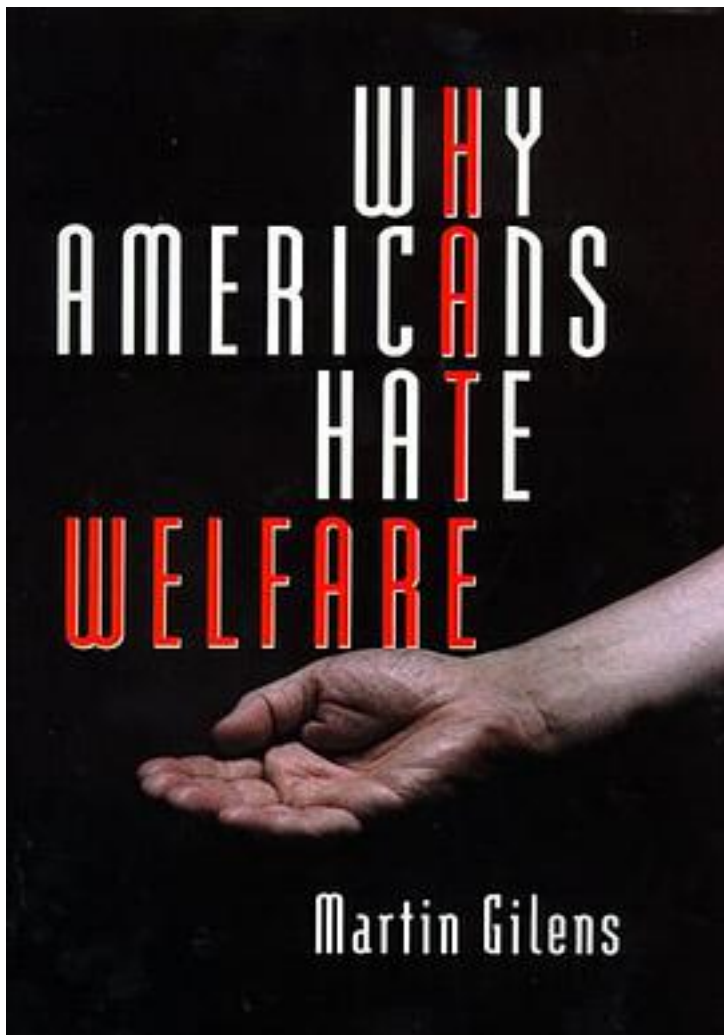


Why Americans Hate Welfare



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Drawing on surveys of public attitudes and analyses of more than 40 years of television

and newsmagazine stories on poverty, this book demonstrates how public opposition to welfare is fed by a potent combination of racial stereotypes and misinformation about the true nature of America's poor. But the answer isn't simply that white Americans oppose welfare because they think it benefits blacks; rather, they think it benefits "undeserving" blacks who would rather live off the government than work, a perception powerfully fuelled by the media's negative coverage of the black poor. Martin Gilens not only examines public opinion and public policy; he also explores the historical context that shaped these attitudes and the role the news media have played in "racializing" poverty and poverty programmes. The public's views on welfare, Gilens shows, are a complex mixture of cynicism and compassion; misinformed and racially charged, they nevertheless reflect both a distrust of welfare recipients and a desire to do more to help the deserving poor.

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