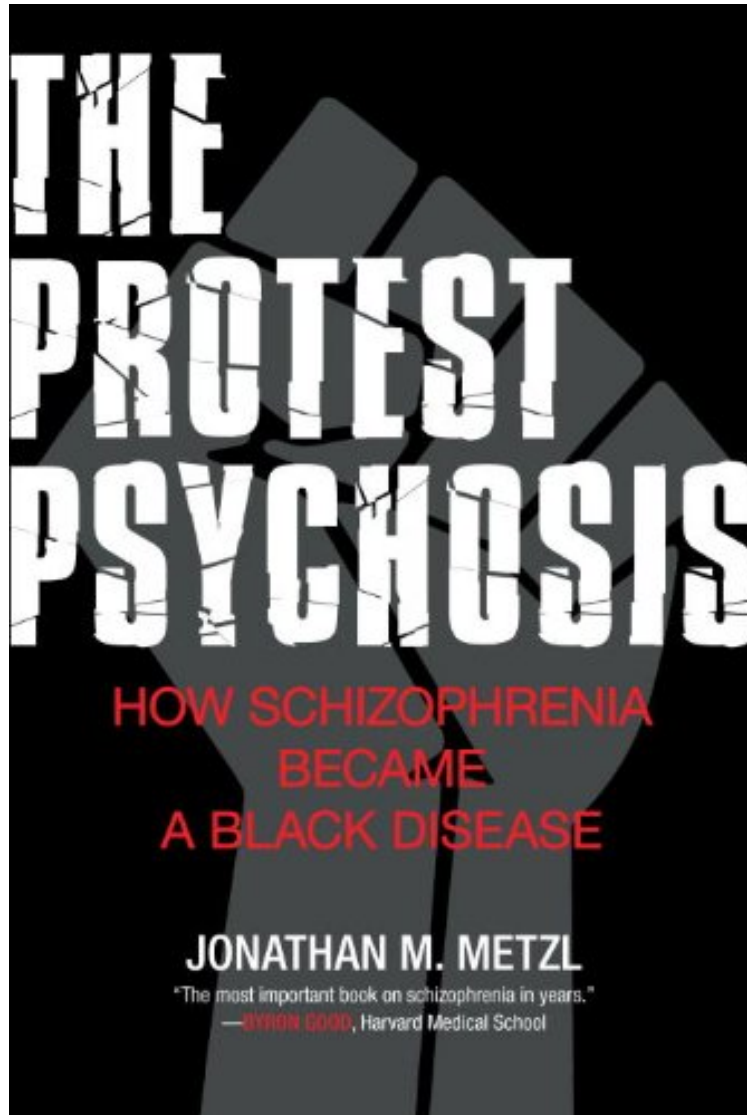


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The Protest Psychosis: How Schizophrenia Became a Black Disease

Jonathan Metzl

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Expertly documents how the pharmaceutical/ mental health-industrial complex criminalizes behavior. Good for those looking to see how mental health diagnoses serves to enforce a racist status quo and condemns people of color.

A powerful account of how cultural anxieties about race shaped American notions of mental illness. The civil rights era is largely remembered as a time of sit-ins, boycotts, and riots. But a very different civil rights history evolved at the Ionia State Hospital for the Criminally Insane in Ionia, Michigan. In *The Protest Psychosis*, psychiatrist and cultural critic Jonathan Metzl tells the shocking story of how schizophrenia became the diagnostic term overwhelmingly applied to African American protesters at Ionia—for political reasons as well as clinical ones. Expertly sifting through a vast array of cultural documents, Metzl shows how associations between schizophrenia and blackness emerged during the tumultuous decades of the 1960s and 1970s—and he provides a cautionary tale of how anxieties about race continue to impact doctor-patient interactions in our seemingly postracial America.

From Publishers Weekly
Metzl, a psychiatrist and Univ. of Michigan professor, uses the largely unknown story of Michigan's Ionia Mental Hospital to track the evolving definition of schizophrenia from the 1920s to the '70s, from an illness of "pastoral, feminine neurosis into one of urban, male psychosis" correlated with aggression. Metzl puts the imperfect science of diagnosis in historical context with admirable lucidity, moving into the present to examine how a tangle of medical errors and systemic racism that labels "threats to authority as mental illness" influences the diagnosis of black men with schizophrenia. He offers a laudably complex look at a complex and still poorly understood condition, expanding his discussion to include the impact of deinstitutionalization and the revision of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-II) in the 1960s. The result is a sophisticated analysis of the mechanisms of racism in the mental health system and, by extension, the criminal justice system. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.
From Booklist
In the 1960s, the psychiatric diagnosis of schizophrenia morphed from a malady suffered by sensitive white intellectuals to one of disaffected, angry black men. Psychiatric professor Metzl explores changes in the profession from the 1920s to today but focuses particularly on the 1960s, which saw violent protests against racial discrimination. Metzl details the social, political, and cultural influences behind debates within the profession about what constituted mental illness. Drawing on case studies from Michigan's now-defunct Asylum for Insane Criminals in Ionia, 130 miles from racially volatile Detroit, Metzl illustrates how schizophrenia became a racialized disease. He analyzes black cultural allusions to double consciousness, from W. E. B. DuBois to modern-day rappers who have adapted notions of schizophrenia in response to American racism or as a social diagnosis of white America itself. Metzl also examines shortcomings in American society and the psychiatric profession in particular, which resisted the notion that violent responses to racism might have been rational. An enlightening look at how those in power define aberrant behavior and evade self-analysis. --
Vanessa Bush "A terrific new book . . . exceptional and unexpected."—Melissa Harris-Lacewell, *The Nation* blog "A fascinating, penetrating book by one of medicine's most exceptional young scholars."—Delese Wear, *JAMA: The Journal of the American Medical Association* "A stunning and disturbing book . . . [A] compelling cultural history that exposes postwar psychiatry's racist character and its enduring legacy."—Robin D. G. Kelley, author of *Thelonious Monk: The Life and Times of an American Original* "Part reportage, part analysis, part theory . . . Metzl challenges readers to peel back the layered complexities of race and medicine."—Felicia Pride, *The Root* "[Metzl] make[s] a powerful case for the way schizophrenia was transformed into a racialized disease."—Christopher Lane, *Psychology Today* "Metzl addresses a long-standing diagnostic tension in psychiatry with insight, clarity, and informative historical detail."—*Health Affairs*