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Entertaining Camp Baraka: Oscillating Between Authoritarian Liberalism and “Niggerization”

In this paper, I will address the Baraka School and issues pertaining to confinement and the suspension of law as part of a technique of disciplinary power. The Baraka School (1996-2003) was an experimental boarding school for maladjusted African American males from Baltimore, Maryland that was located in the Republic of Kenya’s Laikipia district. By placing the school in the backyard of Mt. Kenya, the school’s framers were able to utilize the façade of an Edenic legitimacy coupled with a pantopticism which insured the legal advantages of a grey hole meant to detain urban outcasts. It is my contention that this experiment was misframed to establish a racial nomos that would ensure a juridical void in terms of the student’s “right to have rights.” What is conveniently absent from most accounts about the school is its ordered insecurity. The extent to which the banning of these students is a direct result of a racist biopower, guaranteed the students “inclusive exclusion” and their susceptibility to the state of emergency that ultimately closed the school. I will conclude this paper by considering why it is crucial for Cultural Studies theorists to make affective voices and empathy a part of our moral economy so that we are not duped by the crypto-fascist appeals of the Baraka School and the neoprimitive pleasantries of the culture industry obsessed with zoography and low intensity radical reservation reversal.