2021 ASSEMBLY JOINT RESOLUTION 118


Relating to: honoring the life and work of University of Wisconsin-Madison graduate, bell hooks.

Whereas, on December 15, 2021, bell hooks, the acclaimed and prolific author, poet, and scholar, passed away at the age of 69; and

Whereas, bell hooks was born as Gloria Jean Watkins on September 25, 1952, in Hopkinsville, Kentucky, as the fourth of seven children; and

Whereas, bell hooks went by the pen name of bell hooks as a tribute to her great-grandmother, Bell Blair Hooks, and chose to stylize her name in all lowercase letters to emphasize the “substance of books, not who I am”; and

Whereas, bell hooks was a trailblazer in feminist and Black literature and scholarship, known for her work addressing the intersections of gender, race, and class and bringing the voices of Black and working-class women into the feminist movement; and
Whereas, bell hooks’s work and ideas were largely inspired from her experience growing up in a racially segregated town in rural Kentucky, having attended a segregated school in her early childhood; and

Whereas, bell hooks discovered her love and talent for writing at a young age, writing and memorizing poetry by the age of 10 and publishing her first poems in a Sunday school magazine; and

Whereas, bell hooks was an alumnus of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, having received a master’s degree in English in 1976; and

Whereas, bell hooks earned her bachelor’s degree from Stanford University and her doctorate in literature from the University of California at Santa Cruz, where she wrote her dissertation on Toni Morrison; and

Whereas, bell hooks published her first book, And There We Wept, in 1978 and has authored over 30 books over the course of her career in a wide range of styles and subjects, including literary criticism, memoir, poetry, and children’s literature; and

Whereas, bell hooks is lauded for her work on Black feminism, most notably, Ain’t I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism, which hooks wrote at age 19 and named after a speech by Black abolitionist and suffragist Sojourner Truth; the book was named one of the “20 most influential women’s books of the last 20 years” by Publishers Weekly; and

Whereas, bell hooks had an accomplished career in academia, having taught at Stanford University, Yale University, Oberlin College, the City College of New York, and Berea College in Kentucky; and

Whereas, bell hooks was named as a distinguished professor in residence in Appalachian studies at Berea College in 2004, where she worked for the remainder of her career; and
Whereas, the bell hooks center was created at Berea College in honor of hooks's legacy and contributions; and

Whereas, bell hooks made immeasurable contributions to literature and to feminist and Black thought over the course of her career, and her legacy will continue to shape American intellectual life for years to come; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the assembly, the senate concurring, That the members of the Wisconsin Legislature do hereby honor the life and work of bell hooks and recognize her legacy and enduring contributions to literature and scholarship.

(END)