



Global Woman: Nannies, Maids, and Sex Workers in the New Economy

Barbara Ehrenreich (Editor) , Arlie Russell Hochschild (Editor)

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In a remarkable pairing, two renowned social critics offer a groundbreaking anthology that examines the unexplored consequences of globalization on the lives of women worldwide.

Women are moving around the globe as never before. But for every female executive racking up frequent flier miles there are multitudes of women whose journeys go unnoticed. Each year, millions leave Mexico, Sri Lanka, the Philippines, and other third world countries to work in the homes, nurseries, and brothels of the first world. This broad-scale transfer of labor associated with women's traditional roles results in an odd displacement. In the new global calculus, the female energy that flows to wealthy countries is subtracted from poor ones, often to the detriment of the families left behind. The migrant nanny — or cleaning woman, nursing-care attendant, maid — eases a "care deficit" in rich countries, while her absence creates one back home.

Confronting a range of topics, from the fate of Vietnamese mail-order brides to the importation of Mexican nannies in Los Angeles and the selling of Thai girls to Japanese brothels, a diverse and distinguished group of writers offer an unprecedented look at a world shaped by mass migration and economic exchange. Collected and introduced by bestselling authors Barbara Ehrenreich and Arlie Russell Hochschild, these fifteen essays — of which only four have been previously published — reveal a new era in which the main resource extracted from the third world is no longer gold or silver, but love.

Barbara Ehrenreich is the author of *New York Times* bestsellers *Nickel and Dimed* and *The Worst Years of Our Lives*, as well as *Blood Rites*. She lives near Key West, Florida.

Arlie Russell Hochschild is the author of national bestsellers *The Time Bind* and *The Second Shift*. She live in San Francisco, California.

Global Woman: Nannies, Maids, and Sex Workers in the New Economy Details

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From Reader Review Global Woman: Nannies, Maids, and Sex Workers in the New Economy for online ebook

Chris says

This book tries to be pro-woman in its defense of domestic workers, but ends up being anti-feminist in the double standards and expectations placed on the affluent women who choose to leave the home for higher pay. It is a family decision? to hire a nanny or a maid, yet the authors repeatedly? blame the mothers for having someone else raise their children. No mention of the fathers who leave the home.

Ehrenreich and Hochschild use hyperbole to describe the horrors of being a domestic worker and the evilness of those women who employ them in a cringe?y and eye rolling worth essays with so many gender double standards.

In an article discussing how Philippines women are leaving the home for better opportunities abroad as nannies and domestic workers, the author implies a sense of blame to the affluent women who are breaking up Filipino homes. While the article discussed the fact that these Filipinas are able to make much more money abroad than at home and give better opportunities for their own children, there seems to be no blame on the part of Filipino men leaving the home for migrant work, a pattern which has gone on for years. If now there are greater opportunities for women abroad, why aren't the men being called on to stay home and support the family? The author implies that we in the western world should do more to ensure there are domestic opportunities for work within the Philippines and other migratory countries. How we should do this is not quite clear.

Another article discussed the "servile" and "humiliating" relationship between domestic help and the women whose children they are raising and homes they are cleaning. The author describes a time when feminists worked to celebrate the work women did in the home and how this work is now being outsourced to other lower class women. But it is not only the "women's work" that has been outsourced in the home. Many affluent men don't spend their weekends fixing a leaky pipe, mowing the lawn, or cleaning the gutters. This traditional "men's work" is outsourced as well, but with no guilt inducing commentary on the relationship between a man and his gardener.

Yes, there is a power relationship between domestic help and the home owner, it's one of a boss and worker. The free market dictates the demand for domestic help and the number of people employed in the profession shows that there is a ready supply of people willing to work in these jobs. The authors point out that the women who work as domestic help are often paid much higher than they can find at other jobs, yet the women who employ them are villainized.

Sarah Shourd says

Incredible much-needed look at women, labor and migration in the global economy. Too many 3rd world women are globe-trotting to fill the "care sector" as nannies, housekeepers and prostitutes only to leave a "care void" behind due to strict traditional gender roles that say a woman can't be the provider and a man is not supposed to be the family's source of love and support. This book opened my eyes to some very important work that needs to be done to reconcile the relationship between women in developed and underdeveloped countries.

pinkgal says

Not quite as personal as *Nickel and Dimed*, this is definitely for the readers who prefer a bit more academia in their reading. Nevertheless, it's filled with interesting stories about the women behind the faces we see on the news and beyond. One thing I really like about Ehrenreich is her ability to tackle the subjects that others hate to notice. Or rather, would like to NOT notice. Poverty? Please, of *course* people can live off minimum wage! If they can't, they're just lazy or spendthrifts. Women from "those" countries are always happy to come here, even if they get paid shit and are treated like scum.

Excellent book. =)

Cynda says

A full 5 stars.

Having read Barbara Ehrenreich her book *Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting by in America* when it was newly published, I knew that she writes from both her mind and her heart. By writing in that way, I can better empathize with her subject.

While men also immigrate internationally to find work, Ehrenreich has focused on the women. The women may immigrate legally with temporary documentation. Many stay in the countries that they have immigrated to past and sometimes years past their allotted time. Some just simply travel illegally. Think US-Mexican border. Think travelling as luggage. Think travelling using illegal documents. People are not bad because they do this. They are desperate to change their life experiences immediately or nearly immediately. They often have hungry, ill-clad, and could-be homeless soon children. Even though Ehrenreich doesn't say, I strongly strongly suspect women of those children need medical care. Women's choices are never easy. Mothers are all too often difficult.

They women send their money home to pay for the basics and more. They pay for modest pieces of land, small modest houses, clothing, education. To meet these goals, some women live in virtual slavery, living in damp and un-air-conditioned basements. To meet women of these goals, women find themselves unable to tell the police because they have over-stayed their documentation, because they know no one else in US who will give them temporary shelter. All the while they become estranged from their husbands and children and all their other family members. Because they often work as care providers or household workers, they have often have no one to talk with that understands their difficulties. Too often they are judged by the native population, their employers, their children. Yet immigrant women make it possible for professional women work and have their house clean and their children tended to. Yet immigrant women make it possible for their family members to have their needs met. Sometimes the immigrant women have social services available to them. But nowhere near often enough.

What is the crisis that creates a demand for immigrant worker women? Men too often refuse to help clean the house or tend to the children or care for the elderly family member. Let's socialize our sins differently. I grew up in a house where my brothers and I took turns at the same household chores. Sure they learned cars and I learned more advanced cooking; however I learned how to check my car fluids and tires, and my brothers learned the basics of food preparation and kitchen cleaning. My son learned what my brothers learned and a bit more because I was a single mom. My brothers taught him the car and fishing stuff.

Cyd says

Proof that the "sensational" storylines on "Law & Order" are all too true. Deeply disturbing how people can treat each other in the name of making money.

Icefox416 says

A very interesting and important read. A bit dated and some essays are stronger than others but overall very solid

Rell says

I read this book for a class that I was taking. It was such an interesting read that I decided to keep the book. Depressing that women all over the globe are being suppressed in one form or another but nonetheless its informative and a good read. Thought provoking.

Chinook says

I read Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide a couple of months ago, and now that I've read this book, I feel incredibly well informed. The last essay I found a bit boring, but the others were all interesting, if occasionally a bit repetitive.

Emily says

I picked this book to read because I thought it was by Barbara Ehrenreich. Instead it is a collection of essays that is edited by her. (She did actually write ONE of the essays.) I also didn't realize it was just essays, not a contiguous study of women in the global economy. That was a little dissapointing. Just as an essay got interesting, it was over and the next one was boring.

But I would like to speak about the second to last essay. It was about Vietnamese (or Korean...I already forgot!) women who are highly educated that choose to marry low wage Vietnamese (or Korean) men who live in America. The essayist refers to those women as 'unmarriagebles' and that's why they have to marry in these odd combos. As a Mormom woman who did not get married until she was almost 27, I think I was considered to be an 'unmarriagable'. That was part of the reason those people were not marriagable: they were past marrying age.

Well, that is a load of crap. I was always very marriagable. Can you still be marriageable after you get married? If so, I think I am still marriageable. But oh man I hated when people would pity me for not being married. Or not dating anyone. Pity didn't help me at all! I just couldn't find anyone who would even date me, let alone MARRY me. Don't rub it in, people!

At my little sister's wedding (I don't resent her for beating me to the wedding stuff, but I sort of despised a lot of the people who attended) every conversation I had when like this:

Wedding Guest: Oh, Emily, how are you?!

Emily: Great.

WG: Are you married yet?

Emily: Nope.

WG: Dating anyone?

Emily: Uh, no.

WG: Didn't you go to BYU?

Emily: Yes, I went to SCHOOL. (What in the heck does that have to do with my single-ness????!?)

WG: Oh (sad puppy dog face). Well, there's probably still hope. (Implied: You are 23...hopeless.)

Bleh!

Ok, so I don't think anyone is seriously unmarriageable. No one. Even the stinky or nerdy people in the world. They just have to find the right match. And it doesn't happen for everyone at age 18.

I remember there was a girl who I had some classes with at BYU. I thought of her as Gowron. Who's Gowron? Are you serious? He's the leader of the Klingons. Duh. The one with buggy eyes. And he's not very friendly. Anyways, so after summer break Miss Gowron came back wearing a wedding ring. Ok, that made me feel like a little bit of a loser. I was sure I had more possible marriage matches than Gowron...how could she find her's first?! Anyways, then I saw her with the guy. She was big and burly. He was little and mousy. Very VERY interesting combo. You could hear her bossing him around all the way across the lobby of the science building. I expected to see her throw him over her shoulder and march away sometimes.

I always wondered who asked who on the first date. Or was it an order? And what was it like when he took her home to meet HIS parents? Were they delighted? Scared? TERRIFIED? I would give anything to have been a fly on the wall!

So, back to the book: wow. There are a lot of women who struggle in some pretty difficult situations around the world. Can you imagine living in another country than your family does and wiping some old lady's butt in order to provide for your family? How sad.

I read this book at the same time as I read 'Confessions of a Slacker Wife'. Weird contrast. They mix as well as diet coke and mentos.

Galen Johnson says

This collection of essays was quite informative on often hidden or avoided topics, the role of migrant women in the global economy working as household help and as prostitutes-- in essence, taking over the domestic roles that women become too busy, too powerful, or just too disinterested and rich to play in their own household. The essays are mostly academic in tone, but accessible to the lay-reader (except maybe the final one) and tell a compelling story about both globalization and how far we still have to go in ridding ourselves of the idea of "women's work."

Nicola says

This is a terribly depressing read, simply because it's a terribly depressing subject: white, Western women are able to enjoy their postfeminist equality, but only by (under)paying non-white migrant workers to clean their homes and look after their children. It's a damning, seemingly-unsolvable problem and one that I wanted to know more about. But I really had to force myself to keep reading, because it's a topic that contains such upsetting truths.

There are some great articles in the book, but I'm not crazy about their arrangement. From an editorial point of view, it seems slapdash -- almost as if someone ran a JStor search and threw together any article they could find that mentioned female migrant workers. As a result, some of the articles are pure academia, some are journalistic. It's an odd mix. The collection also ends up being very repetitive on some subjects.

I can't help but feel that *Global Woman* was thrown together to capitalize on the success of *Nickel and Dimed* -- and, really, this couldn't be a more different book. I enjoyed *Dimed* for its claustrophobic, personal slant -- this is just a collection of essays, with little to tie it together. It's a worthy subject, but a heavy read, and I wish more care had gone into its compilation.

Teghan says

A terribly depressing read made even more depressing by the fact that these are the experiences of women all over the world. These are their lives and they don't have the luxury of putting the book down.

Despite that this book is an enlightening read that makes you aware of your own position in the world. It merely scratches the surface of the injustices women experience in their lives all around the world.

One of the strengths of the book is the way in which the material is presented. It avoids highly academic language and instead tells women's experiences as stories, making them accessible and tangible.

Dana says

The best thing about this book was that it introduced me to contemporary concepts and ideas that I had not thought about when discussing about globalization. To be able to see how factors of globalization have changed the dynamics of relationships between women and the society and with other women from different social status. The fact that the book is composed of essays that discuss the about the position of woman in globalization from varying perspectives made the reading interesting. However, I felt that the book was heavy in content and thus I had to push myself to continue reading. Also, I realized that due to the fact that the authors of the essays are different but they all focus on the same subject there were many ideas that were repeated throughout the book.

Diane Burton says

Best book I've read in a very long time. Everybody should read this. It was written almost 20 years ago but is just as relevant today.

Liz says

This is a collection of essays, which generally means you're getting a mixed bag. I didn't go in expecting the most super radical thing ever but I was hoping for a bit more.

I guess what I found most disappointing was the focus on white, Western, professional-class women's perspectives — in particular, how they can be nice employers of Third World women. Who gives a shit? Arlie Russell Hochschild's "Love and Gold" begins as an incisive analysis of how caring labour, like natural resources, is extracted from the Third World to the First. Third World mothers often migrate to be nannies, leaving their own children in the care of local nannies, a process that obviously causes a lot of grief on both ends. Migrant nannies with children at home will often openly admit that they give their bosses' children the love they can't give their own. This love is often attributed by employers and agencies to romanticised cultures with more family values and less materialism, rather than what it in fact is — an expression of the need to love of women who have had to prioritise money over their own family life.

But then Hochschild goes into some weird liberal argument about how we just need to make sure the whole thing is better regulated. Most of these women would not be leaving their families and communities if they weren't pushed into it by the impoverishment of centuries of imperialism. What is needed is a reversal of that imperial relationship, but Hochschild's not daring enough to imagine that.

Susan Cheever's "The Nanny Dilemma" was even worse — she's an employer of domestic workers who interviews a former nanny of hers, concluding that nannies often have it tough. Her closing argument is that Western women employing nannies and the nannies they employ are more similar than we might think — they're both working women who've chosen to put their energy away from their own kids and into building a career. One of these women gets to see her own kid at the end of a working day, one doesn't, it's not comparable, fuck you.

Similarly, Ehrenreich really really wants us to focus on how all women are oppressed by men's unwillingness to contribute to caring labour. This is fine as far as it goes, I agree with her, her essay ("Maid to Measure") isn't bad exactly. But again, it centres the experience of white Western professional women who employ nannies and domestic workers to do the housework they eschew.

There were some high points. "Filipina Workers in Hong Kong Homes: Household Rules and Regulations", by Nicole Constable, was very good, and made me wanna read her book on the same topic. Her ethnographic methods meant that she prioritised the voices and analysis of the Filipina migrant workers she interviewed. The focus of her piece was on the workers' rage, humiliation, and resistance around their employers' micromanagement of their work, their personal habits, and even the length of their hair. Hardly the stuff of lurid tabloids, it's an everyday power conflict that's reflective of the day to day lives and struggles of a disempowered migrant group. (It made me think a lot of Andrea's checklists for her nannies in *Real Housewives of Melbourne*, and her assertion that her nanny-wrangling skills make her a model for "working women". D:) "Clashing Dreams: Highly Educated Overseas Bridges and Low-Wage US Husbands" by Hung Cam Thai, "Among Women: Migrant Domestic Workers and their Taiwanese Employers Across Generations" by Pei-Chia Lan, and "Selling Sex for Visas: Sex Tourism as a Stepping-Stone to International Migration", by Denise Brennan, are also well worth reading.

In contrast, "Because she looks like a child" by Kevin Bales is a highly vague and sensationalised take on sex trafficking. It opens with a really awful, tragic case study of the debt bondage of a fifteen-year-old girl working in a brothel. After that shocking image, we're given nothing from sex workers or trafficked women

themselves — nothing in their own words. It's all the perspective of Kevin and the organisations he chooses to cite — and very little is actually cited. A lot of big numbers are thrown around with nothing to back them up. There's no distinction made between women who choose to enter the sex industry who had a lot of options, women who didn't have many options, and women who were tricked and forced into the industry. (Plus, Bales completely ignores the existence of sex workers who are not cis women, even though they're a large and visible proportion of sex workers in Thailand.) And I mean, very few of us are fortunate enough to have total freedom to choose the industry we work in and the conditions of our work, it's not black-and-white. But there's a difference, all the same, and it's extremely disingenous to pretend that there's not. Saskia Sassen's essay later in the book is also guilty of collapsing these distinctions. If you seek out actual sex workers' voices, you'll find that often even women who are hyper-exploited have strong criticisms of the anti-trafficking movement, in particular its focus on state intervention. I have criticisms of the work of Laura Agustin (admit it, she's a bit of a liberal) but I think *Sex at the Margins: Migration, Labour Markets and the Rescue Industry* is a strong and necessary critique of many anti-trafficking initiatives, exposing them as frequently violent, coercive, dishonest, and unconcerned with the most desperately underpaid and demeaning employment as long as it's not sex-related.

But very few of the pieces in this collection engage with state violence, the materiality of the border, the bureaucracy of visa classes, the precarity induced by the border, capitalism itself. Most of the essays are like "hmm, migrant women are especially vulnerable to abuse because they're frightened of arrest and deportation, seems like that's just a fact of life, maybe we need more regulation of industries with lots of migrant workers". It's clear that a major factor in the vulnerability of migrant women workers is the border itself, and the colonial relationships that drew those borders and militarised them. I'm not asking for some kind of anarchist manifesto here, but I wish there was a little bit of questioning of the structural conditions causing this vulnerability, a little bit less of a focus on the moral questions plaguing the soul of the white Western bourgeoisie.
