

Erick Fabris - Equity at the Asylum: Using critical Indigenous knowledge to analyze public discourses related to psychiatric racialization and genderization.

Race and gender are overrepresented in psychiatric arrangements like medium secure units at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health. Cinderella Alallouf, a Jamaican Canadian psychiatric inmate on such a ward, died shortly after giving birth under observation in 1997. Her baby was conceived on the all-male ward. Allalouf's inquest opens questions regarding sexualization of female inmates, and the 'race-blind' analysis of her 'care, control, and custody'. White male psychiatrists, especially those hiding sexual liaisons with patients, are relied upon to provide psychological and social data on the victim. Yet psychiatric clinics have been multiculturalizing since the 1990s, at least at the local major institution where Allalouf stayed (CAMH). Not yet informed by Black psychiatric survivor testimony (Jackson, 2002), emerging antiracist critiques and applications of Western institutional psychiatric ideas (e.g., Jonathan Metzl; and Joy DeGruy Leary respectively) leave some questions unanswered for me. As the pharmaceutical block sells itself abroad (Watters, 2010), what do we do about the trauma of institutionalization that pits 'normal' versus 'crazy' in Black communities as well as White? A Mad analysis provides not only a recovery of the incapacitated body but in naturalistic historical terms, a polity of difference or 'identity' that involves disorderly brains in our social environments. Psychiatric survivors since Chamberlin (1978) have called for small social environments for recovery (Deegan, 1988) in which ordinary (culturally relevant) interactions are allowed to help a person recover. Folk or social methods that could rely on non-Western conceptions, like an Indigenous knowledge about alterity, is being occluded by multicultural applications of psychiatric behaviouralism.

References:

DeGruy Leary, Joy (2006). Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome: America's Legacy of Enduring Injury and Healing.

Metzl, Jonathan (2009). The Protest Psychosis: How Schizophrenia Became a Black Disease.

Watters, Ethan (2010). Crazy Like Us: The Globalization of the American Psyche