



THE NORTHEASTERN AFRICANA STUDIES PROGRAM PRESENTS

Talking Back: The Genius of bell hooks Symposium

FRIDAY 11 FEBRUARY 2022
NORTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY, EAST VILLAGE
291 ST. BOTOLPH STREET, BOSTON



“To be truly visionary we have to root our imagination in our concrete reality while simultaneously imagining possibilities beyond that reality.”

On behalf of Northeastern University’s Africana Studies Program and our co-sponsors,* we welcome you to this symposium honoring the life and legacy of the trailblazing Black feminist scholar bell hooks (1952-2021). A prolific author, committed teacher, brilliant intellectual, unequivocal truth-teller, and bold visionary, bell hooks (née Gloria Jean Watkins) is a feminist icon who left an indelible mark on multiple generations of people including activists, artists, students, and scholars.

Our symposium consists of three panels organized around the concept of a few keywords dear to hooks, and featuring speakers who will offer formal and informal reflections about her profound and wide-ranging impact. A bold theorist who transitioned at the young age of 69, hooks authored about 40 books in a career spanning more than four decades. She is known for coining the phrase “imperialist white supremacist capitalist patriarchy” to critique how structures of domination and paradigms of power inter-relate and shape every aspect of our lives. Her thinking, writing, teaching, and cultural criticism used this lens to approach myriad issues including art, history, pedagogy, justice, sexuality, spirituality, healing, community, and love.

Today we offer these reflections in the spirit of remembrance and mourning to gather as a community and appreciate her impact, as well as to celebrate her legacy. Now that this legend has gone on to join the realm of the ancestors, we know that she is with us as we share, in community, about the impact of her critical thinking and writing in our professional, personal, and public lives. May she rest in peace and in power, and may we continue to shine the light of her legacy.

“My focus has always been on the work - that work being critical thinking and writing. I am always doing that. That’s where I am, wherever I am.”

Warmest regards,

Régine Michelle Jean-Charles,
Dean’s Professor of Culture and Social Justice
Director of Africana Studies

9-9:30

Dean's Welcome

Uta Poiger (Northeastern University)

Introductory Remarks

Régine Michelle Jean-Charles (Northeastern University)

9:30-11:00

Panel 1 | A Culture of Place

Meredith Clark (Northeastern University)

Saida Grundy (Boston University)

Shawn McGuffey (Boston College)

11:15-12:35

Panel 2 | An Engaged Pedagogy

Grace Assogba (Boston College)

Trina Madziwa (Northeastern University)

Alanna Prince (Northeastern University)

12:35-1:35 PM

Lunch break [boxed lunches will be provided]

1:35-3:05 PM

Panel 3 | A Sacrament of Love

Amey Victoria Adkins-Jones (Boston College)

Kellie Carter-Jackson (Wellesley College)

Lorgia Garcia-Peña (Tufts University)

Melissa Pearson (Northeastern University)

3:05-3:15 PM

Closing Remarks

* We are grateful to all of our co-sponsors in the Northeastern community: ADVANCE Office, College of Social Sciences and Humanities Dean's Office, English Department, John D. O'Bryant African American Institute, Humanities Center, Office of Institutional Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Program.

bell hooks on...

ART

"The function of art is to do more than tell it like it is—it's to imagine what is possible."

IDENTITY

"One of the many reasons I chose to write using the pseudonym bell hooks, a family name...was to construct a writer-identity that would challenge and subdue all impulses leading me away from speech into silence."

LOVE

"I believe wholeheartedly that the only way out of domination is love...and the only way into really being able to connect with others, and to know how to be, is to be participating in every aspect of your life as a sacrament of love."

JUSTICE

"You have to love justice more than your allegiance to your race, sexuality, and gender. It's about justice."

EDUCATION

"The classroom remains the most radical space of possibility in the academy."

SPEECH

"Moving from silence into speech is for the oppressed, the colonized, the exploited, and those who stand and struggle side by side is a gesture of defiance that heals, that makes new life and new growth possible. It is that act of speech, of 'talking back,' that is no mere gesture of empty words, that is the expression of our movement from object to subject — the liberated voice."

FEMINISM

"Simply put, feminism is the struggle to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression."

COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY

"It is our collective responsibility as people of color and as white people who are committed to ending white supremacy to help one another. It is our collective responsibility to educate for critical consciousness."

CULTURAL CRITICISM

"Radical visionary cultural criticism aims to do more than deconstruct cultural production, it endeavors to call attention to alternative modes of creating, new ways of seeing, thinking, and being."