

what kinds of local work and workers a journalist like Davidson would most like to learn about: where might he find an individual who symbolizes the economic opportunities or challenges of your area? If possible, arrange an interview with such a representative worker and then report to the class or write up a short journalistic profile.

12. Listen to the radio version of this story, where you can hear Adam Davidson talking to Maddie Parlier and Larry Sills, the third-generation CEO of family-owned Standard Motor Products. (The story, "The Transformation of American Factory Jobs, in One Company" is archived at National Public Radio: www.npr.org/blogs/money/2012/01/13/145039131/the-transformation-of-american-factory-jobs-in-one-company). The radio segment contains material you have not read above, so you may want to take notes. Discuss how and why hearing the story differs from reading it.

FROM AMERICA'S NEW WORKING CLASS

KATHLEEN R. ARNOLD

Most Americans would probably agree that the purpose of federal welfare programs is to provide economic assistance such as food stamps to people who need it, who can't quite make ends meet. Such a view regards welfare as an essentially humanitarian endeavor. In the reading below, political theorist Kathleen R. Arnold proposes a rather more sinister alternative—that the real purpose of welfare programs is to maintain a supply of cheap labor while disciplining and closely monitoring welfare recipients. Arnold teaches political science at the University of Texas, San Antonio. She is the editor of *Anti-Immigration in the United States: A Historical Encyclopedia* (2011) and author of *America's New Working Class: Race, Gender, and Ethnicity in a Biopolitical Age* (2007), from which this selection is excerpted.

[WELFARE AND "WORKFARE"]¹ should be viewed in the same terms as parole—the recipient is not merely a client, an individual whose transaction with a bureaucracy has a beginning and end. Rather, like parole, welfare entails strict adherence to rules (including the monitoring of one's sexual activities and limits to the number of children one can have), close scrutiny of what are normally considered private details, and harsh penalties for noncompliance. For parolees, the threat is a return to prison; for noncompliant welfare or workfare recipients, the threats involve one's very existence: homelessness, malnourishment,

and a deeper descent into poverty.² As Sheldon Wolin states: "The state is, therefore, allowed to deal arbitrarily with all welfare recipients, not by lynching them but by redefining the conditions and categories of their existence."³

Clearly, the word "reform" is disingenuous when applied to the welfare changes of 1996; instead of improving the situation of the poor, reform "is punishment of individuals or restriction of their rights in order to improve their characters or behaviors, as in 'reform school.' This type of welfare reform has a long tradition" in both the United States and the United Kingdom.⁴ As many authors have demonstrated, the notion that poverty or joblessness is a result of personal failings is particularly American, even as some European countries have shared the values of the Protestant work ethic to a lesser extent. This explains why our policies are far more punitive and individually oriented than in other liberal capitalist countries (although England comes close).⁵

As Sheila D. Collins and Gertrude Schaffner Goldberg discuss, the history of welfare or poor relief in the United States has had the following undemocratic characteristics:⁶ outdoor relief is limited or denied (this is still true—many cities ban individual food donations and regulate outdoor bread lines);⁷ work is provided under coercive conditions (workfare today is not voluntary, wages are below minimum wage, benefits are not provided, and workfare wages can be garnished to pay back welfare); there is an assumption that paupers are irresponsible and individually flawed (this assumption is still evident in the as-cetic prescriptions of TANF⁸ and nearly all other welfare programs); the notion that the provision of aid is a causal factor in the demand for it (this is evident today in talks about welfare dependency and cheating); authorities have required relatives who are often also poor to aid their poor relations (this is still true, particularly with entrance to a homeless shelter—the individual must prove that he or she has exhausted the list of relatives with whom to stay before entering the shelter);⁹ aid is not viewed as an entitlement in the United States (and never has been, and furthermore, this is truer today than it was in the early part of the twentieth century); welfare relief varies from state to state (and always has); despite Supreme Court rulings that strike down residency requirements

¹On "penal welfarism," or the connection between the welfare state and criminal justice, see Garland, *Culture of Control*. [Notes are Arnold's unless otherwise indicated.]

²Wolin, "Democracy and the Welfare State," 159.

³Sheila D. Collins and Gertrude Schaffner Goldberg, *Washington's New Poor Law* (New York: Apex Press, Council on International and Public Affairs, 2001), 6.

⁴See Wilson, *When Work Disappears*.

⁵Collins and Goldberg, *Washington's New Poor Law*, 9. The characteristics listed in this paragraph are Collins and Goldberg's; the parenthetical comments are mine.

⁶For example, San Francisco has arrested individuals for feeding the homeless. In many other cities, outdoor bread lines have been hotly contested.

⁷TANF: Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, the formal name for the U.S. welfare program. [Eds.]

⁸As a housing advocate in Boston's shelter system, I was required to go through a list of relatives and friends with whom shelter residents could stay. Among other problems this

as limiting freedom of travel, local authorities deny or limit assistance to newcomers (and always have), be they citizens or immigrants,¹⁰ and, finally, welfare has "denied recipients political and civil rights in return for a meager dole"¹¹ (this is still true de facto if not de jure). These broad characteristics of welfare throughout U.S. history highlight not only the punitive character of the welfare system¹² but also the coercive nature of welfare. The crucial assumptions behind welfare programs are two: participants must be forced to work; and they have no motivation to do so and thus must be guided, shaped, and disciplined. This is why they are denied choices that ordinary workers would ideally have, such as what hours to work, what they will be paid, and where their wages will go.

It needs to be emphasized that welfare is dependent *not* on job creation but rather on a flexible labor market:

Contemporary welfare policies rarely involve job creation on any significant scale, along the lines of the old-fashioned public-works programs; they are more concerned with deterring welfare claims and necessitating the acceptance of low-paid, unstable jobs in the context of increasingly "flexible" labor markets. Stripped down to its labor-regulatory essence, welfare is not about creating jobs for people that don't have them; it is about creating workers for jobs that nobody wants. In a Foucauldian¹³ sense, it is seeking to make "docile bodies" for the new economy: flexible, self-reliant, and self-disciplining.¹⁴

Welfare and welfare indicate bare survival — recipients are not meant to rise even to lower-middle-class status. As Piven and Cloward note:

In New York City, some 45,000 people, mainly women, sweep the streets and clean the subways and the parks. They do the work once done by unionized municipal employees. But instead of a paycheck and a living wage, they get a welfare check that leaves them far below the poverty level, and they have none of the benefits and protections of unionized workers. Perhaps just as bad, they have become public spectacles of abject and degraded labor — of slave labor, many of them say.¹⁵

The word slavery is an exaggeration but it is not incidental: workers in Marx's analysis were also "free" to sell their labor and participate in a "free" market; but their limited choices, de facto political disenfranchisement, lack of collective bargaining or representation (i.e., unions), and inhuman work conditions indicated a profound asymmetry of political power. These dynamics, which are present today just as in Marx's

¹⁰See Sanford F. Schram, "Introduction," in *Welfare Reform: A Race to the Bottom?* ed. Schram and Samuel H. Beer (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, n.d.). Recent changes in TANF requirements (2006) may allow American-born recipients to move from state to state without cessation of welfare; however, it is unclear whether this will be implemented efficiently.

¹¹Collins and Goldberg, *Washington's New Poor Law*, 9.

¹²See, for example, Garland, *Culture of Control*.

¹³Foucauldian: Resembling the ideas of French philosopher Michel Foucault (1926–1984); Foucault's *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1975) theorized about Western systems of punishment and control. [Eds.]

time, challenge any claims about "freedom." Today, welfare and welfare programs have taken away many of the rights (not necessarily in the legal sense but broadly conceived) that ordinary citizens enjoy, including the rights to privacy and individual moral choice as well as the right to determine work conditions.

Furthermore, if the new working class (low-tier workers) is viewed as part of the inner city, as composed of both formal citizens and migrants, it must be recognized that this same group is not only subject to welfare and welfare surveillance and control, but also to the War on Drugs, racial profiling, the War on Terror, immigration controls, and the resurgence of racial prejudice and sexism.... This set of power dynamics indicates a far more complex and intricate system of controls—one that in effect suspends the law through bureaucratic mechanisms in a systematic fashion (systematic meaning that the impact is long-lasting and that this population is treated consistently as a biological threat to national security).¹⁶ Unlike the conditions at Guantánamo Bay (not to idealize conditions there), the ideational system that creates ethnic, racial, and gender antagonisms obscures these power dynamics and often inverts them, positing these groups as the true usurpers or exploiters (of "us": the welfare system, taxpayers' dollars, our moral sensibility, and so on).

All of these policies disproportionately affect low-tier workers and the very poor.¹⁷ ... Similar to welfare policies and low-wage strategies, the U.S. guest-worker program combines these two elements: "flexible" work conditions; and heavy surveillance and political control, accompanied by the political powerlessness of workers. One of the more prominent sectors of the guest-worker program is agriculture; the United States has the most physically intensive agricultural system in the West, while at the same time, agricultural jobs have been rated by various authorities as the most and second most dangerous jobs in America.¹⁸ Because many of these workers are on agricultural visas, they are monitored by the BCIS¹⁹ as well as by local police forces, employers, and citizens' watch groups. Guest workers are tied to one employer, must be on site twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, are provided housing that lacks both refrigeration and sewage, often live in tents or other makeshift housing, and have no access to doctors' electricity, or outside help. As of this writing, guest workers cannot strike, change employers, or bargain for wages.²⁰ If they are fired from their positions, they have less than a week to leave the country and no legal recourse. Meanwhile,

¹⁶See Arnold, *Homelessness, Citizenship, and Identity*, Chapter 4.

¹⁷See, for example, David L. Marcus, "Three Times and Clut," *Boston Globe*, October 14, 1998. A1; Nancy Gertner and Daniel Kanstroom, "The Recent Spotlight on the INS Failed to Reveal Its Dark Side," *Boston Globe*, May 21, 2000, E1, E3.

¹⁸Other jobs rated among the most dangerous are mining and meatpacking work.

¹⁹BCIS: Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services, a component of the Homeland Security Agency. [Eds.]

²⁰Legislation has been proposed to modify guest workers' conditions, but this is at the

illegal immigrants in the meatpacking industry often work in factories that are freezing, isolated, and subject to deregulated (read “unsafe”) working conditions. Often they are tracked by BCIS and citizens’ watch groups and are deported or allowed to stay according to arbitrary criteria. Additionally, conditions in the Border Industrial Program, a transnational factory area established through a partnership between the United States and Mexico, are both “free”—that is, deregulated—and dangerous and exploitative for workers. Just as international companies in this program (*maquilas*) have enjoyed relaxed environmental and labor standards, female *maquiladora* workers have been subject to brutal conditions. Hundreds of these women have been rape-murdered or kidnapped. The murder investigations of these “women of Juárez” have been sluggish, but their border crossing is certainly policed. The lack of heat in these factories, the speeding up of conveyor belts so that injuries are commonplace, and the vulnerability of these workers to both the market and the police form the parameters of these workers’ daily existence.²¹ In all of these cases, workers are exploited and seemingly abandoned by the state; yet at the same time they are subject to much greater surveillance and control.

ENGAGING THE TEXT

1. Arnold writes in a formal style well suited to an intellectually sophisticated audience. Try writing a 100- to 200-word summary of her argument that would be accessible to high school readers.
2. Does Arnold persuade you that welfare and workfare are unreasonably invasive, punitive programs? What specific details does she cite to support her point of view? What level of supervision, if any, do you think would be appropriate for recipients of federal aid?
3. Arnold and the writers she quotes point to ways in which welfare and workfare resemble parole, lynching, reform schools, and slave labor. Discuss the rhetorical effect of such references, considering both their emotional impact and their logical validity.
4. Arnold’s point of view is obviously not conservative. How would you characterize it—liberal, progressive, reformist, radical, revolutionary, or something else? Explain.

EXPLORING CONNECTIONS

5. Review Diana Kendall’s “Framing Class, Vicarious Living, and Conspicuous Consumption” (p. 314). How would you expect media to “frame” welfare

²¹See Human Rights Watch, “Human Rights Watch Welcomes U.S. Government Meat and Poultry Study,” <http://hrw.org/English/docs/2005/02/03/usdomio117.txt.htm>; “Abusive Child Labor Found in U.S. Agriculture,” <http://hrw.org/English/docs/2000/06/20/usdom580.txt.htm>; NCRCLC, “U.S. Agricultural Workers,” <http://www.ncrlc.com/AgriculturalWorkers>

recipients? Can you think of any specific examples of media representations of welfare recipients, or are these people invisible in the media?

6. Read “The New Jim Crow” by Michelle Alexander (p. 738). Explain why you think Arnold would agree or disagree with Alexander’s claim that America’s mass incarceration of black and brown men constitutes a “new Jim Crow”—that is, a system of legalized racial discrimination. How well does Alexander’s term “invisible punishment” (p. 742) apply to parole, welfare, and workfare as described by Arnold?

7. Read Katherine Mangu-Ward’s “The War on Negative Liberty” (p. 659) and Chris Norwood’s “The Rise of Mass Dependency” (at bedfordstmarins.com/reading/epages) and compare their assessments of government intervention with that offered by Arnold. What do you think these authors would do to address issues involving poverty and public health?

EXTENDING THE CRITICAL CONTEXT

8. Research welfare/workfare in your city or county. Report to the class on the types and amount of aid, the number of recipients, and demographic data such as age, gender, and race/ethnicity of recipients.

THE NEW AMERICAN DIVIDE

CHARLES MURRAY

America is a divided nation. We tend to see the gaps between us as fundamentally political or economic—Republicans versus Democrats, or Wall Street versus Main Street. Charles Murray, in contrast, sees the most essential differences as cultural; the new American divide is, at heart, the dissolution of a “common civic culture.” His essay calls on Americans to rebuild a shared set of values that include marriage, hard work, and religious faith. Charles Murray (b. 1943), currently the W. H. Brady Scholar at the American Enterprise Institute, a conservative think tank, has authored several books on American culture, politics, and social structures. He is best known for his controversial 1994 bestseller *The Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life* (coauthored with Richard J. Herrnstein), which explored connections between social class and IQ. “The New American Divide” echoes themes of his latest book, *Coming Apart: The State of White America, 1960–2010*, published in 2012.

AMERICA IS COMING APART. For most of our nation’s history, what-
ever the immaterial in wealth between the white and black

