

THE  
bell hooks  
CENTER.

NEWSLETTER

SEPTEMBER 2023



ALT TEXT: Collage of bell hooks' portrait and daisies.



# OUR SPACE.

The bell hooks center is located in:

DRAPER  
106

Come visit one of the coziest places on campus!

We offer Pronoun pins, contraceptives, menstrual supplies, candy, and resource guides at the front desk!



ALT TEXT: Students studying together at the bell hooks center.

WE HAVE

1. BEAN BAGS

2. EVEN MORE BEAN BAGS

ALT TEXT: Student jumping on bean bag.

Open 10 am - 6 pm  
Mondays - Fridays





**ALT TEXT: The center's library as you walk in.**



**ALT TEXT: Students hanging out in the center.**



**ALT TEXT: Students jumping on the bean bags.**





**DR. M. SHADEE MALAKLOU**  
(She/ They)

Inaugural director and founder of the bell hooks center: Chair and Associate Professor, Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies.



**KAT MOSES** (She/They)

bell hooks center and Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Administrative Assistant.



**dr. dp** (They/ Them)

Assistant Professor of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies.





**DR. MEGAN FEIFER**  
She/ Her

bell hooks center  
Teacher-Scholar in  
Residence (2021-2024).



**DR. SHAMELL BELL**  
She/Her

bell hooks center  
Teacher-Scholar  
in Residence (2023-2024).



**Itzli (or "Itz")**  
He/ She/ They

Spanish major,  
social, linguistic, and  
artistic interests.



**Joy Mirembe**  
She/ Her

Computer science  
major/ bell hooks  
center's associate.



**Adriel Rocha**  
He/ Him

Studio art Major,  
and graphic designer.  
Enthusiastic about  
all art forms



# bell hooks

## INAUGURAL SYMPOSIUM

**dissident  
feminisms**

**JUNE 16-18,  
2023 AT  
BEREA  
COLLEGE**



**ALT TEXT:** Plenary Speaker Alexis Pauline Gumbs addresses audience.



**ALT TEXT:** Crowd cheering after opening plenary on June 16th.

**350 scholars,  
activists,  
organizers,  
artists,  
educators,  
persons of faith,  
and other  
community-makers  
registered to  
attend this  
historical event.**





## OPENING REMARKS BY DR. M. SHADEE MALAKLOU

Inaugural Director, the bell hooks center

The bell hooks center invited 350 registered participants to Berea College June 16-18, 2023 to celebrate the life and legacy of feminist prophet, powerhouse, and high priestess of love bell hooks.

Academic thinkers, organizers and activists, artists and performers, persons of faith, writers and poets, journalists and media practitioners, and other community-makers gathered to think and hope and dream together in bell's homeplace of Kentucky. bell learned to be a feminist truth-teller not at Stanford, where she later studied, but in Kentucky's hills and hollers, where she took her dissident lessons from "the hillbilly country folk who were [her] ancestors and kin." When she joined Berea College's faculty in 2004, bell explained, "I came home to Kentucky because all that I loved remained constant here; family, the hills where I roamed in my girlhood, the bluegrass beauty, the vernacular speech of backwood folks—all of me that matters. All of who I am, spiritual seeker, intellectual, writer, feminist, critic, was a seed planted in the soil of Kentucky. Here is where I live and here is where my body will return to earth, nurturing seeds for future harvest."

bell's transition in December 2021 was a personal loss for us, and a political loss for a world she feared was already done with feminism.





As to be expected, bell was right. Eager to avoid feminist scandal, many chose to mourn and memorialize bell by divesting her lessons on love from the political context of her dissident interventions, forgetting that bell's feminist critique is a love letter to liberation. The Inaugural bell hooks Symposium serves as a reminder that bell's feminism is, as her long-time friend and co-conspirator Beverly Guy-Sheftall reflects, "loud and unrelenting." bell tells us that feminism must be a "talking back" and "gesture of defiance" if it is to be for everybody.

A consummate critic, bell learned love as a verb, as radical truth-telling, from what she describes as "the Kentucky backwoods." On the page and in person, she describes love as an action, an intention, a possibility, a choice, a community, and accountability—to ourselves, to each other, and to the earth that sustains us. In her 2014 commencement address to Berea College graduates, bell explains that if we seek justice as the destination, then love must be the way. She professes, "Love connects and liberates us. No matter our place in imperialist, white supremacist, capitalist, patriarchal culture, when we do the work of love, we are doing the work of ending domination."

Like bell, Berea College's abolitionist founder John G. Fee agitated not for reform, but to dismantle systems of domination. As the first interracial and coeducational college in the South, founded six years before the onset of the U.S. Civil War, Berea College remains guided by its original commitments to interracial justice and gender equity. Additionally, Berea College's no-tuition promise and sentiment that there is dignity in all labor challenge socioeconomic injustice, but without reproducing class hierarchies. In doing these things together, Berea College affirms that abolition is, as opening plenary speaker, Queer Black Troublemaker and Black Feminist Love Evangelist Alexis Pauline Gumbs writes, "something that grows...with sustainable, transformative love."

Welcome to Berea College. We hope that both new and returning students will join us to plant abolitionist seeds in Kentucky, in the soil where bell wanted her body to grow future harvest, on a campus founded to challenge the intersectional violence that bell's dissident feminism names.



# SEPTEMBER EVENTS

**GENDER  
TALK**

## **Rejecting Compulsory Love: Toward a Politic of Queer Black Expansiveness**

**Jenn M. Jackson** In what ways does a rejection of traditional monogamy and heteronormativity make room for a more expansive, more liberatory politic? How can we challenge compulsory sex and gender roles not only as a means of personal identification and embodiment but also as a collective rejection of the containers in which we have never fit? In this talk, Dr. Jenn M. Jackson (they/them) meditates on these questions via bell hooks' works. They argue, simply, that Black Feminist self and communal love both ask of us this sort of rejection: a rejection rooted in exploration and searching for other ways of being that more fully articulate our human experiences. Not only that, this rejection makes room for the types of radical space-making and world building that nurture fuller Black futures.



**BEREA COLLEGE**  
PEACE AND SOCIAL JUSTICE



**BEREA COLLEGE**  
AFRICAN AND  
AFRICAN AMERICAN  
STUDIES

Respondent: Shamell Bell, bell hooks center Teacher-Scholar In Residence

# bell hooks day

## Sunday, Sept. 24



Illustration by  
Adriel Rocha '26

**10am–12pm: Altar-making** at bell hooks center and walking tour of bell's home and Institute

**11:45am–1pm: Lunch** at the Carter G. Woodson Center (Alumni Building)

**1–3:30pm: Live band!** *Joslyn & The Sweet Compression* on library steps

**3–5pm: Center hop!** Collect a bell hooks sticker at each center



Participating centers include: Loyal Jones Appalachian Center, Black Cultural Center, Carter G. Woodson Center, Center for International Education, Campus Christian Center, and CELTS



# COMMUNITY CLOSET\*

\* The first LGBTQ+ Inclusive closet on campus.



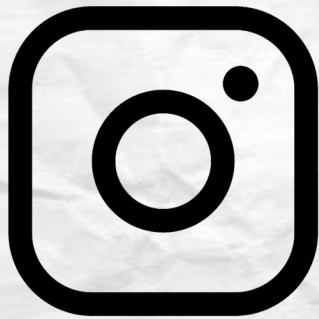
**We** are excited to announce that we now have a permanent community closet in our space to allow campus community members to shop anytime we're open:



While we are not accepting donations, we hope our campus community will turn out to our kick-off and take inventory off our hands so that we may in the future! Please bring reusable shopping bags!



# OUR SOCIALS:



@bellhookscenter



Berea College Women's,  
Gender, & Sexuality Studies

bell hooks center at Berea College



@WGSBerea

@bellhookscenter

Submit creative works like original writing and art for inclusion in the bell hooks center newsletter! Email submissions to:

[mosesk2@berea.edu](mailto:mosesk2@berea.edu)