



# Uncivil Youth: Race, Activism, and Affirmative Governmentality

*Soo Ah Kwon*

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# Uncivil Youth: Race, Activism, and Affirmative Governmentality

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## Uncivil Youth: Race, Activism, and Affirmative Governmentality Soo Ah Kwon

In *Uncivil Youth*, Soo Ah Kwon explores youth of color activism as linked to the making of democratic citizen-subjects. Focusing attention on the relations of power that inform the social and political practices of youth of color, Kwon examines how after-school and community-based programs are often mobilized to prevent potentially "at-risk" youth from turning to "juvenile delinquency" and crime. These sorts of strategic interventions seek to mold young people to become self-empowered and responsible citizens. Theorizing this mode of youth governance as "affirmative governmentality," Kwon investigates the political conditions that both enable youth of color to achieve meaningful change and limit their ability to do so given the entrenchment of nonprofits in the logic of a neoliberal state. She draws on several years of ethnographic research with an Oakland-based, panethnic youth organization that promotes grassroots activism among its second-generation Asian and Pacific Islander members (ages fourteen to eighteen). While analyzing the contradictions of the youth organizing movement, Kwon documents the genuine contributions to social change made by the young people with whom she worked in an era of increased youth criminalization and anti-immigrant legislation.

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