



# Hard Work Is Not Enough: Gender and Racial Inequality in an Urban Workspace

*Katrinell M. Davis*

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The Great Recession punished American workers, leaving many underemployed or trapped in jobs that do not provide the income or opportunity they need. Moreover, the gap between the wealthy and the poor has widened in past decades as mobility remains stubbornly unchanged. Against this deepening economic divide, a dominant cultural narrative has taken root: immobility, especially for the working class, is driven by shifts in demand for labor. In this context, and with right-to-work policies proliferating nationwide, workers are encouraged to avoid government dependency by arming themselves with education and training.

Drawing on archival material and interviews with African American women transit workers in the San Francisco Bay Area, Katrinell Davis grapples with our understanding of mobility as it intersects with race and gender in the postindustrial and post-civil rights United States. Considering the consequences of declining working conditions within the public transit workplace of Alameda County, Davis illustrates how worker experience--on and off the job--has been undermined by workplace norms and administrative practices designed to address flagging worker commitment and morale. Providing a comprehensive account of how political, social, and economic factors work together to shape the culture of opportunity in a postindustrial workplace, she shows how government manpower policies, administrative policies, and drastic shifts in unionization have influenced the prospects of low-skilled workers.

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