Twitter Thread by Jill Filipovic



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This column by @ezraklein is very good and I agree with him 100% on policy -- we need a generous child allowance now. But I'm seeing this creeping argument on the left that it's just not important for women to work outside the home, and that's concerning.

Working 60 hours a week at two or three jobs? That's obviously awful. Being paid so poorly that you have no time for your family or leisure? That's not "dignity," that's exploitation. And it is single moms who bear the brunt of this.

But while the argument that at-home work is just as valuable as paid work may be morally correct, in our capitalist reality, not working outside of the home leaves women incredibly financially and physically vulnerable. It also leaves them isolated, depressed, and anxious.

@LindaHirshman1 wrote a whole book about this, but paid work is good for women. Not three jobs at $7.50 an hour to stay afloat. But work for pay, which offers a purpose outside of raising one's own children, and friends and coworkers and a $$ lifeline outside the nuclear family.

When women wind up financially dependent on men, good things do not follow. Of course there are individual stories of this working out just fine. But over the whole of a society, women as carers and men as earners is not a good system.

That isn't an argument against the child allowance. It is an argument against reframing the discussion as "there is no reason we should want women to work outside the home" when there are lots of reasons -- but we want that work should be reasonably time-limited and fairly paid.

We understand this when it comes to men, who rarely take the chance to parent full-time. The proportion of men who are solo fathers among unmarried parents has not changed since the late 1960s. Very, very few full-time stay-at-home parents are fathers.

It is also the case that whole societies lose out when women are primarily in the domestic and private spheres, while men are in the public -- it means men's experiences, assumptions and desires dominate our politics, our media narratives, our art, our culture.

Ezra is not arguing for a return to a traditional gender division of labor. But a lot of folks on the left, including some he quotes, seem to think that there isn't an issue with the traditional gender division of labor, because paid work can be exploitative & care work matters.

Paid work can be exploitative. Care work matters. It's also a bad system, for women & children & society as a whole, when women do the bulk of the care work for their own families in the private sphere, even if that work was better valued, & men continue to dominate the public.

Care work can also be (and often is) HUGELY exploitative. And the risk is higher when, as @LindaHirshman1 says, your husband is your boss -- the person who has total control over your financial stability, and there's no HR and little ability to change jobs or collect unemployment

All of which is to say: We should push for a child allowance because families need it. But we also need to push for universal childcare, paid leave that incentivizes men to take it & penalizes them when they don't, and fair pay including a livable minimum wage.

And I want to emphasize again -- this is a really good column and I am in near-total agreement with Ezra. Lavender, his main character, is also a telling one: She is ambitious, she wants to work, she wants to grow. But she doesn't want to be exploited and ground to the bone.

Anyway I wrote about this topic at greater length, in a different context, here: https://t.co/bkChS0eJLP