in-depth observation to illuminate key mysteries about people living in poverty: In a field of poverty experts who rarely meet the poor, Edin usefully defies convention" (New York Times). Her books include Promises I Can't Keep: Why Poor Women Put Motherhood Before Marriage and Doing the Best I Can: Fatherhood in the Inner City. Edin is the Bloomberg Distinguished Professor of Sociology and Public Health at Johns Hopkins University. H. Luke Shaefer is an associate professor at the University of Michigan School of Social Work and Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy, and a research affiliate at the National Poverty Center. "

Questions for Discussion

1. How did the 1996 welfare reform change conditions of the poor? How did poverty alleviation policies shift as a result of welfare reform?
2. To what extent do you think the welfare system that was in place before 1996 needed to be reformed? What makes you think that?
3. If you were put in charge of creating government rules to improve conditions for low-wage workers, what would these policies look like?
4. Does the government have a responsibility to help low-wage workers? Do you feel there is anything the government can do to improve working conditions for low-wage workers?
5. Why do you think Jennifer Left her job at Catalina?
6. Did the information about the prevalence of adverse childhood events (ACEs) among Americans, such as physical and sexual abuse surprise you? Why or why not?
7. Which of the survival strategies described in this book would you utilize first if you felt like you had no other options? Which would you utilize last?
8. As you think about the strategies for help described in Chapter 4, what are some of the risks that come with each of the strategies?

9. Chapter 5 is titled, “ A World Apart.” Why do you think they chose this title?

10. What does this chapter tell you about the existence of racism in the 21st Century? Were there things that surprised you in this regard?

11. Finding affordable housing has become increasingly difficult in the United States. The authors propose increasing the minimum wage and expanding government housing subsidies as ways to help poor families close the gap between income and rent. Do you agree with the political effectiveness of these policy prescriptions? Do you suggest any other policies that can help close the gap between income and rent?

12. Despite the abuse and trauma the \$2.00 a day poor are often subjected to, the families profiled in this book find joy, hope and a sense of perseverance in their children. During difficult times, what or who has given you the strength to move on?

13. After getting to know all of the families in the book, to whom do you relate the most? Whom would you want to have coffee or dinner with?

(Questions provided by authors)



www.grpl.org/BookClub