

Benjamin S. Warlick
101 Beech Tree Drive
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29 November, 2016

Mrs. Ehrenreich,

I recently read your book *Nickel and Dimed*, and I am amazed by much of its insight into low wage living fifteen years ago, and, after doing some research of my own, how little it has changed since that time. To earn money for college, I work at a local grocery store part time. Since finishing your book, my view of many of my coworkers' lives has been broadened tremendously. I know that many of them have and will spend their whole careers working there, even including one young woman just out of high school, but I had not really considered what this type of employment means for their lives and how much of a challenge they face maintaining any semblance of a typical minimally financially stressed lifestyle (home, car, insurance, food, clothing, and some comforts) earning at or slightly above the stagnant minimum wage.

My hometown of Black Mountain, NC and the nearest city, Asheville, are both dependent on tourism, with a large service industry and high cost of living. These qualities are like the first location featured in *Nickel and Dimed*, Key West, Florida. While this portion of your book is focused on waitressing, I readily understand many of the insights you share. On page 193, for example, you mention that unskilled labor actually requires quite a bit of skill that is merely less valued in society. For example, I see this clearly in the basic position of cashiering, which can involve mastering a complicated computer system and memorizing shortcuts and bugs. Also, you mention on page 27 that waitressing barely affords the worker housing which is also a significant problem for my coworkers, forcing them to work multiple jobs, which you also mention (45) or forcing them to travel long distances to work by foot or bicycle, lacking a car (205).

These similarities between your book and my co-workers' lives allow me to sympathize with the challenges that many low income people must face regularly. Furthermore, I better understand the importance of a city's right to offer a living wage regardless of state minimum wage. The passing of North Carolina House Bill Two, among other infamous adjustments, prevents any city

from adopting living wage laws. Because of reading your book, I KNOW a worker's right to a living wage is vital to making ends meet, even if employer's profit margins are narrowed.

I feel grateful to you for the time you took out of your life to so thoroughly research low wage lifestyles. Your book has a beneficial message that everyone needs to hear. It offers understanding of a group in society often wrongly dismissed or scorned.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Benjamin Warlick". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent initial 'B'.

Benjamin Warlick