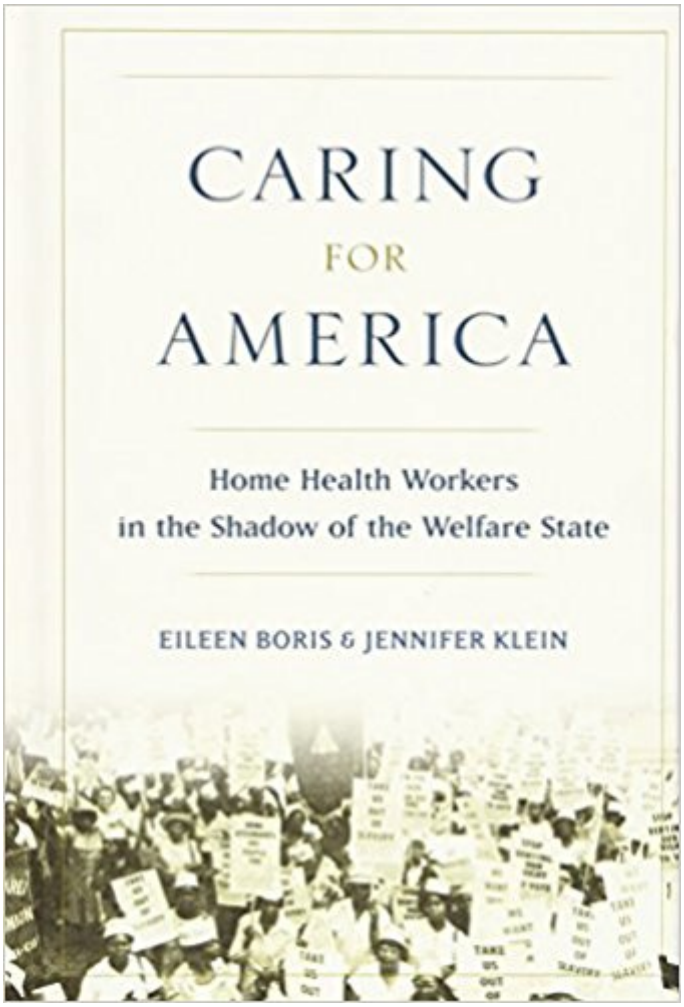
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Caring For America: Home Health Workers In The Shadow Of The Welfare State



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Synopsis

In this sweeping narrative history from the Great Depression of the 1930s to the Great Recession of today, Caring for America rethinks both the history of the American welfare state from the perspective of care work and chronicles how home care workers eventually became one of the most vibrant forces in the American labor movement. Eileen Boris and Jennifer Klein demonstrate the ways in which law and social policy made home care a low-waged job that was stigmatized as welfare and relegated to the bottom of the medical hierarchy. For decades, these front-line caregivers labored in the shadows of a welfare state that shaped the conditions of the occupation. Disparate, often chaotic programs for home care, which allowed needy, elderly, and disabled people to avoid institutionalization, historically paid poverty wages to the African American and immigrant women who constituted the majority of the labor force. Yet policymakers and welfare administrators linked discourses of dependence and independence-claiming that such jobs would end clients' and workers' "dependence" on the state and provide a ticket to economic independence. The history of home care illuminates the fractured evolution of the modern American welfare state since the New Deal and its race, gender, and class fissures. It reveals why there is no adequate long-term care in America.Caring for America is much more than a history of social policy, however; it is also about a powerful contemporary social movement. At the front and center of the narrative are the workers-poor women of color-who have challenged the racial, social, and economic stigmas embedded in the system. Caring for America traces the intertwined, sometimes conflicting search of care providers and receivers for dignity, self-determination, and security. It highlights the senior citizen and independent living movements; the civil rights organizing of women on welfare and domestic workers; the battles of public sector unions; and the unionization of health and service workers. It rethinks the strategies of the U.S. labor movement in terms of a growing care work economy. Finally, it makes a powerful argument that care is a basic right for all and that care work merits a living wage.

Book Information

Hardcover: 320 pages
Publisher: Oxford University Press; 1 edition (April 11, 2012)
Language: English
ISBN-10: 0195329112
ISBN-13: 978-0195329117
Product Dimensions: 9.3 x 1.2 x 6.4 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.2 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars 2 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #1,148,708 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #110 inÃ Â Books > Textbooks > Medicine & Health Sciences > Medicine > Clinical > Nursing Home Care #171 inÃ Â Books > Medical Books > Nursing > Nursing Home Care #3019 inÃ Â Books > Textbooks > Social Sciences > Gender Studies

Customer Reviews

"Caring for America is a remarkable achievement. At once a simple story of how a large and growing sector of disadvantaged women fought for dignity and the right to be treated as workers, it is simultaneously a subtle analysis of the tension between private needs and state intervention. This inspiring tale is, in important ways, the story of modern America." --Alice Kessler-Harris, author of In Pursuit of Equity: Women, Men, and the Quest for Economic Citizenship in Twentieth Century America "This long awaited book is the definitive historical account of the growth of employment and unionization in publicly funded home care work. Boris and Klein provide a powerful, deeply researched analysis of this burgeoning type of 'intimate labor,' past and present. Caring for America is a must-read for anyone interested in low-wage work, the labor movement, and the future of the massive and rapidly expanding carework sector of the U.S. economy." --Ruth Milkman, City University of New York, and author of L.A. Story: Immigrant Workers and the Future of the U.S. Labor Movement "Caring for America is an outstanding study of an industry, social movements, and the people who compose them. It is fundamentally an analysis of a fight for social and economic justice and a tribute to a workforce that has emerged out of invisibility and become a source of energy for a workers' movement operating both inside and outside organized labor. Boris and Klein introduce the reader to a decades old struggle for dignity which has witnessed twists and turns but in order to sustain itself must rely on its own energy rather than the good-will of outsiders." --Bill Fletcher, Jr., co-author of Solidarity Divided and Visiting Scholar, CUNY Graduate Center "Is caring for the ill and the elderly real work or purely a labor of love? Engaging and deeply insightful, Eileen Boris and Jennifer Klein's Caring for America draws on historical record to make an irrefutable case for the social, economic, and political significance of carework. Scholars, policy-makers, and all of us who provide or require care should pay notice." --Viviana A. Zelizer, Lloyd Cotsen '50 Professor of Sociology, Princeton University "Eileen Boris and Jennifer Klein's Caring for America investigates the history of the home health care crisis. The study makes a significant contribution to labor history, welfare history, and the history of health care. ... Caring for America is thoroughly researched,

sophisticated study by top scholars who have produced an important exploration of home health care in the United States." --The Journal of American History"Caring for America is an important, difficult, and timely book... [it] will be a tremendous asset to legal historians, labor historians, and scholars of the United States welfare state." --Law and History Review "Boris and Klein's study is exemplary... and is one of the finest studies anywhere of the complex political and economic interests that are associated with care." --Labour/Le Travail "Caring for America [is] part feminist critique of the welfare state, part labor history, part organizing case study... Boris and Klein meticulously trace the role of government policy in the creation of home care as a low-wage occupation." --DISSENT "Eileen Boris and Jennifer Klein fill a void in the literature devoted to care work by documenting the history of this struggle for recognition. In addition to its passionate yet sober prose style, the strength of the argument comes from the authors' particular perspective. While both are professional historians, they study home care work through the voices of worker activists who fought for justice. Thus, this text is as much a history of a social movement as it is a history of public policy. Indeed, the authors treat these two forces, policy and praxis, as dialectically related. And this dynamic, movement oriented character of the study reveals an authorial imagination as much sociological as historical." --Critical Sociology"Historians Boris and Klein give us a narrative of the development of this still-evolving job-as well as of the activism and organizing of these workers-that is at once compelling in its nuance and local specificity and sophisticated in it analytical breadth. ...a rich historical analysis..." --Signs "This important book brings attention to a neglected segment of the contemporary US workforce. Caring for America is essential reading for historians of labor and the welfare state. Policymakers, organizers, workers, and current and future clients must take stock of the authors' crucial point that working conditions and the quality of care are interdependent." --Labor"In Caring for America, Boris and Klein fill a void in the literature devoted to care work by documenting the history of this struggle for recognition. In addition to its passive yet somber prose style, the strength of the argument comes from the authors' particular perspective. While both are professional historians, they study home care work through the voices of worker activists who fought for justice. Thus, this text is as much a history of social movement as it is a history of public policy." --Critical Sociology

Eileen Boris is Hull Professor of Feminist Studies and Professor of History, Black Studies, and Global Studies at University of California, Santa Barbara.Jennifer Klein is Professor of History at Yale University.

Readable yet academic-shedding light on an overlooked workforce. If you or someone you care about will need homecare in the future you need to read this book!

Great history of poor (mostly women) workers gaining a voice in an often-ignored but fast growing field. A much needed work.

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