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**Citation:** McLaughlin, E. (2026). Book Review: Vivian Saleh-Hannah, Jason Williams, and Michael Coyle (eds). *Abolish Criminology*. Abingdon: Routledge, 2024. ISBN 9780367521332. £32.79 (pbk). 196 pp.. *Theoretical Criminology*, doi: 10.1177/13624806261450855

This is the accepted version of the paper.

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**Link to published version:** <https://doi.org/10.1177/13624806261450855>

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**Book Review: Vivian Saleh-Hannah, Jason Williams, and Michael Coyle (eds). *Abolish Criminology*.** Abingdon: Routledge, 2024. ISBN 9780367521332. £32.79 (pbk). 196 pp.

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This edited collection argues that the abolition of criminology must be an essential part of campaigns to eliminate a racist policing-carceral complex and advance mechanisms of emancipatory justice. The 13 chapters are written by academic activists, visual artists and those with lived experience of the criminal justice system. Focusing on the USA, the book is structured around three themes: *Criminology's Violent Ideologies Rippling Across Place and Time*; *Criminology's Systemic Violence Against Humanity*; and *Re-mapping Criminology's Reach and Growing Visions for Abolition*. It was conceived and developed in the context of the 2019 global pandemic and the wave of Black Lives Matter protests in response to the killing of George Floyd in May 2020. The intellectual line of reasoning running through the chapters is rooted in intersectional anti-racist scholarship and praxis and neo-abolitionism. This book is intended to open new life-affirming 'pathways of thought, vision, and understanding' (p. 39) for students and educators.

Together, the chapters are pitiless in their evisceration of criminology, including the 'stale and sterilizing writings' (p. 37) of critical/radical/feminist/queer criminologists. Across the chapters the discipline stands accused of the following entwined problems. Disseminating a sanitized Eurocentric history that glosses over the discipline's origins in racialized scientific thinking and its profound entanglement with slavery, imperialism, settler colonialism, and genocide (introduction; chapters 3 and 9), criminology has further failed to confront how these legacies remain ever-present, including perpetuating racialized conceptualizations of 'criminality' that are operationalized via criminalization practices and recurring 'wars on crime' (chapters 4, 8 and 12). In tandem, the discipline's promotion of positivist methods and correctionalist reforms fortify and legitimize a racist police-carceral complex, narrowing the horizon for substantive justice work (introduction; chapters 2, 3 and 12). This is compounded by a concerted silence on, or inattention to, human rights violations and structural injustices (introduction; chapter 7). This omission is linked to reluctance to antagonize the state interests that fund and shape criminology's research agendas (chapters 3 and 4). Finally, exclusionary practices rooted in disciplinary whiteness marginalize Black and minority ethnic scholars and those directly impacted by the criminal justice system (chapters 2, 5 and 8). At the same time, white criminologists continue to capitalize on critical race scholarship and anti-racist grassroots campaigns (chapters 2, 6 and 8).

This clarion call to abolish criminology insists that the discipline is woven into the policing-carceral complex and is therefore part of the problem when it comes to confronting systemic harms and building peaceful societies. Moreover, because abolitionism is a threatening alternative, criminology has repeatedly sought to neutralize it. In this light, it is impossible to

repair and repurpose criminology through diversification, de-racialization and de-colonization.

Taking a cue from this fundamental critique, Viviane Saleh-Hanna, in Chapter 1, argues that next generation abolitionism provides the foundations for the birthing of morally energized 'Wild Seed Justice'. Inspired by Octavia E. Butler, Salleh-Hannah's emancipatory imaginary seeks to create sustainable pathways to justice, freedom, healing and safety, 'instead of continuing to loop back into the repressive colonial thinking of crime, punishment, and rehabilitation' (p. 16). It emerges through 'unexpected moments of freedom and resistance, planted for centuries within collective and individual acts for freedom, against all odds' (p. 24). Following Thomas Mathiesen, Salleh-Hannah argues that this substantive justice work will, by definition, always remain 'unfinished'. There will always be more to do to overcome entrenched social-structural injustices and harms.

This is a combative addition to the anti-criminology literature. And it is, as it should be, an unnerving read. The contributors' signature contributions are to foreground the multi-faceted complicity between criminological thinking and practice and racism and the importance of lived theorizing. Once one begins to think through this perspective it is not difficult to find validating instances. European abolitionists are also reminded of their debt to the anti-slavery movements of the 19th century. The book will elicit a variety of responses. For this reader it is not without difficulties. The core criticisms of criminology tend to loop and repeat across the chapters. The intriguing notion of 'Wild Seed Justice' is introduced but actionable applications, strategies and tactics remain under-developed (see [Herzing and Piche, 2024](#), for a comparison). The irony is that we are currently witnessing a very different form of 'Wild Seed Justice' taking hold in the USA under the Trump administration. Insufficient attention is paid to foregrounding and interrogating the rise of police and criminal justice studies and crime science as free-standing disciplines.

A primary aim of the book is to expose the positivist 'white heart' of criminology. This means that there is little consideration of the inventive work taking place in criminology's borderlands. An opportunity has also been missed to connect with zemiologists who have abandoned criminology (see [Canning and Tombs, 2021](#); [Hillyard et al., 2004](#); [Presser, 2013](#)). Finally, we need to take heed of [Cohen's \(1988: 8\)](#) cautionary comment about periodic efforts to invent alternatives to criminology. He argues that the 'deep interpenetration' of criminology and state power 'makes this prospect even more unlikely than in any other branch of the social sciences'. Cohen was writing prior to criminology becoming one of the fastest-growing disciplines within the academy, underpinned by numerous sub-fields, professional bodies and publishing infrastructure and its place in a crime-saturated popular culture. This prismatic collection confirms that neo-abolitionism's ever-expanding challenge remains an essential reality check for understanding what criminology is becoming.

## References

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