

# bell hooks center

OCTOBER 2021 NEWSLETTER

Now open weekdays, 9:00am to 5:00pm!

Visit our bariatric and accessibility-friendly space in Draper 106!



[Photo taken by Crystal Wylie]

ALT-TEXT: Photograph of the bell hooks center entryway in Draper 106.

**THE BELL HOOKS CENTER IS AN INCLUSIVE SPACE** where historically underrepresented students can come to be as they are, outside of the social scripts that circumscribe their living. We curate programs, collaborations and events that affirm these students' sense of self and belonging—on campus and in the world. Our work is motivated by bell hooks's famous insights that "patriarchy has no gender" and that, therefore, "feminism is for everybody." Our center honors hooks's legacy by supporting students as social justice leaders who are active in the creation of a radical undercommons where their many and varied expressions of difference can thrive.

**Abolitionist at its core**, Berea College remains committed to grappling with gender equity and its consequences. Its efforts today are largely informed by women of color feminisms, especially by **Black feminist thinkers like Berea's own bell hooks**. hooks's feminist message—that love is the way and that justice is the destination—exemplifies the College's motto that "**God has made of one blood all peoples of the earth.**" Her insight that there is no feminism without anti-racism implores us to think holistically about the histories that gave birth to The Great Commitments and to agitate for a more inclusive future. As the meanings that we assign to sex, gender and sexuality continue to change, we remember, as hooks taught us, that the oppression of one is the oppression of all. bell hooks's feminism is for everybody, and so is Berea College.



[Photo taken by Crystal Wylie]

ALT-TEXT: Students study in the bell hooks center.



# ART CRAWL

The **bell hooks center** celebrated its grand opening on September 25th with an **Art Crawl** featuring works by women, LGBTQPIA+, and sex and gender non-conforming members of the Berea College community. Some students decided to create **feminist zines**, like those pictured below.



# THE VISITATION DEBATE

## THE CSV COALITION

The **CSV Coalition** is a group of volunteer Berea students dedicated to reforming the current visitation policy. They believe that the current policy needs to change because it is harmful to students' safety, personal development, mental health, and community-making.

### THEIR STATEMENT

Current visitation policy based on a **heteronormative gender binary** fails to accommodate non-binary and trans students, often misgendering them and harming their mental health. Furthermore, it neither aligns with Berea's core values of social justice nor current understandings of gender and sexuality. It is also effectively **misogynistic**, assuming that all cis-male cis-female relationships are inherently sexual, disruptive, and need to be harshly regulated. Rather than encourage mature relationships, current policy assumes students are incapable of them without regulation from above. They may be capable of professionalism in their labor positions and dedication and focus in their classes, but not visiting their friends and partners after hours. This fosters a feeling of alienation among current and new students and the sense that their home of four years has lied to them and results in a loss of trust and safety: RAs no longer know who is in the hall, posing a security risk and an obstacle to Covid-19 contact tracing. The policy must be updated to 24/7 visitation without regard to a guest's gender or sexuality. Will we punish our students, from marginalized and oppressed backgrounds, for breaking irrational and unjust rules, for making the hasty decisions of the young by taking away their academic opportunities and reducing their potential? Not in our Berea. **Today we commit ourselves to accommodate all genders and ending their enforced segregation. Today we commit ourselves to protect our students and their community. Today we commit ourselves to Berea's mission of social justice. Today we call upon all Bereans to build a Berea for all Bereans.**

### WORD ON THE STREET

#### **What students are saying...**

- "Visitation is downright sexist and detrimental to student's health, especially during these trying times. How [can] Berea College have PSJ or WGS majors and not encompass the inclusivity and multi-faceted gender identity? They don't even consider us as part of the equation." (Anonymous)
- "I don't see visitation as big as an issue, except for trans folk. Most of the students complaining are cisgender studies in heterosexual relationships." (Anonymous)
- "I want to see Berea College respect students' privacy. And a 24/7 visitation for Berea and non-Berea guests, as long as they're fully vaccinated. This is the normal visitation policy for almost all of the schools in our area (EKU, Morehead, Transy, etc.)." (Anonymous)
- "In general, the visitation policy shouldn't be based on binary and heteronormative constructs. First-years should be allowed to have visitors of the opposite sex their first semester. Personally, it was extremely frustrating not to have my friends in my room. It's probably challenging on first-years this year as COVID-19 makes it harder to spend quality time with people outside of dorm rooms. We are adults and can manage class and work as well as personal relationships on our own." (Anonymous)



# MEET NEW BHC + WGS FACULTY!



## FAVORITE FEMINIST WORK:

*Sister Outsider* by Audre Lorde; and *Words of Fire* by Beverly Guy-Sheftall

## FUN FACT:

Never afraid to be the first one on the dance floor.

## ACADEMIC INTERESTS:

Black cultural production, visual, material and expressive culture, and sexual politics relies on hooks' analysis of power and forms of domination.

**Dr. fari nzinga, Teacher-Scholar in Residence, bell hooks center**

## FAVORITE FEMINIST WORK:

*Feminism is for Everybody* by bell hooks

## FUN FACT:

Might do well living a contemplative life in a spiritual community.

## ACADEMIC INTERESTS:

Contemporary Afro-Caribbean diaspora and immigrant literatures, feminist, and postcolonial theories, and the works of Edwidge Danticat.



**Dr. Megan Feifer, Teacher-Scholar in Residence, bell hooks center**



## FAVORITE FEMINIST WORK:

*Fearing the Black Body: The Racial Origins of Fat Phobia* by Dr. Sabrina Strings; and *Teaching to Transgress* by bell hooks.

## FUN FACT:

Was born in Glasgow and attends annual fishing trips.

## ACADEMIC INTERESTS:

Porn studies, critical race theory, southern studies, fat studies, queer studies, and masculinity studies.

**Dr. Shawna Felkins, Visiting Assistant Professor, WGS**

# Gender Talk!

# NOW PART OF THE NEW BELL HOOKS CENTER

PLEASE JOIN US FOR OUR NEXT **GENDER TALK** ON OCTOBER 20TH WITH BIOLOGIST AND SCHOLAR OF SEX, GENDER, AND SEXUALITY **DR. SHAY AKIL-MCLEAN (@HOOD\_BIOLOGIST)**.

BEREA COLLEGE PROFESSOR OF BIOLOGY **DR. MEGAN HOFFMAN** TO RESPOND.

HOSTED IN **YAHNG CENTER (MAC)**.



**2021-22 CALENDAR**

**Gender Talk**

11:45 - 1:00  
DRAPER 106  
LUNCH IS SERVED.

Wednesday, September 22, 2021  
**BEVERLY GUY-SHEFTALL**  
(Spelman College)

Wednesday, October 20, 2021  
**SHAY AKIL-MCLEAN**  
(University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign)  
Co-sponsor: The Yahng Center

Wednesday, November 10, 2021  
**JOSEPH PIERCE**  
(Stony Brook University)

Wednesday, February 23, 2022  
**KATY PYLE**  
(Ballez)  
Co-sponsor: Dance Program

Wednesday, March 30, 2022  
**ASHON CRAWLEY**  
(University of Virginia)  
Co-sponsors: Religion and African and African American Studies

Wednesday, April 13, 2022  
**JINA KIM**  
(Smith College)  
Co-sponsor: Disability & Accessibility Services

   
the bell hooks center  
feminism is for everybody

Congrats to WGS alumnus **Rebekah Easton-Hogg**!!  
Please join us at our **Colloquium Series** on October 6th to learn more about her success and new clinic.

**Berea College Women's and Gender (and Sexuality) Studies Colloquium Series presents**

**REBEKAH EASTON-HOGG**



**NIGHTINGALE**  
Behavioral Health  
Rebekah Easton-Hogg, Family and Psychiatric APRN



Join us to learn more about WGS alumnus Rebekah Easton-Hogg's new clinic on N. Broadway Street in Berea! In this colloquium, Rebekah will discuss how she got to Berea College, her experiences here, and how her WGS degree informs her healthcare work.



**Wednesday, Oct. 6 (12-1pm) at the bell hooks center (Draper 106)**

ALT-TEXT: Event poster with description and image of speaker



# pride Series

The below events are hosted via Zoom. Keep an eye out for email and social media announcements with the Zoom links embedded.

the bell hooks center at Berea College presents

## PRIDE SERIES 2021

Organized by Nancy Landreke, bell hooks center program associate

 **Carol Taylor-Shim**  
Tuesday October 12, 2021 at 12 pm -1 pm  
*On queering the intersections of race, gender, and sexuality*

 **Gilda Wabbit**  
Thursday October 14, 2021 at 12 pm - 1pm  
*On Drag culture, specifically Drag King culture*

 **Austen Levi-Smith**  
Friday October 15, 2021 at 12 pm - 1 pm  
*On queering the spirit: is the rainbow enough?*

ALT-TEXT: Event poster with descriptions and images of each speaker

Join us also (*in person!*) on **Monday, October 11th** on Draper quad for a "**Coming Out**" celebration including rainbow cake, "Free Mom Hugs," food, and music; and on **Saturday, October 16th** for a **drag show** co-sponsored by student life.

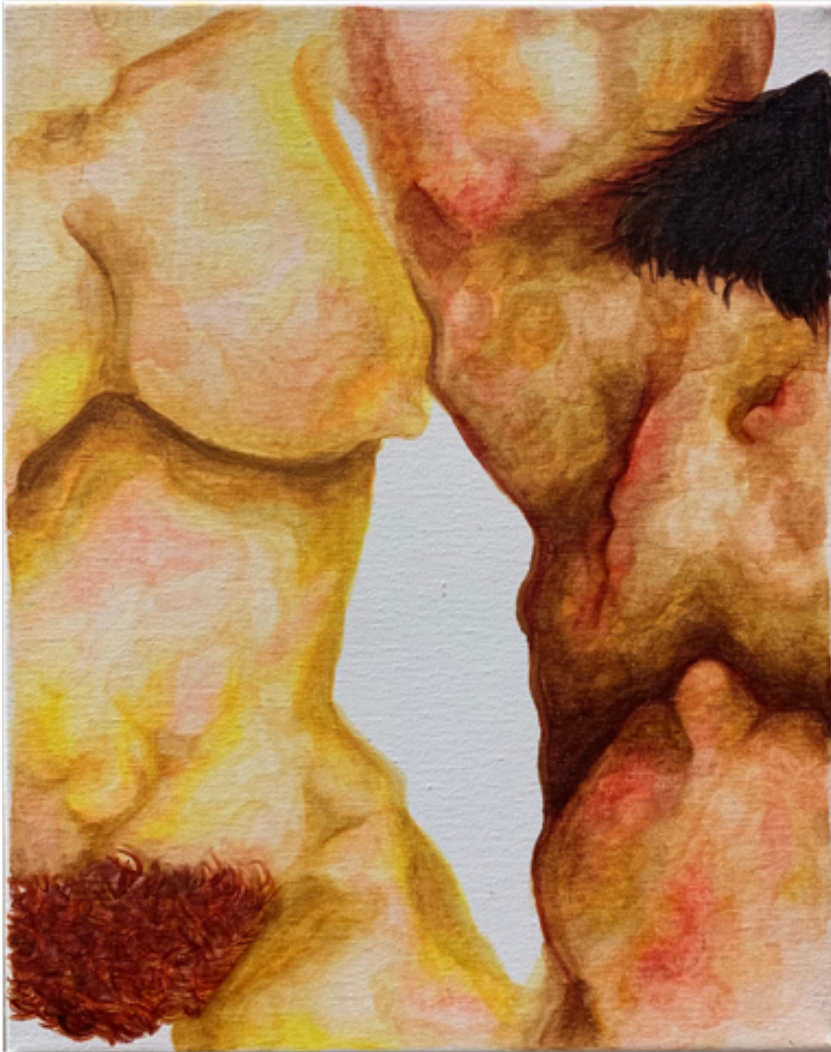
# CREATIVE FEMINIST WORKS!

Do you want your **feminist creative work** featured in the next **bhc newsletter**? **Submit your piece(s)** to [wrightm2@bera.edu](mailto:wrightm2@bera.edu). We welcome submissions from faculty, staff, alumni, retirees, and community members!

## BODY

by Malaya Wright

This piece is part of the **Feminist Expression in Action** exhibit at Hutchins Library. You can learn more about Malaya's art at [malayaart.com](http://malayaart.com) or by following her [@malayaart](https://www.instagram.com/malayaart) on Instagram.



*It swivels and swerves down the pavement,  
Dropping on the floor,  
As it detangles blood and Earth,  
My body breaths.  
Like a temple set on fire.  
Demolished and defaced for desire.  
My body dances,  
Though the twilight for the beat,  
And the roaring of hurt.  
My body aches,  
Because it's not my body anymore.  
It's yours -  
The hungover man on the street,  
The doctor in defiance,  
The parched lips of a politician,  
My body can't handle no more,  
So, I lift my head up higher.*

ALT-TEXT: Event poster with description and image of speaker

Markers on Canvas [14 x 11 inches]



# BLACK MIRROR

by My'Asia Watson

My head raises hesitantly  
Uncomfortable  
As my black soul-less eyes dare to stare in  
the mirror  
I am reminded of my immoral  
Shameful, skin, that perfectly blends in,  
with the  
Wicked night

I can see, but not recognize  
The markings on my flesh  
Cursed with 99 brandings and bullets,  
Mutilated, burning flesh  
That is only seen on stygian skin

Tears stream down from my charcoal eyes,  
Held hostage  
By the Whiteness in-between  
Refusing to erase my dusky color

As I savagely scrub my face,  
My pure White palms  
Attempt to scour away all imperfection:  
The wide nose and even the black moles  
That I secretly loathe  
But, when I use my White towel to dry,  
I am only left with some darkness

Why am I only left with some darkness?  
Why can't I get rid of my black impurities?

This black disease that unfortunately  
Travels beyond my face, to my body  
This painful blackness is so deep  
It goes beyond my skin, to my bones  
The blackness  
That I cannot for a moment forget  
That Whiteness won't let me forget

These thoughts plague my mind  
The mirror and the pure towel reminding me  
I am other  
A reminder of being a wretched flesh  
Drenched in blackness, just a flesh with  
Lashings and bullets,

I struggle to glide red lipstick across  
My hideous enormous lips  
For a few seconds, I show all White teeth  
The only thing about me that is pure  
Looking in the mirror at a minstrel,  
without the smile  
A black abomination  
Quickly I wipe off the red, bright lipstick  
Because it is a reminder  
I am inhuman

My hair texture seen in carpet,  
Unworthy, an object, it's existence  
Only meant to be stepped on  
Invisible but visible, no progression

Staying in place forever, never moving in time  
Never meant to be truly recognized  
Like my blackness

Hair texture seen in cotton,  
I'm reminded of oppression  
Exhausted, my fingers cramping in pain  
Like I have been combing from "day clean, to  
first dark"

My coal black fingers attempt to rip through this  
nappyness  
Combing this uncivilized thing  
When I finally speak, it is to yell in pain  
As if, I am an animal  
A reminder of my nonhuman position

In that moment, I despise this carpet-cotton  
thing

Hating the God that had the audacity  
To create blackness  
Wishing He would un-black me  
De-Niggerfy me  
Wondering why, He would make me so black?

I know and I am proud that:  
My Black features are so noticeable and  
unique  
My Black looking eyes are rare and sparkle  
When I proudly speak, loud, even with anger  
My voice, my English, is it's own

My Ebony skin is a beautiful brown  
complexion  
That spans from a caramel, sweet chocolate  
To a beautiful, bold jet Black  
A dark hue, protected and loved by the sun  
And skin, broad lips that are both smooth  
like silk

Hair is so strong, gravity can't pull it down  
An Afro that stands strong demanding  
attention  
With the everyday smell of  
Whipped cocoa butter and coconut oil

Kinky hair braided into secret messages  
that  
Whiteness can never decipher  
That only Blackness can understand

This is Black Beauty  
I know that Black is beautiful  
I see that Black is beautiful

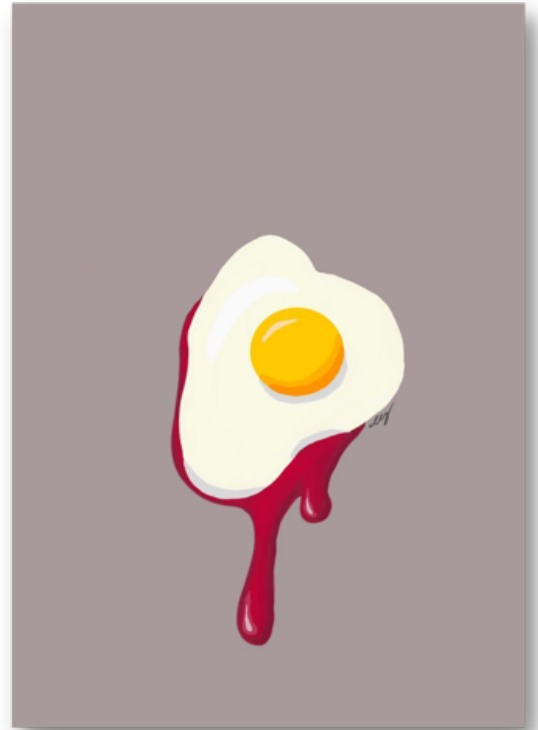
Every day when I look in the mirror  
For just a couple of seconds I see blackness  
An ugly blackness ingrained in my psyche  
A barbaric blackness that I was destined  
This grisly portrait I see when I first  
Look at myself  
Can never be erased  
No matter how much I say, "Black is  
beautiful"

Then I see a beauty I just started to love in the  
mirror  
Black Beauty

# Bloody Eggs

by Illy

This piece is about current **women's reproductive rights issues**. With recent issues and how people with the ability to give birth are referred to as "hosts," it poses the question: "What is society's current view of women? I am not worth more than my eggs and ability to reproduce?"



ALT-TEXT: Image of a bloody cracked egg

## FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA!



ALT-TEXT: Photograph of bell hooks center student program associate (and WGS major!) Rocky Garbanzo Nunez with a bell hooks center mug that reads, "supporting gender beyond a binary."



@wgsbera  
@bellhookscenter



Berea College Women's and Gender Studies  
the bell hooks center at Berea College



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