

Welfare Reform, Globalization, and the Racialization of Entitlement

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In August of 1996, the United States Congress passed the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRA, Public Law 104-193).¹ Dismantling the 60-year-old federal cash assistance program, Aid to Families With Dependent Children (AFDC), this legislation replaced AFDC with Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF)—block grants to states governed under a new set of time-limits and restrictions. Although popularly known as “welfare reform,” the PRA instead radically *transformed* the character of public assistance. Welfare was no longer a social safety net but a temporary program designed to encourage marriage and other “family values” among the nation’s poor and to move welfare recipients as quickly as possible into the workforce. Along with a five-year lifetime limit on cash benefits and new work requirements, the PRA implemented strict restrictions on welfare eligibility, banning large sectors of the American public (including teenage mothers, newborn babies, convicted felons, and legal immigrants) from receiving public assistance.

The political discourse that fueled welfare reform reveals much about how a neoliberal vision of the global economy shaped the connection between changing ideas about what kinds of people are deserving of state protection and American entitlements and the broader context of the triumph of the neoliberal vision of the global economy based on the ascendancy of free markets and the diminution of state social responsibility. As in the past, the contemporary welfare debate pitted the interests of a white citizenry against the de-legitimized claims of an undeserving and “alien” underclass. Welfare reform hinged on the belief that welfare and the culture it bred—not poverty—most harmed the poor. While

this idea is as old as social welfare itself, in “post-civil rights” America such stigmatization, by capitalizing on growing public resentment against low-income black and Latino immigrant women, was enough to dismantle the national welfare system. Indeed, welfare reform sent a stark message to those receiving welfare. By marking who would have and be denied access to benefits of citizenship, welfare reform was a form of civic disfranchisement that had long roots in the racialized politics of U.S. entitlements.

Notwithstanding the historical continuities, the passage of the PRA signals a series of significant breaks from the past. For the first time since the creation of a nationalized system of social welfare in 1935, state and local governments have the power to design their own welfare eligibility standards and to deny assistance to those families who fall outside these narrowed eligibility definitions or fail to conform to a long litany of behavioral codes. Moreover, while the AFDC program was designed to keep white women who had been widowed or abandoned at home with their children and out of the workforce, the “work-first” approach mandated by the federal government requires welfare recipients, the vast majority of whom are women, to accept any job, regardless of pay, work conditions, and childcare considerations. Those recipients who cannot secure paid employment are placed in community-service or “workfare” assignments, where they perform work in the public sector in order to receive their monthly welfare stipends. However, workfare assignments do not have to be new public jobs, and there are neither requirements for job training or higher education in the PRA nor do workfare workers have access to the labor protections of other workers. Thus, despite evidence of a shortage of jobs with living wages for recipients to get out of poverty, the legislation accepted the labor market as is: welfare recipients were the ones needing fixing, not the economy.²

In its broadest sense, the passage of welfare reform in 1996 heralds the success of a “post-civil rights” consensus in American politics, that proclaims that race no longer determines individual success or failure, and that the government should only help those who help themselves. The emerging consensus among liberal politicians, scholars, and journalists around the cultural nature of welfare reflected a confidence that the nation had moved past its own history of denigrating the “cultures” of non-white people. It was now racist *not* to talk about the “dysfunction within” the black and Latino communities, and few felt the need to scrutinize the way that contemporary images of welfare recipients called up age-old stereotypes of black and Latina women as lazy, irresponsible, and promiscuous. With his set of black friends and his New South political background, Bill Clinton was well-situated to usher in a post-welfare world that played on racial imagery and ensured a racially bifurcated work force while disavowing that race had anything to do with it. The lexicon of post-civil rights America—“culture of poverty,” “underclass,” “family values”—pathologized non-white womanhood without speaking it.³

The “work-first” provisions of the PRA also mark an historic shift in the relationship between social welfare and labor. Whereas the AFDC program was

part of a New Deal package that sought to protect the economic rights of white working-class men (by preventing low-wage feminized labor from undercutting prevailing union wages), the new TANF program degrades the power of organized labor and undermines recent gains by service sector unions such as the Service Employees International Union (SEIU). The PRA forces a mass population of under-educated female workers into the bottom half of a U.S. labor market that has, over the past three decades, been characterized by falling wages, flexible labor arrangements, and weakening worker rights and protections.⁴ The labor market benefits of welfare reform are enhanced because states are not required to keep records on what happens to recipients once they leave the welfare rolls. Thus, there are few safeguards to protect individuals as states seek to reduce their rolls by any means available.

Equally significant is welfare reform's intervention in the arena of U.S. immigration policy. The PRA served as a "back door" to immigration reform as it widened the legal gap between citizens and legal immigrants, created immigrant categories entirely new to U.S. law, and opened up new channels of surveillance and information sharing between federal and local social service agencies and the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS). Riding on the political momentum of California's Proposition 187, the 1994 ballot initiative that barred undocumented immigrants from most social services,⁵ welfare reform signals the emergence of a contemporary anti-immigrant agenda that differs markedly from other periods of nativism in U.S. history. This shift represents new immigrants from Latin America and Asia not so much as threats to the work force, as in previous decades, but increasingly as threats to the American civic and fiscal community.⁶ Yet, while this "new nativism" deploys a racial-nationalist discourse, it ultimately furthers a neoliberal agenda in which the state serves the interests of global capital by ensuring the availability and vulnerability of an increasingly foreign-born and female work force in the United States.⁷

Propelling welfare reform, then, were economic and political imperatives introduced by globalization. The dismantling of the U.S. social welfare system provides us with an analytical lens through which to examine the role of the nation-state in the late-twentieth-century global economy. On the one hand, the PRA represents an attempt to tighten the reigns of state authority and to reassert U.S. national sovereignty in the face of global integration. As the second most significant piece of legislation passed under the Clinton presidency, following the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1994—at a time when Ford cars and Sears clothing are manufactured in *maquiladora* factories in Third World "free trade zones," when the most popular radio station in Los Angeles is broadcast in Spanish, and when the gospel of free trade is continually used to undermine the power of workers around the world—welfare reform offered American voters ostensible insulation against the tide of globalization. Vilified as an affront to American values of family, individualism, and self-reliance, black and Latina "welfare mothers" confirmed the voting public's sense of Americanness precisely by serving as its antithesis.⁸

At the same time, although framed by a moralistic discussion of the psychosocial benefits of work and “self-reliance,” the actual rewards of the PRA were to be found in the global economic benefits of an enlarged low-wage work force. As it pushes low-skilled workers into a deregulated economic arena, welfare reform serves the interests of an increasingly transnational and flexible capitalism by removing government cash assistance (long seen by its critics as an impediment to the “free market”) as a viable alternative or supplement to low-wage employment. By mandating that people work in any job for any wage, welfare reform ensured a low-wage work force vulnerable to the demands of global capital. Functioning in many ways as a domestic version of an IMF Structural Adjustment Program, the PRA imposed certain punitive restrictions on welfare recipients from which other Americans were exempt⁹ under a similar rationale that this would lead the way for greater opportunity and responsibility.

Welfare reform, like California’s Proposition 187, followed from the neoliberal logic of NAFTA—removing the national fetters on work and trade while erecting higher boundaries to entitlement and state protection.¹⁰ Like NAFTA and Proposition 187, welfare reform re-territorializes the U.S. nation-state, dislodging the national economy from a bounded territory and creating an imagined (and increasingly corporatized) public sphere that reserves its rights and privileges for a white, middle-class citizenry.¹¹ Supporters sold both NAFTA and the PRA through the neoliberal logic of free trade—arguing that lifting trade restrictions and social subsidies would elevate all workers. Yet, the economic effects of both policies have hardly been elevating for those at the bottom of the economic ladder. Indeed, the PRA provides a telling window on the centrality of race within the ideologies fueling globalization: by playing on faulty assumptions about the cultures and values of people of color, such ideologies legitimate economic policies that maintain, if not exacerbate, racial hierarchies.

The Racialization of Welfare: From “Deserving Mothers” to “Welfare Queens”

AFDC had its roots in the mother’s pensions programs instituted by most states in the 1910s and 1920s. These programs sought to reinforce women’s domestic role and keep mothers out of the workplace by giving “deserving mothers” a small subsidy. “Deserving mothers” were largely defined as white mothers, and these programs were instituted to protect white married or widowed women. In 1935, realizing the need of average Americans for a modicum of protection from the unstable nature of the market, Congress passed the Social Security Act, creating five new programs to provide a safety net for Americans if they were to come on hard times: unemployment compensation, old-age insurance, Aid to the Blind, Old Age Assistance, and Aid to Dependent Children. According to the act, ADC benefits were “designed to release from the wage earning role the person whose natural function is to give her children the physical and

affectionate guardianship necessary.”¹² Because many of the New Deal’s programs were administered through the states, and because, particularly in the South, white politicians feared losing black women’s cheap domestic and agricultural labor, black women were largely deemed ineligible for ADC benefits, disqualified during the cotton harvesting season, or intimidated from even applying.¹³ “Suitable home” provisions found in the statute were often enforced on a racial basis; case workers often disqualifying black children if their mothers did apply.¹⁴ Thus, states have vied for power to determine welfare eligibility criteria throughout the century, and such criteria have long rested on the interests of keeping women of color in the low-wage workforce.¹⁵

ADC was changed to Aid to Families with Dependent Children in 1950, providing benefits to the custodial parent (mother) to stay home and raise her children. Consistent with postwar American family ideals, throughout the 1950s and early-1960s women receiving welfare were *required* to stay home. Yet, the ideology of female domesticity as manifested in welfare policy continued to be racially biased as employment rates for black and Latina mothers climbed steadily in the post-1945 period.¹⁶ In the late-1960s, growing activism in communities of color, particularly the formation of the National Welfare Rights Organization (NWRO) in 1967, led to change in the welfare system. Community activists pushed to open AFDC to all those who met means-tested standards and lobbied to increase benefits to ensure that they met poor families’ basic needs. Framing welfare as a right and a matter of equality, the NWRO took its message to the streets, into welfare offices, in front of state legislatures, and before the courts on behalf of the rights of poor women. By 1969, its membership reached 25,000, with thousands more participating in NWRO-sponsored events. As Johnnie Tillmon, the first chairwoman of the NWRO and a black recipient herself, argued,

There are a lot of other lies that male society tells about welfare mothers: that AFDC mothers are immoral, that AFDC mothers are lazy, misuse their welfare checks, spend it all on booze and are stupid and incompetent. If people are willing to believe these lies, it’s partly because they’re just special versions of the lies that society tells about all women.¹⁷

Civil rights lawyers and NWRO activists challenged these stereotypes as they successfully fought to overturn “man in the house” rules, establish a right to a fair hearing to maintain or obtain welfare benefits, and ensure enforcement of little-known provisions in welfare regulations outlining minimum standards for people on welfare.¹⁸ The NWRO’s organizing ef-

forts, along with President Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty, opened welfare to those eligible, including women of color; eligible families receiving AFDC jumped from 33 percent in 1960 to over 90 percent by 1971. At the same time, increasing numbers of families faced extreme poverty in the 1960s, particularly as a result of the mechanization of southern agriculture and the beginnings of de-industrialization in the North. By 1974, 10.8 million people were receiving AFDC, up from 3.1 million in 1961.¹⁹

Despite evidence that the expansion of AFDC and food stamp benefits did succeed in significantly reducing hunger and malnutrition in America,²⁰ the backlash against the gains of the civil rights movement, including those regarding AFDC, began in earnest with the election of Richard Nixon.²¹ While AFDC had never been a very popular program, the frontal attack on welfare began when larger numbers of women of color began receiving the benefits to which they were entitled under law. Nixon and, more successfully, Ronald Reagan channeled the increasing economic vulnerability of middle- and working-class Americans into a racially-charged campaign against "government largess" and public entitlement.²² Reaganomics blamed income maintenance programs not only for weakening "capital's ability to depress wages by means of economic insecurity," but for producing "overly secure" workers who are less likely to acquiesce to onerous working conditions.²³

Tapping into the white conservatism fomented by Nixon's "Silent Majority" campaign, Reagan's war on welfare flourished through a strategy of racial division and homilies about hard work and family values. The president and his administration accused the "liberal" programs of the 1960s, and their black and Latina clients, of undermining the American tradition of individualism and self-reliance. AFDC's shortcomings went beyond its fiscal cost to honest, hard-working (read "white") American taxpayers. In his 1986 State of the Union address, Reagan openly blamed the AFDC system for propagating a "welfare culture" of "female and child poverty, child abandonment, horrible crimes, and deteriorating schools."²⁴ Drawing on a centuries-old culturalist discourse on poverty, Reagan targeted the "welfare state" and its undeserving clientele as the primary cause for America's social and economic problems.

Reagan's message enjoyed great appeal among white middle- and working-class voters who were faced with an economic crisis that shook the foundations of U.S. society. Beginning in the early-1970s, private divestment from manufacturing centers in the East and Midwest, coupled with the expansion of a low-wage service sector and light industry in the Sunbelt, profoundly transformed the U.S. labor market. In the 1970s, private divestment and capital flight cost over 38 million manufacturing jobs. Between 1979 and 1984, the poverty rate rose from 11.7 percent to 14.4

percent—a dramatic 23 percent increase.²⁵ The changing character of work began to erode public confidence in the Fordist promise of unrestrained economic growth and a rising national standard of living. The shift from manufacturing to service and high-tech information industries, and the deployment of just-in-time production techniques, made it easier for employers to replace full-time employment with part-time and temporary jobs, and to “substitute lower-paid female labour for that of more highly paid and less easily laid-off core male workers.”²⁶ As job security and worker protections shrank alongside federal regulation of corporate activity in the 1980s, the domestic “Leave It To Beaver” family ideal of the 1950s had been replaced by the reality of two-working-parent households struggling to make ends meet. Simultaneously, as both real wages and publicly-subsidized childcare shrank, the number of female-headed households living in poverty rose sharply. Between 1970 and 1978, the number of poor single mothers and their children grew by 38 percent. In 1983, women accounted for two-thirds of all poor adults in the United States.²⁷

By the mid-1980s the effects of economic restructuring and globalization could be seen most profoundly in the altered class structure and racial landscape of U.S. cities. The transformation of manufacturing centers like New York and Chicago into global “command centers” for high finance, tourism, and technology produced what economists describe as an “hourglass economy,” sharply divided between high-income and low-income workers.²⁸ “Reindustrialization” in southwest cities like Los Angeles and Houston replaced unionized jobs in rubber and automobile manufacturing with sweatshop production in the growing garment and electronics industries. As white working- and middle-class families fled the city for federally subsidized suburbs, the economic elite that remained cloistered itself in fortress-like condominiums and gated residential communities serviced by a brown and black brigade of janitors, maids, gardeners, and nannies.

That the emergent class structure of American cities was bifurcated along racial lines can be explained by several factors. First, “last hired, first fired” rules disproportionately affected African American and U.S.-born Latino workers who, as a result of the anti-discrimination policies of the 1960s, had only recently gained entry into the skilled trades, and were also geographically concentrated in urban centers hit hard by corporate downsizing, factory shutdowns, and municipal cutbacks. In New York City, where manufacturing declined at three times the national rate, 40 percent of the city’s Puerto Rican workers were unemployed by the mid-1980s. Also displaced from unionized blue-collar work, black workers were increasingly concentrated in low-wage clerical and service occupations in the private and public sectors (the latter which would be devastated by the city’s “fiscal restructuring” in the early-1990s, which cost

25,000 public jobs, including 15,000 layoffs).²⁹ With similar patterns in cities across the nation, by 1985, the black unemployment rate had risen to a crisis level of 15.1 percent, followed by Latino unemployment at 10.5 percent.³⁰

Second, following passage of the 1965 immigration reforms,³¹ immigration from Latin America and Asia radically transformed U.S. urban centers. In three decades, the percentage of Europeans among legal immigrants dropped from 80 percent to less than 20 percent, with the majority of new immigrants settling in coastal metropolises like New York, Miami, and Los Angeles.³² This wave of post-1965 immigration coincided with the economic changes described above. On the one hand, the migration of highly educated Asian and South American professionals and venture capitalists (referred to as the Third World “brain-drain” of the 1970s and 1980s) contributed to the growth of the “informational city,”³³ and to the development of transnational economic linkages between the United States and newly industrializing nations. More significant, in sheer numbers, was the arrival of millions of working-class immigrants from Mexico, the Caribbean, and Southeast Asia, displaced by industrialization and multinational development in their homelands and drawn to U.S. cities by jobs in the growing service and light manufacturing sectors. In Los Angeles, for example, the Latino population grew by 71 percent between 1970 and 1980, with Mexican and Central American immigrant workers concentrated in producer services or export-competitive production—industries characterized by low wages, low unionization rates, and unstable employment. By 1980, 61 percent of male workers and 66 percent of female workers in Los Angeles were employed in part-time, part-year jobs. Moreover, between 1967 and 1982, real average wages for L.A.’s unskilled workers (both native-born and immigrant) dropped by 8 percent.³⁴ Thus, while the city’s Mexican immigrants were “instrumental in the reindustrialization of certain low-wage industries,”³⁵ the vast majority of Mexican workers and their children lived in racially segregated, high poverty barrios. In Los Angeles, as in other U.S. metropolises, post-Fordist capitalism flourished from the availability of low-wage immigrant labor, producing an urban political economy sharply divided along lines of class, race, and nativity.

In the face of the changing economic realities of an increasingly global economy, President Reagan and his New Right allies capitalized on the city as a valuable political commodity. Throughout the 1980s, and continuing into the 1990s, media coverage and political discourse on “urban decline”—of rising crime rates, vicious youth gangs, crack cocaine, illegal aliens, teenage welfare queens, and absent fathers—constructed an image of the city, and its brown and black residents, as a world apart and different from the rest of America. Centuries-old racist and nativist beliefs intertwined in this portrait of a “Third World inside a First,” of ghettos and barrios as incubators for alien cultural values, hyper-

sexual and criminal behavior, broken marriages, and overly large families. Indeed, the genius of Reagan's strategy lay in its ability to link this portrait of a foreign and dangerous city to the "cultural struggle over the material and symbolic conditions of U.S. citizenship."³⁶ If, as Lauren Berlant has argued, "the anti-federal but patriotic nationalism of Reagan Republicanism [worked] to shrink the state while intensifying identification with the utopian, symbolic 'nation,'"³⁷ then the city in the 1980s became the dystopian mirror to Reagan's Americanism. Calling on "ordinary citizens" to reclaim the nation from liberals, minority interest groups, and urban criminals, Reagan offered American voters a new private vision of the public sphere: a nation embodied in the cloistered enclave of family and privatized community life.

Reagan's fetishization of privacy and individualism, however, did not extend to poor women and people of color, whose behavior and family life came under intensified surveillance and scrutiny during the 1980s. Painting welfare recipients alternately as threats to the national community and as victims of government policy, Reagan moved to eradicate the welfare state "for the good of the poor." Calling for a return to the American tradition of self-help and voluntary associations,³⁸ Reagan abolished the public service jobs program, cut almost half a million people from the food stamp program, and reduced or eliminated funds for public housing and Medicaid for the working poor. Moreover, Reagan, and his successors George Bush and Bill Clinton, put work requirements into AFDC and encouraged state governors to seek waivers from federal guidelines. By 1996, over 40 states had applied for waivers and were running welfare-to-work demonstration programs that eventually laid the groundwork for the federal TANF program.³⁹

Revealing the new role of the American state in the global economy, Reagan's anti-government ideology did not aim to do away with government but to shift its role. Eliminating the fetters in the market through cuts in social spending coincided with tremendous increases in law enforcement and military spending. In 1981, Reagan persuaded Congress to allocate a \$1.2 trillion increase in military spending over five years. Reagan's War on Drugs gave the federal government new jurisdiction over crime, and in 1982, Reagan and Congress authorized \$125 million to hire a thousand new FBI and DEA agents. Federal drug prosecutions skyrocketed, nearly 100 percent from 1982-1988, far ahead of any actual increase in drug crimes. In 1986 and again in 1988, the administration and Congress passed a series of harsh mandatory minimum sentencing guidelines, interjecting the "get tough" voice of the state into the arena of sentencing.⁴⁰

The Welfare Debate in the 1990s: Forging a "Post-Civil Rights" Consensus

While most critics of welfare reform blame the Reagan Revolution for the recent dismantling of AFDC, few consider how academic social science in the 1980s and 1990s, even among scholars who called themselves liberals, legiti-

mized Reagan's behaviorist analysis of poverty. Ken Auletta's *The Underclass* (1982) first popularized the concept of a behaviorally defined "underclass" as an alien sub-population that menaced the nation and thus was at fault for its troubled position in society. But it was the publication of William Julius Wilson's *The Truly Disadvantaged* in 1987 that gave the liberal imprimatur for Democratic governor and presidential hopeful Bill Clinton to call for "an end to welfare as we know it."

Wilson took older conservative ideas about poverty, married them to a structural analysis, and recast them as liberal formulations on the underclass. He explicitly connected this new underclass to changes in the U.S. economy (notably deindustrialization and public and corporate disinvestment from U.S. cities) that improved the incomes of many blacks while leaving the rest of the black community unemployed, poor, and increasingly isolated. These structural changes in the economy, according to Wilson, precipitated behavioral and community change in black inner-city neighborhoods. As basic institutions declined, the social organization of inner-city neighborhoods—sense of community, positive neighborhood identification, and explicit norms and sanctions against aberrant behavior—likewise declined. This process magnified the effect of living in highly concentrated urban poverty areas, effects that are manifested in ghetto-specific culture and behavior.⁴¹

According to Wilson, social dislocation and isolation were the defining traits of the underclass, the problems of poor blacks stemming from class rather than race.⁴² The dissolution of the black community⁴³ and of black families as men lost their jobs led to the creation of a permanent underclass whose "behavior contrasts sharply with that of mainstream America."⁴⁴ Wilson was particularly concerned with the proliferation of single-parent families and teenage pregnancy, even while citing statistics that show that fertility rates for black teenagers have actually decreased since 1970. While Wilson took pains to distinguish his analysis from conservatives like Charles Murray by emphasizing the structural roots of black community decline, his focus on "the tangle of pathology in the inner city"⁴⁵ legitimated the belief that a profoundly destructive culture had emerged in the nation's inner cities. Comparing liberal structuralists (like Wilson) to neo-conservatives (like Murray), historian Robin Kelley has concluded that "For all their differences, there is general agreement that a common-debased culture is what defines the 'underclass,' what makes it a threat to the future of America."⁴⁶

By the early-1990s, Wilson's theoretical formulations had overtaken American social science, forging what Stephanie Coontz calls the "new consensus" that weak family ties and values explains postwar black poverty.⁴⁷ Wilson's gendering of urban problems—his fixation on absent fathers and overly-sexual mothers—lent academic credence to conservative political arguments not only by locating the causes of black poverty in black culture (a theme already well-developed in the 1960s and 1970s), but also by explicitly establishing a causal link between

black social pathology, rapid urban decline, and rising public expenditures. Moreover, his portrayal of an inner city populated by poor blacks and Latinos forsaken by their more successful, middle-class brothers and sisters helped unite the stigmatization of Latino immigrants and blacks in both conservative and liberal discourse throughout the 1980s and 90s.⁴⁸ Journalist after journalist, scholar after scholar, went to the “other America” to show how different this world was from the rest of America.⁴⁹ Teenage mothers, deadbeat dads, gang members—the fictionalized inhabitants of Wilson’s post-industrial city—became the stars in a public morality play about the struggle between true Americanism and an exotic, dangerous “underclass.”

Underclass theory thus proved an ideal vehicle for the anti-immigration cause, allowing groups like the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR) to appeal to taxpayer antipathy towards big government as they blamed immigration for the explosion of the urban underclass. Beginning in the 1980s and gaining momentum in the early 1990s, growing public outcry against illegal Mexican immigration, the increased visibility of nonwhite and poor immigrants across U.S. cities, hospitals, public schools, and social service agencies, and a media frenzy over Latino and Southeast Asian youth gangs all worked together to associate immigration, welfare, and “urban problems” in public debate. Though immigrants were denounced for a long litany of social and economic problems—from taking American jobs and depressing wages, to pollution and overpopulation, to causing the cultural “disuniting” of America—public concerns focused prominently on the moral character of new immigrants and their dependency on welfare.

In particular, long-standing stereotypes about Latina sexuality and fertility resonated throughout the contemporary debate over the 1996 reforms, as proponents assumed that all immigrants on welfare were Latinos and that all Latinos (over 70 percent of whom are U.S.-born) are immigrants. Within the racialized discourse of welfare reform, Latinos were “alien” not by virtue of their national origins, but rather because, like blacks, they possess a culture that is antithetical to the American way of life. Always already cast as newcomers and cultural outsiders, poor Latinos fit ideally into the culturalist-behavioralist discourse at the heart of underclass theory. Concentrated in urban centers (and often in or near historically black neighborhoods), Latino immigrants and their U.S.-born children melded well with the social ecological focus of underclass discourse, confirming the link between urban decay and the moral decay of urban dwellers.

This linking of blacks and immigrants in public discourse, as well as in federal law, marks a unique characteristic of late-twentieth-century U.S. politics. In the 1960s and 1970s, immigrants had served as a discursive foil to African-Americans. Celebrated as exemplars of American values of family and hard work, second-generation European immigrants’ assimilation into the suburban middle class (and later, the emergence of Asian-Americans as “model minorities”) proved that with the “right” cultural values all ethnic groups could succeed

in U.S. society.⁵⁰ This framing of immigrant success, then, had obscured continuing racial discrimination by locating the causes for racial and class inequality in the cultural defects of African Americans.

Having celebrated immigrant success as proof that the system works, slashing immigrant welfare entitlements in 1996 was only possible through the particular racialization of post-1965 immigrants. Implicit—and explicit—in nativist calls for restricting immigration and denying public benefits to noncitizens was a belief that Latino and Asian immigrants were racially unassimilable to the Anglo-Saxon (white) core of American society. In his 1995 *Alien Nation* Peter Brimelow, senior editor at *Forbes Magazine* and the *National Review*, described new immigrants as “poor, ignorant desperate people” fleeing from “primate cities” like Mexico City, Cairo, or Calcutta.⁵¹ Proclaiming that “race and ethnicity are destiny in American politics,” Brimelow warned that “immigration is breaking the racial hegemony of white Americans” as unskilled Third World immigrants are “swelling in the ranks of the welfare underclass.”⁵² *Chicago Tribune* writer Georgie Anne Geyer blamed immigrants for undermining the American tenets of self-government and citizenship and contributing to the decay of public life. Contrasting Latino and Asian immigrants to a nostalgic (and historically inaccurate) portrait of previous European immigrants, Geyer concluded that new immigrants “lack the inclination to assimilate” and are pulled to the United States by economic need and government hand-outs, rather than by a “patriotic love” for their new home country.⁵³

While journalists such as Brimelow and Geyer lumped together all new immigrants into one menacing “racial other,” more moderate conservatives and liberals advanced similar views by drawing on an ideology of individualism that drew distinctions between “good” and “bad” immigrants. Good immigrants were those who learned English, became U.S. citizens, and never took government handouts. Bad immigrants included illegal aliens, criminals, bilingual speakers, and welfare recipients. Immigrants who had “made it” without governmental help were proof that hard work and personal responsibility would lead to success.⁵⁴ This moral typology resonated with the model of meritocracy so central to the “post-civil rights era,” and worked to reinforce ethnic and class divides within the immigrant population and the nation as a whole. At the same time, the racial codewords and symbols embedded in public discourse concerning immigration provided white native-born Americans a lens for understanding Americanism in an increasingly global world.

This cultural vocabulary for immigration signals the emergence of what Etienne Balibar has identified as a “new racism without races . . . whose dominant theme is not biological heredity but the insurmountability of cultural differences.”⁵⁵ Once race was recast as “culture,” and culture was equated with social and class position, proponents of welfare reform could advocate eliminating public entitlements for undeserving foreigners, while continuing to celebrate the United States as a country of immigration and “individual opportunity.” Just as

the current generation of urban blacks was denounced for abandoning the cultural and moral traditions of the old African American community, so immigrant newcomers were represented as culturally different from the hardworking and humble European immigrants of previous generations. Public discourse on the welfare underclass invoked a mythic history of black and immigrant life in the early-twentieth century as proof of contemporary urban decline. This distorted past was then used to condemn contemporary blacks and immigrants for their lack of values, motivation, and responsibility.

The effectiveness of this new discourse on immigration was evidenced in the liberal response to the debate, as immigrant advocates and scholars insisted that immigrants had the same cultural values (hard work, family, religion) as Americans—or at least that some immigrants had better values than others. Scholarly critiques of the Asian American “model minority” thesis, for instance, nonetheless reinforced the moral distinction between the welfare poor and the working poor, noting that Asian immigrants worked longer hours than native-born Americans and relied less on public assistance. Similarly, scholarly and popular portraits of Latin American immigrants emphasized their high rates of labor participation and marriage, contrasting these new arrivals to blacks. Thus, while such writings strove to distinguish immigrants from the underclass, they ultimately left the cultural and moral assumptions of underclass theory intact.⁵⁶

Cultural definitions of immigrant poverty surfaced differently in the work of sociologists like Min Zhou and Alejandro Portes, who turned to “segmented assimilation” theory to explain growing economic and social inequalities between different immigrant groups, and across immigrant generations.⁵⁷ Inverting the logic of assimilation theory, these scholars credit the economic success of certain immigrant groups in U.S. society, such as Cubans and Punjabi Sikhs, to the maintenance of tight-knit ethnic communities and the retention of “traditional values” from their countries of origin, such as belief in hard work, sacrifice, and family unity. In contrast, other immigrant groups, like Mexicans and Haitians, have assimilated into an “inner-city minority culture” that is characterized by “an adversarial stance towards the white mainstream” and a self-defeating cynicism about the possibility of upward social mobility.⁵⁸ By embracing black “urban culture”—which Portes and Zhou identify with rap music, hip-hop dress, and defiance towards school officials—the U.S.-born children of Mexican and Haitian immigrants place limits on their own educational and economic mobility. In this theoretical paradigm, race is a self-destructive *choice* for new immigrants, a cultural costume they can put on or take off at will. Echoing the logic of underclass theory, which conflates class, race, and behavior, the literature on “segmented assimilation” lent credence to the idea that it is the cultural values of poor people that create economic and social inequality.

What moved the debates concerning the underclass was the insistence that racism no longer mattered. Echoing Wilson’s postulation that racial discrimination was not primarily responsible for post-1960s black poverty, proponents of

welfare reform declared that the United States had moved beyond its history of racism and now the problems of immigrant and native-born people of color had to do with their own values. The success of welfare reform lay in politicians' abilities to foreground the problems *with* welfare recipients of color while denying that gendered assumptions or racism had anything to do with their intentions. As President Clinton explained, "It's not racist for whites to assert that the culture of welfare dependency, out-of-wedlock pregnancy and absent fatherhood cannot be broken by social programs, unless there is first more personal responsibility."⁵⁹ Indeed, when polled, nearly 60 percent of white Americans answered that they believed that blacks on welfare "could get along if they tried" and that if "blacks would only try harder, they could be just as well off as whites."⁶⁰

By locating racism in the past, supporters of "welfare reform" re-formed the age-old stereotypes of blacks and Latinos into a more polite language of "underclass," "inner city," or "welfare recipient." Tellingly, in one *New York Times*/CBS News poll, two-thirds of Americans said there was too little assistance for the poor. But when asked about welfare and those who receive it, only 23 percent said that the assistance was too little.⁶¹ The racial histories behind these assumptions were palpable: welfare recipients were lazy; welfare recipients had too many babies and too little work ethic; without proper control, welfare recipients cheat the system and squander their benefits.⁶² But the cleverness of welfare reform was making the moral crisis of welfare dependency seem so new, so urgent, and so post-racial as to avoid the historical parallels.

Also crucial to the success of welfare reform was the addition of prominent African American and Latino voices who supported "reform"—what Mike Davis has called the "backlash."⁶³ Thus, this focus on culture was legitimated by the voices of certain black and Latino academics and public figures whose self-help philosophies called on blacks and Latinos to redeem themselves and their own community.⁶⁴ In the 1980s and 1990s, many blacks and Latinos embraced the idea of personal responsibility as a means to community empowerment. However, as this concept was co-opted by national debates around welfare, it came to represent a system where taxpayers and governments were no longer responsible. Real change would come only when individuals and their own communities assumed more personal responsibility.

By the mid-1990s, the national debate over "personal responsibility" focused exclusively on the black and immigrant welfare poor—this in spite of the federal government's own statistics showing that poor whites made up the majority of the nation's welfare recipients.⁶⁵ Although blacks and Latinos were not the numerical majority of welfare recipients, each of these two communities was disproportionately poor. In 1996, 28.4 percent of blacks and 29.4 percent of Latinos lived in poverty, more than double the poverty rate for whites.⁶⁶ Yet, national consensus agreed that the problem was not poverty, but rather the black and Latino poor themselves. Television coverage, newspaper articles, and political speeches

blamed blacks and immigrants for their own poverty, repeating over and over again that blacks and immigrants were the reason that welfare did not work. Although families on welfare were slightly smaller than the average U.S. family and less than 9 percent of immigrant households received cash public assistance,⁶⁷ public discourse continued to promote the idea that blacks were making careers of having babies just to collect a larger welfare check and that immigrants with their overly large families were crossing the border only to cash in on American entitlements. While the immigrant population that used public assistance was an extremely diverse sampling of immigrants from Europe, Asia, and Latin America, public images centered around Mexicans and Puerto Ricans (although Puerto Ricans are citizens not immigrants).⁶⁸

Similarly, media stories highlighted the substandard work ethic among blacks and Latinos, who allegedly preferred sitting around waiting for their next check instead of looking for a job. In reality, three-quarters of welfare recipients did not remain long on welfare but moved from welfare to under-paid work with great frequency.⁶⁹ In their comparative study of welfare recipients and single mothers in low-wage jobs, Katherine Edin and Laura Lein found that the economic gap between working women and women on welfare (most of whom were also working) was insignificant. Based on their actual incomes and their labor market opportunities, work was not a route out of poverty for either group of women.⁷⁰ Edin and Lein's ethnographic findings are confirmed by national data that show that work in the 1990s often did not lift a family out of poverty. While a full-time, minimum-wage worker with two children in the 1970s lived above the poverty line, the same family today makes \$8,840 a year—far below the 1995 poverty line of \$12,188.⁷¹ For many parents in minimum-wage jobs, public assistance had become a necessary means to supplement what they were denied in the private sector: an income they could survive on and health benefits for their family.

Despite numerous studies that show that welfare recipients are a heterogeneous group of Americans, from diverse racial backgrounds, family types, work histories, and lifestyles, the debate over welfare reform in the 1990s had moved so far to the political right that it was dominated by racial and nationalistic symbols that had once been the purview of neoconservatives like Pat Buchanan and the Christian Right. New York Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan, who criticized the bill, still described inner-city life in eugenic terms: “[I]f you were a biologist, you could find yourself talking about speciation here.”⁷² Rather than describe a government program that kept women and children barely above the poverty line, but had succeeded in combating widespread hunger in many communities, “welfare” had become a codeword for race and the linchpin in a national debate over American culture and citizenship.⁷³ With public responsibility to the poor now seen as dangerously naïve, the task at hand was to find the most efficient way of removing these families from the welfare rolls. And Bill Clinton, a neoliberal politician with a coterie of black friends and advisors who would use

the oldest of racial stereotypes to demonize welfare recipients, a man who would condemn the morals of others while asking the nation for forgiveness for his own shortcomings, was the ideal man to bring this all together.

The “End of Welfare as We Know It”: An Overview of the PRA

United in a crusade to rescue American individualism from the clutches of the welfare system, Democrats and Republicans together fashioned the most draconian dismantling of social welfare in the history of the United States. In many respects, the new welfare system created in 1996 operates through the kind of tautological logic that characterizes symbolic politics. Rather than respond to the real demographics of poverty—an inadequate labor market, a lack of childcare and health benefits, urban divestment from social services and poor communities—the authors of welfare reform were more concerned with imposing moral values and slashing welfare numbers and drew upon a collection of two-dimensional caricatures of women on welfare to shape the legislation.⁷⁴ Thus, despite its “work-first” sloganeering, the PRA was not designed to move recipients from poverty into long-term, meaningful employment.

In reality, TANF is not so much a welfare program as it is a funding stream that distributes block grants to states and oversees a minimum set of federal regulations on work and family life. States have total flexibility in spending federal money, but in order to maintain their grant levels, they must reduce their welfare rolls by at least 50 percent by the year 2000. To facilitate these implementation goals, federal rules established a five-year lifetime limit on cash benefits, and stipulated that at least 80 percent of each state’s welfare recipients must be working a minimum number of hours within two years. Welfare clients who cannot find a job are given a choice of losing all of their benefits or working in the public sector in exchange for a monthly welfare stipend (“Workfare”). Notably, federal work requirements operate from an “any job is better than welfare” philosophy. States are not required to provide basic education or skills development to their welfare clients, or to track employment outcomes and wages through time. Workfare participants are not protected under minimum wage provisions or national fair labor standards.

Certainly, one of the most sinister aspects of workfare is the use of welfare recipients to replace unionized workers.⁷⁵ Workfare jobs did not have to be newly created jobs and thus have often been contracted-out old jobs. Using the divide-and-conquer strategy that companies used against unions throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, workfare sought to undermine the successes unions had been gaining in the service sector by forcing them to compete with a grossly under-paid, coerced workforce of welfare recipients. This was not the outcome that the architects of the PRA put forth. The assumptions behind the work-first provisions of the PRA—like those of low-paid immigrant work more broadly—were that these welfare recipients would take the jobs that no one else

wanted. Reformers played on the racial antagonism of (imagined white) workers toward (imagined colored) welfare recipients to distract workers from the economic ramifications of the changes and to prevent any alliances between recipients and workers.⁷⁶

However, workfare in practice not only ensured the public and private sectors of an available, cheap, new workforce, but it also threatened to drive down wages and force more Americans into poverty. In essence, workfare takes its cues from post-Fordist capitalism: replacing full-time salaried workers with part-time below-minimum-wage employees. In New York City, for example, Mayor Rudolph Giuliani has cut 22,000 municipal workers since 1995 and replaced them largely with workfare workers. Part-time workfare workers now make up three-fourths of the labor force in the Parks Department and one-third of the Sanitation Department. They also help staff the city's welfare agency, housing authority, and public hospitals. The fiscal advantage to the city is clear: the average New York city clerical worker's hourly wage is \$12.32, not including benefits, but a workfare worker costs the city \$1.80 an hour for a 20-hour work week and earns no benefits.⁷⁷

Welfare reform has also meant big profits for Wall Street. Under generous tax breaks implemented by the Clinton administration, private employers who hire former welfare recipients can deduct up to 50 percent of their employees' wages from their taxes.⁷⁸ Meanwhile, as the march towards the privatization of government services speeds up in the welfare arena, large corporations are aggressively vying for more than \$20 billion in federal and state grants to run welfare-to-work services. Maximus, the nation's largest company specializing in welfare work, boasts an annual revenue of \$127 million and over 1,600 employees nationwide who have taken over the duties of traditional caseworkers in the public sector.⁷⁹ Public support of the poor, then, has been replaced with public support of corporations. Welfare reform brought with it real economic benefits—for corporations and municipal governments—but increased economic vulnerability for working people.

Alongside this attack on workers' rights, almost two-thirds of the 1996 welfare law was a litany of rules and sanctions on family and sexual life designed to regulate morality on a population deemed naturally immoral and deviant. Already familiar with a punitive system that tracks their personal behavior, TANF participants must now navigate an even more complicated system of rules and penalties: welfare recipients will not receive benefits for any additional children born after August of 1996; mothers under the age of eighteen must be living with an adult and enrolled in school, or they lose all benefits; parents convicted of fraud or drug possession (no matter which drug or what quantity) face a lifetime ban on benefits; families who move to a higher benefit state are subject to the lower benefit levels of their home state; and parents who fail to immunize their children or send them to school will lose some or all of their cash benefits.

The Personal Responsibility Act also served as a covert means for immigration reform, as Title IV drew even sharper distinctions between the rights and entitlements of citizens and non-citizens. Whereas, under the old system, a greencard gave one access to public benefits, legal immigrants who arrive in the United States after August of 1996 must wait for five years before applying for cash assistance, food stamps, Medicaid, and public housing. Moreover, under the new “deeming” rules of the PRA, the income and resources of an immigrant applying for welfare will be deemed to include the income and resources of the immigrant’s spouse and of the immigrant’s sponsor, making it increasingly difficult for legal immigrants to qualify for means-tested public assistance.⁸⁰ Perhaps the most publicized immigrant regulation was the federal ban on food stamps and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) for most legal immigrants, regardless of age or length of stay in the United States. On August 22, 1996, over one million legal immigrants became ineligible for food stamps, and half a million elderly and disabled immigrants became ineligible for SSI assistance.⁸¹ Only certain refugees and asylees, veterans and their families, and legal immigrants who could provide proof of 40 quarters (10 years) of work in the United States were exempt from the cut-offs. While the work documentation requirement would be hard for any citizen to meet, it was nearly impossible for an immigrant population concentrated in informal and seasonal employment.

A less publicized feature of welfare reform was its frontal attack on illegal immigration. Under AFDC, undocumented immigrants were not eligible for public assistance, but their U.S.-born children were. While this distinction remains in place, state agencies who receive federal funding (including the Housing Department and other social service agencies) are “required on request of the Immigration and Naturalization Service to furnish the INS with the name and address of, and any other identifying information about, any individual who the [agency] knows is unlawfully in the United States.”⁸² This reporting requirement is accompanied by a new system of information sharing between public service agencies and the INS. Previously prohibited by federal law, welfare caseworkers can now directly contact immigration agents for information about their clients. Today, an undocumented mother who applies for public assistance for her U.S.-born child risks the threat, not only of deportation, but also of having to repay any public benefits that were improperly received (whether or not there is proven intent to deceive).⁸³ The implications of these new rules for undocumented immigrants move far beyond the sphere of the welfare system, transforming every public service agency into an arm of the INS. Alongside beefed-up enforcement at the U.S.-Mexico border, and new immigration rules that facilitate the deportation process, the denial of due process enacted by welfare reform clearly widens the divide that separates undocumented families from the civil rights that protect the rest of the American public.

Welfare's Missing in Action: Assessing the Aftermath of the PRA

No sooner had President Clinton signed the PRA into law, than Republicans and Democrats were jostling for airtime, eager to take credit for ending a morally corrupt entitlement system. Celebrants of welfare reform, from members of Congress to state governors to the mainstream press, rushed to publish statistics and rosy human interest stories of dropping welfare numbers as evidence of success of “ending welfare as we knew it.”⁸⁴ Between 1993 and 1997,⁸⁵ Clinton’s Council of Economic Advisors reported almost three million recipients had fallen off the rolls, a 20 percent drop nationwide.⁸⁶ By the summer of 1999, Clinton would once again declare welfare reform a success, citing new evidence that 35 percent of all welfare recipients had moved into work, or “work-related activities.”⁸⁷

As with much of the public debate that enshrouded welfare reform, these statistics were largely tautological. Few stopped to question the most obvious explanation for these dropping numbers: poor families were leaving the welfare rolls because they were being pushed off welfare. Beginning in the mid-1980s, and culminating with the passage of the PRA, more and more states had been carving away at cash and food stamp assistance, making it easier for caseworkers to terminate clients’ benefits, and imposing strict work requirements and behavioral rules. Even before the federal overhaul in 1996, over half of the nation’s recipients were covered by state welfare rules that, were it not for the waiver program implemented by the Reagan administration in 1986, would have violated federal law. Following the passage of the PRA, as states rushed to secure federal block grants by reducing their welfare rolls, welfare review boards found that as much as 50 percent of the cases under review, where recipients had lost some or all of their benefits, were the result of erroneous state action.⁸⁸

Nor did celebratory media portraits of “heroic working mothers” tell the whole story of welfare reform.⁸⁹ Lost in public debate was any meaningful analysis of what types of jobs the 35 percent of welfare recipients had obtained, or of what would happen to the remaining 65 percent of poor mothers and children once the safety net was removed. While ordering the Congressional Budget Office to track declining welfare rates, Clinton cynically refused to keep a concurrent count of welfare reform’s effects on child poverty rates, despite independent estimates that 1.1 million children would be forced into poverty under TANF.⁹⁰ Dropping welfare costs—not the economic and social welfare of low-income families—had become the nation’s litmus test for effective public policy.

As welfare reform enters its fourth year, however, recent national data reveal alarming implications for low-income families. On the same day that President Clinton celebrated the success of the PRA in the summer of 1999, the Urban Institute released a study that showed that “near one-third of those that had left public assistance since August of 1996 had returned at least once, and that one fourth of those who had left welfare are not working and have no working

partner.”⁹¹ The study also found that health insurance, which had formerly been provided to recipients through the Medicaid program, had been severely impacted by the 1996 reforms. A small minority, 23 percent, of those who had moved from welfare-to-work reported receiving health insurance through their employment—nearly 50 percent below the national average of all workers—leaving the majority without health coverage.⁹² As was true before the 1996 legislation and remains the case today, work does not necessarily provide the road out of poverty for many Americans. Data collected in August of 1998 contradicts Republican Bill Archer’s conclusion that “welfare recipients’ lives are getting better, poverty is going down, and more Americans are enjoying the freedom of independence from the chains of welfare.” In its nationwide survey of wages earned by former welfare recipients who had moved into work, the Congressional General Accounting Office found that mean hourly wages fell between \$5.60 and \$6.60 (a full-time job at \$5.50/hour falls far below the poverty line of \$13,650/year for a family of three).⁹³ Moreover, one 1999 study of former recipients who are employed found that most do not have full-time, year-round jobs. Thus, their annual earnings average between \$8,000 and \$9,500.⁹⁴

Such alarming figures have been dismissed by welfare reform supporters who argue that the “New Economy” will miraculously absorb this massive new workforce. Bombarded with rosy statistics about record-low unemployment levels and booming job creation, the public has regained confidence in the American promise of unrestrained national economic growth (even if this does not actually reflect their own family’s experiences in the labor market). The economic optimism of the late-1990s has bolstered public support for the dismantling of social welfare. The presumption that anyone who wants to work can get a job means that it is no longer seen as cruel for the government to push single mothers, poor children, and legal immigrants off public assistance.

Despite record-low national unemployment levels, however, research shows that welfare recipients applying for employment continue to face stiff competition, even for poverty-wage jobs. A 1997 study of what kinds of jobs would be available to low-skilled welfare recipients in the Midwest, for example, found that “there are twenty-two workers for each job that pays at least a poverty wage; sixty-four workers for every job that pays 150 percent of poverty (\$18,417/year); and ninety-seven workers for each job at a living wage (\$25,907/year for a family of three).”⁹⁵ Similarly, Katherine Newman’s survey of fast food restaurants in New York’s Harlem concluded that for every minimum-wage job, there are fourteen applicants. According to Newman, “Statewide estimates of the gap between the number of people who need jobs (the unemployed plus the welfare recipients) and the number of available jobs in New York approach one million.”⁹⁶ It is not surprising, then, that between 1996 and 1998 only one-fifth to one-third of New York’s adult welfare recipients had found work.⁹⁷ Indeed, there is evidence that the PRA has increased competition at the bottom end of the labor market, further depressing wages paid to low-skilled workers.⁹⁸ Thus, even in

regions with significant job growth, rising employment rates have paradoxically been accompanied by rising poverty rates and growing class polarization. Out of the 300,000 new jobs created in Los Angeles County between 1993 and 1999, for example, the vast majority pay less than \$25,000 a year, and barely one in ten averages above \$60,000. Los Angeles' transformation into a polarized economy is further evidenced in the fact the region's economic recovery has "yielded no net jobs in industries that pay solid middle-class salaries. . . ."99 These figures are reflected in similar studies of other urban centers which confirm that job creation in the United States is concentrated in the lower end of industries that specialize in poverty wages and flexible labor arrangements.¹⁰⁰ The fastest growing job into the twenty-first century, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, will be cashiers.¹⁰¹ Thus, the "economic miracle" of the New Economy, in fact, does not look like much of a miracle but more of a crisis from the vantage point of low-income families. What seems clear from the evidence thus far is that the PRA has succeeded in moving some recipients off welfare and into work, some recipients off welfare but not into work, and very few off welfare and out of poverty.

Conclusion: A Post-National, Post-Racial World?

Despite these alarming prognostics, American journalists as well as readers, politicians as well as voters, continue myopically to applaud the drop in AFDC numbers by turning away from a broader analysis of the nature of work and poverty in the global economy. As recent studies of welfare reform suggest, job growth and rising employment rates are not reliable indicators of poverty reduction in this post-Fordist U.S. economy. Rather, poverty is today a product of work for those American workers at the bottom of the socio-economic structure, as it is for the majority of workers around the world. The trends we see in the United States—the erosion of wages, benefits, and working conditions, the incorporation of greater numbers of women, racial minorities, and immigrants into the low-wage workforce, and widening class divisions—are magnified at the global level as multinationals migrate freely and continuously across national borders in search of bigger profits.¹⁰²

Welfare reform, like NAFTA, followed from the logic of global free trade: open the market, get rid of the artificial barriers and subsidies, and all will have the chance to prosper. Yet, neither the PRA or NAFTA dismantle the barriers to economic and racial equality so much as recast globalization through a mix of neoclassical economics and American ideologies of moral individualism and bootstrap opportunism. Thus, while supporters of NAFTA proposed "to bridge the racial and cultural borders that divide the Americas," and to "empower" Mexican workers by creating the conditions of a First World economy, NAFTA in fact has not improved the wage basis of Mexican workers, as Manning and Butera point out in their article in this issue.¹⁰³ Similarly, proponents of the PRA cel-

ebredated American ideals of opportunity and responsibility,¹⁰⁴ while expanding a feminized and racialized workforce stripped of the labor protections, benefits, or even minimum-wage guarantees granted to other U.S. workers. The effect of these policies on both sides of the border is greater economic and social instability, as more than a million and a half Mexican workers lost their jobs,¹⁰⁵ and as millions of poor women and their children in the United States race against the welfare clock in search of a sustainable livelihood.

Calling attention to the expansive reach of multinational corporations, and the increased mobility of people and commodities across national borders, critics across the political spectrum have charged that globalization has resulted in the decline of the power of the nation-state.¹⁰⁶ However, while framed through an anti-government discourse, neoliberal policies such as welfare reform do not reduce government, so much as reshape it. As the social state is “downsized” through the elimination and privatization of social services, schools, prisons, and transportation, the positive public benefits that were once the hallmark of U.S. citizenship are increasingly accessible only to those who can afford them. At the same time, as states replace schools with prisons, cities rush to grow their police forces, and the Border Patrol doubles in size, the punitive arm of the state extends its surveillance over the nation’s poor. The result is a federal government that actively facilitates the flexibility of capital by forcing millions of workers into a deregulated labor market, while it erects higher barriers to full citizenship in the national community. That contemporary efforts to circumscribe the benefits of citizenship continue to posit people of color, both immigrant and U.S.-born, as national outsiders further suggests that the symbolic power of white Americanism has not suffered under globalization.

In this newly privatized civil society, where U.S. citizens-qua-consumers are presumably “empowered” to choose their schools as well as their racial identities, those individuals who freely make the wrong choices deserve to be contained, punished, or “rehabilitated.” The individualization of free choice bolsters the ideology of meritocracy at the heart of post-1960s American politics by locating choice in the private, psychological terrain of the “self,” and thus obscuring the ways in which choices are themselves structured and limited in a political economy of racism, patriarchy, and capitalism. The tautological nature of this ideology is evident in the equation of good and bad choices with class and racial position. In post-civil rights America, the nation can call upon welfare recipients to achieve “self-sufficiency” in a labor market that lacks adequate wages, safe childcare, decent medical coverage, and affordable housing, and, in the same breath, blame the continued marginalization of black and Latina workers on their self-defeating attitudes, cultural defects, and unfortunate “lifestyle” decisions. The ideology of “choice” ultimately rests on

racialized and gendered ideas about what kinds of work and remuneration different kinds of people deserve, while simultaneously ensuring that those on the losing end of the globalization equation are made “responsible” for their own failure and subjection.

Notes

In an academic world that too often isolates scholars and forgets that scholarship is a shared enterprise, writing this paper together was a vivid testament to the intellectual gift collaboration can be. We would also like to thank Scott Dexter and Jason Elias for their political vision, steadfast patience, and logistical and theoretical help that enriched this paper and our writing process tremendously.

1. Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, PL 104-193 (HR 3734), in *Congressional Record*, July 31, 1996.

2. Frances Fox Piven comments incisively on the exclusion of labor market considerations in the debate over welfare reform, concluding that “when labor market effects are taken into account, ‘welfare reform’ is more likely to weaken families than to restore them (84). Piven cites a 1997 study by the Economic Policy Institute, which found that the unemployment rate among women with a high school diploma or less was 13.6 percent, while the underemployment rate for *such women* is 24.3 percent. Welfare reform will not only force low-income women to compete in a saturated low-wage labor market, she argues; it will also drive down the wage floor, particularly in states like California and New York with large welfare populations. Frances Fox Piven, “Welfare and Work,” in *Whose Welfare?*, Gwendolyn Mink, ed. (Ithaca, 1999), 83-99. Piven’s argument is supported by Robert Haveman’s comparison of welfare benefit levels and wages across a number of highly-industrialized countries which shows a direct correlation between more generous welfare benefit levels and stable, higher wages in the unskilled labor sector. Similarly, another study by Lawrence Mishel and John Schmitt predicts that, as a result of welfare reform, wages for the bottom 30 percent of workers will drop by 11.9 percent nationally. Robert Haveman, “Equity with Employment,” *Boston Review*, (Summer 1997); Lawrence Mishel and John Schmitt, “Cutting Wages by Cutting Welfare,” Briefing Paper of the Economic Policy Institute, Washington D.C., October, 1995. (Both cited in Piven, 88-89)

3. Here we draw on a body of work that shows how ideas about race and gender in American society are not exclusive epistemological categories but continually work through and back upon each other. See Toni Morrison, ed., *Race-ing Justice, En-gendering Power: Essays on Anita Hill, Clarence Thomas, and the Social Construction of Reality* (New York, 1992); Patricia Williams *The Rooster’s Egg* (Cambridge, Mass., 1995); Dorothy Roberts *Killing the Black Body: Race, Reproduction and the Meaning of Liberty* (New York, 1997) and Joy James, *Shadowboxing: Representations of Black Feminist Politics* (New York, 1999).

4. Michael Katz, *In the Shadow of the Poorhouse: A Social History of Welfare in America* (New York, 1996), 331-332. Indeed, Katz contends that the PRA “flew in the face of all credible evidence about welfare, work and poverty.”

5. Proposition 187 consisted of five major provisions: 1) barred illegal aliens from public education and required public schools to verify students’ immigration status; 2) required providers of public, non-emergency health services to verify immigration status and refuse services to illegal aliens; 3) required welfare department to verify applicants’ immigration status; 4) required service providers to report “suspected illegal aliens” to the state attorney general and the Immigration and Naturalization Service; 5) made it a felony to make, distribute, or use false immigration documents in an effort to obtain public services or monies.

6. In an insightful analysis of the Proposition 187 campaign, Pierette Hondagneu-Sotelo identifies a decisive change in anti-immigrant narratives over the past decade. Whereas in the 1970s and 1980s, nativist rhetoric focused on the issues of job competition and “cultural differences,” nativism in the 1990s shifted its focus to immigrants as a “public charge.” Hondagneu-Sotelo concludes that contemporary nativism represents a backlash against the permanent settlement of immigrants, and particularly against Mexican women and children, representing less concern about illegal immigration than a rejection of “Latino immigrants and their U.S.-born family members as permanent members of U.S. society.” Pierette Hondagneu-Sotelo, “Unpacking 187: Targeting Mexicanas,” in *Immigration and Ethnic Communities: A Focus on Latinos*, Refugio Rochin, ed. (East Lansing, 1996), 93. Read in this framework,

legislation like Proposition 187 and welfare reform represents a state move to erect tighter borders around public spaces and entitlements, rather than to curtail the immigrant labor flow that fuels the U.S. economy. See also Alejandra Marchevsky, "The Empire Strikes Back: Globalization, Nationalism, and California's Proposition 187," *Critical Sense: A Journal of Political and Cultural Theory* (Spring 1996), IV:1, 8-51.

7. Kim Moody defines "neoliberalism" as "a mixture of neoclassical economic fundamentalism, market regulation in place of state guidance, economic redistribution in favor of capital (known as 'supply-side' economics), moral authoritarianism with an idealized family at its center, international free-trade principles (sometimes inconsistently applied), and a thorough intolerance of trade unionism. . . . Neoliberal ideology attributes to the market almost mystical powers to cleanse a sick world economy. It does not hesitate to use the state to affect economic trends, but it does so in ways that free up market forces rather than restrain them." Kim Moody, *Workers in a Lean World: Unions in the International Economy* (London, 1997), 119-120. Moody distinguishes between "neoliberalism" and "globalization" (two key concepts in this essay). The latter refers to the increased mobility of capital and commodities across national borders through the international reorganization of production and consumption and the proliferation of transnational corporations. The former, on the other hand, refers to a newly imagined nation-state and a system of governance in which the state actively serves the interests of private capital. Moody's analysis highlights the ideological nature of the neoliberal state. It is this partnership between ideologies of race, gender, and family and the application of market rationality to public policy that we explore in our analysis of welfare reform.

8. Just as David Roediger has written about the "wages of whiteness" providing a supplemental psychic wage to nineteenth-century industrial work, the ways welfare reform limited and thus reinscribed social citizenship provided a similar psychic wage in the face of globalization. The market might be increasingly global but social entitlement was increasingly contained. David Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (London, 1991).

9. For instance, no other Americans are punished for failing to have their children immunized. Similarly, while the privacy of one's home is an American right, and the police must obtain a search warrant to inspect the home of a suspected criminal, caseworkers can inspect the homes of welfare recipients at will without judicial approval.

10. Here, and throughout this paper, we draw on the theory of narrative analysis, which views widespread media narratives as both representative and constitutive of societal power relations. Literary critic Wahneema Lubiano, for instance, has argued that categories like "black woman" and "welfare mother/queen" are not simply social taxonomies, they are also social narratives (or "stories") that offer their reader a politically charged way of reading the world. Functioning as "cover stories" that naturalize ideological beliefs as "common-sense" or "reality," these media narratives work to disguise actual relations of power. Wahneema Lubiano, "Black Ladies, Welfare Queens, and State Minstrels: Ideological War by Narrative Means," in *Race-ing Justice, En-Gendering Power*, Toni Morrison, ed. (New York, 1992), 323-361.

11. In our analysis of globalization, we diverge from the work of scholars like David Harvey, Saskia Sassen, and Gary Teeple who, we contend, have not adequately analyzed the importance of the nation-state and nationalism, particularly in the United States, in facilitating globalization. Like NAFTA, welfare reform reveals that the economic and political mandates of globalization do not undermine the power of the nation-state but rather transform it. A sense of American-ness, and more importantly non-American-ness, helped to secure the PRA and the resulting vulnerable low-wage work force that accompanied it.

12. Valerie Polakow, *Lives on the Edge: Single Mothers and their Children in the Other America* (Chicago, 1993), 56

13. One Southern public assistance supervisor explained, "The number of Negro cases is few due to the unanimous feeling on the part of the staff and the board that there are more work opportunities for Negro women and to their intense desire not to interfere with local labor conditions." Roberts, *Killing the Black Body*, 207.

14. Interestingly, while the law mandated the federal government to pay beneficiaries on Social Security a fixed amount, it provided much more discretion for caseworkers and administrators in determining who got ADC and how much a family received. *Ibid.*, 205.

15. For a more detailed discussion of the history of welfare and the exclusion of African Americans from New Deal entitlements, see Joanne L. Goodwin, *Gender and the Politics of Welfare Reform: Mother's Pensions in Chicago, 1911-1929* (Chicago, 1997); Linda Gordon, *Pitted But Not Entitled: Single Mothers and the History of Welfare* (New York, 1994); Jill Quadagno, *The Color of Welfare: How Racism Undermined the War on Poverty* (New York, 1994); Katz, *In the Shadow of the Poorhouse*; and Gwendolyn Mink, *The Wages of Motherhood: Inequality in the Welfare State, 1917-1942* (Ithaca, 1995). Because much of the analysis of welfare has been limited by a black-white racial framework, there is scant his-

torical literature on Latinos and social welfare prior to the 1970s. George Sanchez's work on the Americanization campaigns in Los Angeles in the 1910s and 1920s documents how Progressive social welfare policy served to move Mexican immigrant women into low-wage work in the booming domestic and garment industries. Thus, while Mexican Americans were characterized as good workers and potential "Americans" during the Progressive era, following the stock market crash of 1929 they were re-inscribed as racial outsiders and blamed for Los Angeles County's swelling relief rolls. This construction of Mexican Americans as undeserving foreigners and a public burden in the early 1930s led to the largest repatriation movement in the history of the United States. George Sanchez, *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945* (New York, 1993), 87-107.

16. In the postwar period, more than 40 percent of black mothers with small children were employed outside the home. Stephanie Coontz, *The Way We Never Were: American Families and the Nostalgia Trap* (New York, 1992), 30. This same period marked the massive move of Puerto Rican women into industrial employment, both on the island and in New York City, and of Mexican-American women into agricultural and domestic work in the Southwest. See Clara Rodriguez, *Puerto Ricans: Born in the USA* (Boston, 1989); Vicki Ruiz, *Cannery Women, Cannery Lives: Mexican Women, Unionization, and the California Food Processing Industry, 1930-1950* (Albuquerque, 1992).

17. Quoted in Teresa Amott & Julie Matthaei, *Race, Gender, and Work* (Boston, 1996), 178. Amott and Matthaei document the different assumptions about work for white women and women of color, showing how the domestic ideal of women caring for their own children has not applied for women of color the way it has for white native-born women. For a provocative analysis of how the NWRO appropriated the discourse of domesticity to argue in favor of welfare entitlements for black women, see Eileen Boris, "When Work is Slavery," in *Whose Welfare?*, Mink, ed. (Ithaca, 1999), 36-55. NWRO activists asserted poor women's right to a sustainable income while they stayed at home to raise their children, challenging the racial underpinnings of domesticity and arguing that, like their middle- and upper-class counterparts, poor women's "motherwork" was valuable work. As Tillmon told a reporter from *The African World* in 1972, "The work ethic is a double standard. It's applied to men and women on welfare. It doesn't apply if you're a society lady from Scarsdale and spend all your time sitting on your prosperity painting your nails!" (Quoted in Boris, 51).

18. The NWRO challenged not only the laws governing welfare but also public perceptions of welfare recipients. In 1968, when Senator Russell Long refused to let female welfare rights leaders testify to Congress and called them "brood mares," Johnnie Tillmon and the organization responded with what she termed a "brood mare stampede." They picketed in front of welfare centers, government offices, and the homes of legislators themselves. For a more extensive discussion of the work and philosophy of the NWRO, see Deborah Gray White, *Too Heavy a Load: Black Women in Defense of Themselves, 1894-1994* (New York, 2000).

19. Katz, *In the Shadow of the Poorhouse*, 275-276. Katz contends that the expansion of the social welfare state in the post-World War II period drew on the language of racial equality, yet also fulfilled the Keynesian mission of regulating economic competition in the bottom-end of the economy. Proponents of increasing AFDC benefits argued that more generous income maintenance programs would discourage the "welfare poor" from looking for work, and thereby protect "American workers" from unfair competition that would lead to lower wages.

20. See Patricia Williams' discussion of the politics of welfare in "Scarlet the Sequel," *The Rooster's Egg*.

21. Nixon's failed attempt at welfare reform, the Family Assistance Plan (FAP), which would have extended welfare benefits to working poor families with fathers present, should be viewed as part of a Republican strategy of racial division. FAP would have pushed more female welfare recipients into wage labor, while also providing a financial incentive for single mothers to marry. Thus, FAP advanced conservative values of the nuclear family and the work ethic while continuing to associate AFDC with "dysfunctional" nonwhite families. See Quadagno, *The Color of Welfare*, 117-34.

22. For a more detailed discussion of Nixon and Reagan's ideology of entitlement, see Dan Carter, *From George Wallace to Newt Gingrich: Race and Conservative Counter-Revolution 1963-1994* (Baton Rouge, 1996); Maurice Isserman and Michael Kazin, *America Divided: The Civil War of the 1960s* (New York, 2000); and Thomas and Mary Edsall, *Chain Reaction: The Impact of Race, Rights and Taxes on American Politics* (New York, 1992).

23. Frances Fox Piven and Richard A. Cloward, *New Class War* (New York, 1982), 27-28.

24. Polakow, *Lives on the Edge*, 59. One of Reagan's favorite stories lambasted a black Chicago mother with "80 names, 30 addresses, 12 Social Security Cards and a tax-free income of over \$150,000." Quadagno, *The Color of Welfare*, v. Even this story was outright deception. Reagan's infamous "welfare queen" had actually embezzled \$8,000 from the state, not the \$150,000 of Reagan's lore. David Zucchino, *The Myth of the Welfare Queen* (New York, 1997), 75.

25. "Welfare: Facts and Fiction" in *MS* (May/June, 1995), 93; U.S. Census "Selected Characteristics of the Foreign-Born Population by Year of Entry and Selected Countries of Birth," 1990.

26. David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Cambridge, 1990), 153. Numerous scholars have adopted Harvey's theory of flexible accumulation and the segmented global labor market to examine more extensively how different groups of workers, such as national minorities, women, and immigrants, are positioned differentially in relation to global capital. For example, for a discussion of the effects of "flexibilization" on the African American working class, see Robin Kelley's *yo mama's disfunkcional: fighting the culture wars in urban america* (Boston, 1997); for a case-study of Latina workers in the New York and Los Angeles apparel and electronics industries, see Maria Patricia Fernandez Kelly and Saskia Sassen, "Recasting Women in the Global Economy: Internationalization and Changing Definitions of Gender," in *Women in the Latin American Development Process*, Christine Bose and Edna Acosta-Belén, eds. (Philadelphia, 1995).

27. Karin Stallard, Barbara Ehrenreich, and Holly Sklar, *Poverty in the American Dream: Women and Children First* (Boston, 1983), 6-7.

28. Saskia Sassen, *The Global City* (Princeton, 1991), 13. See also Manuel Castells, *The Informational City: Information Technology, Economic Restructuring, and the Urban Regional Process* (London, 1989).

29. Andres Torres and Frank Bonilla, "Decline Within Decline: The New York Perspective," in *Latinos in a Changing U.S. Economy*, Rebecca Morales and Frank Bonilla, eds. (London, 1993), 85-108. Though technically many Puerto Ricans are not U.S. born, the scholarly literature generally classifies them as national minorities because of the island's commonwealth status (which extends U.S. citizenship to all Puerto Ricans). Yet, despite their citizenship status and historical presence in New York City since the 1950s, Puerto Ricans (like Chicanos in the Southwest) are often lumped together with new Latino immigrant groups and treated as foreigners and recent arrivals.

30. Bennett Harrison and Barry Bluestone, *The Deindustrialization of America: Corporate Restructuring and the Polarizing of America* (New York, 1982); Antonia Darder, Rodolfo D. Torres, and Henry Gutierrez, eds. *Latinos and Education: A Critical Reader* (New York, 1997), 52.

31. The Hart-Cellar Act replaced a national quota system biased in favor of European origin with an application system that gave preference to family reunification, professional skills, and refugee status.

32. Leo R. Chavez, "Immigration Reform and Nativism: The Nationalist Response to the Transnationalist Challenge," in *The New Nativism*, Juan Perea, ed. (New York, 1996), 442.

33. Castells, *Ibid.*

34. Rebecca Morales and Paul Ong, "The Illusion of Progress: Latinos in Los Angeles," in *Latinos in a Changing U.S. Economy*, Rebecca Morales and Frank Bonilla, eds. (London, 1993), 55-84. In a recent study, UCLA geographer William Clark found that the earning power of Mexican and Central American immigrants, even among those who have been in the United States for over 20 years, has decreased dramatically since the 1970s. For instance, between 1970 and 1995, Mexican immigrant men and women earned nearly \$2,000 less per year in adjusted constant dollars. Even when tracking the same immigrant cohort from 1970 to 1995, Clark found a similar drop in average yearly earnings, suggesting that long-term settlement in the U.S. does not equal higher wages for Mexican immigrants. William Clark, *The California Cauldron* (New York, 1998), 74-87.

35. Morales and Ong, "The Illusion of Progress," 57.

36. Lauren Berlant, *The Queen of America Goes To Washington City* (Durham, 1997), 2.

37. *Ibid.*, 3.

38. Most historians agree that this tradition of self-help never existed in the United States. For a convincing refutation of the idea, see Chapter 4 of Stephanie Coontz's *The Way We Never Were*.

39. Katz, *In the Shadow of the Poorhouse*, 330.

40. Marc Mauer, *Race to Incarcerate* (New York, 1999), 59-63.

41. William Julius Wilson. *The Truly Disadvantaged* (Chicago, 1987), 137-138.

42. The slippage between poor blacks and the underclass is notable throughout his work.

43. Wilson uses statistical indices on poverty, social isolation, and family patterns to support his claims about the changing social organization and cultural disintegration of high-poverty black neighborhoods. However, such statistics provide Wilson's reader little actual documentation of how the residents of these neighborhoods understand and practice community. In fact, numerous qualitative studies of black urban culture have refuted Wilson's claims about black community dissolution. See, for example, Lisa Dodson, *Don't Call Us Out of Name: The Untold Lives of Women and Girls in Poor America* (Boston, 1998); Steven Gregory, *Black Corona: Race and the Politics of Place in an Urban Community* (Princeton, N.J.,

1998); and Katherine Newman, *No Shame in My Game: The Working Poor in the Inner City* (New York, 1999).

44. *Ibid.*, 7.

45. *Ibid.*, 21.

46. Kelley, *Yo mama's disfunkcional*, 18.

47. Coontz, *The Way We Never Were*, 250.

48. Compare for example, the following statements: In 1989, New Right theoretician Morton Kondracke wrote that "the crisis of the underclass . . . is so great that probably nothing short of a spiritual renewal of black America will solve the problem." Four years later, radical-Left cultural theorist Cornel West describes the "post-industrial urban condition" in startlingly similar language: "And a pervasive spiritual crisis impoverishment grows. The collapse of meaning in life—the eclipse of hope and absence of love of self and others, the breakdown of family and neighborhood bonds—leads to the social deracination and cultural denudement of urban dwellers, especially children." Morton Kondracke, "The Two Black Americas: A Progress Report," *New Republic*, February 6, 1989, 20; quoted in Kushnik, "Responding to Urban Crisis," 162. Cornel West, *Race Matters* (Boston, 1993), 5.

49. These include highly regarded work including Elijah Anderson's *Streetwise: Race, Class and Change in an Urban Community* (Chicago, 1990), Alex Kotlowitz's *There Are No Children Here: A Story of Two Boys Growing Up in the Other America* (New York, 1991), Carl Nightingale's *On the Edge: A History of Poor Black Children and Their American Dreams* (New York, 1993), Mitchell Duneier, *Slim's Table: Race, Respectability and Masculinity*, (Chicago, 1992) and David Simon and Edward Burns' *The Corner: A Year in the Life of an Inner-City Neighborhood* (New York, 2000).

50. Seminal examples of this approach include Thomas Sowell's *Ethnic America* (New York, 1981), Milton Gordon's *Assimilation in American Life* (New York, 1964), Nathan Glazer and Daniel P. Moynihan's *Beyond the Melting Pot* (Cambridge, Mass., 1969). There are numerous critiques of the "ethnicity" paradigms of U.S. race relations: Lucie Cheng and Philip Q. Yang, "The Model Minority Deconstructed," in *Ethnic Los Angeles*, Roger Waldinger and Mehdi Bozorgmehr, eds. (New York, 1996); Suzanne Oboler, *Ethnic Labels, Latino Lives: Identity and the Politics of (Re)Presentation in the United States* (Minneapolis, 1995); Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States From the 1960s to the 1980s* (New York, 1986); Stephen Steinberg, *The Ethnic Myth: Race, Ethnicity, and Class in America* (Boston, 1981); Ronald Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans* (Boston, 1987).

51. Peter Brimelow, *Alien Nation* (New York, 1995), 52.

52. *Ibid.*, xii.

53. Georgie Anne Geyer, *Americans No More: The Death of Citizenship* (New York, 1996).

54. The distinction between "good" and "bad" immigrants caused division within Republican party ranks, and forged unusual alliances between conservatives and Latin American multinationals. For example, as the debate over Proposition 187 heated up in California, William Bennett and Jack Kemp took out a two-page advertisement in the *Los Angeles Times*, urging fellow Republicans not to broaden "legitimate concerns about illegal immigrants . . . into an ugly antipathy towards all immigrants." In this ad, paid for by the Mexico City-based Univision Television Group, Bennett and Kemp wrote, "[Immigrants] tend to live in strong, stable families; possess impressive energy and entrepreneurial spirit; have a deeply rooted religious faith; and make important intellectual contributions to the nation. Most come to America in large part because they believe in traditional American ideals." *The Los Angeles Times*, Nov. 6, 1994, A28-29. The moral typology between "good" and "bad" immigrants is reflected in ambivalent (if often contradictory) American attitudes concerning proposals to restrict immigration. For example, in several 1996 Roper polls, the majority of people polled supported the idea of a five-year moratorium on immigration. Yet, only 21 percent said that they viewed legal immigration as a major problem. Furthermore, in a 1995 Roper poll, 61 percent disapproved of eliminating the preference for family reunification in U.S. immigration policy. Cited in Debra DeLaet, *U.S. Immigration Policy in an Age of Rights* (Westport, Conn., 2000), 114. The elimination of welfare benefits for legal immigrants, then, rested on the association of poor and racialized immigrants with illegality, welfare, and crime, while continuing to celebrate America as a land of opportunity for the "right" kinds of immigrant families.

55. Etienne Balibar and Emmanuel Wallerstein, *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities* (London, 1991), 21. See also Reeve and Campbell's discussion of the "new racism" that developed in the Reagan era. Jimmie L. Reeves and Richard Campbell, *Cracked Coverage: Television News, the Anti-Cocaine Crusade, and the Reagan Legacy* (Durham, 1994), 97-102.

56. For example, the essays in Joan Moore and Racquel Pinderhughes' *In the Barrios: Latinos and the Underclass Debate* (New York, 1993), while challenging the applicability of underclass theory for Latinos still assume that, in the case of urban blacks, it is a useful

model. See also, Lucie Cheng and Philip Q. Yang, "Asians: The 'Model Minority' Deconstructed," in Roger Waldinger and Mehdi Bozorgmehr, eds. *Ethnic Los Angeles* (New York, 1996), 305-344.

57. Alejandro Portes and Min Zhou, "The New Second Generation: Segmented Assimilation and Its Variants Among Post-1965 Immigrant Youth," *Annals of The American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 1993, 530. Portes and Zhou's notion of an "adversarial culture" among certain second-generation youth draws heavily from the work of educational anthropologist John Ogbu. See Ogbu, *Minority Education and Caste: The American System in Cross-Cultural Perspective* (New York, 1978).

58. Portes and Zhou, 81.

59. Like President Clinton, most Americans celebrated Martin Luther King Jr., decried the racism of the 1950s and 1960s, and were convinced contemporary ideas about welfare recipients were not racist.

60. Donald Kinder and Lynn Sanders, *Divided by Color: Racial Politics and Democratic Ideas* (Chicago, 1996), 92-127.

61. Farai Chideya, *Don't Believe the Hype: Fighting Cultural Misinformation About African-Americans*, (New York, 1995), 36. Language plays a critical role in how Americans view poverty. As sociologist Herbert Gans has noted, "[U]nderclass is a technical sounding word that hides its pejorative meaning. . . . The public expression of racial prejudice being no longer respectable, underclass becomes an acceptable euphemism." Herbert Gans, "Fighting Biases Embedded in Social Concepts of the Poor" in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, January 8, 1992, A56.

62. Substitute "Blacks" or "Mexicans" for "welfare recipient" and it becomes clear these are the falsehoods of racism that have haunted this country for centuries. The same black and Latino cultures that needed discipline and moral guidance in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries needed it again.

63. Mike Davis, *City of Quartz* (New York, 1990) 289-292.

64. From Minister Farakhan's "atonement" to Cornel West's "nihilism," black calls for self determination lent credence to the notion that focusing on culture was not racist but critical for the black community and the nation as a whole.

65. In fact, most welfare recipients were white, lived in the suburbs, were not teenagers and had two kids. Michael Moore, *Downsize This* (New York, 1996), 69.

66. Leantha Lamison-White, "Poverty in the United States: 1996," *Current Population Reports*. P-60-198. (Washington, D.C., 1997), vi.

67. Lamison-White, "Poverty in the United States: 1996." iv.

68. Comparing Mexican immigrants to Middle Eastern and Asian immigrants in California, Clark found that Mexicans have the highest poverty rate and the lowest welfare dependency rate of all three groups. Clark, *The California Cauldron*, 76. Similarly, examining U.S. Census data from 1990 (*ibid*), we found that Mexican immigrants received AFDC at a slightly higher rate than Russian immigrants (3.1 percent to 2.4 percent, respectively), but that Russians received "other welfare" (SSI, food stamps, etc.) at a much higher rate than Mexicans (7.5 percent compared to less than 1 percent). Furthermore, the percentages are significantly higher for Vietnamese, Laotian and Cambodian immigrants in part as a result of the connection between public assistance and refugee resettlement policy. Thus, while Latino immigrants are less likely to receive welfare, "Anti-immigrant sentiment pivoted on fear of invasion by Latinos [. . . and] traded on stereotypes of Latina fertility." Lynn H. Fujiwara, "Asian Immigrant Communities and Welfare Reform," in *Whose Welfare*, (Ithaca, 1999), 100-131.

69. Numerous studies have shown that women on welfare want to work and do so when they can find jobs. According to David Zucchini, "One study of women who received welfare at any time over a two-year interval found that the typical mother held 1.7 jobs during that period. Forty-four percent held two or more jobs." Zucchini, *The Myth of the Welfare Queen*, 64.

70. Kathryn Edin and Laura Lein, *Making Ends Meet: How Single Mothers Survive Welfare and Low-Wage Work* (New York, 1997).

71. "Welfare: Facts and Fiction" in *MS* (May/June, 1995), 93.

72. In debates around the bill, President Clinton also invoked biology, describing the welfare population as "different than it used to be." Philip Klinker with Rogers Smith *The Unsteady March: The Rise and Decline of Racial Equality in America* (Chicago, 1999), 334. Katz, *In the Shadow of the Poorhouse*, 330.

73. See Williams, *The Rooster's Egg*.

74. Such caricatures were so symbolically powerful that the new TANF system seemed to be designed with them in mind. For example, although faced with evidence that teenage mothers make up a small minority of all welfare recipients, welfare policymakers nonetheless concentrated their efforts on combating teen pregnancy. The purpose of welfare reform, it seems, was not to address the real circumstances in poor people's lives but rather to "send

a message.”

75. For example, two major unions in New York, DC 37 and the TWU Local 100, have been forced to acquiesce to the city’s transformation of previously unionized public jobs into nonunion workfare assignments in order to get any new contractual guarantees of future job security. Joshua Freeman, *Working-Class New York* (New York, 2000).

76. While most unions did not break with Clinton or Congress over the legislation, since its passage new coalitions and organizing efforts have begun to form. A number of SEIU and AFSCME locals as well as community groups such as the Kensington Welfare Rights Union have begun the work of bringing together welfare recipients and union workers to see their common interests.

77. Vanessa Tait “‘Workers Just Like Anyone Else’: Organizing Workfare Unions in New York City” in *Still Lifting, Still Climbing: African American Women’s Contemporary Activism*, Kimberly Springer, ed. (New York, 1999), 304-305.

78. Tait, 314. Under the Work Opportunity Tax Credit, employers who hire a TANF recipient can claim up to 40 percent of that employee’s first-year wages (not to exceed \$2,400). Under the Welfare To Work Tax Credit, employers who hire an AFDC or TANF recipient who has received welfare for at least 18 consecutive months, can claim 35 percent of that employee’s first-year wages, and 50 percent of that employee’s second-year wages.

79. Adam Cohen, “When Wall Street Runs Welfare,” *Time Magazine*, March 23, 1998, 151:11. In a recent essay, Valerie Polakow cites a similar example of Lockheed Martin “[T]he formidable ‘giant of the weapons industry’ and a major beneficiary of corporate welfare subsidies, plans to close of its New Jersey plants; as one congressman put it, ‘They would be getting a subsidy to lay off these folks and then would be getting additional money from the government to help get these people off welfare.’” Valerie Polakow, “The Shredded Net: The End of Welfare as We Knew It,” in *A New Introduction to Poverty*, Louis Kushnik and James Jennings, eds. (New York, 1999), 168.

80. California Immigrant Welfare Collaborative, “Immigrants and Welfare in California” (Spring, 1998), Section B, 1-36. Even prior to the passage of the PRA, federal legislation moved towards restrictions on immigrant eligibility for public benefits. The 1990 Immigration Act required that sponsors sign an “Affidavit of Support” stating that they will support the immigrant at 125 percent of the poverty line until that immigrant becomes a U.S. citizen or works for 40 “qualifying quarters.” Under such affidavits, sponsors also assume financial responsibility for any public costs incurred by the legal immigrant under their sponsorship.

81. During the summer of 1997, largely through the efforts of immigrant advocacy groups and, interestingly, agribusiness lobbyists (who sought to protect a steady supply of cheap immigrant farm labor), Congress passed the Balanced Budget Act. This legislation restored limited food stamp benefits to “pre 8/22” legal immigrant children, seniors, and disabled persons, among Vietnam-era veterans, and extended benefits to refugees and asylees from five to seven years. Congress also changed the PRA’s provision that prohibits states from using federal funds to aid legal immigrants to allow states to purchase federal food stamps for legal immigrants. Numerous states with large immigrant populations provide limited food stamps to legal immigrants under this provision. California and New York, for example, have used state funds to purchase federal food stamps for children, elderly, and disabled legal immigrants. Texas provides such benefits to elderly and disabled legal immigrants. See Debra DeLaet, *U.S. Immigration Policy in an Age of Rights* (Westport, 2000), 108-109.

82. Fujiwara, “Asian Immigrant Communities and Welfare Reform,” 125.

83. By December of 1997, there were reports that INS officials were unlawfully stopping legal immigrants at the border and at airports and making repayment of legally obtained public benefits a condition for re-entry into the United States. See, for example, December 17, 1997, letter from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to State TANF Directors regarding this matter. In “Immigrants and Welfare in California,” The California Immigrant Welfare Collaborative, Tab H.9.

84. There has been much less coverage of the rising activism in the face of these devastating changes. From workfare organizing in New York City, to the Economic Human Rights campaign of the Kensington Welfare Rights Union, to community protests in the Mission Hill section of Boston, the activism of former welfare recipients and their allies has not fit with the prevailing celebration of welfare reform and has thus received little media attention.

85. Note that the PRA did not pass until August 1996; the period that Clinton’s advisors are citing largely predates the passage of the PRA.

86. As researcher Lisa Dodson cautions, “When we find one of the many low-income mothers who has found a better place, more education, a decent job, a chance to develop, let us all recall history. Let’s remember that the vast majority of families on welfare have always moved on, moved up through their own tenacious determination, with the help of their family

and decent programs for real education and opportunity.” Lisa Dodson, 224.

87. James Gerstenzang, “Clinton Touts Welfare-To-Work Progress,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 4, 1999, A-3.

88. Barbara Vobejda and Judith Haveman, “Sanctions Fuel Drop in Welfare Rolls,” *The Washington Post*, March 23, 1998, A01.

89. Having created the much maligned character of the welfare recipient, states in partnership with private industry now needed to resuscitate the image of welfare recipients in order to get businesses to hire them. Across billboards and on the radio, states launched advertising campaigns to promote welfare recipients by publicizing the same statistics that were hidden throughout the campaign to reform welfare: welfare recipients want to work and have work experience, welfare recipients have on average two children and are conscientious about work and their children, the majority of welfare recipients are white. See, for example, the website of the Welfare-to-Work Partnership (www.welfareto-work.com), a nonprofit organization created and governed by the CEO’s of corporations like United Airlines, Burger King, Sprint, Monsanto, and UPS.

90. Sheila Zedlewski, Sandra Clark, Eric Meier, and Keith Watson, *Potential Effects of Congressional Welfare reform on Family Incomes* (New York, 1996).

91. Pamela Loprest, *Families Who Left Welfare: Who Are They and How Are They Doing?* (New York, 1999)

92. More specifically, the Urban Institute found that most women who leave welfare are working in service jobs in the low-wage labor market. One-third to one-half of those leaving welfare report serious economic struggles in providing food and almost 20 percent report problems paying rent. Loprest, *Ibid.*

93. Melissa Healy, “More Ex-Welfare Recipients Are Working But Still Poor,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 29, 1999, A2. A National Governor’s Association also found that only half of former recipients found any work and that work paid \$5.50 to \$7.00, not enough to lift a family out of poverty. Dodson, *Don’t Call Us Out of Name*, 223

94. Maria Cancian, Robert Haveman, Thomas Kaplan, Daniel Meyer, and Barbara Wolfe, “Work, Earnings, and Well-Being After Welfare: What Do We Know?” cited in Mink, *Whose Welfare?*, 3.

95. Mark Weisbrot, “Welfare Reform: The Jobs Aren’t There,” <http://www.rtk.net/pre-ambles/welfjobs/fulltex.2.html>. Cited in Mink, *Whose Welfare?*, 2.

96. Katherine Newman, *No Shame in My Game*, 63.

97. Mink, *Whose Welfare?*, 2.

98. According to a recent study by the Economic Policy Institute, the lowest 30 percent of wage earners can expect a 13 percent reduction in income as a result of the PRA.

99. Don Lee, “L.A. County Jobs Surge Since ‘93, but Not Wages,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 26, 1999, A-1.

100. See, for example, the Urban Institute’s study of welfare reform’s labor market effects on 20 metropolitan areas: Robert I. Lerman, Pamela Loprest, and Caroline Ratcliffe, “How Well Can Urban Labor Markets Absorb Welfare Recipients?” A-33 in series “New Federalism: Issues and Options for States” (June 1999). Available at <http://www.newfederalism.urban.org/html/anf33.html>.

101. John MacArthur, *The Selling of “Free Trade”: NAFTA, Washington, and the Subversion of American Democracy* (New York, 2000), 19.

102. Between 1960 and 1991, the share of the richest 20 percent rose from 70 percent of global income to 85 percent, while the share of the poorest 20 percent dropped from 2.3 percent to 1.4 percent. Similarly, between 1960 and 1990, despite industrial development throughout much of the Third World, the average per capita income dropped from 18 percent of that of developed countries to 17 percent. Moody, *Workers in a Lean World*, 54.

103. This language describing NAFTA is drawn from a 1995 *Los Angeles Times* 16-article special section entitled “The Melding Americas.” Claiming that the borders between the Americas are dissolving through free trade and the democratization of Latin America, most of the *Times* stories focused on the “The Cultural Ties [That] Mend Continental Divide.” The transnationalism celebrated in this special section was undergirded by a “universal” (American) consumer ethic, as article after article glowed over the success of U.S. performance artists (Gloria Estefan, Edward James Olmos, and Jean-Claude Van Damme) and consumer commodities in the Latin American market. A similar blend of “global Americanism” was evident when President Clinton lauded NAFTA as an opportunity to export American ideals throughout the continent, while assuring the American public that America’s fighting spirit was prepared to “compete and win in the global economy.” *The Los Angeles Times*, “Special Section: The Melding Americas,” July 18, 1994, Section D.

104. On the day President Clinton signed the PRA, he extolled how the new law would restore “America’s basic bargain of providing opportunity and demanding in return responsibility.” *New York Times*, August 23, 1996, A1.

105. Kushnik, “The Shredded Net,” 168.

106. For varying renditions of this argument, see: Linda Basch, Nina Glick Schiller, and Cristina Szanton Blanc, *Nations Unbound: Transnational Projects, Postcolonial Predicaments, and Deterritorialized Nation-States* (Amsterdam, 1994); Brimelow, *Alien Nation*; William Rogers Brubaker, *Immigration and the Politics of Citizenship in Europe and North America* (Lanham, Md., 1989); Geyer, *Citizenship No More*; Peter Schuck and Rogers Smith, *Citizenship Without Consent: Illegal Aliens in the American Polity* (New Haven, 1985).