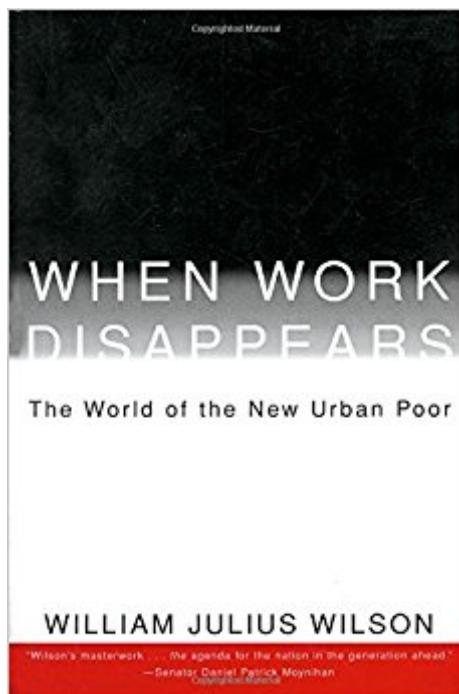


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# When Work Disappears : The World Of The New Urban Poor



## **Synopsis**

Wilson, one of our foremost authorities on race and poverty, challenges decades of liberal and conservative pieties to look squarely at the devastating effects that joblessness has had on our urban ghettos. Marshaling a vast array of data and the personal stories of hundreds of men and women, Wilson persuasively argues that problems endemic to America's inner cities--from fatherless households to drugs and violent crime--stem directly from the disappearance of blue-collar jobs in the wake of a globalized economy. Wilson's achievement is to portray this crisis as one that affects all Americans, and to propose solutions whose benefits would be felt across our society. At a time when welfare is ending and our country's racial dialectic is more strained than ever, *When Work Disappears* is a sane, courageous, and desperately important work. "Wilson is the keenest liberal analyst of the most perplexing of all American problems...[This book is] more ambitious and more accessible than anything he has done before."--*The New Yorker*

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

An unofficial adviser to President Bill Clinton, Wilson has become a celebrity of sorts. A former University of Chicago professor, Wilson--currently on staff at Harvard--has been profiled in *The New Yorker* and dubbed one of America's most influential people by *Time* magazine. A respected thinker on issues of race and poverty, the author of *The Declining Significance of Race* and *The Truly Disadvantaged* offers his take on welfare and inner-city joblessness in *When Work Disappears*. Racism, Wilson argues, plays increasingly less of a role in urban problems. More significant, he claims, are changes in the global economy and the disappearance of unskilled but decent-paying

jobs near cities; according to Wilson, these factors have deprived the urban working class of steady jobs, destroyed inner-city businesses, and caused younger, upwardly mobile residents to flee for the suburbs.

Record levels of unemployment and disappearing jobs in inner-city neighborhoods are the root cause of poverty and social distress among African Americans, contends Wilson, an eminent University of Chicago sociology professor. A galvanizing blueprint for concerned citizens and policy makers, his scholarly study focuses on Chicago's inner-city poor, using three surveys he conducted between 1987 and 1993. Wilson (The Truly Disadvantaged) sees a direct link between growing joblessness and what he calls ghetto-related behavior and attitudes?fatherless children born out of wedlock, drugs, crime, gang violence, hopelessness?but unlike those who blame a "culture of poverty," he emphasizes that structural changes can effect a turnaround. His plan to reverse declining employment and social inequality includes proposals for city-suburban collaboration, private-sector partnerships with public schools, national health insurance, and time limits on welfare for able-bodied recipients combined with guaranteed jobs in a public-works program modeled on the New Deal's Works Progress Administration. Copyright 1996 Reed Business Information, Inc.

This book keeps it real while also managing to keep it interesting too. I have read many of these books on poverty and the working poor and most of them are dry, humorless things. Most books on poverty are written by college professors who over analyze poverty so much that you can't get a real feel for the suffering, privations and other realities that illustrate the pains of life spent in suffocating poverty. This When Work Disappears: The World of the New Urban Poor does a great job of putting a human face on the numbers and science of understanding poverty. What's more while the book centers on black poverty in many ways it never forgets that other races suffer the cruelty of poverty as well. When Work Disappears: The World of the New Urban Poor looks at how black people are uniquely and more intensely affected by poverty in ways that other minorities are not. When Work Disappears: The World of the New Urban Poor proves scientifically two things my grandparents told me growing up as a black man in the United States. My grandfather told me Wolf he said, jobs are disappearing that let a black man with just a high school diploma and good manual dexterity skills make the living wage needed to support a family in the style I was accustomed. My grandfather saw early as the 1960's that, I would not be able to follow in his footsteps if I hoped to live in a nice home in a fine neighborhood. My father's job carrying coal across the water to Sparrows Point Steel Mills by barge was made redundant by a high speed conveyor belt that did his

job much faster 24\7. Lucky for us he was near the end of his working life and we were almost grown when his job died out. My grandfather saw many low skill manual labor jobs die out. Today there are no more elevator operators, assembly jobs and other such low skill positions. Some much is automated centralized and globalized my grandfather told me when I was still in elementary school I needed to focus on getting an office job working with computers or in accounting. My grandfather said people who can't transition to the knowledge economy of the future would not survive. My grandfather knew early I was a science nerd so all he had to do was aim me at computers and I'd take it from there. Today I am a successful computer specialist so I do fine. My grandmother saw the other part of this book come true. My grandmother lived through Jim Crow Racial Segregation she said what kept black communities strong then was that by law successful blacks had to live in the same communities as poor blacks. My grandmother hated segregation but she said, the good thing about that time was black kids got to see successful black lawyers, businessmen, doctors and others because; they lived in the same communities, shopped at the same stores. My grandmother lamented the fact that now with integration rich and better off black folk left the inner city ghettos dispersed into better safer stable multiracial neighborhoods where people of like income seek refuge I number among them. My grandmother asked me a question that troubles me to this day which is why I read books like, When Work Disappears : The World of the New Urban Poor. My grandmother asked me Wolf, if every black man leaves the inner city ghetto for the distant suburbs soon as they become successful who will young black folk have to look up to except the dope dealers, numbers runners and other criminal low life scum of the Earth. She was right and this book proves both my grandparents were right in their observations, they did not have all the letters behind their names but they saw in the 1960's foundations being laid for the ugly new world detailed in When Work Disappears: The World of the New Urban Poor. My grandparents prepared us for the arrival of the information economy so all three of her children including me are doing extremely well. I read books like When Work Disappears: The World of the New Urban Poor because; they show me how I am blessed and why I should try to help others. Left to myself I would never go back to ghetto areas since that life is not something I am at all comfortable with. I go back to ghetto schools and talk to people while trying to help in other ways because; things in inner city ghettos have gotten worse than I ever before. I go to some places in Baltimore that were mostly black when I was young and they were never the horrific war zones I see today. Today when I look at the places of my youth 50 plus years ago I'm shocked at the sheer magnitude of the change from wonderful shops, working class community to absolute bombed out hell hole. It breaks my heart to see people living in such squalor and desolation. This book puts the changes in perspective so I can

try to understand them. When Work Disappears: The World of the New Urban Poor is a book so real it haunts my very soul. If I could give this book fifty stars I would do so in a heart beat because; it is that good.

Cities in the 80s were left unprepared to deal with the crack-cocaine tsunami, the AIDS epidemic, and the steep rise in homeless populations, largely jobs leaving urban centers, Wilson found. As I read Wilson's thorough work, I kept thinking about how similar his findings were to what Anne Case and Angus Deaton more recently found in rural America: heroin addiction, deaths of despair, and unemployment or underemployment. Black, brown, or white it doesn't matter. Long term exposure to environments of chronic unemployment is detrimental to individuals, families, and the communities. The primary problem that Wilson found, which continues to be a problem today is that, "... systematic scientific argument is no match for the dominant belief system -- it is the moral fabric of individuals, not the social and economic structure of society, that is taken to be the root of the problem."

The urban poor are happy to take welfare, never work, commit crimes, do drugs, etc. Sound familiar? People love to tout this idea of the urban poor, based on anecdotes, popular TV and movies, and some media approaches. However, Wilson describes, quite convincingly, a world of the urban poor who yearn for the "American Dream" like the rest of us, who want to work, contribute to society, and make their lives (and their children's lives) better, but are simply unable to do so. This book can get dry by piling on statistic after statistic, chart after chart, but always seems to bring the reader back in by presenting direct quotes from people, typically from ghetto areas of Chicago, on how their lives are effected by their situations. It puts a human face on the issues of poverty in America - a human face that rarely gets seen. For all of those who have grown up in suburban areas, small towns, or cloistered urban situations, I recommend you read this book and open your eyes to the true world of the urban poor. Yes, there are some bad apples, as in any society - but these people want to improve their lives - and we need to ensure we enact responsible policies and give them the opportunity to do so.

It arrived quickly and in good condition. It discusses African Americans in the ghettos of Chicago during the 1970's and 1980's. It looks at every aspect of what their experiences are like, and how they got there. It is a good read with good research, and good interviews. It does repeat some, but, overall it is really informative.

Great condition!!!!!!!

Mr. Williams definitely done his research to address the issues never taken into consideration why things are the way they are. I like his out and out truth about how we suffer a people problems of have and have nots. How we take from the poor to give to those who already have and there is no real bad people but corrupt policy.

I rate this book with five stars because it is telling the message in a scholarly way that I have been saying earlier. I have only began to read it. However, the message is important. It is said if you go grocery shopping while you are hungry you will make different decisions than when you go after eating. Likewise people who don't have many resources will make a different decision.

This is one of the best books that I have ever read that explains the origin of ghettos and inner cities.

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