Introduction

The political economy of African American life in the era of welfare state dismantling and neoliberalism, I contend, is weakly articulated in the critical sociology of late capitalism. My task is to open up this space and propose a way to think about African Americans and the state in this period of neoliberalism and corporate globalization. This conjecture embodies the increasing privatization and elimination of core features of the social welfare state in the U.S. and the internationalization of capital. It is a narrative connected also to race and Africans in the diaspora. It is an attempt to articulate the complex interplay of race, class, and gender in the global South and North, with the core analysis focusing on African Americans in the U.S.

Essentially, my position in this paper is this. First, U.S. Welfare State policy in the current period must be understood in the context of global economic restructuring. These processes are deeply shaped for African diaspora peoples by race. Nevertheless, for African Americans and the global African community, these social forces are more than the expression of a racial dynamic. The dismantling of the U.S. social welfare state is embedded in a fundamental change in the social contract: increased pursuit of
global private profit with little commitment to domestic social programs. Second, at the center of state transformation in the U.S. is a gender, race, and class dialectic. These relational and intersective processes are rooted deeply in the U.S. social order and are examined in this essay in the context of early U.S. state formation and change. This history is followed by an analysis of the current period of state and economic restructuring. This is a moment in capitalist crisis which requires new forms of accumulation (Dahms 2000). Nonetheless in the U.S. the process must be viewed in the context of longstanding racial and gender logics. This basic premise is omitted, erased or deliberately ignored in too much of the scholarship and decision making on the U.S. Welfare State, race, and class (Murray 1982, O’Connor 1973, Kloby 1999, Mills 1999).

Ideologically this dialectic of race, class, gender and the capitalist state is expressed as an embrace, on the one hand, of liberalism by liberal and conservative policy makers, and on the other, as an intense move to the right by a substantial sector of the populace and dominant elite in the United States. These moves of global aggression and regressive domestic policies with the increasing immiseration of many in the U.S. occur within a racist/sexist logic—the cultural expression of privatization. This logic of race, class, and gender inequality is deeply rooted in capitalist formation and is remade in the current context under new conditions of accumulation (Roy 2001). This period involves a discourse embedded in the intense demonization of Black women as drains on the public till and unfit for motherhood. These are long-standing narratives, remade in the context of economic and state restructuring and new forms of racism. This public castigation of the most vulnerable Black women and children occurs in the midst of the virtual elimination of the social wage for the poorest Americans as the U.S. Welfare State is restructured (Murray 1984, Gingrich 1994, Lussone 1997). This castigation is, in fact, the justification for these draconian measures.

The reasons for this state restructuring have been variously labeled: ‘fiscal crisis of the welfare state’, ‘crisis of capitalist accumulation’, ‘the collapse of Keynesian economic policy’, “the minimalist welfare” state and so on. I contend that this move for state privatization is an expression of a neoliberal logic which has global sweep. Moody speaks to the consequences for labor of this corporate global restructuring:

The recipe for decentralizing production processes through the creation of extended production chains of progressively lower-paying work sites and casualized labor is contributing to a deep class that began over two decades ago (Moody 1997: 113).

What workers are facing is a new structural corporations’ increasing integration of the global economy (Dahms 2000). This and raced division of labor in the U.S. a in the U.S. the reemergence of overt racism, strengthened institutional racism, and its part and parcel of the current expression of the deep embeddedness and interplay of nomic, and cultural dynamics are at the least 45 million Americans living with poverty, a disproportionate whom are B growing homeless population of families (Kloby 1999). The questions is why has done are core to my argument.

The Major Issues

I attempt to place race, gender and state U.S. political practices. I contend that historically and contemporarily an expression ties. Given this, it is arguable that the principle of race/class/gender dynamics are reflect state changes (Devine and Canak economic and cultural relations involving the way gender is embedded and relatio (Brewer 1993).

Given the preceding conceptual assur central tenets of my argument in this is 3) As the state has been restructured old periods (expressed in such state for the neoliberal state), so has the position
I am only concerned here with one more gender and race in a broader historical context of U.S. political practice. I consider that the state can be an expression of itself, race, and gender inequality. It is important to note that this expression of power is not only a function of the state, but also of the social and economic structures in which it operates. The following points are the conceptualization of power enacted in this paper:

1. The state has historically been structured under capitalism and the racialization of power. The following points are the conceptualization of power enacted in this paper:

   a. The state has historically been structured under capitalism and the racialization of power. The following points are the conceptualization of power enacted in this paper:

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   z. The state has historically been structured under capitalism and the racialization of power. The following points are the conceptualization of power enacted in this paper:
2) Processes of political economy are articulated in the exclusion, inclusion, and the bifurcation of economic and civil life along racial and gender lines: racialized and gendered labor markets, family fracturing, racially exclusive housing markets, and unequal access to education and training are striking cases in point. Today this is expressed most pointedly in the exclusion of large numbers of African Americans from the economy simultaneously with the elimination of social spending.

3) The reconstitution and change of state practices have occurred in the context of racial, gender, and class struggles. This is not simply class conflict, but the resistance of state racial/class impositions by African American people, women, and men. In turn, these conflicts help reshape state practices. Black struggle and response must be considered an essential element in American state reconstitution (Morris 1984). Nonetheless, race/class/gender struggles in the United States have altered but never completely transformed the political-economy of inequality or American civil society. Moreover, new forms of struggle will be required for the current period.

4) African Americans and welfare state change can be treated as a more specific site through which to view the capitalist state. Gender is highly visible when issues of production and social reproduction in intersection with race and class are considered in analysis of state restructuring.

In sum, it is the restructuring of the state in the context of liberalization and privatization, racism and gender inequality and their confluence that is of keen interest here. The key features of neoliberal state policies as articulated by Moody include:

1. Embeddedness in the ideology of the market whereby the state is used to free up market forces. 2. Older accumulation strategies replaced locally and globally with intensive privatization of all sectors. 3. The global South is locked into export-oriented models embedded in structural adjustment. The IMF and World Bank are central here. Indeed, the conditions of getting loans, require opening up the country to transnational corporations as well as changing nationalized industries and state supports to private enterprise (1997).

Real wages have fallen in the North and South given structural adjustment in countries such as Mexico (Moody 1997). Mentah (2002) describes the same process for Cameroon. Structural adjustment for this small West African country, according to Mentah, has the following features:

1. Cuts in government spending, particularly to the poor, the vulnerable (e.g., water, etc.);
2. Removal of import controls and a goods and allowing the free market;
3. Devaluation of currencies;
4. Tight-fisted control of money supply and raise interest rates to encourage;
5. Privatization of government enter
tprises.

This neoliberal period is a time where supranational local control, countries are to resources to the fullest, public good privatization and environmental regulation. The key question is in order to not it major tools of this restructuring globalization, the role of the World Bank and IMF.

Nonetheless, this dismal reality is one and struggle of all to transform this. Consequently this two-fold dialectic: conceptualization of capitalist state specific implications for Blacks in the corporate globalization are key here, a chance for renewed struggle and...
1. Cuts in government spending, particularly expenditure on services that are crucial to the poor, the vulnerable and the aged (Education, health, housing, water, etc.).
2. Removal of import controls and removal of low prices for even essential goods and allowing the free market to determine prices
3. Devaluation of currencies
4. Tight-fisted control of money supply and credit to burn away inflation and raise interest rates to encourage savings and

This neoliberal period is a time when the "globalization of capitalism is to supplant local control, countries are to be encouraged to exploit their natural resources to the fullest, public goods are to be opened up to relentless privatization and environmental regulations are to be geared to the lowest common denominator in order not to interfere with free trade." (2003: 4) The major tools of this restructuring globally, in the interest of capital, are the World Bank and IMF.

Nonetheless, this dismal reality is matched by the recognition of resistance and struggle of all to transform this situation (Katz-Fishman, et al., 2000). Consequently this two-fold dialectic, I contend, must be incorporated into a conceptualization of capitalist state policy formulation and change, with specific implications for Blacks in the U.S. The current state restructuring and corporate globalization are key here And, although a difficult period, signals a chance for renewed struggle and change.

**African Americans and the Neoliberal U.S. welfare state**

Because African Americans occupy restricted labor, social, and political positions, and, indeed, because of racism and sexism, the current dismantling of the U.S. social welfare state has been particularly devastating. Even today, when formal economic indicators suggest low levels of unemployment, the official unemployment rate for Blacks is still two to three times the rate for whites. The Black youth population is increasingly on the educational, social and economic margins, and many Black women have access only to low wage work below the levels of subsistence. Clearly these jobs do not pay enough for family survival (Brewer 1993; Burnham 2001). The context for the current difficulties is deeply rooted in American welfare state formation, racial
formation and the gendering of social citizenship. An overview of a nu
history sets some of the context for the present moment.

The long and sometimes acrimonious academic debates about the state
characterize a number of discussions of the state in U.S. society. The most
canons tensions center around liberal pluralistic definitions of the state and
concepts within conservative and Marxist theories of the state.

More recently, in Britain and the United States, a conservative tendency has
emerged emphasizing reshaping the state along minimalist lines. The mini-

malist state is the political expression of Thatcherism, Reaganism, Gorbachevism
and the neoliberal policies of past President Bill Clinton and current presi-
dent George W. Bush. Moody, however, makes it quite clear for us concep-
tualizing the capitalist state when she argues that the “Basic function of
protection, regulating, and servicing private business property remains at the
core of the capitalist state.” (Moody 1997: 123).

Neoliberal housing policy, for example, supported by HUD’s former Henry
Cisneros during the Clinton presidency opened up the low income housing
market to a broader class sector, provided a set of vouchers to a mixed income
group of claimants, and effectively squeezed even more of the poor out of
housing. This was matched in urban areas all across the United States by the
removal of the poor from these housing sites. This convergence of liberal and
conservative policy practice is a good example of the current restructur-
ing of the social welfare state, with deep and often devastating consequences for
African Americans, a third of whom live below the poverty line. I prefer to
use the term neoliberalism to describe this convergence of liberal and con-
servative, market embedded public policies.

Classical Marxists agree that in a capitalist society, the governing entity
reflects the interests of the owning classes. Thus, the state in capitalist soci-
eties is not a sphere of competing interest groups, but is constituted by and/or
instrument of the (in some versions) the ruling class. Debates on Marxist
state theories often revolve around the “instrumental” versus the “structural
nature of the capitalist state. Drawing upon various Marxist versions of the
state, Gough (1981) argues that the term capitalist state can be used to con-
ceptualize the political, economic, civil, as well as bureaucratic nature of the

governmental and ideological structures of late twentieth century American
society. He states more specifically, “this self same state acts to secure the
political domination of one class by another.”

Given Gough’s loose synthesis of structuralist and instrumentalist con-

ceptions of the capitalist state, those ic-

ing upon Greenberg’s work (1977) on
as Diamond’s work on women and
emerging scholarship on race, class, g
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Race and State

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ceptions of the capitalist state, these ideas can be elaborated further by drawing upon Greenberg's work (1977) on the state and racial domination, as well as Diamond's work on women and the state. These are precursors to the emerging scholarship on race, class, gender and the U.S. welfare state. (Mink 1990, Gordon 1990, 1995, Abramovitz 1996, Quadagno 1994). A consideration of some of that literature follows.

Race and State

Greenberg (1980) places his emphasis on the central way in which racial domination and ideologies of white supremacy have entered into the structuring of the state in capitalist societies such as the U.S. and South Africa. He suggests how racial structuring occurs "somewhat independently of the class forces that helped to propagate the original ideas." Marable (1985) too, places the relationship between race and state at the inception of Euro/American contact with Africans during the period of slavery. Therein, he notes, "the state served to rationalize and define in the form of law, the existence of slavery." Consequently, the very process of state formation in racially based capitalist society is its development in the context of race and racism as well as class forces.

Drawing upon a Gramscian interpretation, Marable informs us that "the state cannot be analyzed separately from an analysis of the social and cultural formation."

Scott (1978), too, sheds light on this state formation process in the context of racism during the constitutional period. He states,

The founders of this nation had an opportunity to politically abolish the racial oppression the British had forced upon blacks but instead members of the constitutional convention drafted a strong antislavery statement and entered it in the early drafts of the Constitution, but it was finally deleted under pressure from Southerners... slaves were declared to have both the social and legal qualities of property and men (sic) 1978: 63.

Historians of the antebellum period generally agree that powerful southern planters in conjunction with powerful northern shipping interests overrode the rhetoric of equality of the constitutional convention, ignored statements drafted by free blacks to disavow slavery, and compromised with the few delegates not wanting slavery. Property superceded ideology and, slavery was adopted.
The impact of the southern state on shaping patterns of racial domination has been documented in the works of Wilson (1978) and James (1988). James points out, the southern racial state was not an accident of history but was created by white plantation owners, white farm owners, and their allies to discriminate against blacks (1988: 205).

Gough (1981) centers class and the state arguing that the growth in welfare state activity has taken place in a period sometimes referred to as monopoly capitalism. Its dismembering is occurring in the period of global capital. The welfare state in its modern form is a product of this particular economic form and of race and class struggles for a more equitable piece of the pie. Thus the most recent growth in the welfare state, reflects, to some extent, ideas reaching fruition during the New Deal and the depression of the thirties. The current retraction reflects, economic decline, a shrinking pie, and a dismantling of the old Welfare State, channeling more of these resources to capital.

Gough points out further that "the welfare state denotes state intervention in the process of reproducing labor power and maintaining the nonworking population" (Gough 1981: 49). Other theorists have identified the process more materially. In fact they argue, the welfare state represents a way of handling the crisis of accumulation inherent in the capitalist mode of production (Castells 1977).

Until recently, the state in the U.S. reflected the regulation of the economy through Keynesian demand side policies. The other side of this strategy was proposed by Piven and Cloward (1977). They centered the welfare state has been used to "regulate the poor." This aspect of state formation reflects social justice struggles. Groups such as the welfare rights organization (NWRO) saw the intersection among gender, race, economics and state policy before it was theorized among scholars. They pressed for a guaranteed, living wage income. On the other hand, the turmoil of the sixties, especially street rebellion, engendered a state response. Piven and Cloward argue that the social welfare, relief function of the state is clearly tied to a process of social control. Historically, sheer desperation, per se, has not precipitated the expansion of the safety net. So, Piven and Cloward argue for the "periodic expanding and contracting of relief roles as the system performs its two main functions: maintaining civil order and enforcing work."

Thus in their still timely critique of the welfare state, Piven and Cloward show how the potentially destabilizing function of struggles for more of the social bounty catalyze a state response control rebellion. Cleaver (1979), too, in defining the current crisis of the welfare states words in the describing the harshness, "the crisis of the State emerges as a ph in which working class struggle imp which capital tries to turn the crisis to its own advantage." While none of the authors seem to be aware of its impact on the welfare state.

My contention is that much of the period expresses the interplay between restructuring, and racism. To render men, it is the gender/race intersection and work on Black women is credit, does recognize the importance and inequality with her emphasis on BI (1988) has assembled some of the early Diamond's work delineates the power themselves their focus on male domination nature contribution to her edited volume consider the complexities of gender time to race with, as noted, her focus on intersection of race, class, and gender attention to the power of race in its structural class and gender. In her analysis, patriarchal capitalist society but does not capitalist crisis. She does, however, in her analysis.

Nonetheless, by the mid-nineties race and state in the U.S., Quadra attempted to place race at the center of the media. Her work, however, is not gender in intersection with race. How as well as gendered is not her main argument. Gordon (1998, 1995) probes race and the state. She notes the gender respect during the late 19th a
social bounty catalyze a state response: an expanding social welfare state to control rebellion. Cleaver (1979), too, captured the former process by squarely defining the current crisis of the welfare state in this context. He minces no words in the describing the harshness of capital’s response, pointing out that “the crisis of the State emerges as a phenomenon of two moments – the first in which working class struggle imposes crises on capital, and second, in which capital tries to turn the crisis against the working class to restore command.” While none of the authors center gender, there is a growing concern with its impact on the welfare state.

My contention is that much of the minimalist state practice of the current period expresses the interplay between white male patriarchy, economic restructuring, and racism. To render visible African American women and men, it is the gender/race intersection which needs to be specified. There is little or no work on Black women and the state. Deborah King (1988) to her credit, does recognize the importance of interrogating multiple sites of political inequality with her emphasis on Black women’s political agency. Diamond (1980) has assembled some of the early ideas on white women and the state. Diamond’s work delineates the power of patriarchal relations in state formation. Her focus on male domination structuring class relations is the signature contribution of her edited volume. King (1988) and Law (1983) too, consider the complexities of gender and patriarchy. King however, is attentive to race with, as noted, her focus on Black women. She is sensitive to the intersection of race, class, and gender. Yet neither Diamond or Law pay much attention to the power of race in state formation. Mies (1986) does understand class and gender. In her analysis she deems late capitalist society, a patriarchal capitalist society but does not articulate the racial dimension of capitalist crisis. She does, however, locate Third World women’s inequality in her analysis.

Nonetheless, by the mid-nineties much more attention was being given to race and state in the U.S.. Quadagno (1995) in The Color of Public Policy, attempted to place race at the center of her analysis of the Great Society initiatives. Her work, however, is not deeply intersectional. She tends to elide gender in intersection with race. How the U.S. welfare is simultaneously raced as well as gendered is not her concern. Race is the core framing tenet of her argument. Gordon (1996, 1995) probably advances furthest the ideas of gender, race and the state. She notes the way Black women struggled for racial and gender respect during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The independent
social welfare struggles of these women, especially in the early 20th century, is discussed in her work. Tellingly, Gordon points out:

welfare policy includes not only the giving of material goods but also regulation – of the market and the family in particular (1990: 7).

Mink in that same volume edited by Gordon (1990) clarifies even further the role of race, gender dynamic. She argues thusly.

The intertwining of race and gender during the process of the welfare state formation generated citizenship, produced materialist policies that benefited some women, opened the state to other women and allowed the assimilation of "lesser races" into the system while assuring their continued subordination within it. It created a welfare state that tied the woman citizen to women's place and that institutionalized political ambivalence towards social citizenship (1990: 114).

Indeed, given what we know historically, the treatment of African men and women and children as noncitizens was a constant in the early growth and development of local as well as national state practices in the U.S. These economic processes were infused with cultural and ideological realities. In sum, the structuring of racial inequality has been intimately tied to the evolution and growth of the capitalist economy, patriarchy, culture, and the state – the racialist/capitalist/patriarchal state. Moreover, the relationship of African Americans to the state must be considered beyond the contest of electoral, legalistic, and protest maneuvering. The state, economy and ideological representations are in interplay in shaping the form of African American inclusion/exclusion. Yet, the state has been, in turn, reshaped by racial struggles emanating from African Americans.

Morris (1984) also argues the Civil Rights Movement, as noninstitutionalized political struggle, emanated out of the organizational and political savvy of southern Blacks, many of them women. Their political insurgency is as persistent as an essential element in the remaking of the southern racial order.

Examined more carefully over historical time, the racial, class, and patriarchal nature of the state can be more clearly delineated, from the revolutionary period culminating in the forging of a national state with constitution, to the fight anti-slavery and abolitionist struggles through the civil rights movement, and finally to the current restructuring of the welfare state. State practices have been central in the etiopathology of American society.

Thus, today the minimalist welfare state around a new policy consensus seeks the elimination of the principle of ev children – AFDC. This neoliberal privatization of welfare state restructuring. It is reflected in the writings of Mead (1984), Murray (1984) welfare and work must be linked. It is with America (1994), which essentially social welfare state, while the state has helders and private capital. And now, "Perfume." President Bill Clinton signed into law welfare reforms which would "end welfare as we know it," dramatic changes have essentially eluded Americans.

Strikingly, the instantiation of a different and deserving recipients has been in practice since the institutionalization of welfare. African American women have largely been the least able of the American population proportionately Black and poor. Just a fair spending for the rich has increased in this form of state spending, yet in the wealthy escape critique. The culture is a welfare recipient. Indeed, the racial Black women, men and children as they were.

The current widespread acceptance of the political powerlessness of the tarnishing of an ideology which neglects and gender in state dynamics which matters is that the racialization of the servedness is a core structuring principle and practice of white supremacy based on paid labor were preferred.
practices have been central in the establishment of racialized and gendered inequality in American society. Thus today the minimalist welfare state has, in fact, being constituted around a new policy consensus regarding reform of the U.S. welfare state: the elimination of the principle of even the barest support for mothers and children—AFDC. This neoliberal principle is deeply shaping of the current welfare state restructuring. It is reflected in the academic and journalistic writings of Mead (1986), Murray (1984), and R. (1986). They all agree that state welfare and work must be linked. It is captured in the Gingrich book Contract With America (1994), which essentially called for the dismantling of the U.S. social welfare state, while the state itself remains deeply supportive of wealth holders and private capital. And most centrally it is expressed in “Welfare Reform:” President Bill Clinton signed the legislation in 1996 as a set of practices which would “end welfare as we know it,” as stated by Clinton. These dramatic changes have essentially eliminated the social wage for millions of Americans.

Strikingly, the instantiation of a discourse and practice of non-deserving and deserving recipients has been deeply embedded in U.S. Welfare State practices since the institutionalization of the modern welfare state (Mink 1980). African American women have typically been the target of this rhetoric. The minimalist states means that social spending cuts reach new highs for the least able of the American population. The least able economically is disproportionately Black and poor. Just as social spending has gone down, welfare spending for the rich has increased. Corporations are formally implicated in this form of state spending, yet in terms of formal beliefs about welfare, the wealthy escape critique. The cultural imagery has hardened around who is a welfare recipient. Indeed, the racial/class/gender ideology which defines Black women, men and children as laggards rationalizes the use of the stick.

The current widespread acceptability of this ideology is possible because of the political powerlessness of the targeted groups and because of the instantiation of an ideology which neglects or distorts the true nature of race, class and gender in state dynamics which go back at least 50 years. The fact of the matter is that the racialization of the state and the rhetoric of Black undeservedness is a core structuring principle of U.S. society located in the ideology and practice of white supremacy (Mills 1997). Thus economic claims based on paid labor were preferred over motherhood claims. This of course
was cross-cut by race. A racialized, engendering occurred. Black men were marginalized from both public support and private work. Black women had to struggle to claim a “protected motherhood.” Culuminating, today with the elimination of this claim for poor women, a disproportionate number who are Black. Quadagno (1994) delineates this relationship further.

The New Deal thus united the industrial working class around a party that provided income security against job loss, injury, and old age to working men and their families. At the same time it left intact—indeed reinforced—the rigid color line. The extension of social rights thus had paradoxical consequences for racial equality—no full democracy for blacks—a modicum of economic welfare and security to whites (1994: 24).

Gender and Black Family Policy: Contested Motherhood

Indeed today, an increasing number of the Black poor are women and their children. Families are formed without male providers. This group as currently constituted, is largely the outcome of economic restructuring and state transformation. Black exclusion along racial lines contemporarily and a deeply rooted sexual division of labor: productive and reproductive. The social representation of these families is also a cultural construction. These women and their children are labeled “disreputable,” “undeserving,” and increasingly “a permanent drain on the state.” Today neoconservatives and conservatives of the capitalist state agree: these people are not “entitled” to public aid. They must be made to work. Thus the driving discourse is the contention that something is wrong with the American family in the public rhetoric on social welfare in the U.S. via the intense scrutiny of African American families. This contention has galvanized liberal and conservative policy makers. The roots of this Black inequality, contrary to public rhetoric, is structural.

For example, Squires clearly argues in Capital and Communities in Black and White (1994) that restructuring is rooted in “the efforts of capital to seek cheaper, union-free work force in order to retain a large share of surplus wealth.” Moreover, he makes the case that

These developments reflect public policy as well as private sector activity. Tax and regulatory policies have encouraged capital mobility, strengthened the hand of capital in labor-management struggles, and substituted racial segregation and inequality (1994: 3).

As early as 1982, Bluestone and Harrison point of deindustrialization on core sects (1997) drew upon this theme in his won this chilling ground is the belief by man organization will provide economic prosper. Many of these workers embrace the rig launch a strong domestic program empolitical conditions of reprivatization, is energy around launching living wage is that coupled with this retrenchmen dependency.” “workfare” and the “dys ideological discourse of the current per fund by neoliberal spokespeople.

The Race to the Bottom in the U

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As early as 1982, Bluestone and Harrison were delineating the profound impact of deindustrialization on core sectors of the U.S. working class. Wilson (1997) drew upon this theme in his work on "the truly disadvantaged." On this chilling ground is the belief by many white male workers that reprivatization will provide economic prosperity to those who have lost ground. Many of these workers embrace the rightwing reaction. Thus the ability to launch a strong domestic program emphasizing livable wages, under current political conditions of reprivatization, is not good. Nonetheless, there is some energy around launching living wage initiatives across the U.S. The reality is that coupled with this retrenchment is the intense rhetoric of "welfare dependency," "workfare" and the "dysfunctional Black Family." This is the ideological discourse of the current period, the raced and gendered face put forth by neoliberal spokespeople.

The Race to the Bottom in the U.S.

Some of the most vocal rhetoric in the press regarding the dismantling of AFDC is the demand for women on welfare to work. In this period of tremendous economic restructuring where there are too few jobs for all workers this polemic is heavily a political strategy that resonates deeply among a good number of the voting public. It is also a strategy of social control, forcing work under any conditions. Thus the current period is expressed in the intense language and practice of state privatization. It is a racialized, class, and gendered assault, complicating the ability of Black women, men, and children to live. A little stated fact is that for Black men the welfare state has always been a cruel task master. Few if any of the policies are for so-called "able-bodied" men who are surplus population generated by racism and economic oppression.

Programs such as job training, general assistance, minimal old age pensions, provided the barest of policy supports for Black men. Yet, through welfare reform, the support for one form of Black family: women and their children is all but eliminated. More specifically, low wage workfare, the elimination of health and child care provision, the phase out of low income housing, goes to the heart of the ability of African American women and children, families to survive. This holds true even though the welfare state has always splintered its largesse along racial lines/class lines. The struggles which forged social legislation for a living welfare wage only incompletely
erved the needs of Blacks and whites, but even less so for Blacks. Case and McRoy (1983) make the same case. Black women, especially, have been hard hit by the restructuring of the social welfare state through the dismantling of AFDC. The progressive side of the social welfare struggle, which forced the state to respond to the needy is all but done for. In the context of conservative state restructuring social support is defined out of existence. The code names such as the “new federalism,” and the “minimalist state.”

Reaganomics, Gingrich’s “Contract,” and William Clinton’s “welfare reforms” are among a set of political decisions are just the public face of deep state restructuring in the late capitalist U.S. This restructuring is counterposed to the structural adjustment requirements imposed on the global South. It is no coincidence that these are the neoliberal decisions which place hundreds of millions of people in dire poverty. The squeeze for African Americans, given the current situation, is exactly at the most vulnerable sites: wages, work, housing, and family formation (Cree and Howard 1986; Burnham 2002). As the public sector shrinks even the Black middle class is hard hit. This class is disproportionately employed in those government jobs most likely to be eliminated. More broadly, the economic crisis hits African Americans squarely because of the traditional deal cutting, fracturing of the working class along color and gender lines, and the whole history of labor strife and turmoil. Nonetheless, the situation is the tip of the iceberg with workers across racial categories being affected (Mies 1986; Simms and Malveaux 1986; Luxane 1997). Nonetheless, as Tabb aptly notes, “neoliberalism is widely understood, even by many mainstream economist and policy works, to have failed terms of its announced goals.” (Tabb 2003: 25). He goes on to argue.

It has not brought more rapid economic growth, reduced poverty, or made economies more stable. In fact, over the years of neoliberal hegemony, growth has slowed, poverty has increased, and economic and financial crises have been epidemic. The data on all of this are overwhelming. Neoliberalism has, however, succeeded in the class project of capital. In this, its unannounced goal, it has increased the dominance of transnational Corporations, international financiers, and sectors of local elites (2003: 25).

Stated in such unflinching terms, it is clear that without a progressive agenda that is linked to fundamental social transformation, the situation can only deteriorate. Given the transformation of the political economy in this technologically advanced capitalist economy, many older strategies are inade-
quite to deal with the current realities. New struggles must be firmly embedded in a praxis expressing the interaction of culture, history, economy, race, class and gender. This complex interplay is not easily sorted out but is essential to public policies. We need movements for social change rooted in these complicated dynamics. The complexity of race, gender and class interactions suggest that our scholarship and activism must accomplish a number of theoretical and applied tasks that we are just beginning to be envisioned and acted upon.