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Nature of Industry Changing Around the World, Kansas State University Experts Say

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MANHATTAN, Kan., June 16 /U.S. Newswire/ -- The character of work is changing around the world, according to Kansas State University professors Torry Dickinson and Robert Schaeffer. Some parts of the world are encountering globalization, while other parts are being written off. Fair wages are more difficult to come by. In addition, protests for change and better conditions are increasingly being led by women.

Dickinson, associate professor of women's studies, and Schaeffer, professor of sociology, co-authored a book on the topic, "Fast Forward: Work, Gender and Protest in a Changing World." Their arguments on the changing character of work are being taken seriously by others; the book was recently recognized as one of the Core Readings in Women's Studies by the Association of College and Research Libraries.

"We have studied how the world has been changing, and things are getting worse around the world in terms of a fair, living wage," Schaeffer said. "People are starting to take it into their own hands and are relying less on corporations and businesses to provide them with wage jobs. They are finding other ways of making money. They might work for a wage, but they also might take people into their home and rent rooms or make stuff in their home and sell it."

Many people used to believe that, if they get an education, things will improve. Dickinson and Schaeffer say this isn't always the case in the world today.

"People are saying, 'If we can't get what we want from the system, we'll just go get it ourselves,'" Schaeffer said. "People are trying to get by without relying on these institutions that don't give them what they need."

Schaeffer said many people have to make this change due largely in part to consumers.

"People think of technology and computers as something that is moving the world ahead," Schaeffer said. "For example, most people don't even flinch that copper is being used less and less as we gain new technologies, but they don't think of how that affects people in Chile who mine copper for a living. Another example is the use of high-fructose corn sweeteners. Now, people don't want as much sugar from Jamaica and Cuba.

"The consumers are saying, 'Well, we don't really want that anymore. You're on your own,'" Schaeffer said. "That's an important change. We do not need that stuff we used to want. These people have to find other ways to make a living. Some of the ways are good, and some are not so good."

Dickinson said the world is seeing many protests for change, for better conditions, and many of these movements are led by women.

"People who used to look at protests looked at labor movements, which were usually by men while women were at home," Dickinson said. "Now, women are doing work in the workplace also. Women are organizing the protests to try to make their lives better."

"If you look at movements around the world, they're led by women. They're not led by men or political unions," Schaeffer said. "If you would have asked a century ago, who are the people making changes, it would have been men. The look of the person making change has changed. It's a woman."

"Now, you see, women are forming a lot of the unions. Women are the ones who are emerging as leaders," Dickinson said. "One of the places you can see this is the environmental movement. Wangari Maathai from Kenya was recently awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for her work in agriculture in Kenya.

"It's not just trying to survive, but rather setting up institutions that work," Dickinson said. "Some places are setting up new ways of living that may become the blueprints for future cultures.

"Everyone hears that globalization is taking place," Dickinson said. "What we're arguing is that there is selective globalization going on. Some parts of the world are being developed and others are being written off."

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