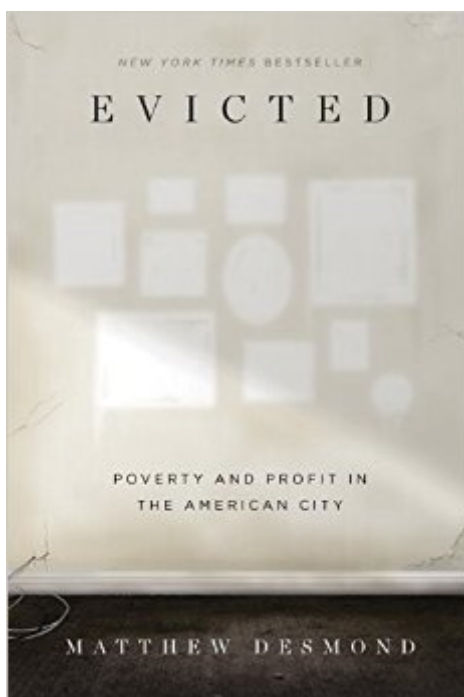


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# Evicted: Poverty And Profit In The American City



## Synopsis

New York Times Bestseller From Harvard sociologist and MacArthur "Genius" Matthew Desmond, a landmark work of scholarship and reportage that will forever change the way we look at poverty in America

Â In this brilliant, heartbreaking book, Matthew Desmond takes us into the poorest neighborhoods of Milwaukee to tell the story of eight families on the edge. Arleen is a single mother trying to raise her two sons on the \$20 a month she has left after paying for their rundown apartment. Scott is a gentle nurse consumed by a heroin addiction. Lamar, a man with no legs and a neighborhood full of boys to look after, tries to work his way out of debt. Vanetta participates in a botched stickup after her hours are cut. All are spending almost everything they have on rent, and all have fallen behind. The fates of these families are in the hands of two landlords: Sherrena Tarver, a former schoolteacher turned inner-city entrepreneur, and Tobin Charney, who runs one of the worst trailer parks in Milwaukee. They loathe some of their tenants and are fond of others, but as Sherrena puts it, "Love don't pay the bills." She moves to evict Arleen and her boys a few days before Christmas. Even in the most desolate areas of American cities, evictions used to be rare. But today, most poor renting families are spending more than half of their income on housing, and eviction has become ordinary, especially for single mothers. In vivid, intimate prose, Desmond provides a ground-level view of one of the most urgent issues facing America today. As we see families forced into shelters, squalid apartments, or more dangerous neighborhoods, we bear witness to the human cost of America's vast inequality and to people's determination and intelligence in the face of hardship. Based on years of embedded fieldwork and painstakingly gathered data, this masterful book transforms our understanding of extreme poverty and economic exploitation while providing fresh ideas for solving a devastating, uniquely American problem. Its unforgettable scenes of hope and loss remind us of the centrality of home, without which nothing else is possible.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Evicted" is the story of eight families in Milwaukee, WI--six families struggling mightily to pay the rent on their increasingly crappy apartments, and two sets of landlords. The landlords are either a new breed of venture capitalists or merely slumlords, depending on your perspective. Since roughly 2000, rents have shot up while the properties have either stayed the same or declined, so that by 2013 about one out of every three poor families spent seventy percent of their income on housing. Think about that for a minute. As a result of this, poor families are always one crisis--really one unexpected expense--away from being evicted. The ramifications of being evicted on one's emotional, financial, and physical states are profound. First, once someone gets evicted, finding any kind of housing becomes extremely difficult--one of the ladies called 90 apartments before she found one that would take her and her two kids. You can place blame on these struggling families if you want to, but the fact of the matter is it's extraordinarily difficult for them to succeed, or even to just get by. I found this book very interesting--to say I enjoyed it would be wrong because much of it is depressing. It made the problems of the urban poor personal. I quite liked some of them and I was rooting for them--"Please, let this landlord call her back!" I felt bad when Vanetta went to prison for armed robbery after her hours were cut, and I cheered when Scott finally got clean. I read it all the way through the endnotes, which are also quite interesting and provide some insights or background info. I really wanted to find out how all the families were doing today (the book takes place in 2008-2009) because I became attached to them and had come to care about them. Unfortunately the author doesn't tell you what became of them, although if I had to guess I'd say their lives continued on in more or less the same vein. A word on the swearing: this is a well written, professionally done sociological study. The author only uses swears when he's quoting one of the people he interviewed. If you were desperate, poor, depressed and angry, you, too might be given to curse words. If you enjoy sociological and/or cultural topics, if you care about equality in America, if you are interested in how grinding poverty affects families, pick this up. I learned a lot.

A difficult book to get through. Not that it was poorly written or boring just its subject matter was hard. And that is what made it so powerful. More real stories than boring analysis which is right up

my alley. Statistics are fine but I want to know about the real people and their stories not just graphs and charts. I had a real rough patch 25 plus years ago and was very near what a lot of these people are going through. I know their fear, panic, depression, feeling of worthlessness first hand and that is what made this book an excellent read for me. When I got my feet back on the ground and bought my first house we used to have a mail box right out front. At the end of the month I used to write my check for my mortgage at night when I did my bills and go to the mailbox and put it in. I used to look up at the stars, close my eyes, and thank God that I had a place to stay for another 30 days. Although many years have past the scars of that time never left me and never will and I am glad. A reminder of what could happen. All of these people have my sympathy because I have been there myself. Powerful and relevant-well worth the time.

Evicted is a powerful and brutal read. I'm a bit of a novice when it comes to nonfiction reading, but as a life long renter, I was intrigued by this topic. Fortunately, my experiences as a renter have been as far removed from the experiences depicted in this book as you can get. The author focuses on the city of Milwaukee, and paints a truly disturbing picture of families and individuals held hostage by exorbitant rents, condemned properties and a vicious cycle of poverty that holds them in a death grip. I was more than a bit intimidated by this 400+ page volume, and was convinced that I had committed myself to a giant volume of dry statistics and government policy. It didn't take me long to realize how wrong I was. This is an extremely well written book with a driving narrative that is compelling and hard to put down. Desmond follows eight families as they struggle to pay the rent, keep the lights on and their children fed. He also gives us a glimpse of a typical landlord, seeking to make profits off of those with little to no income. Reading about these people trying to make ends meet on a shockingly low income is painful and eye opening. I was feeling battered and weary from these tales of crime, poverty, drug abuse and bad decisions and was wondering if the author would ever offer up any sort of solution. He does at the end, and to my novice view, it seems amazingly simple. Evicted has changed many of my preconceptions and has saddened me beyond words. I think I had a rather abstract view of life in America's inner cities, but this book has brought it into focus and made the plight of inner city residents all too real. Heartbreaking, fully sourced, and brutal, Evicted is a must read for any American and should serve as a call to action for anyone looking to make a difference whether it be addressing the issues of homelessness in your hometown or changing government policy. A must read.

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