

From Widow to “Welfare Queen”: Welfare and the Politics of Race

Premilla Nadasen, *Queens College, City University of New York*

Abstract

This article discusses the racialization of welfare in the popular discourse. In the 1960s, Aid to Families with Dependent Children shifted from a program serving primarily white widows and supporting them in their work as mothers to a punitive program aiding a disproportionate number of women of color who were divorced, deserted, or never married. A narrative of race, sexual deviance, fraud, family break-up, and community disintegration came to dominate discussions of welfare and black poverty. At a moment when theories of scientific racism were in decline, stereotypes and images of black women as “welfare queens” reinscribed racial domination in the popular and political discourse. But, at the same time, a black-led movement for welfare rights challenged these negative portrayals and called for a broader safety net and a reconceptualization of welfare.

Over a decade ago, Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC)—the primary support system for poor women and children in this country—was dismantled with relatively little protest and a disheartening degree of public support. The apathy and, in some cases, eager endorsement of the abolition of AFDC by the general public was partly because the debate about welfare has been constructed by a language of morality and racial fear. In discussions of welfare, the black community generally, and African American women in particular, are vilified, ridiculed, and demeaned.¹ One illustration of these racialized and gendered stereotypes is the performance by Charles Knipp, a gay white man who dresses in blackface and drag and caricatures a black woman on welfare. Knipp describes his character, Shirley Q. Liquor, as a black welfare mother living in the South with nineteen children from different fathers. The character speaks with a heavy Southern

accent laced with malapropisms and mispronunciations. She lives in a roach-infested house, is overweight, refuses to work, and lives off the government's largess. Knipp's show, which tours the country, promotes the idea that African American women on welfare are sexually promiscuous, illiterate drug addicts who are undeserving of assistance. Although most welfare recipients are not black, popular representations, such as Knipp's, often depict the typical welfare recipient as black. This construction of a racialized, sexually deviant "welfare queen" is not a new phenomenon. Ronald Reagan employed it in the 1980s to demonize women on welfare, and politicians invoked it in the 1960s to push for work-oriented welfare reform. Racial stereotypes of recipients have, in fact, dominated discussions of welfare since the 1960s.

In the 1960s, the politics of welfare became racialized and sexualized, laying the groundwork for the stereotype of the "welfare queen."² As increasing numbers of African American women joined the welfare rolls, politicians and policymakers instituted more punitive measures, including work requirements. These reform efforts were premised on a discourse falsely suggesting that most welfare recipients were black and unworthy of assistance. Welfare became a code word for race and came to symbolize the perceived problems within poor black communities—single parenthood, family breakup, and unemployment. The image of the "welfare queen" framed the political discourse about race, class, and gender in modern America (Lubiano 1992). Welfare became a discursive stand-in in discussions about race and poverty. This new manifestation of racism laid community disintegration and the national urban crisis at the doorstep of African American women. This article will explore when welfare became associated in the public mind with African Americans and how this shifted the goal of the program from one that supported women's work as mothers to one that encouraged them to enter the paid work force.³ The politics of welfare did not evolve without contestation. At the very moment when welfare became a hotly debated issue, black women on welfare organized to challenge the punitive, discriminatory, and dehumanizing nature of the welfare program. Despite their efforts, the "controlling image" of the "welfare queen," to use Patricia Hill Collins's phrase (1991, 67–78; see also Jewell 1993), has had enormous longevity and breadth, even well past the dismantling of the AFDC program, to influence how Americans think and talk about race.

Welfare played a central role in influencing discussions of race. In the first part of the twentieth century, understandings of race and racial ideology underwent a sea change. The horrors of Nazi Germany, movements for national liberation in colonial states, campaigns for racial equality in the United States and other parts of the world, and new social scientific research

that discredited biological theories of race all transformed thinking about racial difference (Pascoe 1996; Scott 1997). With the decline of scientific racism and the success of campaigns like the Civil Rights Movement to challenge overt racism, racial differences were attributed to cultural and environmental factors (Brown et al. 2003; Winant 2001). This hardened divisions within the African American community. Those members of the black middle class who conformed to dominant cultural expectations were increasingly seen as capable and equal to whites and worthy of inclusion into the mainstream. This was reflected in and fostered by civil rights activists' preoccupations with "respectability." On the other hand, the black poor who transgressed the boundaries of acceptable behavior were increasingly despised and marginalized. Stereotypes and images associated with the black poor (and poor black women on welfare in particular) became even more entrenched during the postwar period. Narratives about welfare receipt, family, sex, fraud, and the work ethic further alienated and isolated this group. Black women on welfare became the new other against which both white society and the black middle class were measured. This new discourse of welfare has implications for understanding the politics of race in the postwar period. While many scholars have examined the role of race in shaping and informing welfare policy, I am interested in exploring how race has been constituted by the welfare state. This essay is part of a much larger story, in the words of Thomas Holt, about how race was "made" (Holt 1995; see also Fields 1982; Omi and Winant 1986).

History of Welfare and African American Women

Welfare has not always been associated with African American women. Aid to Dependent Children (ADC), as AFDC was known prior to 1962, was instituted in 1935 as part of the Social Security Act. As many historians have shown, ADC and its precursor, state-level mothers' pension programs, reinforced the heterosexual family model and traditional gender roles of the male breadwinner and female caretaker (Gordon 1994; Kessler-Harris 2001). To deflect potential criticism, caseworkers made assistance available only to recipients they believed were blameless for their current situation, morally pure, and properly disciplining and caring for their children. Racial, cultural, and class biases shaped reformers' views of who was a worthy and unworthy recipient, and welfare served cultural purposes—to Americanize immigrant recipients (Mink 1995). Pitied and considered worthy of support if they met the social and moral standards set by caseworkers, these women were viewed as moth-

ers and caretakers. Consequently, ADC and mothers' pensions contained strict eligibility criteria and forced poor single mothers receiving assistance to conform to white middle-class notions of proper motherhood. Despite these restrictive rules, ADC did provide an allowance to help some mothers raise their children (Abramovitz 1989; Gordon 1994).

Part of a gendered and racialized two-track welfare system, ADC provided less generous and more restrictive assistance than the federally run contributory social insurance programs, such as social security and unemployment compensation, that were tied to work history (Abramovitz 1989; Quadagno, 1988). There was, for example, no allotment for the mother in the monthly budget until 1950. Along with Old Age Assistance and Aid to the Disabled, ADC was part of the category of public assistance, serving the poor and a disproportionately larger number of women and people of color (Nelson 1990). The federal government provided oversight and matching funds for ADC, but states controlled eligibility criteria, determined budgets, and essentially ran the program. Consequently, ADC payments varied widely from state to state, and local politics, to a large degree, shaped the program (Lieberman 1998; Zylan 1994). And, although the idea that single women should be supported in their work as mothers prevailed in the political discourse, in practice, most mothers worked or supplemented their monthly allowance, which was simply too little to support their children. Local welfare departments often expected recipients to work even though they saw recipients' as primarily mothers.⁴

Patterns of discrimination in the program were widespread. ADC gave only limited assistance to women of color. White women, most of whom were widows or deserted by their husbands, overwhelmingly populated the welfare rolls in the late 1930s.⁵ A majority of needy African American women were denied assistance especially in the South and other areas where large numbers of African Americans lived. Beginning in the 1940s and continuing into the 1950s, local officials passed regulations to deny eligibility and remove women from the welfare rolls.⁶ These included "suitable home" laws denying aid to mothers who had "illegitimate children" or who engaged in other behavior that caseworkers considered immoral or inappropriate, "substitute father" or "man-in-the-house" rules denying aid to women if there was any evidence of a male present in her home, employable mother laws refusing assistance to women physically able to work, and residence laws denying assistance to migrants from outside the state (Abramovitz 1989; Bell 1965; Piven and Cloward 1971; Zylan 1994). Georgia passed an employable mother rule in 1952. Michigan and Florida passed suitable home laws in 1953 and

1959, respectively. In 1943, the state of Louisiana refused assistance to women during cotton-picking season (Bell 1965, 60–110).

Restrictive welfare laws directed primarily at black women, who had a long history of employment outside the household, ensured an adequate supply of laborers in the work force. A field supervisor in a Southern state explicitly made this connection:

The number of Negro cases is few due to the unanimous feeling on the part of the staff and board that there are more work opportunities for Negro women and to their intense desire not to interfere with local labor conditions. The attitude that “they have always gotten along,” and that “all they’ll do is have more children” is definite. . . . [They see no] reason why the employable Negro mother should not continue her usually sketchy seasonal labor or indefinite domestic service rather than receive a public assistance grant. (Larabee 1939, 449; quoted in Bell 1965, 34–35)

Consequently, Southern officials routinely restricted eligibility and forced recipients into the labor market during periods of labor shortage (Piven and Cloward 1971; Zylan 1994, 104). Thus, black women’s status as welfare recipients was bound up with their relationship to the labor market. More often seen as laborers than as mothers, black women were considered less deserving of public assistance than other women.⁷

The Welfare Backlash

Between 1950 and 1960, changes in the composition of the welfare rolls coupled with black migration generated widespread public concern about welfare in other parts of the country that led to similarly restrictive policies. The number of families on welfare only grew from 652,000 in 1950 to 806,000 in 1960 (U.S. Bureau of the Census [Census Bureau] 1970, table 428). This was a small increase. But public concern about welfare centered more on the particular welfare recipients joining the welfare rolls. The rolls in 1960 looked very different than they had in 1940 in terms of the recipients’ “morality” and “worthiness”—often defined by divorce, a child born out of wedlock, or the racial or cultural background of a recipient. Because of poverty, racism, and migration, the percentage of African Americans on AFDC nationally increased from 31 percent in 1950 to 48 percent in 1961 (U.S. Congress, House Ways and Means Committee 1986, 392). Mechanization and other changes in agricultural production in the postwar South left many African Americans without work, fueling the migration of African Americans to urban areas and

the North. Between 1940 and 1960, more than three million African Americans made their way from the South to Northern cities in search of employment. Although many found work, deindustrialization in urban centers in conjunction with widespread race and gender employment discrimination led to a disproportionately large number of unemployed or underemployed African Americans. In 1960, the official unemployment rate was 4.9 percent for whites and 10.2 percent for nonwhites (Census Bureau 1975, 135). Those landing in the North may have turned to welfare departments for economic support as a last resort.

In addition, by the 1960s, most welfare recipients were not widows but were never-married, divorced, or deserted women. In 1961, widows made up only 7.7 percent of the ADC caseload, down from 43 percent in 1937 (Bremner 1956, 535; cited in Abramovitz 1989, 321). The 1939 Social Security Amendments encouraged this trend by extending old-age insurance coverage to widows and their children, in effect removing “deserving” women and children—whose husbands and fathers had died—from the ADC rolls. The percentage of single mothers in all racial groups increased after World War II because of social and economic dislocations. Between 1950 and 1960, out-of-marriage births increased by 31 percent for white women and 20 percent for nonwhites (Grove and Hetzel 1968, 185). But nonwhite and African American women were disproportionately single mothers. In 1960, the official out-of-wedlock birth rate for whites was 23 out of 1,000 births; for nonwhites it was 216 (Grove and Hetzel 1968, 185). There were obviously more women of color having children out of wedlock, but there were also other reasons for this big gap. White women who became pregnant were well hidden from the public eye. They were sent off to birthing homes, and their babies were quietly put up for adoption. Black women had fewer institutional resources available. The lack of avenues for adoption, in addition to community values discouraging mothers giving up their children, meant that black women kept their children and raised them at a far higher rate than white women did (see Kunzel 1994 and Solinger 1994). This higher rate of black single motherhood, coupled with higher poverty rates, translated into a higher AFDC rate for African American women.

Only a small minority of children born out of wedlock ended up on ADC. Nevertheless, the increase in black single mothers on welfare caused public alarm.⁸ Historians Ricki Solinger (1994) and Regina Kunzel (1994) have both examined how out-of-wedlock births among African Americans, in contrast to whites, in the postwar period came to be viewed as evidence of cultural pathology and how the children were considered a social liability. Using

hyperbole and inflammatory rhetoric, politicians and the press hammered away at the apparent overrepresentation of black women on the welfare rolls. However, taking into account poverty and out-of-wedlock birth rates, black women were actually underrepresented on ADC. Increasingly, the politics of welfare converged on the stereotypical image of a black unmarried, unworthy welfare mother. This image that interwove race, sex, and morality more than any other fed the fires of the welfare controversy. So, the public opposed not just more families on welfare but also the greater number of black unmarried women receiving assistance.

Local politicians, the conservative press, and many ordinary white Americans focused on the supposed problems of cultural pathologies and sexual immorality. Promiscuity and laziness became synonymous with black women on welfare. No one definitively linked the increase in welfare rolls to the rise in out-of-marriage births, yet “illegitimacy” became the catchword for evidence of the degeneracy of the black population. Popular and social welfare magazines gave undue attention to the rise in out-of-wedlock births among women on AFDC and attributed this rise to black migration.⁹ An investigator reported that 93 percent of ADC recipients in Washington, D.C., in 1962 were African American and that “Women with several illegitimate children, by several different fathers, were often found living with men who were bringing home regular paychecks” (“Cheating on Relief” 1962). In 1965, *U.S. News and World Report* explained that black men, unable to get jobs, deserted their families: “Deserted wives, sometimes turning to any man who comes along, add to the high rate of illegitimacy in the self-perpetuating breeding grounds of city slums” (“Mystery” 1965). Unlike a few years earlier when financial assistance was deemed necessary for single mothers to raise healthy and well-adjusted children, by the early 1960s welfare for single mothers was considered detrimental. In 1963, *The Saturday Evening Post* commented, “Today’s welfare child, raised in hopelessness and dependency, becomes tomorrow’s welfare adult, pauperized and helpless” (Chevalier 1963). *U.S. News and World Report* reported in 1965 that the rise in welfare rolls was due to the “mass migrations of unskilled Negroes from the South.” The increasing number of “welfare babies” would “breed more criminals, more mental defectives, more unemployables of almost every type.” The magazine profiled the typical ADC recipient in Chicago: “A poor Negro girl: . . . She is insecure, uneducated, unsophisticated, frightened” (“Mystery” 1965). One official referred to children on AFDC as the “children of illegitimate parents.” Clearly, the target in the welfare debate had become African American men and women who were characterized as not wanting to work, unable to properly raise their children, and engaging

in deviant sexual and family behaviors. Thus, the concern about ADC was shaped and sold to the public in large part by racial ideology.

The trend in the popular discourse was reflected as well in social science literature.¹⁰ The most well-known study to connect welfare, poverty, and race was *The Negro Family: A Case For National Action* by Daniel Patrick Moynihan, assistant secretary of labor under President Johnson. Published in 1965, the *Moynihan Report*, as it is more popularly known, addressed black urban poverty and the rising number of female-headed households. Moynihan argued that “At the heart of the deterioration of the fabric of Negro society is the deterioration of the Negro family. It is the fundamental source of the weakness of the Negro community” (1965, 5). He attributed the disproportionate number of black single parent families, which he called a “tangle of pathology,” to the “matriarchal” black family structure. A long history of slavery, exploitation, racism, and unemployment had led to an increased divorce rate, a large number of “illegitimate children,” male desertion, and a rapid growth in AFDC families. The solution, Moynihan claimed, was to establish a stable black family structure.¹¹

What Moynihan said was not new. In fact, such characterizations of the black family as matriarchal dated back to the 1930s to the work of black sociologist E. Franklin Frazer. In the 1960s, other sociologists such as Oscar Lewis had similarly put forth theories of a “culture of poverty” that explained the persistence of poverty in poor communities of color.¹² The *Moynihan Report* was nevertheless important because of its impact on welfare policy. In the mid-1960s, social policy and urban politics were at a critical juncture, making the reception of Moynihan’s report invaluable to critics and reformers of welfare policy. Strengthening age-old debates about why poor single mothers should not get government assistance, the report cemented the issue of race to welfare and single-parent families in a way that made it difficult to talk about one without the others.¹³ Moynihan’s report shifted the debate about urban poverty from structure and economics to culture and values. Although Moynihan suggested expanding employment opportunities for black men, his emphasis on black family cultural practices overshadowed his other points. He inadvertently fueled popular concerns about black women’s sexuality and welfare receipt. The ensuing debate centered on changing the “domineering” position of black women, bringing black men back into the household, and ending the “cycle of poverty.” Most advocates of “culture of poverty” theories were liberals attempting to discredit biological theories of race by highlighting the importance of culture and environment. But by framing poverty as a problem of “illegitimacy” and black family patterns, they laid

the seeds of an attack on poor black women and welfare that was advanced by people across the political spectrum (Kunzel 1994; Scott 1997).¹⁴

Local welfare officials and legislators responded by attempting to uncover alleged welfare fraud and corruption, limiting the size of welfare rolls, reducing welfare payments, and putting welfare recipients to work (Patterson 1981, 107–9; Zylan 1994). A number of cities, counties, and states—including Washington, D.C.; Milwaukee, Wisconsin; Los Angeles, California; Cuyahoga County, Ohio; Wayne County, Michigan; and the states of Illinois, Louisiana, and Pennsylvania—formed special units within the welfare department to investigate whether a substitute parent resided in the house (Bell 1965, 87). Caseworkers routinely checked up on recipients, sometimes conducting “midnight raids” to ensure that a recipient was not involved in a relationship with a man. They applied stringent and humiliating eligibility criteria to prevent women with alternate sources of support from receiving assistance. This included probing questions about a recipient’s past sexual experiences or snooping inside her refrigerator to see what kind of food she was eating. Under constant scrutiny, recipients had to prove the soundness of their character, their destitution, and, increasingly, their willingness but inability to work. Even when recipients qualified for assistance, their income was not always secure. Caseworkers frequently cut them off assistance without notice or explanation or reduced their grants arbitrarily. Those getting their monthly check found the amount hardly enough to provide the basic necessities for their children. These increasingly restrictive ADC policies made it harder for all women, particularly black women, to receive assistance.¹⁵

One of the most sensationalized cases of public concern about welfare occurred in Newburgh, New York, a small town seventy miles north of New York City. The Newburgh saga exemplifies how welfare was blamed for broader social ills and how it became linked to African Americans. Joseph Mitchell, the recently elected city manager of Newburgh, made his mission one of reforming the city’s welfare program. He instituted a stringent set of policies designed to weed the rolls of “chiselers” and inhibit the “undeserving” from applying for relief. In his own words:

We challenge the right of a welfare program to contribute to the rise of slums, to the rise of illegitimacy, to the rise of social diseases among children and adults. . . . We challenge the right of a welfare program to contribute to the wreckage of an entire business and residential district, to overcrowding, to fires and fire hazards, to sanitation hazards, to school problems, to emptying the city of responsible, tax-paying citizens and filling it with those who create and contribute to crime and violence. (NBC 1961)

It is clear that Mitchell blamed welfare for every conceivable urban problem, from deindustrialization to overcrowded schools, from fires to garbage pick up. Mitchell proposed cutting AFDC to mothers who bore children out of wedlock, requiring able-bodied men to work full time, requiring recent migrants applying for welfare to prove that they came to the city with offers of employment, and limiting the size of monthly checks. The purported reason for the new rules, according to one reporter, was “that shiftless migrants from the South were flooding the relief rolls and that the city was subsidizing crime, immorality, slums and a general ‘pollution’ of social standards” (Raskin 1961). During the 1950s Newburgh’s white population had decreased by four thousand while the black population increased by three thousand.¹⁶ The city published a report stating that “Welfare is now a magnet for those who would migrate.” One city councilman claimed, “I know of cases where relief checks have been forwarded to Southern States to buy tickets, even automobiles, to bring more strangers into Newburgh to live.”¹⁷ Welfare, it was believed, not only brought larger numbers of African Americans to Newburgh but also generated a host of social problems, including burglaries, muggings, and teenage violence. As the police chief explained, “It used to be that decent families would come downtown at night and go window shopping, or just walk around. They don’t do that now. It’s too dangerous. And even when it isn’t dangerous, it’s unpleasant” (“When You Try” 1961). In Newburgh, welfare came to symbolize not only black cultural deviance and a social program gone awry but also the decline of urban America.

There was opposition to Mitchell’s plans from the social welfare community, liberal politicians, and civil rights activists. Threatening to end state welfare assistance to the city, the New York State Board of Social Welfare held a hearing to determine if the proposed reforms in Newburgh violated state and federal welfare regulations. The city ultimately lost the battle in the courts and rescinded the regulations, but it won the larger political battle. Despite the opposition it faced, Mitchell’s plans received extensive public support, with letters of approval pouring in from around the country. In an August 1961 Gallup poll, 85 percent of Americans favored forcing men who could not find jobs to take any job offered. Seventy-five percent of those polled believed recent migrants wanting assistance should prove that they moved to the area with a job offer. Only about 10 percent advocated continued aid to women with more than one child born out of wedlock (Gallup 1972). The *New York Times Magazine*, which only a decade earlier had argued that employment of the mother was not a viable solution to the problem of single-parent families, suggested that the problem of rising ADC rolls and increased “illegitimacy” in

Newburgh could be resolved with federal financing of work-relief programs, to help unwed mothers “lift themselves out of the need for relief.” Moreover, the Newburgh case focused the country’s attention on welfare rolls populated disproportionately by African Americans and unmarried mothers. Regardless of the outcome of Mitchell’s reforms, this episode etched into the public mind the image of the unworthy black recipient (Levenstein 2000).

The Newburgh case is an important marker of the shifting discourse about race, gender, and welfare. Historian Lisa Levenstein (2000) has persuasively argued that Newburgh transformed welfare into a national and explicitly racial issue. The “rhetorical framing” of the situation in Newburgh, she suggests, shaped the antiwelfare discourse. Mitchell’s plans were not unprecedented: dozens of communities around the country had initiated similar rollback relief plans. Like Mitchell, they used racialized and gendered imagery to frame their opposition to welfare. While Southern states had always implemented racially punitive welfare policies and had consistently pushed black women into the labor force when necessary, black migration to the North and the changing composition of the welfare rolls fostered similar reforms in the Northern states and on a national level in the 1960s. The Newburgh case illustrates the national shift in the discourse about welfare and government responsibility over the course of the postwar period—from a position of supporting women’s work as mothers to encouraging or requiring women to enter the paid work force.

These punitive and restrictive welfare policies manifested themselves most clearly on the national level in the new work requirements. In the 1960s, employment of welfare recipients became a permanent feature of federal welfare policy. Work incentives were first introduced in 1962, and in 1967, the Johnson administration mandated employment of women on AFDC.¹⁸ The new work rules shifted the focus of AFDC from counseling and rehabilitation to reducing poverty through training and employment. The 1967 Work Incentive Program (WIN) required women with school-age children receiving AFDC to accept either job training or employment. It also provided some funding for day-care services for women on welfare and included a work incentive allowing working recipients to keep the first \$30 of their monthly income and one-third of anything beyond that, without a reduction in monthly benefits. Recipients refusing to participate in work or training lost their benefits.

The new welfare proposals represented a widespread consensus in the 1960s that women on welfare should work. Liberals, conservatives, and many radicals concurred that jobs programs would solve the immediate

problem of rising welfare rolls and the long-term problem of poverty.¹⁹ Democrats and Republicans did not agree completely on all aspects of the WIN proposals. Johnson offered amendments for child care and a work incentive allowing recipients to keep a portion of their earnings and suggested making mandatory the AFDC-Unemployed Parent program, which extended benefits to two-parent families. But even these proposals reinforced the dominant view about the need to bolster the two-parent family and require recipients to work.²⁰ The public also seemed to enthusiastically support employment of women on welfare. At a welfare rights protest for furniture and clothing guidelines in Boston, construction workers dropped lunch leftovers and containers of water on demonstrators and called out "We work, why don't you try it!?" (*Record American* 1968).

Social workers, as well, were won over to the position that employment was the best reform strategy to bolster support for the welfare program.²¹ Among social work experts, a push for rehabilitative reform since the 1940s fostered a language of economic independence that laid the foundation for work rules implemented in the 1960s (Mittelstadt 2005). In addition, attacks on the program in the 1960s encouraged social workers to embrace work as a way to build support for AFDC and to deflect criticism (Curran 2005). Although most social work reformers opposed forcing women into the labor market, both their push for rehabilitation and their support of work rules reinforced the focus on the individual character traits of recipients.

The reasons for the assault on the welfare state were more complex than race alone and have to do with broad economic and political changes, as well as the growing power of conservative forces (Katz 2001). But my goal here is more modest than to chart all aspects of the antiwelfare crusade. Instead, I want to chronicle the representation of women on welfare and the racialized discourse around welfare. Welfare reform was in part a reaction to black women claiming this entitlement that was previously denied to them. At the core of the debate were issues about employment, motherhood, and what was considered the proper social role for black women. When it came to employment and motherhood, there were contrasting expectations for black women on welfare and middle-class women. In the mid-1960s, there was still a great deal of ambivalence or even downright opposition to middle-class women, particularly women with children, entering the work force. A number of scholars have written about the persistence of the domestic ideal throughout the 1950s and 1960s. In her study of mothers and work in popular American magazines, Kathryn Keller (1994) argues that, in the 1950s, mothers who worked were considered maladjusted and their choice to work harmful

to the child's development. In their study of American women in the 1960s, Blanche Linden-Ward and Carol Hurd Green (1993, 92) reinforce the point that, although larger numbers of women were entering the work force in the 1960s, they were doing so despite persistent public disfavor of working mothers. For poor women the situation was different. A publication produced by the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare exposed the disjuncture between what was considered appropriate for middle-class white women versus women on welfare. It cited a report that children on AFDC have more behavioral problems when the mother stayed at home with the children. Welfare children "seem to have a higher incidence of serious disorders such as psychosis and appear to be more isolated, mistrustful, and anxious than the nonwelfare children. . . . The employment status of the welfare mothers also seems to affect impairment: children of working mothers have less impairment" (quoted in Moynihan 1973, 89–91). So, the new welfare work rules in the 1960s seemed to be more a result of the association of AFDC with African American women specifically rather than a transformation in the dominant gender roles and entrance of middle-class women into the work force. Historically, there have been different social expectations for black and white women—and this was reflected in the debate about welfare. The shifting discourse about welfare reflected the historic role of black women in this country as workers rather than mothers. Since the emergence of racial slavery, black women were valued primarily for their labor power, and, as slaves, their value as reproducers was limited to childbearing rather than the nurturing and caring role as mothers. Fueled by racial stereotypes of black women, the new welfare regulations devalued the mothering work of black women and reinforced their status as workers. The architects of ADC and mothers' pensions constructed programs to assist women as caretakers, but theirs was a racially specific vision. They had in mind white single mothers. After the establishment of ADC, as black women increasingly applied for this entitlement in local areas around the country, single welfare mothers came to be viewed as wage earners as well as mothers.

The Welfare Rights Movement

These views about poor African American women did not go uncontested. By the mid-1960s a powerful movement for welfare rights, led by black women, emerged (e.g., see Boris 1999; Nadasen 2005; Orleck 2005; Williams 2005). Hundreds of local, community-based organizations around the country attempted to address violations of recipients' personal and civil rights, low

benefit levels, and the negative portrayals of women on welfare. In 1966, they joined together to form a national group, the National Welfare Rights Organization (NWRO). By 1969, at its peak, the movement had close to thirty thousand members nationwide. It was multiracial and open to all recipients, but it was overwhelmingly African American (about 85 percent). The organization planned sit-ins, organized militant public demonstrations, wrote pamphlets and position papers, and lobbied Congress.

Members of the welfare rights movement were unequivocally opposed to the 1967 work rules, which gave them no choice about being full-time homemakers. They eloquently tied the new work rules to the history of exploitation and slave labor to which black women had been subject. In 1967, the NWRO planned its first annual convention in Washington to coincide with the congressional debates about the proposed work requirements for welfare recipients. At a public hearing, they argued that “having a job is no guarantee against poverty” and that the proposed federal program would create hardship for women on AFDC. They called the bill “a betrayal of the poor, a declaration of war upon our families, and a fraud on the future of our nation” (*Washington Daily News*, September 20, 1967). After the hearing, welfare rights activists adjourned to the Mall in downtown Washington for a “Mothers March” that drew one thousand people and later a picket at the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. At the rally, Margaret McCarty, a welfare rights leader in Baltimore, invoked the historical oppression of African Americans as well as the racial pride of the period, when she said that “lousy, dirty, conniving brutes” devised the bill to “take us back to slavery. . . . I’m black and I’m beautiful and they ain’t going to take me back” (*Washington Post*, August 29, 1967; Williams 2005).

Welfare rights activists wanted to have a choice about working inside or outside the home. To this end, they sought to ease the problems of women who, out of choice or necessity, entered wage work. In particular, they supported the creation of childcare centers. Johnnie Tillmon, a prominent leader of the welfare rights movement, made day care “one of the first priorities” of her welfare rights organization in California (West 1981, 253). The NWRO office produced a guide for local welfare rights groups on how to organize a comprehensive community-controlled childcare program, giving them advice on raising money, hiring staff, and planning meals (“How to Organize”). In 1972, the Clark County Welfare Rights Organization in Nevada successfully launched a day-care program with the help of local churches and a nutritionist employed by the Office of Economic Opportunity (Evans 1972). Although proponents of day-care centers, women in the welfare rights movement were,

nevertheless, critical about the dynamic created when poor women were hired to care for other people's children. Afraid of the way institutionalized child care could be used to oppress women, Tillmon warned that the fight for universal child care should not be used to create "a reservoir of cheap female labor" that "institutionalized, partially self-employed Mammies" (1972, 115). Thus, although day-care centers could potentially free some women from the constraints of child care, they could just as likely create an exploitative situation for other women. For poor black women, paid employment was not necessarily a challenge to sexual inequality. On the contrary, requiring poor women to enter the world of work would only reinforce the kind of exploitation and oppression that many of them faced on a daily basis. Instead, they proposed adequate public support so that women would have the option of staying home. This, in itself, was a radical challenge to the socially defined gender roles of poor black women, who had never been seen primarily as homemakers or mothers.

Welfare rights activists also worked to recast the image of welfare recipients. They wanted to draw attention to their work as mothers as a way to challenge the characterizations that they were lazy and choosing not to work. Their concerns for their children often spurred their involvement in the welfare rights struggle, and their status as mothers was inseparable from their identity as activists.²² They often referred to themselves as "mothers" or "mother-recipients" and sought to bring dignity and respect to their work as mothers (Massachusetts Welfare Information Center Newsletter 1969). They challenged the artificial dichotomy between work and welfare by insisting that as mothers they did, in fact, work. In 1968, a Boston group said that "motherhood—whether the mother is married or not—is a role which should be fully supported, as fully rewarded, as fully honored, as any other" (Brumm 1968). One welfare recipient cleverly contrasted her situation with the reigning symbol of womanhood of the time when she asked, "Jackie Kennedy gets a government check. Is anyone making her go work?" ("Ohio Adequate Welfare News" 1968). By attempting to refashion the popular portrayal of welfare recipients as worthy mothers engaged in meaningful and socially significant work, welfare rights activists sought to legitimize their receipt of public assistance. To place value on their work as mothers was to challenge social norms, not to conform to dominant expectations.

Welfare rights activists believed that women should have control over their sexuality and reproduction and autonomy in choosing their partners. They were critical of the ways in which domestic relationships with men

could be oppressive to women and especially to mothers. In their exaltation of motherhood, they were not proposing that women on welfare simply marry and accept a secondary position as mother and homemaker. They condemned the subordination of women in traditional family formations and suggested alternative models. Mothers for Adequate Welfare (MAW) in Boston believed that marriage, with its “fixed rules and obligations,” was a “means for domination more than a means for expressing love” (quoted in Brumm 1968). Moreover, they defended their status as single mothers and disputed stereotypes that vilified them, challenging the heteronormative two-parent family as the solution to the problem of poverty. They attempted to debunk the notion that single motherhood was a sign of cultural deficiency and to challenge the assumption that poor single mothers needed a male breadwinner. As single mothers who were essentially punished for not conforming to conventional norms, they were acutely aware of the social expectations to marry and establish traditional family relationships, but they believed that such relationships often served to subordinate women. Tillmon argued that if a woman was not married, people assumed she had “failed as a woman because [she has] failed to attract and keep a man. There’s something wrong with [her].” The meager benefits and stigma attached to welfare served as an “example” to let any woman know what would happen “if she tries to go it alone without a man” (1972). These women examined the ways in which social pressures, the welfare system, and the institution of marriage all worked to discourage autonomy by forcing women into unequal relations with men. Welfare recipients in Morgantown, West Virginia, wrote a handbook instructing others that “an AFDC mother can have male visitors as often as she wants and go out on dates if she leaves her children in the care of a responsible person.” Through such strategies, welfare rights activists attempted to validate their status as single parents and assert their right to enter or reject the institution of marriage on their own terms. This push for autonomy included reproductive rights. Welfare recipients wanted to choose for themselves whether and under what circumstances they should have a child. Johnnie Tillmon wrote, “Nobody realizes more than poor women that all women should have the right to control their own reproduction” (1972, 115). Some manuals created by local welfare rights organizations to educate recipients informed them of birth control but stressed that “this is your choice” (“Chicago Welfare Rights Organization Handbook” 1968; Mothers for Adequate Welfare n.d.). In 1971, the NWRO national convention included a panel on abortion, but, as Tillmon explained, “We know how easily the lobby for birth control can be perverted into a weapon against poor women.

The word is choice. Birth control is a right, not an obligation. A personal condition, not a condition of a welfare check" (1972, 115).

The welfare rights movement also made a claim that welfare was a right, which for them meant financial assistance regardless of moral standing, personal behavior, or the capricious will of caseworkers. The only qualification that should be necessary for receipt of welfare, they argued, was poverty. Movement activists educated other welfare recipients about the rules and regulations of the welfare program. Local groups gained access to departmental welfare manuals, and with the help of legal aid lawyers, they wrote welfare rights handbooks that outlined for their members the rights to which they were entitled. In Long Beach, California, Citizens for Creative Welfare circulated a ten-page booklet called "Poor Man's Bible: A Welfare Rights Handbook" (Sutton 1968). MAW in Boston wrote "Your Welfare Rights Manual," which addressed topics such as "What do I get on AFDC?," "What about Sheets and Furniture?," "Can my Children go to College?," and "How to Appeal a Decision by Your Caseworker" (Brumm 1968). The Hinds County Welfare Rights Movement (1967–68) in Mississippi developed a handbook called "Your Welfare Rights," counseling recipients: "Welfare is not charity. If you are in need and meet the other standards, you have a *right* to welfare help." Welfare rights activists also used the appeals process to question unfair decisions made by caseworkers. This was most evident in the campaign for fair hearings, a formal nonjudicial hearing before a state board of welfare to overturn a caseworker's decision. In New York City, where the fair hearing campaign was used most extensively, the Citywide Coordinating Committee of Welfare Rights Groups, according to executive director Hulbert James, sponsored three thousand fair hearing cases from August through October 1967, a huge increase over the usual fifty cases a year (*New York Times*, July 15, 1968; Ginger 1970, 111). The appeals process shifted the balance of power between caseworker and client and gave recipients a bit more leverage in the face of a daunting welfare bureaucracy.

The movement also lobbied for, and introduced into Congress, a proposal for a guaranteed minimum income for all poor people regardless of family status, work history, or personal morality. This fight for a right to welfare and a guaranteed minimum income was hugely important in terms of attempting to redefine the nature of the welfare program, which had been tainted by the politics of charity and had always distinguished between worthy and unworthy recipients. Endorsing the concept of guaranteed annual income served several purposes at once. It forced the state to recognize housework

and child care as legitimate work, freed women from dependence on men, debunked the racial characterizations of black women as lazy by acknowledging the work they did as mothers, and gave women a viable alternative to degrading labor market conditions.

The welfare rights movement and its allies had a discernible impact on welfare policy in the 1960s. They eliminated some of the most egregious regulations associated with welfare, such as the residency requirement and the man-in-the-house rules, and established a legal precedent for their rights to due process. They won thousands of dollars for recipients in special grants to bring them up to the basic minimum standard of living, as defined by local welfare departments. They informed recipients of their legal and political rights and empowered them to claim these rights through collective action. By the end of the 1960s, welfare rights activists were sitting on presidential advisory committees; were consulted by the secretary of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare; and were regular participants in welfare conferences. Although in many cases their representation was token, it nevertheless signaled an important victory for poor black women who had historically been excluded from such deliberations. Their proposal for a guaranteed income never passed, but it was introduced into Congress and became a standard against which other proposals were measured. Although the welfare rights movement was not able to achieve all of its goals, it participated in the debate about black women's right to assistance and contested the prevailing wisdom about welfare.

Conclusion

In the postwar period, the welfare program underwent a dramatic transformation: from a relatively benign program supporting women in their work as mothers to a highly charged, punitive program that came to symbolize the social ills of inner-city black communities. This change was fueled by a narrative about race, gender, family, sex, and community disintegration—a narrative that nurtured the growth of a welfare rights movement that posited a different vision of welfare reform and an alternative black womanhood. Although the welfare rights movement made important strides in empowering poor and black women, it was not able to counter the emergence of the “welfare queen” stereotype. The trope of the “welfare queen” served a number of purposes in American political discourse. It was a strategy to establish heterosexual normativity. The despised and marginalized welfare

recipient became a lesson to poor women who have children outside the boundaries of traditional marriage. It reinforced the work ethic by sanctioning poor women who chose caring for their children and government assistance over low-paying, menial jobs with few benefits. It redrew racial and gender boundaries by constructing a narrative about the deviant sexuality and shaky moral standing of poor black women. This racial ideology was deployed in response to fears about black migration, rising welfare rolls, and changing social mores in the postwar period. This reconstruction of the welfare discourse signaled a change in how race was discussed, demonstrating the fluidity and adaptability of the concept of race (Jones 1998).

The transformation of welfare lends insight into the ongoing process of racial formation. In the period after World War II, with the emergence of the black freedom movement and the discrediting of scientific racism, it became less acceptable to speak openly in racially derogatory terms. Instead of biologically based theories of race, culture and gender became a more common way of discussing group traits (Feldstein 2000). Rather than painting the entire black community with a broad brush, the characteristics of gender, sexuality, morality, and public assistance came to signify the “less desirable” elements. The new politics of welfare reinscribed racial domination and led to a greater isolation of the black poor. In this new discourse of welfare, poor black women and their ostensibly deviant behavioral practices were deemed dangerous to core American values of hard work, family values, and middle-class morality. Black women’s dependence on welfare, it was argued, fostered criminal behavior, discouraged work, modeled promiscuity, and led ultimately to the next generation’s dependence on welfare. In the postwar period, welfare became a euphemism for race viewed through a lens of gender, family, and sex. The recasting of race enabled mainstream Americans to smugly claim that because of the black freedom movement, the “race” problem had been resolved—and that the disproportionate numbers of African American on welfare, in prisons, and in poverty can be explained instead by culture and morality. This discursive strategy conveniently rewrites the history of the black freedom movement as a movement that nearly all Americans shared in and supported. The success of the black freedom movement is held up as evidence that the nation has rid itself of the scourge of racism.

Yet, race and racism are still present in American politics. Alongside racial violence and systemic discrimination in housing, hiring, and voting, ideological constructions of poor black women and their sexuality play a profound role in shaping social policy and, more specifically, in undermining support

for various government-run programs. The image of the “welfare queen” is a powerful component of political discourse and symbolizes myriad social problems: single parenthood, inner-city poverty, intergenerational welfare dependence, and teenage pregnancy. In reality, most welfare recipients don’t fit the stereotypical, multigenerational recipient who eschews the work that these reforms are premised on. A major study by the University of Michigan in the early 1990s demonstrated that most women on welfare received assistance for a limited period of time, that on average they had fewer than two children, and that they cycled on and off welfare between periods of work. Most welfare recipients who were employed turned to welfare because of some personal, family, or financial crisis (see Bane and Ellwood 1994). Nevertheless, the racialized and sexualized image of welfare recipients facilitated the implementation of the first work requirements in 1967 and led to the dismantling of AFDC in 1996. When President Bill Clinton signed into law the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA), which overhauled the AFDC program eleven years ago, he asserted that the most important aspect of the legislation was that it was “tough on work.” As the title of the act suggests, lawmakers wanted recipients to take “personal responsibility.” PRWORA replaced AFDC with Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), a block-grant system that gives states a lump sum of money that they then use to put women on welfare to work. TANF includes a five-year lifetime limit on assistance and mandatory work requirements. It effectively ended the entitlement of support to poor single mothers. Politicians continue to assume that TANF recipients—who are disproportionately women of color—need to be required to take employment. The focus on behavior and morality, as a political strategy, turns social problems into individual ones. It blames black women for economic deprivation, political disfranchisement, and social isolation and deflects attention away from broader structural issues such as unemployment, low wages, the lack of availability of quality day care, a poor public school system, and inadequate health care.²³ It also has serious consequences for poor black women’s participation in political culture, their access to citizenship rights, and their economic marginalization.²⁴ As long as the trope of the “welfare queen” continues to dominate discussions about black poverty, the real problems facing poor black families will not be addressed. Perhaps the welfare rights movement can serve as a model for how poor women can reassert their rights, push for a more just social policy, and redirect our nation’s attention to the political issues that matter most.

Endnotes

1. For a discussion of racist and sexist stereotypes in recent welfare reform, see Sheared (1998).

2. See Brown (1999). In *The Color of Welfare* (1994), Jill Quadagno also discusses the connection between race and social policy, but she suggests that the Civil Rights Movement was responsible for this association in the public mind because of its demand that War on Poverty programs be racially inclusive. In fact, the AFDC became linked with African Americans much earlier—in the 1950s.

3. Robert Lieberman makes a similar argument in *Shifting the Color Line* (1998); however, he doesn't discuss gender and sexuality in the constructions of welfare and attributes the shift to the institutional structure of the program.

4. For a discussion of wage earning and welfare, see Abramovitz (1989), Goodwin (1995), Gordon (1990, 1994), Mink (1995), and Nelson (1990).

5. Winifred Bell (1965, 34) suggests that between 1937 and 1940 African Americans made up 14 to 17 percent of the ADC caseload.

6. See Goodwin (1995), Mittelstadt (2005), and Reese (2005). For more on patterns of discrimination in the early years of ADC, see Neubeck and Cazenave (2001, 41–65).

7. See, for example, Jones (1985) and Boris (1993).

8. According to a HEW report, 4.5 percent of the nation's children in 1961 were illegitimate, but only 0.5 percent were illegitimate and on ADC (U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare 1961; cited in Steiner 1966, 125).

9. This conclusion is based upon an extensive review of the popular press from 1945 to 1967. The review includes coverage about welfare in *Time*, *U.S. News and World Report*, *New York Times Magazine*, *Saturday Evening Post*, *Nation's Business*, *Atlantic Monthly*, and *Business Week*. See for example, *New York Times Magazine* (December 17, 1961), *U.S. News and World Report* (July 24, 1961), *Saturday Evening Post* (May 11, 1963), and *Business Week* (July 22, 1961).

10. For a discussion of the shift from a structural to an individual analysis of poverty in poverty research, see O'Connor (2001).

11. For a critique of Moynihan, see Collins (1989).

12. Laura Briggs (2002) traces the emergence of the Puerto Rican "welfare queen" in Oscar Lewis's *La Vida*.

13. Spitzer (2000) makes a similar argument that race and welfare became inseparable in the mid-1960s. He ties this development, however, more to the passage of the 1967 Social Security Amendments.

14. Ruth Feldstein (2000) looks at the way motherhood shaped discussions of race and liberalism in the 1950s and 1960s.

15. For an extended discussion, see Bell (1965).

16. African-Americans comprised five thousand out of a total of thirty-one thousand in the city as a whole.

17. This quotation is from *U.S. News and World Report* (July 24, 1961). See also *Business Week* (July 22, 1961) and *Time* (July 28, 1961).

18. For a discussion of the full range of government work programs and how they were targeted differently, see Rose (1995).

19. For a discussion of civil rights organizations positions, see Hamilton and Hamilton (1997).

20. Marisa Chappell (2002) argues that the family-wage ideal was an important component of social policy. Most experts favored reestablishing the two-parent family. This motivated the formation of the AFDC-UP program. In the absence of this, however, they advocated self-sufficiency for women on welfare.

21. Mittelstadt (2005) argues that the shift toward employment among social welfare experts begins in the 1940s, and Laura Curran (2005) argues that the shift in social work is a response to liberalization of gender relations and the backlash against AFDC.

22. For an excellent overview of the connection between mothering and activism, see Jetter, Orleck, and Taylor (1997).

23. See Brewer (1994). Barbara Omolade (1994) discusses the scapegoating of black single mothers, and Dalton Conley (1999) also discusses the black-white gap in wealth.

24. See Ange-Marie Hancock (2004), Gwendolyn Mink (1998), Holloway Sparks (2003), Dorothy Roberts (1996), and Susan Thomas (1998).

References

- Abramovitz, Mimi. *Regulating the Lives of Women: Social Welfare Policy from the Colonial Times to the Present*. Boston: South End Press: 1989.
- Bane, Mary Jo, and David T. Ellwood. *Welfare Realities: From Rhetoric to Reform*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994.
- Bell, Winifred. *Aid to Dependent Children*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1965.
- Boris, Eileen. "The Power of Motherhood: Black and White Activist Women Redefine the Political." In *Mothers of a New World: Maternalist Politics and the Origins of the Welfare States*, edited by Seth Koven and Sonya Michel, 214–45. New York: Routledge, 1993.
- . "When Work is Slavery." In *Whose Welfare*, edited by Gwendolyn Mink, 36–55. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999.
- Brewer, Rose. "Race, Class, Gender and U.S. State Welfare Policy." In *Color, Class and Country: Experiences of Gender*, edited by Gay Young and Bette Dickerson, 115–27. London: Zed Books, 1994.
- Briggs, Laura. "La Vida, Moynihan, and Other Libels: Social Science, Migration, and the Making of the Puerto Rican Welfare Queen." *Centro: Journal of the Center for Puerto Rican Studies* 14, no. 1 (Spring 2002): 3–24.
- Brown, Michael K. *Race, Money, and the American Welfare State*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999.
- Brown, Michael K., Martin Carnoy, Elliot Currie, Troy Duster, David Oppenheimer, Majorie M. Shultz, and David Wellman. *Whitewashing Race: The Myth of the Color-Blind Society*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003.
- Brumm, Gordon. "Mothers for Adequate Welfare—AFDC from the Underside" In *Dialogues Boston*, January 1968, 11. William Howard Whitaker Papers, Ohio Historical Society, Columbus, box 3, folder 3.
- Chappell, Marisa. "From Welfare Rights to Welfare Reform: The Politics of AFDC, 1964–1984." PhD diss., Northwestern University, 2002.

- "Cheating on Relief: Investigation Shows This." *U.S. News and World Report*, July 16, 1962.
- Chevalier, Lois. "The Welfare Mess." *Saturday Evening Post*, May 11, 1963.
- "Chicago Welfare Rights Organization Handbook." June 1968. William Howard Whitaker Papers, Ohio Historical Society, Columbus, box 3.
- Collins, Patricia Hill. "Comparison of Two Works on Black Family Life." *Signs* 14 (1989): 875–84.
- . *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*. New York: Routledge, 1991.
- Conley, Dalton. *Being Black, Living in the Red: Race, Wealth, and Social Policy in America*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999.
- Curran, Laura. "Social Work's Revised Maternalism: Mothers, Workers, and Welfare in Early Cold War America, 1946–1963." *Journal of Women's History* 17, no. 1 (2005): 112–36.
- Evans, James. "Quarterly Report to Campaign for Human Development." February 1, 1972. George Alvin Wiley Papers, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison, box 25.
- Feldstein, Ruth. *Motherhood in Black and White: Race and Sex in American Liberalism, 1930–1965*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000.
- Fields, Barbara. "Ideology and Race in American History." In *Region, Race, and Reconstruction: Essays in Honor of C. Vann Woodward*, edited by J. M. Kousser and J. M. McPherson, 143–77. New York: Oxford University Press, 1982.
- Gallup. *The Gallup Poll, 1959–1971*. Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 1972.
- Ginger, Ann Fagan, ed. *Civil Liberties Docket*. Oakland, CA: Meiklejohn Civil Liberties Libraries, 1970.
- Goodwin, Joanne. "'Employable Mothers' and 'Suitable Work': A Re-Evaluation of Welfare and Wage Earning For Women in the Twentieth-Century United States." *Journal of Social History* 29 (1995): 253–74.
- Gordon, Linda. *Pitied but Not Entitled: Single Mothers and the History of Welfare*. New York: The Free Press, 1994.
- , ed. *Women, The State, and Welfare*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990.
- Grove, Robert, and Alice Hetzel. *Vital Statistics Rates in the United States, 1940–1960*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, 1968.
- Hamilton, Dona Cooper, and Charles Hamilton. *The Dual Agenda: Race and Social Welfare Policies of Civil Rights Organizations*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1997.
- Hancock, Ange-Marie. *The Politics of Disgust: The Pubic Identity of the Welfare Queen*. New York: New York University Press, 2004.
- Hinds County Welfare Rights Movement. Your Welfare Rights. Handbooks. July 1967 and March 1968. American Civil Liberties Union National Archives, Mudd Library, Princeton University, boxes 1134–36.
- Holt, Thomas C. "Marking: Race, Race-Making, and the Writing of History." *American Historical Review* 100 (February 1995): 1–20.
- "How to Organize a Comprehensive Community Controlled Child Care Program." NWRO pamphlet, Wiley Papers, box 16.
- Jetter, Alexis, Anneliese Orleck, and Diana Taylor, eds. *The Politics of Motherhood: Activist Voices from Left to Right*. Hanover: University Press of New England, 1997.
- Jewell, K. Sue. *From Mammy to Miss America and Beyond: Cultural Images and the Shaping of U.S. Social Policy*. New York: Routledge, 1993.

- Jones, Jacqueline. *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work, and the Family from Slavery to the Present*. New York: Vintage, 1985.
- . “Race and Gender in Modern America.” *Reviews in American History* 26, no. 1 (1998): 220–38.
- Katz, Michael B. *The Price of Citizenship: Redefining the American Welfare State*. New York: Metropolitan Books, 2001.
- Keller, Kathryn. *Mothers and Work in Popular American Magazines*. Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1994.
- Kessler-Harris, Alice. *In Pursuit of Equity: Women, Men, and the Quest for Economic Citizenship in Twentieth-Century America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- Kunzel, Regina. “White Neurosis, Black Pathology: Constructing Out-of-Wedlock Pregnancy in the Wartime and Post-War U.S.” In *Not June Cleaver: Women and Gender in Postwar America*, edited by Joanne Meyerowitz, 304–31. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994.
- Larabee, Mary S. “Unmarried Parenthood Under the Social Security Act.” *Proceedings of the National Conference of Social Work, 1939*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1939.
- Levenstein, Lisa. “From Innocent Children to Unwanted Migrants and Unwed Moms: Two Chapters in the Public Discourse on Welfare in the United States, 1960–1961.” *Journal of Women’s History* 11 (2000): 10–33.
- Lieberman, Robert. *Shifting the Color Line: Race and the American Welfare State*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998.
- Linden-Ward, Blanche, and Carol Hurd Green. *American Women in the 1960s: Changing the Future*. New York: Twayne, 1993.
- Lubiano, Wahneema. “Black Ladies, Welfare Queens, and State Minstrels: Ideological War by Narrative Means.” In *Race-ing Justice, Engendering Power: Essays on Anita Hill, Clarence Thomas, and the Construction of Social Reality*, edited by Toni Morrison, 323–63. New York: Pantheon, 1992.
- Massachusetts Welfare Information Center Newsletter, April 7, 1969. William Howard Whitaker Papers, Ohio Historical Society, Columbus, box 2, folder 38.
- Mink, Gwendolyn. *The Wages of Motherhood: Inequality in the Welfare State, 1917–1942*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995.
- . *Welfare’s End*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998.
- Mittelstadt, Jennifer. *From Welfare to Workfare: The Unintended Consequences of Liberal Reform, 1945–1965*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005.
- Mothers for Adequate Welfare. “Your Welfare Rights Manual,” n.d. William Howard Whitaker Papers, Ohio Historical Society, Columbus, box 3.
- Moynihan, Daniel Patrick. *The Negro Family: A Case for National Action*. Washington, DC: Office of Policy Planning and Research, U.S. Dept. of Labor, 1965.
- . *Politics of Guaranteed Income: The Nixon Administration and the Family Assistance Plan*. New York: Random House, 1973.
- “The Mystery of Rising Relief Costs.” *U.S. News and World Report*, March 8, 1965.
- Nadasen, Premilla. *Welfare Warriors: The Welfare Rights Movement in the United States*. New York: Routledge, 2005.
- NBC. “The Battle of Newburgh.” NBC White Paper, 1961.
- Nelson, Barbara. “Origins of The Two Channel Welfare State: Workmen’s Compensation

- and Mothers' Aid." In *Women, The State, and Welfare*, edited by Linda Gordon, 123–51. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990.
- Neubeck, Kenneth, and Noel A. Cazenave. *Welfare Racism: Playing the Race Card Against America's Poor*. New York: Routledge, 2001.
- O'Connor, Alice. *Poverty Knowledge: Social Science, Social Policy, and the Poor in Twentieth-Century U.S. History*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001.
- "Ohio Adequate Welfare News." April 18, 1968. William Howard Whitaker Papers, Ohio Historical Society, Columbus, box 1.
- Omi, Michael, and Howard Winant. *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1980s*. New York: Routledge, 1986.
- Omolade, Barbara. *Rising Song of African American Women*. New York: Routledge, 1994.
- Orleck, Anneliese. *Storming Caesar's Palace: How Black Mothers Fought Their Own War on Poverty*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2005.
- Pascoe, Peggy. "Miscegenation Law, Court Cases, and Ideologies of 'Race' in Twentieth Century America." *Journal of American History* 83 (1996): 44–69.
- Patterson, James. *America's Struggle Against Poverty, 1900–1980*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981.
- Piven, Frances Fox, and Richard Cloward. *Regulating the Poor: The Functions of Public Welfare*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1971.
- "Project in Lay Advocacy." 1967. George Alvin Wiley Papers, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison. *New York Times*, July 15, 1968.
- Quadagno, Jill. *Transformation of Old Age Security: Class and Politics in the American Welfare State*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988.
- . *The Color of Welfare: How Racism Undermined the War on Poverty*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1994.
- Raskin, A. H. "Newburgh's Lessons for the Nation." *New York Times Magazine*, December 17, 1961.
- Record American*, August 27, 1968. In *Welfare Rights Handbook*, William Howard Whitaker Papers, Ohio Historical Society, Columbus, box 3, folder 5.
- Reese, Ellen. *Backlash Against Welfare Mothers Past and Present*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005.
- Roberts, Dorothy. "Welfare and the Problem of Black Citizenship." *Yale Law Journal* (April 1996): 1563–1602.
- Rose, Nancy. *Workfare or Fair Work: Women, Welfare, and Government Work Programs*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1995.
- Scott, Daryl Michael. *Contempt and Pity: Social Policy and the Image of the Damaged Black Psyche, 1880–1996*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997.
- Sheared, Vanessa. *Race, Gender, and Welfare Reform: The Elusive Quest for Self-Determination*. New York: Garland, 1998.
- "Six Myths About Welfare." NWRO pamphlet, 1971. Welfare Rights Collection, Lehman Library, Columbia University.
- Solinger, Rickie. *Wake up Little Susie: Single Pregnancy and Race Before Roe v. Wade*. New York: Routledge, 1994.
- Sparks, Holloway. "Queens, Teens, and Model Mothers." In *Race and the Politics of Welfare Reform*, edited by Sanford Schram, Joe Soss, and Richard Fording, 171–95. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003.

- Spitzer, Scott J. "The Liberal Dilemma: Welfare And Race, 1960–1975." PhD diss., Columbia University, 2000.
- Steiner, Gilbert. *Social Insecurity: The Politics of Welfare*. Chicago: Rand McNally, 1966.
- Sutton, Charles. "Newspaper Article." *Independent Press Telegram*, May 26, 1968. George Alvin Wiley Papers, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison, box 24, folder 13.
- Thomas, Susan. "Race, Gender, and Welfare Reform: The Anti-Natalist Response." *Journal of Black Studies* 28, no. 4 (March 1998): 419–46.
- Tillmon, Johnnie. "Welfare is a Woman's Issue." *Ms. Magazine* vol. 1 (Spring 1972): 111–116.
- U.S. Advisory Council on Social Security. "1938 Final Report." Quoted in Abramovitz 1989, 321.
- U.S. Congress, House Ways and Means Committee. *Background Material and Data on Programs Within the Jurisdiction of the Committee on Ways and Means, 1986 Edition*. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1986.
- U.S. Bureau of the Census. *Statistical Abstracts of the United States*. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1970.
- . *Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1970*. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1975.
- U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. *Public Assistance 1961, reprinted from the Annual Report 1961*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, 1961.
- West, Guida. *The National Welfare Rights Organization: The Social Protest of Poor Women*. New York: Praeger, 1981.
- "When You Try to Get Relievers Back to Work." *U.S. News and World Report*, July 24, 1961.
- Williams, Rhonda. *The Politics of Public Housing: Black Women's Struggles against Urban Inequality*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.
- Winant, Howard. *The World is a Ghetto: Race and Democracy Since WWII*. New York: Basic, 2001.
- Zylan, Yvonne. "The Divided Female State: Gender, Citizenship and U.S. Social Policy Development, 1945–1990." PhD diss., New York University, 1994.