

A Mother's Day Wish for Moms in Poverty

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/EINPresswire.com/ -- For some mothers, there will be no flowers or brunches this Mother's Day, because their families cannot afford gifts. These moms are rarely celebrated. But they should be.

Raising kids without enough money to meet their basic needs is like being an Olympic athlete deprived of oxygen. Under extreme stress, they're doing something that's already difficult under the best of conditions. Though many low-income moms deserve medals, they're often judged harshly as they trudge across an uneven playing field."

Perhaps we more fortunate parents roll our eyes because she always says no when asked to work a bake sale or chaperone a school trip. We're forgetting

that she has an hourly wage job — as women disproportionately do — with no predictability in her schedule and no paid time off.

Perhaps she splurges on ice cream for her daughter's birthday. Everyone in the checkout line feels entitled to pass judgment on the grocery choices of someone using Food Stamps — especially if she's overweight, as most Americans are.

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Joanne Goldblum, National Diaper Bank Network

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While 4 in 10 American families rely on mothers as the sole or primary breadwinner in the family, women still do not have a fair chance to earn a living wage in the United States. Women are over-represented in low-wage jobs and, even when they



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do skilled work, are still paid less than their male counterparts. American women earn 79 cents for every dollar that male workers do. On top of that, they shoulder more elder and child care responsibilities in a nation that doesn't have adequate systems to support either.

In decades of serving people in poverty, I found that that most work, though in low-wage jobs that often don't offer full-time positions or benefits. They are essential jobs that we've collectively decided need not be well compensated: home health aides, child care providers, cleaners. Research by the Economic Policy Institute found that among poor adults who were eligible to work, 63 percent were employed. Keep in mind that the study was done when 3.3 million Americans were unemployed and actively seeking a job. Of those working poor, almost 20 percent were in part-time jobs.

It isn't that poor moms and dads aren't willing to work — it's that the economy offers them so few opportunities to prosper from hard work and that safety net programs are inadequate to supplement low wages or provide for those who cannot work. Safety net programs like Temporary Assistance to Needy Families are available to fewer families as states put up more barriers to applicants. The purchasing power of these benefits has fallen more than 20 percent in the past decade. Until we remedy these problems, there will be unhappy Mother's Days for too many families. While we do that important work, we should also be treating these mothers with the respect that they deserve.

On Mother's Day, I'd like recognize all the moms struggling to make ends meet:

Thank you for going without lunch yourself most days so that you have the money to buy diapers.

Thank you for all those evenings that you come home from work exhausted and then go straight to the kitchen to make dinner, because even the occasional take-out night is a luxury you can't afford.

Thank you for driving your kids to a safer neighborhood to trick-or-treat, even though you knew people kept peering out of their big, beautiful houses at your old clunker.

Thank you for taking two buses in the rain so that you could pick up library books for your children.

Thank you for those Christmas mornings that you couldn't spend with your family, because nursing home workers cannot have holidays off.

There is so much that you do to make life better for your children. You are swimming against a tide of unfair policy that pushes you back. But you are still swimming. You're amazing. You deserve roses, chocolates, breakfast in bed. Most of all, you deserve a fair chance to earn a living wage and real help when that's not possible.

Written by Joanne Goldblum, executive director of the [National Diaper Bank Network](#), the above article originally appeared as part of her regular column on [Huffington Post Impact](#).

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