

# Nickel and Dimed

BARBARA  
EHRENREICH



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## BARBARA EHRENREICH

One of our country's most recognized and original writers, Barbara Ehrenreich is a journalist, lecturer, critic and social activist. She graduated from Reed College in 1963 with a bachelor's degree in chemistry and physics and received her Ph.D. from Rockefeller University in 1968 with a degree in cell biology. Her passion, however, is social activism and it is this drive that has fueled her many successful articles, books and lectures. Her work has appeared in *The New York Times Magazine*, *The Washington Post Magazine*, *The Atlantic Monthly*, *Harper's*, *The Nation* and the *New Republic*.

Ehrenreich began her career teaching at the State University of New York in the Health Sciences Department (1971-74) and at New York University (1979-81) while writing about women's health care concerns. Her first book *Long March, Short Spring: The Student Uprising at Home and Abroad* was co-authored with her husband at the time, John Ehrenreich, and dealt with student movements in both Europe and the United States. An early work, *The American Health Empire: Power, Profits and Politics* in 1970, was an analysis of problems in the health care system.

Numerous critically acclaimed books followed. Among them are *Fear of Falling: The Inner Life of the Middle Class* (1989), *The Worst Years of Our Lives: Irreverent Notes from a Decade of Greed* (1990), *Blood Rites: Origins and History of the Passions of War* (1997), and *Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America* (1998). With *Nickel and Dimed*, Ehrenreich looked at the plight of the working poor. Taking a series of low paying jobs and attempting to live on what she earned provided Ehrenreich with a unique insider's perspective, and it is this first person experience that distinguishes her book from others on the economic hardships of working Americans. When asked by a reporter at *The Sun* why her book was so successful when the assumption is that middle-class people aren't interested in the subject of poverty, she responded, "*Nickel and Dimed* is very personal and subjective, not preachy. It's just about me trying to survive."

*Nickel and Dimed* helped Ehrenreich fuel an already extraordinarily successful speaking career. She has lectured on three continents and has appeared on national programs including the *Today* show, *Good Morning America*, *Nightline*, and NPR's *All Things Considered*.

Barbara Ehrenreich's work is intelligent, thoughtful and always provocative. Her varied career has spanned television, radio, print and lecture mediums. Recently, she taught essay writing at the Graduate School of Journalism at U. C. Berkeley and women's studies at Brandeis. At the heart of the considerable success she has achieved in all of these fields is Ehrenreich's consistent commitment to giving an articulate voice to those who, for one reason or another, might otherwise be silenced.

Material for this biography came from the following sources: *The Sun* (January 2003), Interview, pg. 5-10, *Contemporary Authors New Revision Series*, Vol. 62 pg. 152-155, *American Women Writers*, Vol. 5, pg. 126-131 and biographical information provided by Barbara Ehrenreich's literary agent.

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