



The Progress Index "Getting 'Nickel and Dimed'"

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Ladies, let's flip coins — heads, you lose; tails, you lose.

As sometimes today, the women of the 1990s filled low-paying occupations for the American society.

The production of "Nickel and Dimed" aptly includes jobs at or below the poverty level, nearly always assigned to women: waitresses, cleaning ladies, low-paid nursing home low-paid and store clerks.

The upper and middle classes are subsidized by the low-income working class. This could be the theme of the production, played by six actors, at the Sycamore Rouge in Old Towne Petersburg.

Barbara, the leading lady, Pamela Bradley (in absence of H. Lynn Smith), played an undercover journalist who chose to live part of her life among the nearly indigent hard-working women who had no union to represent them.

The other female actresses are Jennifer Catton, Kirsten Ruber, Adama Oneydike, who each played multiple parts. Logan Conner, the only visible man, acted several parts, also.

A highlight of the show was Adama Oneydike as she jettisoned her body out into the middle and upper class audience and shouted, "What would you pay your cleaning lady? Would you wash your own car?" This seemed to cast a guilt feeling among the audience when confronted by such accusing questions.

Job interviewers for these women were quite liberal, and hiring was assured when employers discovered that these ladies were willing to work for low wages. In fact, the interviews lasted only a few minutes.

Pamela Bradley, with her lone, almost confidential statements to the audience, gave the play a cohesiveness. As an understudy, she must have been a quick study as well. She, as Barbara, could not endure the hectic life of a waitress and promptly quit.

Finding that Holly, portrayed by Kirsten Ruber, was pregnant and later injured, Barbara tried to persuade her to take time off. Holly resisted because, although it was meager, she wanted to get paid something for her hard work.

Barbara often talked to a shadow behind a screen, like it was her inner voice. The audience could not view the person's visage, but the shadow spoke like a professional consultant.

Logan Conner, with his many parts, did a splendid job especially when he described wealth is according to the numbers.

Jennifer Catton, also with many roles, offered stability to the thespians when she tried to comfort Holly and supported others in their plight.

Very little, if any, humor was injected into the play, for comic relief was not needed. The production had a platform: People are often paid too little for their thankless, menial labors. Economic inequality for women was most evident in this production. The man was the manager/supervisor and they were his workers.

Director, Natasha Lee Martin has reason to be proud of her versatile players.

The play is based on a book by Barbara Einherich, "Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting by in America."

Interested in Acting? Two workshops...

WORKSHOP #1: Audition Technique for Acting for the Camera

WORKSHOP #2: Audition Technique for Stage Acting

Natasha Lee Martin, the director for Nickel and Dimed, brings her years of experience in film, television, industrial video and the stage to two special workshops at Sycamore Rouge on Sunday, May 4, 2008! Workshops will run \$60 for each three-hour session, or \$90 for the full day.