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The Shriver Report: A Woman's Nation Pushes Back from the Brink

Reporting and examining the new American reality: 1 in 3 American women lives on or over the brink of poverty

LOS ANGELES — In an era when women have solidified their position as half of the U.S. workforce and a whopping two-thirds of the primary or co-breadwinners in American families, the reality is that one in three American women is living at or near the brink of poverty. That's 42 million women and the 28 million children who depend on them, living one single incident—a doctor's bill, a late paycheck, or a broken-down car—away from economic ruin. Women make up nearly two-thirds of minimum-wage workers, and a vast majority of them receive no paid sick days. This is at a time when women earn most of the college and advanced degrees in this country, make most of the consumer spending decisions by far, and are more than half of the nation's voters.

This week, **Maria Shriver** is launching ***The Shriver Report: A Woman's Nation Pushes Back from the Brink***, in partnership with the **Center for American Progress**. This is the third in a series of groundbreaking examinations of cultural transformations impacting American women and families. This *Shriver Report* is a multiplatform study of the profound change in the makeup and reality of American families and the failure of government, business, and other cultural institutions to adapt to this change and deal with it. The fact is that the average family is not what it used to be. Today, only one-fifth of our families have a male breadwinner and a female homemaker. And it's not only that women are breadwinning in most families. These days, more than half of babies born to mothers under age 30 are born to single mothers, the majority of whom are white. This is a seismic shift, and it's time for our institutions to catch up.

"For too many American women, the dream of 'having it all' has morphed into 'just hanging on,'" said Maria Shriver. "*The Shriver Report* is about what working women need now to be successful in today's economy, where women are powerful, but also powerless. Identifying why that is and what we as a nation can do about it is the mission of this report."

"*The Shriver Report* makes clear that the challenges facing millions of American women who are living on the brink of poverty are not inevitable, but the result of the choices that government, businesses, and individuals make," said **Neera Tanden**, president of the Center for American Progress. "We do not have to accept endemic economic insecurity, perennial work-life conflicts, and inadequate and unaffordable child care as our reality. It is our hope that this unique collaboration between the Center for American Progress and Maria Shriver not only ignites a national conversation but also spurs real movement to lift women up and pull them back from the brink."

The Shriver Report takes stock of the developing crisis and explores what women need now to push back from the brink by proposing concrete solutions—a combination of public, private, and personal approaches—that can help reignite the American Dream for women and their families. *The Shriver Report* finds that these solutions would also help the economy at large. We report that closing the wage gap between men and women would cut the poverty rate in half, adding nearly half a trillion dollars to the national economy and boosting the gross domestic product by 2 to 3 percent.

"At its core, this *Shriver Report* is a call to the nation to modernize its relationship to women. Without a new approach, we are benching our front line and weakening our economy and families," said **Karen Skelton**, editor-in-chief of *The Shriver Report*. "*The Shriver Report* explores how we got here, why it matters, and what we can do about it."

The report brings together a star-studded array of experts, thinkers, academics, practitioners, and cultural leaders, who lay out how we got where we are today and suggest new ways forward. The impressive and influential roster of contributors from across the political spectrum includes **Hillary Clinton, Beyoncé, Anne-Marie Slaughter, Howard Schultz, LeBron James, Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY), Ron Haskins, Stephanie Coontz, Muhtar Kent, Gov. C.L. "Butch" Otter (R-ID), Carol Gilligan, Angela Glover Blackwell, Sheryl Sandberg, Eduardo J. Padrón, John Bouman, Barbara Ehrenreich, Sister Joan Chittister, Eva Longoria, Tory Burch, Danielle Moodie-Mills, Heather Boushey, Ann O'Leary, Kathryn Edin, Nadine Burke Harris, Tony Porter, Jennifer Garner, Ai-jen Poo, Peter Edelman, Jada Pinkett Smith, Maya Harris, and Rev. Leith Anderson**—and real women who are doing what it takes to get and keep their families on firm economic footing.

The multiplatform *Shriver Report* includes:

- **The book.** *A Woman's Nation Pushes Back from the Brink* is an eBook from Rosetta Publishing. In an initial four-day special offer—available from January 12 to 15—it is a free download on Amazon Kindle.
- **The huge, nonpartisan nationwide poll,** commissioned by *The Shriver Report*, conducted by Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research and TargetPoint Consulting, and supported by AARP, will be released Sunday, January 12 on NBC News's "Meet the Press." For more information about the poll and a conference call about the findings, contact Katherine Azar at kazar@griffinschein.com.
- **The Thrive Index** for businesses, developed for *The Shriver Report* by Ann Huff Stevens and researchers at the University of California, Davis. It helps managers identify company policies and best practices that promote the success of low-wage women workers, increasing their productivity and creating a thriving workplace for employees and employers alike.
- **The Life Ed curriculum**—which was developed for the report by Anne Mosle and Ascend at the Aspen Institute—identifies the new set of tools and skills young women need to meet the demands of the modern era: financial literacy, self-esteem development, healthy relationship building, and the ability to find mentors and networks, as well as the critical importance of college and how to get there. It's a far cry from the old home economics curriculum.
- **The Shriver Corps**—in partnership with the Corporation for National and Community Service's AmeriCorps VISTA program and LIFT—will develop and train volunteers across America who will put low-income families on firmer economic footing by helping them connect to secure housing and jobs and reducing barriers to access to public benefits programs.
- **The photojournalism.** *The Shriver Report* commissioned a team of award-winning photographers, led by former White House photographer Barbara Kinney, to document a day in the life of women living on the brink all over this country.
- **The classroom initiative.** *The Shriver Report* will be used in classes ranging from sociology and gender studies to public policy, business, education, and public health in colleges and universities across the country, including Harvard University, Georgetown University, Wellesley College, the University of Southern California, the University of California, Berkeley, and the University of Michigan.
- **The Shriver live event.** It will be held in partnership with *The Atlantic* all day, January 15th, at the Newseum in Washington, D.C. The day will feature presentations and discussions with many of the contributors to the written report. For more information, please contact *The Atlantic's* Alexi New at anew@theatlantic.com.
- **The documentary.** HBO's Sheila Nevins and Maria Shriver have co-executive produced a documentary film, "Paycheck to Paycheck: The Life and Times of Katrina Gilbert," produced by Emmy® Award-winning filmmakers Shari Cookson and Nick Doob and airing March 17th.
- **The community.** The website www.ShriverReport.org is already hosting a growing community of citizen reporters around the country who are chronicling their changing lives.
- **The media partners.** Once again, NBC News will bring this report to life, rolling it out across NBC News and MSNBC platforms beginning Sunday, January 12. TheAtlantic.com will feature Maria Shriver's essay and other reporting on Wednesday, January 8.
- **The video trailer.** The project trailer is available [here](#).

The Shriver Report's editor-in-chief is award-winning political strategist Karen Skelton, president of Skelton Strategies, and the managing editor is writer and strategist Olivia Morgan. *The Shriver Report* has a National Advisory Committee of 50 leading men, women, organizations, and corporations. The full list is available at www.ShriverReport.org.

This report was made possible through the generous support of the Ford Foundation; Wells Fargo; AARP; JPMorgan Chase; The California Endowment; The Coca-Cola Company; Marvell Semiconductor, Inc.; and several other contributors. *The Shriver Report* is an initiative of A Woman's Nation™, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization founded by Maria Shriver to raise awareness, ignite conversations, and inspire impact around the defining issues and fundamental challenges facing modern women.

Advance praise for *The Shriver Report*:

"Whenever anyone sits down to write, work, or review a piece of women's policy, they should always keep a copy of *The Shriver Report* at hand." – **Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY)**

"The Shriver Report includes comprehensive data and proposes a variety of public and personal solutions to

help society move to greater gender equality. Teachers, leaders, and business owners everywhere can learn a great deal from the report.” – **Austan Goolsbee, professor of economics at the University of Chicago’s Booth School of Business and former chairman of the Council of Economic Advisors**

“The Shriver Report fulfills the necessity for amassing and understanding the extraordinary depth and breadth of the contributions women today provide to our nation, as well as the challenges they confront on a daily basis. For all of the progress that’s been attained for women in America, we must be ever vigilant and vigorous in protecting those gains and work to address those obstacles and aspirations that remain. In that light, Maria Shriver’s vision in bringing this project to fruition cannot be overstated.” – **Former Sen. Olympia J. Snowe (R-ME)**

“I love using *The Shriver Report* in my classes because it is packed with the latest data, it includes beautifully illustrative graphics and pictures, and it includes compelling personal stories that bring the data to life. It is ideal to use in the classroom because it covers so many topics.” – **Anmarie J. Widener, professor of women’s and gender studies at Georgetown University**

“This third *Shriver Report* provides a compelling assessment of the critical role women in America are playing as parents and contributors to the U.S. economy. Yet at the same time, more and more of them are falling into poverty. The prescriptions laid out here to reverse this disastrous trend deserve serious attention and action. How we respond will have much to say about our nation’s future.” – **Ambassador Melanne Verveer**

“I applaud *The Shriver Report* for its comprehensive portrayal of the status of American women today and its emphasis on investing in education for women and children.” – **Wendy Kopp, CEO and co-founder of Teach For All and founder and chair of Teach For America**

“This *Shriver Report* will be thought provoking and discussed from the classroom to the boardroom.” – **Patricia Kempthorne, founder and president of The Twiga Foundation**

“The Shriver Report is far more than a social report on the economic quality of life available to the millions of women and children who live in poverty. It is as much a spiritual call to churches and congregations everywhere to preach the full humanity and gifts of women.” – **Sister Joan Chittister**

Contact:

Taylor Royle: press@shriverreport.org | 202.258.3508

Madeline Meth: mmeth@americanprogress.org | 202.741.6277

Katherine Azar: kazar@griffinschein.com | 714.206.8995

About The Shriver Report:

The first *Shriver Report*, published in 2009, examined a huge transformation in U.S. history: For the first time, women had become fully half the workforce, and even more momentously, were about two-thirds of the primary and co-breadwinners in American families—truly the engine driving the economy. We called this new state of American affairs *A Woman’s Nation Changes Everything*, as the explosion of women becoming breadwinners changed not just the economy, but marriage, families, schools, the workplace, government, health care—everything, including men. The following year, *A Woman’s Nation Takes on Alzheimer’s* was the largest study ever to examine the cultural, social, and economic impact of the Alzheimer’s epidemic, just as the nation’s 78 million Baby Boomers were aging into their mid-60s—Alzheimer’s territory. We reported that women were not only half the people living with the disease but also more than half of the country’s unpaid caregivers. *A Woman’s Nation Pushes Back from the Brink* is the third in the series. For more information, please visit www.ShriverReport.org.

About the Center for American Progress:

The Center for American Progress is a nonpartisan research and educational institute dedicated to promoting a strong, just, and free America that ensures opportunity for all. We believe that Americans are bound together by a common commitment to these values, and we aspire to ensure that our national policies reflect these values. We work to find progressive and pragmatic solutions to significant domestic and international problems and develop policy proposals that foster a government that is “of the people, by the people, and for the people.”
