The Center for Research on Race and Ethnicity in Society presents a
CRRES Speaker Series Lecture

More Than “Radicals” or “Junkies:” Black and Latino Drug Addicts and the Pursuit of Psycho-Political Liberation

This presentation brings together the history of black, Puerto Rican and Chicano radicalism with that of drug addiction studies to highlight the intellectual contributions of drug addicts and mental health professionals of color in the 1940s-80s. In the past, black and Latino leaders have been portrayed chiefly as opponents of methadone maintenance programs. Even though methadone maintenance was recognized as an effective treatment for heroin addicts by scientists, black and Latino leaders adopted a conspiracy theory in which methadone was imagined as a government effort to control people of color through “chemical slavery.” Black and Latino leaders’ vision of liberation, however, was not so anti-psychiatric. As individuals deeply committed to the political empowerment of people of color, as well as the individual transformation of people suffering from psychological suffering, they proposed a liberatory politics that could work alongside a liberatory psychiatry to restore the life of the drug addict and his community. They combined race-specific group therapy, chemical treatment, and political organizing to develop a psychosocial rehabilitation ideal for drug addicts of color.

Dr. Sonia Song-Ha Lee,
Associate Professor of American Studies and Latino Studies, Indiana University Bloomington

Thursday, February 22, 4PM, Maple Room, IMU


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