



NANCY: An eye-opening account of daily life for hard-working Americans earning low wages. Linda Tirado started life in the middle class, and fell into the poor working class through misfortune. I found her insights disturbing and helpful. A well-written gritty and truthful autobiographical book. It causes me to look with new eyes at the service people who wait on me in stores, restaurants and beyond. I found myself often thinking, "I never thought of it that way before." I try now to be kinder, wondering how I could bring some joy to them.



KATHARINE: A great book for the business management classes at our college. I think anyone going into management needs to think about the lives of their workers. If you aren't paying someone a living wage, then you need to take a serious look at the company and whether you want to choose to work there.



PRISCILLA: Bless her heart. She does have a rough life, or before she wrote this best seller. My, my, my. What can we do about this ladies? People shouldn't have to work two jobs to survive. What ever happened to the American Dream?



JANE: Whew. That last chapter... her letter to rich people was rather rough. She made some good points there. Like Nancy, I never quite thought of it that way before. I felt like she was lecturing me. I need to go to confession. I need to do something. But what? Yes, Priscilla, what can we do about this?



MOLLY: Go Linda! She's got this going on. Black folks have been treated this way since the beginning of our country, but I didn't realize so many whites face this, too. Isn't there a better way to run our country? Bernie Sanders? Elizabeth Warren? I don't see this changing any time soon. From everything I hear, it's just getting worse.



ABIGAIL: We need reform in America. This is what happens when we allow corporations to control our country. Life is quickly becoming impossible for many Americans. We need to fight for better minimum wages. The gap between the rich and the poor keeps widening, and more people are on the poor side.



SALLIE: I love her discussion about the way the poor are treated and her comments on the way they raise their children. The judgements made sometimes are just downright wrong. I liked her standing up for her own ability to raise children. Like when people were judging her for getting pregnant, and trying to assess whether she could raise her own child. The rich sometimes do a lousy job of raising children. Love isn't based on how much money you have.



Discussion Guide



About the Book

Book Title: Hand to Mouth: Living in Bootstrap America

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Questions for Discussion

1. What were your general impressions of this book?
2. What have been your personal experiences working in low wage jobs? Did you find your experiences similar to hers? Why or why not?
3. A common opinion is that poor people have children to make money. What is the author's take on this? What do you think?
4. The American Dream suggests that we can lift ourselves up "by our own bootstraps." What does this book have to say about this? What's your take on the American Dream?
5. How does Linda describe her plight as a minimum wage worker and what her employer expects of her. Will this impact your thoughts when you encounter service workers? Why or why not?
6. What impact do you think this book can have on the way things are in America? Will writing and talking about it lead to change? Why or why not?
7. At the end, she writes a letter to rich people. What did you think of this letter? Did it speak to you, or did it echo your own thoughts? Explain.
8. Read over the MAMs comments on the book. Which of them do you most agree with and why?
9. In what ways, if any, will this book change your life or perspective?

On YouTube: Real Time with Bill Maher: Linda Tirado – Hand to Mouth (HBO) (9:17)

Linda Tirado and US poverty [HD] Late Night Live, ABC RN (3:15)