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### **"Playing the Fool:" A Critical Analysis of U.S. Welfare Policy**

#### Abstract

In this article, we draw on critical race theory and critical race feminism to deconstruct contemporary US welfare policy. The political framing of work requirements, single motherhood, and 'citizenship' under the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 are used to illustrate the racism, sexism, and classism that pervade current regulations. Drawing on Hurtado's (1996) conceptualization of the 'Pendejo Game', we argue that political elites feign ignorance of poverty and structural inequities to legitimate policies that maintain economic disparities. We conclude with suggestions for disrupting the Pendejo Game and promoting economic justice.

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