



Rich, Free, and Miserable: The Failure of Success in America

By John Brueggemann



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Compared to much of the rest of the world, America and its citizens are rich. But many people are also deeply miserable—at work, at home, or both. This provocative book unpacks why so many people are struggling, both emotionally and financially, in a nation that looks so prosperous on the surface. Author John Brueggemann not only outlines these pressing social problems, but also offers practical suggestions for people looking to make a positive change.

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Editorial Review

Review

Rich, Free, and Miserable examines why so many successful people are miserable, at work and at home, struggling emotionally and financially in the world's most prosperous nation. Brueggemann's book...is clearly written and easy to follow....[Brueggemann] drew upon existing research to try to diagnose what ails contemporary America. He cites numerous studies that show that Americans feel less connected to each other, that they have less time and that membership in civic organizations is declining. (*Schenectady Gazette*, August 2010)

Brueggemann's *Rich, Free, and Miserable* provides a concise and fairly comprehensive examination of the consequences of unregulated markets on the moral life of America. . . .[T]his book is insightful, well written, and comprehensive. (*Critical Sociology*)

This book is a searing indictment of the invasion of market thinking into every corner of American life, including areas where market considerations should never be primary, as when we hear about 'the health industry' or 'the education industry.' Brueggemann points out that market pressures undermine moral commitments dear to liberals, such as social justice, and moral commitments dear to conservatives, such as personal loyalty and responsibility. He suggests the possibility of a civil discussion across our ideological divides to think about how we can resist long-standing pressures that undermine the moral life of all of us. It is a badly needed book and deserves a wide and diverse audience. (Robert Bellah, Professor of Sociology, Emeritus, University of California, Berkeley; coauthor of *Habits of the Heart*)

A highly accessible account of what Brueggemann calls the Death Zone?the grim moral universe of an America where markets have overwhelmed government and civil society. A Durkheimian critique that, despite the unsparing assessment of the moral crisis, points to the hopeful possibility of American renewal. (Charles Derber, professor of sociology, Boston College; author of *The Wilding of America and Corporation Nation*)

Cultural and political conservatives rail against the loss of civility, morality, and family values while simultaneously celebrating its principal cause?the individualist, materialist, and competitive free market. In *Rich, Free, and Miserable*, John Brueggemann sets the record straight, with prose that is powerful, engaging, and as contemporary as yesterday's newspaper. People who long for civility and community should turn off their iPods, their cell phones, and their laptops, and read this book. (Barry Schwartz, professor of psychology, Swarthmore College; author of *The Paradox of Choice and Practical Wisdom*)

Brueggemann's sociology of every-day experience shows how the power of the market is stealing our neighborhoods, our families, our time, our lives. I was reading it on the plane from Fargo to Los Angeles, and it was so fascinating that my seat partner surreptitiously read it as I did. And then he started talking about how it makes sense of his own life. This is a great conversation-starter. (Glen Harold Stassen, Lewis B. Smedes Professor of Christian Ethics, Fuller Theological Seminary, author of *Kingdom Ethics: Following Jesus in Contemp*)

The conversational and open-ended approach the author engages in is excellent. The biggest questions and conundrums of our day are tacked head-on. Grounded in important issues and questions, and up-to-date in current social science research, this book addresses the core questions of our time in a well-balanced, non-

partisan tone. (Vincent Roscigno, professor of sociology, Ohio State University)

About the Author

John Brueggemann is professor of sociology and Quadracci Chair in Social Responsibility at Skidmore College. He is the author of *Racial Competition and Class Solidarity* and a number of journal articles, and he is a regular speaker on topics including class, race, inequality, and social change.

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Jack Bell:

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