The Welfare Queen has long been a symbol of welfare abuse in US political discourse. This article aims to view this socially constructed image through intersectionality among class, race and gender. Many Americans view welfare recipients as black single mothers who are careless, immoral and idle, believing that Welfare Queens purposely mishandle taxpayer dollars.

Gendered racism, which incorporates both gender and race, constructs and strengthens personal philosophies about welfare users. Although the image of Welfare Queen is a political and social construct, gendered racism promotes stereotyping of welfare recipients as indolent and immoral, and therefore unworthy of assistance.

While Americans are generally supportive of their tax dollars helping poor people, this does not apply to welfare specifically. US policies regarding welfare reform perpetuate gendered racism by requiring conditionality and ushering in the Working Mother as a replacement for the Welfare Queen. The images of do-nothing Welfare Queens only serve to reinforce the opposition to welfare spending.

Poverty in America, a national survey, concluded that 57% of Americans feel that welfare support causes recipients to have more babies, causing them to have less favorable views on welfare spending. The survey also found that white and Republican respondents were less likely to support welfare.

Another national survey, National Race & Politics Survey, found that 61% of respondents believed welfare recipients to have more children to increase their support and 54% believe that welfare recipients don’t try very hard to find work. Responses indicated that they were also less likely to support welfare spending for black recipients, showing that gender alone is not enough to explain the aversion towards welfare spending.