

# REPERTOIRES OF RACISM:

## *Reactions to Jamaicans in the Okanagan Valley\**

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To notice is to recognize an already discredited difference. To enforce its invisibility through silence is to allow the black body a shadow-less participation in the dominant cultural body.

– Toni Morrison

**I**N 2007-08, 114 BLACK JAMAICAN STUDENTS and twenty-six temporary migrant workers, also black and from Jamaica, arrived in the Okanagan via a recruitment initiative organized by Okanagan College, the Central Okanagan Economic Development Commission (EDC), and the Jamaican Ministry of Labour and Social Security (Steve MacNaull, “Caribbean Connection Could Ease Labour Crunch,” *Okanagan Saturday*, 2 June 2007). The purpose of this “Caribbean initiative” was to train students in the culinary arts, body shop work, and business programs available at Okanagan College while also adding international student fees to the college’s operating budget. For Okanagan employers (the EDC is their representative), the temporary workers would come to take up jobs left vacant in a red hot regional economy<sup>1</sup> with limited labour market options (Wendy Leung, “Labour Shortage? Bring in the Jamaicans,” *Globe and Mail*, 8 September 2008).<sup>2</sup> The media coverage of the arrival of Jamaicans was twofold. On the one

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<sup>1</sup> “TRESPASSERS WILL BE HIRED!” Billboard outside fiberglass company in Winfield, British Columbia. Kelowna is a ten-minute drive south of Winfield. See Steve MacNaull, “Economy Hits the Brakes,” *Okanagan Saturday*, 6 September 2008.

<sup>2</sup> Employers recruiting foreign migrant workers must first demonstrate to Canadian government authorities that there is no local labour pool to take up the vacant jobs. There is dispute and debate regarding the veracity by which this demonstration of need is pursued. For a discussion of this in the Okanagan agricultural sector, see Aguiar, Tomic, and Trumper (forthcoming).

hand, Jamaicans were viewed as just-in-time labourers stepping in to meet the immediate labour needs of local businesses faced with a shortage of skilled labour; on the other hand, local media depicted the Okanagan Valley as a place from which the migrants could send remittances to an economically depressed Jamaica reliant on overseas nationals for currency exchanges and employment. And so the relationship was described as a “win win” for both parties (Adrian Nieoczym, “Jamaica Eager to Fill Need,” *Kelowna Capital News*, 5 August 2007).

And yet the media coverage reveals something else: a systematic “othering” and stereotyping of the other (especially the Jamaican male) by white institutions in a white place (Koroscil 2008). While newspaper articles functioned as public relations outlets for the various stakeholders involved in bringing Jamaicans to the Okanagan (e.g., the EDC, Okanagan College), they also implied that the Jamaican is a marked and suspect body “threatening” or “menacing” the local white population (Aguiar, Tomic, and Trumper 2005b). Most of this coverage is presented as unbiased – as merely commenting on the “obvious” concerns that Kelowna residents have regarding ethnic others, underscoring that the local media assume that their readership is white. By representing the arrival of black Jamaicans in racialized terms and as a potential “problem,” these newspaper articles serve to reassure citizens of Kelowna that the “menace” has been recognized and that steps are being taken to ensure that the threat never materializes.

This asymmetrical discourse, casting the (ethnic) other as law breakers (sexualized pot smokers) ranged against the rule makers and law abiders, was established early. The Jamaicans were hyper-visible: the media reported their arrival and printed editorials and letters to the editor discussing the best ways of dealing with the newcomers and seeking to allay the fears of the local community. Media first expressed alarm at the “flow” (Steve Nieoczym, “Okanagan Employers Turning Their Attention to Jamaica,” *Kelowna Capital News*, 3 June 2007) of black persons into an ostensibly white community, then – in an attempt to allay the very fears they had fanned – reported that Jamaican workers were monitored through criminal record screening, bank statements, and educational transcripts. And their temporary status was emphasized. Their return to Jamaica was assured as they were either on two-year work contracts or in diploma programs of similar duration at Okanagan College. Finally, a forum was organized to evaluate Kelowna’s readiness to deal with its

changing population (Steyn 2008),<sup>3</sup> and a program called “OK to Say” ([www.oktosay.ca](http://www.oktosay.ca)) provided a crisis line, support, and referrals for victims of racism in the Okanagan Valley.

Much of this reaction was attributable to a repertoire of racist epithets about blackness that transcends place (Amin 2010). The “community,” created in part by local newspapers, appeared threatened by the racialized other. This occurred against a backdrop of earlier campaigns (sometimes violent) to exclude visible minorities and to control those already in the Okanagan Valley (Aguiar, Berg, and Keyes forthcoming; Roy 1990; Stone 2001; Ward 1990). These campaigns of exclusion were organized on racial rather than on class or economic lines. Thus, we argue that the City of Kelowna is racialized as a white space (Aguiar, Tomic, and Trumper 2005b; Koroscil 2008; Peake and Ray 2001; Razack 2002) in which non-whites are not welcome (Drury forthcoming). Representations of Kelowna in real estate, hospitality, and tourism advertisements are uniformly white, and the activities pursued in the Okanagan are those of the predominantly white middle class – wine, golfing, skiing, and boating (Aguiar and Marten 2010). For those who recognize themselves in these advertisements, “Kelowna” implies a natural, neutral identity. To others, the advertisements reflect yet again what, in the 1970s, Adrienne Rich (1979) called “white solipsism,” a racist practice that implicitly takes a white perspective as universal.

Although black people have settled in British Columbia since the mid-nineteenth century (Kilian 2008), their numbers have always been small (black people make up only 0.6 percent of the population of the province).<sup>4</sup> When the Jamaican students and labourers arrived in Kelowna, they were identified in advance of their arrival as *black*. As Frantz Fanon (1967, 173) argues, “Wherever he goes, the Negro remains a Negro.” It would seem that “blackness” is always, in advance of arrival and after, foreign to British Columbia (Hudson 2007, 115). White solipsism cannot be rectified by colour blindness, by the refusal to perceive people by their racial identities. And this is a position enabled by more than entitlement and authority: we read “whiteness” (the unmarked identity that makes blackness signify) in local news coverage as an instance of “the neoliberalism of colour-blindness,” wherein differences – individual class histories; racial, ethnic, and religious identities; and genders – are

<sup>3</sup> Only 5 percent of the total population of the Central Okanagan is visible minority (Central Okanagan Economic Development Commission 2009, Table 2.73, p. 15) This figure has remained this low for years and we don’t see any evidence of it changing in the near future. So, we question the racial heterogeneity optimism of the Steyn Report.

<sup>4</sup> 2001 Census as cited in Hudson 2007, 173.

elided by the universalizing language of markets, consumption, individualism, and entrepreneurialism (Roberts and Mahtani 2010). Of course, racism preceded neoliberal markets and the globalization of labour and education (Frederickson 2002). However, through the white solipsism of neoliberalism, the logic of markets and individual autonomy further entrenches racism (Goldberg 2008).

#### NEOLIBERALIZATION OF THE HINTERLAND

According to the geographer David Harvey (1989), the space-time compression of globalization brings people together spatially but distances them socially as the proximity of the “other” creates social barriers and resentments in a new discourse of “us” versus “them.” For the contemporary social-cultural anthropologist Arjun Appadurai (2006), globalization, the global economy, and rapid population movements lead to conditions of social uncertainty that are often dealt with in campaigns of “ethnic cleansing” and “dismembering of the suspect body” through programs of “cultural purification” and violence. The latter occurs in different ways and forms and with varying intensity. Symbolic violence can be disrupting to homogeneous places. In Kelowna, alarmist newspaper reports of Jamaicans coming to the area constituted a form of symbolic violence. Representations of Kelowna and the Okanagan Valley as “white” serve as a kind of cultural purification by evacuating the racialized presence of the other from the landscape.

New immigrants to Canada continue to serve as a “buffer” for those most advantaged in society and even for those who may be economically disenfranchised but who solidly identify with corporate power simply because it is white (Li 2003; Winks 1997). The global restructuring of markets has spelled hardship for workers worldwide (Moody 1997). Yet, it is not uncommon to blame the “other” for taking local jobs, even when they are simply seeking opportunities in the globalized workplace (Bell 1997, 596). Although Okanagan media claim that “no Canadians will miss out on work if a Jamaican is hired” (Steve MacNaull, “Caribbean Connection Could Ease Labour Crunch,” *Okanagan Saturday*, 2 June 2007), migrant temporary labour is rendered relatively subservient by the knowledge that any activity, such as agitation for a living wage, might mean that their work contract is not renewed and/or that they are sent back whence they came (Preibisch 2007).

Labour power, of course, comes in corporeal form and with a repertoire of expectations, assumptions, and attributes. In other words, employers

seek labour power, but it is people who show up (Castles 2006). And some people are more noticed than others (Said 2003; Rattansi 2007); and some are thought to be “more capable” of doing the work due to their “make-up” and personalities (Iacovetta 1992; Waldinger and Lichter 2003). This has implications for how labour power is viewed, understood, and treated. Kelowna and the Okanagan Valley are spaces of fun, sun, safety, and security (Aguiar, Tomic, and Trumper 2005b). Developing the current economy of play and retirement entailed restructuring the valley into a quality-of-life location. This eliminated many jobs (e.g., a dramatic reduction of the white male working class) and created other jobs in the new economy of the hinterland (Aguiar and Marten 2010). Some of these jobs were left vacant due to a shortage of appropriately trained labour. Others paid too little to attract serious employment candidates (Central Okanagan Foundation 2009; Okanagan Partnership 2008). In response, temporary foreign labour power was imported, especially from Mexico and the Caribbean (Tomic, Trumper, and Aguiar 2010; Adrian Nieoczym, “Labour Airlift,” *Kelowna Capital News*, 4 November 2007).

Geographers Roberts and Mahtani argue as follows: “Racist eruptions that result from neoliberal policies and practices are cited, but race is imagined as a fixed category, where individual racialized groups are seen as distinct and mapped onto policy outcomes ... [N]eoliberalization is understood as a socioeconomic process that has racial implications, but little is said about the ways that neoliberalism modifies the way race is experienced or understood in society.” They propose a shift from the study of race and neoliberalism (which investigates the impacts of neoliberalism in racial terms) to a perspective that would “race neoliberalism” (i.e., that would understand race as already embedded and foundational to the project of neoliberalism). To race neoliberalism is “to understand neoliberalism as a facet of a racist society that works to both reinforce the racial structure of society, while also modifying the processes of racialization” (Roberts and Mahtani 2010, 248-50).

If racism is further entrenched as a result of the white solipsism of neoliberalism, then developments in the Okanagan have reinforced “the racialization of immigrants” (Roberts and Mahtani 2010, 252). “Guest worker” programs (Trumper and Wong 2007) seek to import labour, but the people who arrive are defined according to cultural repertoires culled from a collective memory of racisms used to categorize migrants/guest workers even before they arrive in a community. Portuguese labour is described as dependable, hardworking, and unskilled (Teixeira and

Da Rosa 2009). The Portuguese are probationary whites (Flusty 2005). Jamaicans are described as criminal, undependable, threatening, and insubordinate in the workplace (D'Arcy 2007; Henry 1994). These terms are racialized and appended to the black Jamaican body not in biological but in cultural terms (Balibar 1991). Culture has not only replaced biology as the new and most common form of racist expression, it has itself been biologized. It has been assigned permanence: according to bell hooks (1992), it is an essence that transcends place, context, and history to remain ingrained in the popular psyche to mark and define blackness. In the Okanagan media, cultural racism is expressed aggressively (rather than alluded to politely) but in ways that do not render racist sentiments and points of view ambiguous, or confusing. The message of racism is clear and upfront. Under neoliberalism the race-less subject is described as dependent, reliable, enterprising, flexible, and outside of race. Black subjects are the antithesis of the white neoliberal self (Roberts and Mahtani 2010). Thus, even though the area faces a labour shortage, Jamaicans are allowed in the Okanagan only temporarily and under strict surveillance.<sup>5</sup>

#### THE SUSPECT BLACK BODY IN THE WHITE IMAGINATION

Although some have argued that white people interpret blackness as a form of transgression (Brand 2001, 67-68; hooks 1992, 118), George E. Clarke (1997, 208-9) writes that, "despite its marginal presence in the country, blackness has always played an overlooked role in the development of Canadian identity." That is to say, there is an absence/presence of blackness in the history of Canada (Peake and Ray 2001; Baldwin 2009). This is so in the Okanagan Valley since whites come to escape metropolitan living (noise, commutes, traffic congestion, etc.) and diversity (Aguiar, Tomic, and Trumper 2005a; Drury forthcoming), the idea being to stop time or to turn back the clock to an era of tranquility, homogeneity, and traditional values (Aguiar and Marten forthcoming; Stone 2001). In other words, whites come to the valley to escape "diversity," which is often constructed as a stand-in word for racialized blacks and the social problems of multicultural cities (Henry 1994).

If the body is a "place of captivity," then the black body is "situated as a sign of particular cultural and political meanings" (Brand 2001, 35).

<sup>5</sup> In another paper, Aguiar and Marten (forthcoming) show how, in the local labour shortage scheme, Okanagan "leaders" are recruiting skilled white, northern European workers by enticing them with permanent residency status, while black labourers from the Caribbean and Mexico are hired on short-term contracts.

Dionne Brand argues that (with the exception of the female body) the black body is “one of the most regulated bodies in the Diaspora” (37): The Black body is a “space not simply owned by those who embody it but constructed and occupied by other embodiments. Inhabiting it is a domestic, hemispheric pastime, a transatlantic pastime, an international pastime. There is a playing around in it. There is a marvel at its strength or grace or speed or agility. As well, there is a constant manipulation of its transgressive trope.” (38)

The space of the body is also regulated and regulating, marked and marking, accessible and inaccessible (Peake and Ray 2001; Razak 2002). Clarke (1997, 107) writes that the history of “settlement” in Canada reveals that, in order to “bring the nation into existence, the white settlers [made] common cause with often white landscape. The primeval frontier and the white body [became] one.” It is not surprising that, as a result, “Canada’s coloreds [sic] are an almost invisible presence in the country at large. Because most of them live in the largest cities – Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver – one can travel huge tracts of the largest country in the world and never lay eyes on another person of color” (98). The population of the Central Okanagan is 160,565, but only 8,325 (or 5 percent) are visible minority members. This percentage is significantly below the provincial average of 25 percent for visible minorities (Central Okanagan Economic Development Commission 2009).

Because the long history of racializing black bodies puts the black body under suspicion, the racialization of Jamaicans in the Okanagan media began before their arrival in the Okanagan. Many established residents “knew” the “characteristics” of Jamaicans in advance of their appearance in the valley. These pre-judgments were not based on experiences in the local setting or on personal interaction with Jamaicans; rather, they rested upon perceptions of the infamous bedrock of Jamaican presence in Canada – media representations of the Jane and Finch corridor in Toronto (CBC 1998; D’Arcy 2007). One Okanagan resident complained about the coming of Jamaicans, claiming, on the basis of a second-hand “source,” that drugs and criminal activity would soon follow them into the region.<sup>6</sup> In response, the Jamaican liaison office imposed a curfew on Jamaican men, keeping them indoors after 11:00 PM. It was not clear, however, how this was to be policed. In addition, the curfew suggested that black men were somehow more unpredictable, more likely to be a

<sup>6</sup> Besides the racism inherent in this point of view, it is also hypocritical as the growing and selling of marijuana (as well as other drugs) is big business in the Okanagan (see the documentary *The Union*).

menace to white women and white society, especially after dark, than were white men. Consequently, a report described the curfew thus: “No sex, no pot for [Jamaican] workers” (*Kelowna Capital News*, 23 September 2007).

The notion of “black threat” is implicit in this reporting, as is the notion of “white innocence.” Black masculinity has long been associated with the defilement of white women, making white innocence an important rhetorical device (Markovitz 2004). In local Kelowna newspapers, this unspoken sentiment marked the rhetorical terrain of much of the discussion surrounding the arrival of Jamaicans. Not only does the rhetoric of white innocence draw its power from these historical, if sublimated, binaries, but it also has the obvious advantage of dissipating any responsibility for constructing the discourse of menace itself (Ross 1997). The local population interpreted these inflammatory accounts not as reminders of the kind of vigilance needed to protect black men from the white spaces of racism but, rather, as an affront to the community and the humanity of black men. In so doing, they missed the point – racism in Kelowna. Even though the curfew may have unintentionally “confirmed” black stereotypes, Jamaican officials in Kelowna were willing to risk this to protect their own. None of this was incorporated into the public discussion. The curfew was described as a necessary response to racism and as an attempt to safeguard black Jamaicans from even worse racism (interview with official from Jamaican Liaison Office, 15 October 2009). The discussion in the local media concentrated on the assault on individual rights and on how the curfew was un-Canadian as it prohibited Jamaicans from enjoying Canadian freedoms. In other words, the discussion dealt with “freedom” rather than with the fact that Jamaicans (and visible minorities generally) are “unfree” in the valley due to acts of racism and an exclusionary whiteness (Aguiar, Tomic, and Trumper 2005a,b). At the same time, the concern shifted to the potential embarrassment this would cause Kelowna in the Canadian and Jamaican media.

Studying media reports, editorials, letters to editors, blogs, and similar materials provides insight into the “thought du jour” of a community (James forthcoming). Jamaican students arriving in Kelowna were confronted with newspaper articles reminding them that they were “black” (freighted with the usual abstract negative connotations). This coverage coincided with their arrival.

These articles generated many letters to the editor. Some of these, which were unflinchingly racist in their assumptions regarding black

crime, prompted a second round of letters, whose writers insisted that the citizens of Kelowna were not racist. They claimed that Kelowna's (white) people were vigilant rather than racist, watching for all potential problems in their city. Some letters declared that local coverage was doing everyone a favour by bringing this "problem" to the fore, that well-meaning people were merely having a "conversation" about race. Some argued that the only alternative to this conversation was silence (*Kelowna Daily Courier*, 19 October 2007). Both silence and uncritical conversations about race are examples of what educator Joyce E. King (1997, 128) calls "dysconscious racism" – a form of racism that tacitly accepts dominant white norms and privileges. This is not false consciousness so much as "impaired" consciousness. Uncritical ways of thinking about race and racial inequality underwrite the assumptions, myths, and beliefs that construct whiteness and white privilege. Indeed, the cycle of *Kelowna Daily Courier* letters is typical of white, liberal discussions on race: the letter writers are afforded the space and the privilege to make a public declaration that they assume will be shared (i.e., the readers are "like us"). Inevitably, those who counter the original comments declare that "we" are innocent of racism and are merely attempting to air "our" thoughts. Calling into question or challenging the self-identity of white populations is not only denied ("we are not racist"), it shows that revealing whiteness is a direct threat to white identity.

#### JAMAICANS AS DOMESTICATED, SAFE BODIES

Among other discourses marshalled to assure locals that there was nothing to worry about were claims that newcomers to the valley were not the lazy loafers and idling Jamaicans so commonly described in the popular media (D'Arcy 2007; Henry 1994). These were different, respectable Jamaicans (Adrian Nieoczym, "Relationship with Jamaica Benefits All," *Vernon Morning Star*, 28 September 2007; Adrian Nieoczym, "Caribbean Workers 'the Solution to Our Employment Needs,'" *Kelowna Capital News*, 3 August 2007; Kathy Michaels, "Hiring Foreign Workers May Be Answer to Labour Shortage," *Kelowna Capital News*, 19 September 2007). This argument was given credence by Robert Fine of the EDC, one of the key persons in the delegation to Jamaica to recruit temporary workers and students. Fine sought to indicate that disciplined and committed workers, not stereotyped troublemakers, were coming to Kelowna: "It's funny, people have the perception that things are laid-back and slow in Jamaica. I've never seen an initiative

with a foreign country that has become a reality so quickly” (J.P. Squire, “Valley Forges Economic Links with Jamaica,” *Kelowna Daily Courier*, 29 June 2007).

Another member of the delegation, Michael Patterson (an Okanagan College professor born in Jamaica and a key person in the initiative), emphasized that the valley would not be “saturated” with Jamaicans but, rather, would merely receive a “sprinkling” of them (Adrian Nieoczym, “Okanagan Employers Turning Their Attention to Jamaica,” *Kelowna Capital News*, 3 June 2007). This “sprinkling,” observed someone sympathetic to the Jamaicans, would “add colour” to Kelowna’s racial homogeneity (“Jamaicans Will Add Colour to Kelowna,” letter to the editor, *Kelowna Daily Courier*, 19 September 2007).

These were respectable Jamaicans, “a group of people who [were] above average on their island,” averred another of their supporters (“Don’t Judge Jamaicans before You’ve Met Them,” letter to the editor, *Kelowna Daily Courier*, 20 September 2007). They were “skilled workers” with the right training and, most important, the right attitude for the labour needs of valley industries. These reports worked to dispel (or was it to reinforce?) racial stereotypes by emphasizing that those coming to Kelowna would fit almost seamlessly into the middle-class valley ethos.

After arrival, Jamaicans were described as happy, hard-working, and appreciative of life in the Okanagan Valley. “Idling” Jamaicans were never described; rather, there were accounts of how much they “like[d] the work here” (Andrea Flexhaug, “Jamaicans in Valley to Work Construction Trades,” *Penticton Herald*, 9 November 2007). Accompanying pictures, such as one of Jamaicans leaning on a window-cleaning company truck, posing and smiling, did much to reinforce the message of easy integration (Adrian Nieoczym, “Drive to Succeed Makes Positive Impression,” *Kelowna Capital News*, 18 April 2008). For all that, the head of the Fruit Growers’ Association of British Columbia wanted Jamaican workers screened for union views in order to guard against the possibility that they might support attempts to organize in the agriculture industry (and others) across the province. Michael Patterson first responded by saying that workers have the right to unionize if they want to. Then he backtracked, stressing that Jamaicans were: “encouraged, if they [were] approached by a union, to say they ha[d] adequate representation through the liaison office. ‘Your priority is not to get political and if you do, you will be removed, it’s as simple as that’” (Michael Patterson, paraphrased and quoted in

Adrian Nieoczym, "Jamaica Eager to Fill Need," *Kelowna Capital News*, 5 August 2007).

So, newspaper headlines shifted from black men menacing established norms in the Okanagan Valley (black women remained invisible) to stories about safe black men in the community. Black masculinity was constructed as dangerous, with the concomitant understanding that it had to be controlled, and was only later reconstructed as a "no-risk" presence to local residents (Steve MacNaull, "Okanagan-Jamaica Partnership Expands," *Kelowna Capital News*, 27 August 2008). Among the two dozen local newspaper articles on Jamaicans in the valley reviewed for this article, however, only one mentioned that Jamaicans could qualify for permanent residency under the Provincial Nominee Program were they to secure a job with an employer who would be willing to sponsor them. This, it seems, may have been a step beyond what the community could accept, and it contrasts sharply with the Kelowna Economic Development Commission's efforts to entice Europeans to move to the Okanagan with their families, with employer sponsorship deals in pocket, en route to permanent residency status (Aguiar and Marten forthcoming).

## CONCLUSION

Whiteness, and the values, beliefs, assumptions, and behaviours that accompany it, pervade representations of community life in the Okanagan Valley. These representations of whiteness create both visible and invisible walls for non-white newcomers who may be made to feel as "others" who are not only different but deficient. For black Jamaicans, especially males, the situation is even more limiting and damaging as persistent racial stereotypes render them as criminal, pot-smoking threats to safety.

The impending migration and arrival of Jamaicans in Kelowna elicited fear and resistance from many residents, some of whom expressed these views in letters to local newspapers. Racial stereotypes were recurrent in media coverage. When other letter-writers contested such reporting, editors typically proclaimed their colour blindness: we are racially neutral; we don't see colour; we treat everyone the same way. Ultimately, however, such a stance ensures that no one takes responsibility for the discrimination experienced by non-white newcomers, and it works to heighten their exclusion from community life (except, of course, as labourers). The Jamaicans were wanted for their money (foreign student

fees) and as resources, but only as temporary, dispensable resources – rather like any other raw materials used in the regional economy.

To appease those who exhibited fear and resistance, Kelowna's black Jamaicans were regulated far more heavily than was normal for people in democratic communities. Curfews were imposed to keep Jamaicans from creating social problems and social networks. The perceived threat posed by representations of Jamaicans as sexualized pot smokers was abated by promises to prohibit them from smoking pot – this in British Columbia, a province well known for its production of and trade in marijuana. The community was also assured that the Jamaican migration was temporary and that Jamaicans were not going to take jobs away from local residents. It is unclear how residents would have responded to the Jamaicans' arrival had the media more extensively covered the relatively new Canada Immigration policy, which enables workers to obtain landed immigrant status following the completion of one year of Canadian work experience.

The local media had a chance to confront racism and the privilege of being white in a white community through addressing the letter writers who contested their original coverage, but, instead, they adopted a complacent, Kelowna-need-not-worry, all-is-under-control attitude, thus merely reinforcing the notion of the black body as a menace. And forgotten in the local coverage were the reasons why the Jamaicans were in the Okanagan in the first place. Neoliberalism emphasizes economics at the expense of all other aspects of life, and, in the logic of the neoliberal labour market, black Jamaicans are merely a resource, a commodity. Other dimensions of the human – cultural, social, spiritual, and so on – are disregarded.

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