



Saving Bernice: Battered Women, Welfare, and Poverty (Northeastern Series on Gender, Crime, and Law)

Jody Raphael

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Skillfully interweaving Bernice's own eloquent words about her harrowing abuse with descriptions of other women's similar experiences and a rich synthesis of statistical findings, Jody Raphael demonstrates convincingly that domestic violence and dependence on public assistance are intricately linked. In a work that is sure to stir controversy, she challenges traditional views and stereotypes (conservative and liberal) about welfare recipients, arguing that many poor women are neither lazy nor paralyzed by a "culture of poverty," but instead are trapped by their batterers.

Bernice's ordeals at the hands of her abusive partner -- brutal beatings, violent rapes, threats on her life, stalking, blocked access to birth control, and sabotage of efforts to find a job -- resonate throughout the work. The experiences she relates provide crucial insights into the welfare system and illuminate its failures, successes, and potential in helping women like her.

This disquieting yet inspiring book puts a human face on the heated public policy debate over welfare reform. Above all, it is Bernice's life story and, through her voice, the story of countless other battered women who are isolated in poverty and welfare by the power and control of their abusers.

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