



The Forgotten Americans

John E. Schwarz, Thomas J. Volgy

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“John E. Schwarz and Thomas J. Volgy have joined forces to produce an incisive analysis of the nation’s economic problems, illustrated their book with real people, and linked their material to the political process. This is a major contribution to the most important debate taking place in America. ?Thomas B. Edsall

Does the American Dream still exist when nearly 30 million Americans live in families in which workers find a paycheck and poverty in the same envelope? Just as Michael Harrington's *The Other America* shocked the nation with its disclosure of poverty in the 1960s, John E. Schwarz and Thomas J. Volgy's *The Forgotten Americans* exposes the breadth of poverty that exists today among responsible, hardworking Americans. At the end of the prosperous 1980s, the number of Americans living in working-poor families equaled the combined populations of the nation's 25 largest cities. Contrary to conventional wisdom, this situation is not largely confined to minorities, women, the undereducated or young adults. It is commonplace for workers from nearly all segments of society to be employed in low-paying jobs even during good economic times. *The Forgotten Americans* reveals the betrayal of the hopes and expectations of these industrious people through broad-based factual evidence and the real-life stories of individual families. Their hardship has been ignored at enormous cost to them and the country. Numerous problems at the forefront of national debate—welfare dependency, crime, and the inadequate performance of many American school children—are closely connected to the existence of working poverty on a large scale. Unless corrective action is taken, the country risks the creation of a deeply fractured society arising from the despair of millions of employed people who have discovered that practicing the work ethic yields little reward. The problem is staggering and often misunderstood by politicians, the media, and the public. Once Schwarz and Volgy have outlined the implications of this social and economic tragedy, they propose effective solutions that require simple changes to existing policies—solutions that are politically feasible and can be accomplished without new taxes.

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