

# Ayanna De’Vante Spencer

## Curriculum Vitae

**Pronouns:** she/her/hers **Email:** ayanna.spencer@uconn.edu

**Address:** Beach Hall U-1181, 354 Mansfield Road, Office 412, Storrs, CT 06269-1054

### Areas of Specialization:

Epistemology

Feminist Theory (especially Black Feminisms and Women of Color Feminisms)

Social and Political Philosophy

### Areas of Concentration:

Bioethics

Girlhood Studies

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### Academic Positions:

**Assistant Professor** in the Department of Philosophy and Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Program, University of Connecticut 2021

### Education:

**Ph.D.** (with distinction), Philosophy, Advisor: Kristie Dotson, Michigan State University 2021

*Dissertation Title:* Epistemologies of Criminalization: Tracking Epistemic Oppression in the Lives of Black Girl Survivors

**B.A. *summa cum laude***, Philosophy with a minor in Political Science, Ethel Waddell Githii Honors Program, Spelman College 2015

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### Fellowships and Awards:

- Mellon Foundation Postdoctoral Fellow, The Leslie Center for the Humanities, Dartmouth College, 2021 (Declined)
- Ford Foundation PreDoctoral Fellow, National Research Council, 2016
- University Distinguished Fellow, Michigan State University, 2015
- Honorable Mention, Ford Foundation PreDoctoral Fellowship, National Research Council, 2015
- Phi Beta Kappa Member, Epsilon of Georgia at Spelman College, 2015
- UNCF Mellon Mays Fellowship, Spelman College, 2013
  - 2013 Most Outstanding Mellon Mays Fellow, Emory University, 2013
- Iris Marion Young Fellow, Philosophy in an Inclusive Key Summer Institute, Penn State University, 2014
- Research Intern, Leadership Alliance Summer Research Early Identification Program, Tufts University, 2014

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## Publications:

### *Essays*

- **Spencer, A. D.** (forthcoming). Epistemic Adultification: Clarifying the Pernicious Work of Black Girls as “Prematurely Knowing.” Hardison, A. (Ed.), *Women, Gender, and Families of Color*.
- **Spencer, A. D.** (2021). Surviving Jane Code: Black Feminist Epistemological Considerations for MeTooBots. Henning, T. M. & Aikin, S. (Eds.), Plenary Session: Black Feminism. *Southwest Philosophy Review*.  
<https://doi.org/10.5840/swphilreview20213713>
- Dotson, K. & **Spencer, A. D.** (2020). Another Letter Long Delayed: On Unsound Epistemological Practices and Reductive Inclusion. Takaoka, B. & Manne, K. (Eds.), Gendered Oppression and Its Intersections [Special Issue]. *Philosophical Topics*.  
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/26927950>
- **Spencer, A. D.** (2018). Say Her Name: Maladjusted Epistemic Salience in the Fight Against Anti-Black Police Brutality. In Pieranna Garavaso (Ed.), *Bloomsbury Companion to Analytic Feminism*. London: Bloomsbury. Print.

### *Book Reviews*

- **Spencer, A. D.** (2020). Reading Patriarchy through Liberation Feminism [Review of *Vexy Thing: On Gender and Liberation* by Imani Perry]. *Kennedy Institute of Ethics Journal*. Georgetown University.

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## Presentations:

### *Invited Presentations*

- “Exploring Black Feminist Epistemology: A Conversation with Kristie Dotson and Ayanna Spencer,” Department of Philosophy & Studies of Women, Gender, and Sexuality, Harvard University, Spring 2022
- “Mapping an Epistemological Quagmire for Criminalized Black Girls in the US,” Annual Workshop on Race, Gender, and Justice, Department of Philosophy & Leslie Center for the Humanities, Dartmouth College, Spring 2022
- “Beyond Believing Survivors: Epistemic Oppression and the Criminalization of Black Girl Survivors in the US” for Department of Philosophy & Humanities’ “Inclusive Knowledge: Theory and Activism,” Utah Valley University, Spring 2022
- “Philosophy and Activism Workshop,” Department of Philosophy and Humanities, Utah Valley University, Spring 2022
- “Contested Self-Defense and Criminalized Black Survivors: On Burdens-Based Epistemic Oppression” for Department of Philosophy’s Brown Bag Series, University of Connecticut, Fall 2021
- “Thought Leaders in the Academy Roundtable” for UNCF/Mellon Programs Virtual Conference, Fall 2021
- “Black Feminism Fireside Chat” Facilitator for UNCF/Mellon Mays Summer Institute, Summer 2021
- “Engaged Philosophy and the ‘metoo’ Movement” for Social Responsibility Network, Georgetown University, Spring 2021

- “Another Letter Long Delayed” Presentation for Feminist Philosophy, Tufts University, Spring 2021
- “Surviving the DA: Criminalized Black Girl Survivors and Epistemic Oppression” Presentation for *Difficult Dialogues* at Spelman College, Fall 2020
- “Another Letter Long Delayed” Presentation for Readings on Gender and Philosophy, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Fall 2020
- “Grad Life Panel” for Minorities and Philosophy (MAP), Tufts University, Fall 2020
- “Philosophy in an Inclusive Key Summer Institute’s Impact” for Honoring Eva Kittay Panel at 2015 The Association for Feminist Ethics and Social Theory
- “A Modern-Day Discussion on Social Justice” Panel with Georgia State Senator Vincent Ford and Attorney Bettianne C. Hart, Spelman College, Fall 2013
- “Hip Hop and Linguistic Violence: Rick Ross on College Campuses” Panel, Toni Cade Bambara Scholar-Writers-Activist Collective Conference, Spring 2013

### *Conference Presentations*

- “Knowing Survival: A Non-Accidental Epistemic Burden in the Sexual Abuse to Prison Pipeline,” Roundtable for Black Feminist and Womanist Theory, Pennsylvania State University, November 5-7, 2020
- “Tracking Carceral Epistemology through the Criminalization of Black Girl Survivors,” Sexual Violence as Structural Violence: Feminist Visions of Transformative Justice, University of California at Los Angeles’s Thinking Gender 30th Annual Graduate Student Research Conference, March 6, 2020
- “Adultification as Process-Based Invisibility: Black Girls in U.S. Education Literature and Policy, 2018 Annual National Women’s Studies Association Conference, November 8-11, 2018
- “‘I didn’t think anyone would believe me’: Black Women Survivors and Rape Skepticism”, AES Philosophy and Religion Panel, (rescheduled) 2017 Ford Foundation Conference of Fellows, May 4-5, 2018
- “Say Her Name: Affectability Imbalance and Epistemic Violence”, AES Philosophy and Religion Panel, 2016 Ford Foundation Conference of Fellows, September 22-24, 2016
- “Police Brutality, Affectability Imbalance, and Maladjusted Epistemic Salience”, Society for Analytical Feminism Conference, Analytic Feminism: Past, Present, Future, September 16-18, 2016
- “Evasive Theorizing and Exploitative Potentiality of Narrative: A Descriptive Account of Ethical Concerns with Philosophical Methodology via Black Suffering Narratives,” Summer Institute in American Philosophy, University of Oregon, July 11-16, 2016
- “Say Her Name: Epistemic Violence in the Fight Against Police Brutality”, Society for Analytical Feminism Group Session, 2016 Central American Philosophical Association
- “Intersectional Understanding of Sexual Terrorism and Language”, Michigan AGEP Alliance Fall Conference, November 2015
- “Linguistic Violence and Rape Culture: Language of Consent”, 2014 Leadership Alliance National Symposium in Stamford, CT, Summer 2014
- “Foucault, MacKinnon, and Rape Culture”, UNCF Mellon Mays Summer Institute, Emory University, Summer 2013

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## Teaching Experience:

### *Instructor*

- Seminar in The Gendered-Racial Mythologies of Predictive Policing and Knowing Crime, Department of Philosophy, Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Program, University of Connecticut, Spring 2022
- Women, Gender, and Violence, Department of Philosophy, Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Program, Human Rights Institute, University of Connecticut, Fall 2021
- Philosophical Aspects of Feminism (Online), Philosophy Department, Michigan State University, Summer 2020
- Ethical Issues in Health Care, Philosophy Department, Michigan State University, Summer 2019
- Philosophical Aspects of Feminism (Online), Philosophy Department, Michigan State University, Summer 2018

### *Teaching Fellow/Graduate Consultant*

- UNCF/Mellon Mays Virtual Summer Institute, June 1-26, 2020
- Philosophy In an Inclusive Key (PIKSI): Boston, June 19-28, 2019

### *Teaching Assistant*

- Ethical Issues in Health Care, Philosophy Department, Michigan State University, Spring 2018
- Literature, Culture, and Identities, Integrative Studies in Arts and Humanities, Michigan State University, Fall 2017

### *Mentor*

- UNCF/Mellon Mays Faculty Mentor to Ananda Griffin at Spelman College, 2021-2022
- PIKSI Mentor to Julie Williams-Reyes at American University, 2019-2022
- PIKSI Mentor to Tyler Farmer at Tufts University, 2019-2021
- PIKSI Mentor to Lesley Walker at Lipscomb University, 2019

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## Additional Work Experience

### *Research Experience*

- Research Assistant to Dr. Kristie Dotson, Michigan State University, 2015-2016
  - Research Project: "Creating and Teaching a Unified Epistemology across the Sciences and Humanities," Interdisciplinary Team Building Initiative (ITBI). Funded by MSU ESPP and AgBioResearch, 2014 – 2017
  - Research Consulting: New York City Council's Young Women's Initiative, Economic and Workforce Development Group, 2015-2016
- Researcher with Public Policy Associates (PPA), Inc. under the supervision of Dr. Paul Elam, Spring 2017
  - Research Project: "Student Voice MI: Helping Eliminate the Opportunity Gap," Michigan Department of Education

### *Engaged Philosophy Experience*

- Research Consultant, me too Movement, 2018-2019, 2021-present

- MSU Engaged Philosophy Summer Intern, Girls for Gender Equity, Summer 2017

#### *Youth Empowerment Work*

- Peer Support Specialist for Sisters in Strength, The Firecracker Foundation, January 2019- September 2019
  - Instructor, Michigan State University Upward Bound, 2017-2018
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### **Service Work:**

#### *Service to University of Connecticut*

- Project Founder for “From Childhood Sexual Abuse to Campus Sexual Assault: Black Feminist Perspectives on Supporting Multi-Time Survivors,” 2021-present
  - Secured \$1500 project funding from Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Program
  - Confirmed project collaborators from Women’s Center and Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Program: Elise Delacruz & Mick Powell
  - Co-Organized Public Conversation and Student Workshop with Aishah Shahidah Simmons & Joanne N. Smith on April 15<sup>th</sup>, 2022
- Committee Member for Eric Berg, Doctoral Candidate
- Committee Member for steven nuñez, Doctoral Student
- Co-Advisor for Sadie Gjonaj, Independent Studies Major: Gender Inequality and the Law
- Recommender for Alexandra Kapell’s UConn IDEA Grant Project: The Impact of Framing Gender Based Violence as Torture, Grant Awarded for 2022-23 SY

#### *Service to Michigan State University*

- 18th Annual MSU Philosophy Graduate Conference Co-Organizer, “How is this Conference Philosophy” Women of Color and Philosophy, 2016-2017
- Philosophy Graduate Student Representative, Michigan State University, 2016-2018
- Philosophy in an Inclusive Key Summer Institute Ambassador to the American Philosophical Association, 2016
- Committee Member, Philosophy Graduate Committee, Michigan State University, 2015-2016

#### *Service to Spelman College*

- Co-Founder, Atlanta University Center Alliance for Fair Labor, 2013
- Spelman College Social Justice Fellows Program, 2012-2015
- Toni Cade Bambara Scholar-Writer-Activist Collective, Spelman College, 2012-2015
- Women Against Violence Brigade, Spelman College, 2014

#### *Service to Community*

- Co-Facilitator, Teen Club, Firecracker Foundation, 2018
- Co-Organizer, Me Too with Tarana Burke, Wharton Center, Michigan State University, April 19, 2018

- Co-Organizer, Me Too Teen Workshop with Tarana Burke, Kellogg Hotel and Conference Center. April 19, 2018
- Mentor, Upward Bound, Michigan State University, 2016-2017
- Student/Youth Executive Board Chair (Elected), Atlanta Jobs with Justice, 2013-2015
- Delegate, 2013 United Students Against Sweatshops Delegation to Bangladesh, Summer 2013

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## Media:

### *Articles*

- Believing Black girl survivors?, The Review: Independent Student Voice of Utah Valley University, <https://www.uvureview.com/news/believing-black-girl-survivors%ef%bf%bc/>
- New Faculty Bring Antiracism and the Environment to the Forefront, UConn Today, <https://today.uconn.edu/2021/09/new-faculty-bring-antiracism-and-the-environment-to-the-forefront/>
- Philosophy Alumna Accepts Assistant Professor Position, Michigan State University College of Arts and Letters, <https://cal.msu.edu/news/philosophy-alumna-accepts-assistant-professor-position/>
- Changing the World with Engaged Philosophy, Michigan State University Department of Philosophy, <https://philosophy.msu.edu/2017/10/10/changing-the-world-with-engaged-philosophy/>
- Program Funds Non-Academic Internships for Philosophy PhD Students, Daily Nous, <https://dailynous.com/2017/10/13/program-funds-non-academic-internships-philosophy-phd-students/>

### *Podcasts*

- Imagining Worlds Otherwise: Learning from Black Feminist Curiosity with Ayanna Spencer, Choose to be Curious Podcast, <https://lynnborton.com/2020/09/16/imagining-worlds-otherwise-learning-from-black-feminist-curiosity-with-ayanna-spencer/>
- Black Feminist Epistemological Concerns for MeTooBots with Dr. Spencer, Philosophy in Color Podcast, <https://podcasts.apple.com/ch/podcast/black-feminist-epistemological-concerns-for-metoobots/id1557279373?i=1000522682404&l=en>

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## References:

### **Dr. Kristie Dotson**

University Diversity and Social Transformation Professor  
University of Michigan  
[kldotson@umich.edu](mailto:kldotson@umich.edu)

### **Dr. Kyle Whyte**

George Willis Pack Professor of Environmental Justice, Climate, and Energy  
School for Environment and Sustainability  
University of Michigan  
[kwhyte@umich.edu](mailto:kwhyte@umich.edu)

### **Dr. Michael O'Rourke**

Interim Director of the Center for Interdisciplinarity  
Professor of Philosophy  
Michigan State University  
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**Dr. Elena Ruíz**  
Associate Professor of Philosophy  
Michigan State University  
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**Joanne N. Smith, MSW**  
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