

Shortlisted Book for the 2024-2025

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Matthew Desmond

Poverty, By America

Date: 2023

List price: \$28 hardback (large print paperback also available)

Publisher website: <https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/675683/poverty-by-america-by-matthew-desmond/>

Publisher description:

The United States, the richest country on earth, has more poverty than any other advanced democracy. Why? Why does this land of plenty allow one in every eight of its children to go without basic necessities, permit scores of its citizens to live and die on the streets, and authorize its corporations to pay poverty wages? In this landmark book, acclaimed sociologist Matthew Desmond draws on history, research, and original reporting to show how affluent Americans knowingly and unknowingly keep poor people poor. Those of us who are financially secure exploit the poor, driving down their wages while forcing them to overpay for housing and access to cash and credit. We prioritize the subsidization of our wealth over the alleviation of poverty, designing a welfare state that gives the most to those who need the least. And we stockpile opportunity in exclusive communities, creating zones of concentrated riches alongside those of concentrated despair. Some lives are made small so that others may grow. Elegantly written and fiercely argued, this compassionate book gives us new ways of thinking about a morally urgent problem. It also helps us imagine solutions. Desmond builds a startlingly original and ambitious case for ending poverty. He calls on us all to become poverty abolitionists, engaged in a politics of collective belonging to usher in a new age of shared prosperity and, at last, true freedom.

This book is shortlisted for the 2024-2025 Book in Common because

- *It is engaging to students and to a broad audience.* This is a highly readable, passionate, and research-driven take on a difficult and multifaceted topic.
- *It has broad appeal across disciplines.* This book will have particular interest to the disciplines within the College of Behavioral and Social Sciences; the College of Business; the College of Communication and Education; and the College of Humanities and Fine Arts. *Poverty, By America* also looks at impacts of consumer and market decisions, as well as intersections between poverty and environmental conditions that will be relevant to courses in the College of Natural Sciences.
- *It is relevant and timely.* The Federal Reserve has found that, from 2019 to 2022, while many families saw large gains in income and wealth during the pandemic, “the income gains were largest among the highest-earning families, and fastest among white families, with income at the median actually registering small declines for both Hispanic and Black families.” The causes and consequences of increasing income inequity in America are extremely relevant and timely.
- *It relates to the university mission.* Many of our students personally face the challenges of structural inequality, as indicated by the high demand for the services provided by Chico State’s Basic Needs Project. Our enduring commitments include a pledge to “coordinate and continually improve academic and support services that maximize comprehensive student well-being.” The Strategic Priority of “Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion” is further centered by this choice, as a way to “address real-world issues of equity, diversity, and inclusion through interdisciplinary” experiences.