

Mapping an Epistemological Quagmire for Criminalized Black Girl Survivors in the US Ayanna D. Spencer

In this presentation, I claim that punitive attributors leverage a historical construction of Black girl survivors as “fast-tail swindlers” to override self-defense as “knowing criminal intent.” The controlling image of Black girl survivors as “fast-tail swindlers” is a hegemonic construction of Black girls as insatiable, hypersexual beings who con or use adults via sexual favors. I explain that a *settler colonial obfuscation of survivorhood* exists such that Black girl survivors navigate a *criminalizing metaphysical and socio-epistemic quagmire*. A *settler colonial obfuscation of survivorhood*, here, refers to a historical, replicating formation of settler colonialism that elusively constructs survivorhood so that it is difficult to accurately categorize actual survivors as subjects belonging to the category ‘Survivors.’ Further, a *criminalizing metaphysical and socio-epistemic quagmire* is a very, very bad punitive situation whereby people (here, Black girls in the US) are metaphysically categorized and socio-epistemically assessed outside of legible, hegemonic survivorhood when they experience violence. This quagmire involves both *constructed subjects*, categories of potential and actual knowers constructed by contingent geo-political formations and *socio-epistemic assessments*, third-person determinations of who some subject is as a potential knower of some p or broad p-relevant inquiry. This presentation importantly maps as a non-neutral epistemological problem whereby constructions of “knowing subjects” play a pivotal role in Black girl survivors’ experiences of criminalization in the U.S.