

Reading List: [Worth a Peek]

An Economy That Puts Families First: Expanding the Social Contract To Include Family Care

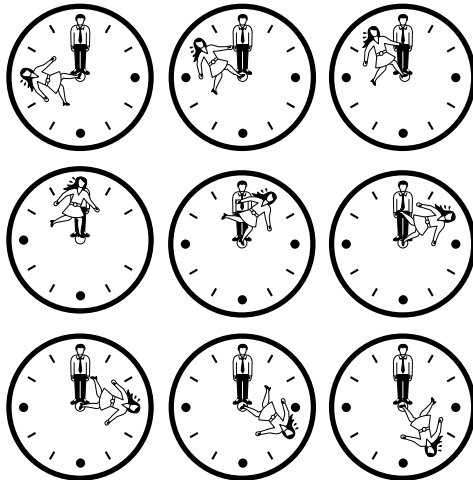
Report by Heidi Hartmann, Ariane Hegewisch, and Vicky Lovell at the Economic Policy Institute

In reality, both parents are in the workforce in two out of three families with children. In American public policy, “parents have made enormous changes in their lives with little help or support, and the strains are showing.” There is no one to pick up the slack during emergencies, illness, or when one earner cannot work. Since society has an overwhelming interest in seeing that the next generation is cared for, and the market alone cannot ensure this, we need public policy that allows for flexible work schedules, paid family leave and sick days, and subsidized childcare.

Unregulated Work in the Global City

Report by Annette Bernhardt, Siobhan McGrath & James DeFilippis at the Brennan Center for Justice

From the clerk at the 99-cent store who works 60-hour weeks without ever seeing a dime of overtime pay, to the dry cleaning employee inhaling hazardous chemicals with no protection, this intensive, three year study from the Brennan Center finds that federal, state, and local workplace safety laws are systematically violated in a wide number of low-wage industries in



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New York City. The authors caution that “the many laws on the books to protect the working poor mean little if they are not enforced.” And it’s not just a few bad apples in the Big Apple—the implications of this report for the rest of the country are grim.

Losing Ground: Foreclosures in the Subprime Market and Their Cost to Homeowners

Report by Ellen Schloemer, Wei Li, Keith Ernst, and Kathleen Keest at the Center for Responsible Lending

A surprise? Not so much. The experts at the Center for Responsible Lending raised alarms about the dangers of loosely regulated subprime loans long before the mainstream media caught on. In this report, billed as “the first comprehensive,

nationwide review of millions of subprime mortgages originated from 1998 through the third quarter of 2006,” the Center presents a disturbing forecast about the scale of the crisis. One out of every five subprime mortgages is likely to end in default, leading millions of American homeowners to lose both their homes and an estimated \$164 billion due to foreclosures.

Trends in Political Values and Core Attitudes: 1987-2007

Report from the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press.

For twenty years, Pew has been surveying Americans about a broad range of political, social and economic beliefs and values, from the existence of God to the advisability of maintaining a strong military. The most recent edition contains some good news for progressives: Pew finds increased concern about economic inequality, greater public support for the social safety net, and more moderate views on race, gender, and homosexuality. And while the country was equally divided on partisan lines in 2002, 2006 reveals a decided Democratic advantage.

The Assault on Reason

Book by Al Gore

The former Vice President is quickly developing a reputation for impassioned yet meticulously researched books that tackle the foremost issues of the day. This time, he considers the overall state of American public discourse on big

questions from terrorism to, yes, global warming. Gore argues that “reason, logic and truth seem to play a sharply diminished role in the way America now makes important decisions,” a trend he finds embodied by—but hardly limited to—the reality-challenged Bush Administration, which regularly dismisses sound evidence, expert advice, and public debate in favor of a pre-set ideological agenda.

Black and White and Re(a)d All Over: The Conservative Advantage in Syndicated Op-Ed Columns

Report from Media Matters

Oh, the liberal media! After an exhaustive review of the daily newspapers in the United States, this report concludes that “in paper after paper, state after state, and region after region, conservative syndicated columnists get more space than their progressive counterparts.” While 60% of the papers print more conservatives every week, just 20% print more progressives (the rest print an even number). What’s more, the top ten columnists by circulation include five conservatives, two centrists, and just three progressives. So much for balance.

From Poverty to Prosperity: A National Strategy to Cut Poverty in Half

Report from the Center for American Progress

One in eight Americans lives in poverty. Can we really do anything about it? This report provides a resounding “yes!” in the form of twelve policies that together have the potential to cut American poverty in half within a decade. From expanding the Earned Income Tax Credit to helping former prisoners reintegrate into communities and raising Pell Grants to help poor kids attend college, the cumulative impact of these policies would lift millions of Americans toward the middle class.

Close To Slavery: Guestworker Programs in the United States

Report from the Southern Poverty Law Center

Proponents of a guest worker program to address the nation’s future immigration needs would do well to consider the program currently in effect. This report finds that the approximately 120,000 guest workers brought to the U.S. annually under the H-2 visa program regularly face exploitation, from squalid living conditions to denial of wages earned. Despite being faced with an abusive employer, they are prohibited from changing jobs. To make matters worse, the study finds that “if guestworkers complain about abuses,

they face deportation, blacklisting or other retaliation.” Sound familiar?

The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism

Book by Naomi Klein

This powerful book explores the recent history of efforts in the U.S. and abroad to “[use] moments of collective trauma to engage in radical social and economic engineering” in service of a right wing economic vision of privatization, deregulated markets, and a slashed social safety net. With the gutting of worker protections, demolition of public housing without replacement and privatization of schools in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina as one example, Klein finds that devastating “free” market proposals are often pushed through when the public is too shocked by a man-made or natural disaster to resist.

Climate Change 2007: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability, Summary for Policymakers

Report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

This sobering report from the Nobel Prize winning U.N. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change finds evidence that natural systems throughout the world are already being affected by climate change. The report predicts that in North America, coastal communities



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will be particularly stressed, air quality will decline due to higher ozone levels, and heat waves, floods, storms, wild fires and droughts will increase both in number and severity. The report concludes that many impacts of climate change can be reduced or avoided by taking steps to mitigate it, for example through sustainable development.

The Housing Landscape for America's Working Families, 2007

Report by Maya Brennan and Barbara J. Lipman at the Center for Housing Policy

The tough housing market affects more than just homeowners: low- and moderate-income renters are also struggling. This nationwide study looks at working families in 31 metro areas who earn just over the area's median income or less. Since 1997, the number of these families paying more than half of their income for rent has doubled. The problem is not limited to expensive cities on the East and

West Coasts: "significant numbers of working families in every metro area—including those in Atlanta, Denver and Indianapolis—pay more than half their income for housing."

After Katrina: Washed Away? Justice in New Orleans

Report by Caterina Gouvis Roman, Seri Irazola, and Jenny Osborne at The Urban Institute

Two years after Hurricane Katrina, high levels of crime and violence continue to plague New Orleans, and the criminal justice system remains chaotic. The result of a year-long study, this report documents the situation before the storm, the immediate impact of Katrina and its persistent consequences, including a dramatically understaffed police force, insufficient jail space, and inadequate legal representation for indigent defendants. The study concludes that "together, these issues create a cycle

of hard-to-shake problems, including low officer and resident morale, further jeopardizing the region's ability to maintain safe streets."

A Pro-Civil Justice Presidential Platform

Report by Kia Franklin at the Drum Major Institute for Public Policy

Besides a few stale calls for tort "reform," you won't hear much about civil justice in the 2008 presidential discussion. DMI's latest report aims to set that right, explaining that "Our civil justice system empowers citizens to advocate for their rights and protect themselves against undue harm... ensuring that everyone, even powerful corporations and our government, abides by the rule of law." The report outlines common-sense steps the next president can take to improve access to the civil court system, from establishing a right to civil counsel in certain critical cases to creating a presumption that federal laws will not preempt state regulations that protect public health and safety, economic fairness, and social justice.

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