

The Death of the Queer and the Violence of Our Normative Aspirations



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Women Studies

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SUB Cherry/Silver



The recent and highly publicized deaths of queer youth of color have drawn public attention to the issue of bullying. The anti-bullying campaigns that have emerged as a response to these tragedies have been a powerful and beautiful attempt to counter the violence of homophobia. However, the discourses that emerged out of this need to make queer lives more livable has also created the “bullied subject” as a social type. In this talk I argue the organization of the bullied subject is marred by “the death of the queer”—a double death that involves (1) the material deaths that anti-violence activism ostensibly seeks to prevent, and (2) the death of the possibility of maintaining non-normative existence. I focus on the need to counter the violence of bullying while also attending to the racially-normative, colonial-normative, sexually-normative, and nationally-normative logics that guide the formation of the bullied subject. While queer studies has a long history of focusing on the role of normativities in exacting violence on individuals and whole populations, I question how the public mourning of the bullied subject creates the conditions of possibility for normalizing queer. In other words, “the death of the queer” highlights the material deaths of queer youth of color that are then employed by the political project of normalizing queer aspirations for citizenship. I interrogate this normalizing via the Brandon McInerney trial, a legal case that involved the use of gay/trans panic to help rebuke a hatecrime charge.

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