

Jijian Voronka - Rooting Out the Weeds: Resisting white settler & psychiatric supremacy through a critique of The Review of the Roots of Youth Violence.

This talk was based on a textual analysis of The Review of the Roots of Youth Violence, a provincial report that was released in November of 2008, which put forward recommendations on how to solve the 'problem' of youth violence in Ontario. I started my analysis by looking at how the province of Ontario is framed as a benevolent white settler space, and showed how, through the establishment of white settler space as imperiled by raced violence, The Review legitimizes its right to intervene. I then examined how and what racialized subjects are considered in the document, and argued that the approach The Review takes disappears the history of white settler colonial violence. I then focused on one main recommendation that The Review moves forward to cure the problem of raced violence: increasing mental health services for children and youth in targeted sites of exception. I ended with a critique of The Review's proposal to solve over-criminalization in racialized 'inner city slums' by substituting such governance with mental health services. I understand this shift as a move away from overt policing through the criminal justice system, to a more subtle system of self-governance that asks racialized communities to individually pathologize the problem of collective violence through psychiatric interventions. This move – from overcriminalization to overpathologization – must be understood as simply a systems transference from criminal to psychiatric intervention, and works to proliferate, solidify and justify increased psychiatric interventions on racialized youth. Critical to this is the ethnocentric ways in which The Review emphasizes the need to 'educate' racialized families towards Western biomedical understandings of madness. The aim of this talk was to show how critique and discourse analysis of policy documents is an imperative starting point for resistance against the spread of psychiatric interventions on racialized youth.