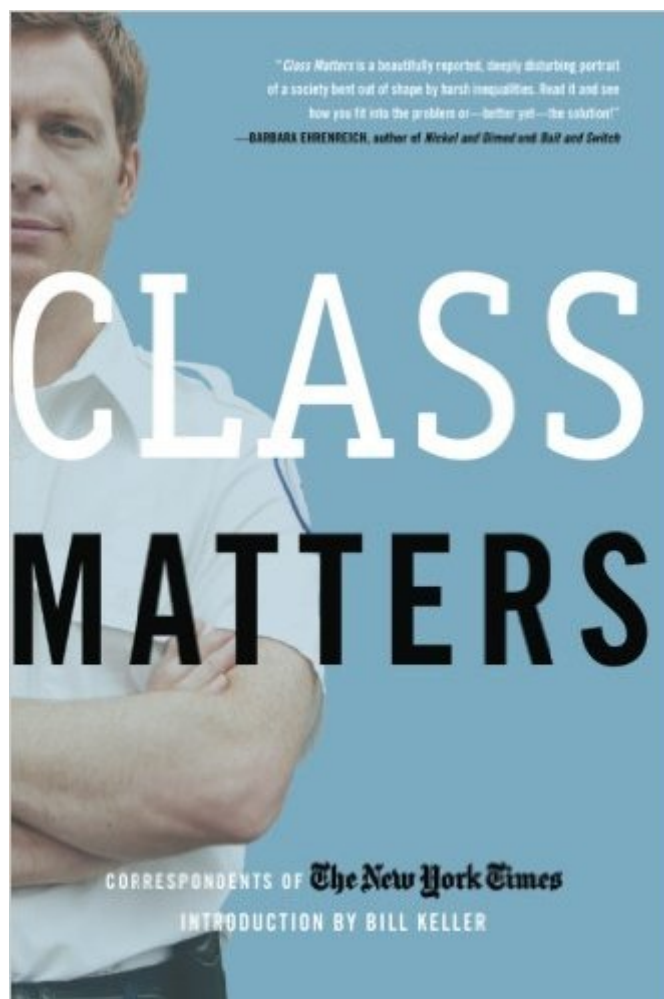


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# Class Matters



"Class Matters is a beautifully reported, deeply disturbing portrait of a society bent out of shape by harsh inequalities. Read it and see how you fit into the problem or—better yet—the solution!"  
—BARBARA EHRENRICH, author of *Wired and Gilded* and *Ball and Chain*

# CLASS MATTERS

CORRESPONDENTS OF *The New York Times*  
INTRODUCTION BY BILL KELLER



## Synopsis

The acclaimed New York Times series on social class in America and its implications for the way we live our lives. We Americans have long thought of ourselves as unburdened by class distinctions. We have no hereditary aristocracy or landed gentry, and even the poorest among us feel that they can become rich through education, hard work, or sheer gumption. And yet social class remains a powerful force in American life. In *Class Matters*, a team of New York Times reporters explores the ways in which class—defined as a combination of income, education, wealth, and occupation—influences destiny in a society that likes to think of itself as a land of opportunity. We meet individuals in Kentucky and Chicago who have used education to lift themselves out of poverty and others in Virginia and Washington whose lack of education holds them back. We meet an upper-middle-class family in Georgia who moves to a different town every few years, and the newly rich in Nantucket whose mega-mansions have driven out the longstanding residents. And we see how class disparities manifest themselves at the doctor's office and at the marriage altar. For anyone concerned about the future of the American dream, *Class Matters* is truly essential reading. "Class Matters is a beautifully reported, deeply disturbing, portrait of a society bent out of shape by harsh inequalities. Read it and see how you fit into the problem or a better yet the solution!"—Barbara Ehrenreich, author of *Nickel and Dimed* and *Bait and Switch*

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## Customer Reviews

Most books about race and class in America tend toward the macroscopic, marshalling their

arguments behind surveys, statistics, and broad statements of theory or conjecture. Case studies or anecdotes about specific individuals are presented, if at all, to illustrate and particularize from whatever generalized conclusions their authors happen to be espousing. Such works of course serve useful purposes, but they can seem coldly impersonal, lacking any sense of the human lives that comprise all those statistics. Only occasionally do writers like Studs Terkel or Barbara Ehrenreich come along to put a human face on these issues. Journalism, on the other hand, revels in the particular. Human drama provides the attraction, and individual stories create the base from which to propel the writer into broader statements of issues and positions. Thus, it is hardly surprising that CLASS MATTERS, a book compiled from stories previously published about class in America by the New York Times, should consist largely of anecdotes. That it works so well is a tribute not just to the writers themselves, but to the editorial framers of this collection. CLASS MATTERS addresses the great taboo of America, the myth of a classless society. Never does the book claim that American life is caste-bound or separated into rigid classes. Rather, the opening chapter asserts that while class mobility still exists (that is, one can be born poor and lower class but, through dint of steady self-application in school and hard work thereafter, the opportunities for "upgrading" oneself are effectively limitless), the degree of such mobility has lessened considerably in the last 30 years.

I just finished reading Class Matters on my new Kindle which I love by the way. I have terrible eyesight and the Kindle's lit reading area and adjustable fonts were a God send. Baltimore, Maryland and its surrounding environs are collectively some of the most racially segregated areas in these United States. I live in Towson, Maryland a somewhat well to do area north of Baltimore City but in Baltimore County. Class Matters used an illustration of how different classes of people are treated when they each have a heart attack. The poorest of the poor heart attack victim got no choice of what hospital they went to. The middle class guy heart attack victim got to choose between a lesser and better hospital's. The rich guy had friends who insisted he go to the hospital via emergency transport and he was given the option of choosing between the better and best hospitals. Needless to say both middle and upper class heart attack victim's had the best post heart attack outcomes. What made me remember this is I have a retired friend who lives in the luxury building I call home. He had the best doctors. As he was checked out before upcoming percedures they found much more wrong than expected. He was rushed off to be seen to right away. I used to live on Medical Assistance. When I went to the internist on Medical Assistance (Medicaid) I was seen exclusively by Physician Assistants and Nurse Practioners. The waiting room for poor medicaid

patents was a dismal depressing, ill lit salmon pink colored mess that was filled with funk. Today I see doctors in my middle to upper middle class area and the waiting rooms are awesome.

Aquariums line the walls, well dressed people, lively colors and get this a Starbuck's in the lobby.

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