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# Selling Women Short: The Landmark Battle For Workers' Rights At Wal-Mart



## Synopsis

On television, Wal-Mart employees are smiling women delighted with their jobs. But reality is another story. In 2000, Betty Dukes, a fifty-two-year-old black woman in Pittsburg, California, became the lead plaintiff in *Dukes v. Wal-Mart Stores*, a class action, representing 1.6 million women. In her explosive investigation of this historic lawsuit, journalist Liza Featherstone reveals how Wal-Mart, a self-styled "family-oriented," Christian company: Deprives women (but not men) of the training they need to advance. Relegates women to lower-paying jobs like selling baby clothes, reserving the more lucrative positions for men. Inflicts punitive demotions on employees who object to discrimination. Exploits Asian women in its sweatshops in Saipan, a U.S. commonwealth. Featherstone goes on to reveal the creative solutions that Wal-Mart workers around the country have found, like fighting for unions, living-wage ordinances, and childcare options. *Selling Women Short* combines the personal stories of these employees with superb investigative journalism to show why women who work these low-wage jobs are getting a raw deal, and what they are doing about it. A new preface to the paperback edition will reflect on Wal-Mart's response to this lawsuit and its critics-including this one.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Betty Dukes is the lead plaintiff in a recent class action lawsuit charging Wal-Mart, the nation's biggest employer, with sex discrimination in pay and promotions. The giant retailer recognized the energy and dedication of the 52-year-old African American clerk - until she applied for promotion to management and crashed into a glass ceiling. When she complained, she was demoted. More than

100 women working at Wal-Mart joined Ms. Dukes in the suit, which charged that advancement at Wal-Mart is controlled by an "old boys" network. They came forward to talk about how they gave their all for Wal-Mart only to see men who were their juniors and had contributed less racing up the management hierarchy. The case is the largest class-action suit in history, covering 1.6 million past and present women employees. Liza Featherstone tells their story in "Selling Women Short: The Landmark Battle for Workers Rights at Wal-Mart." Wal-Mart projects an image of a family-friendly company whose workers are valued "associates." But Wal-Mart managers often justify paying men more because they must provide for a family and women less because their family responsibilities might interfere with managerial duties. Women make up more than two-thirds of Wal-Mart's workers, but only 1/3 of its managers. The firm's deep-rooted sexist culture includes meetings at Hooters restaurants, exclusively male social gatherings and persistent segregation of entire departments. Featherstone points out that even if all the discrimination ended, most Wal-Mart workers would still live in poverty with many needing food stamps and Medicaid to survive.

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