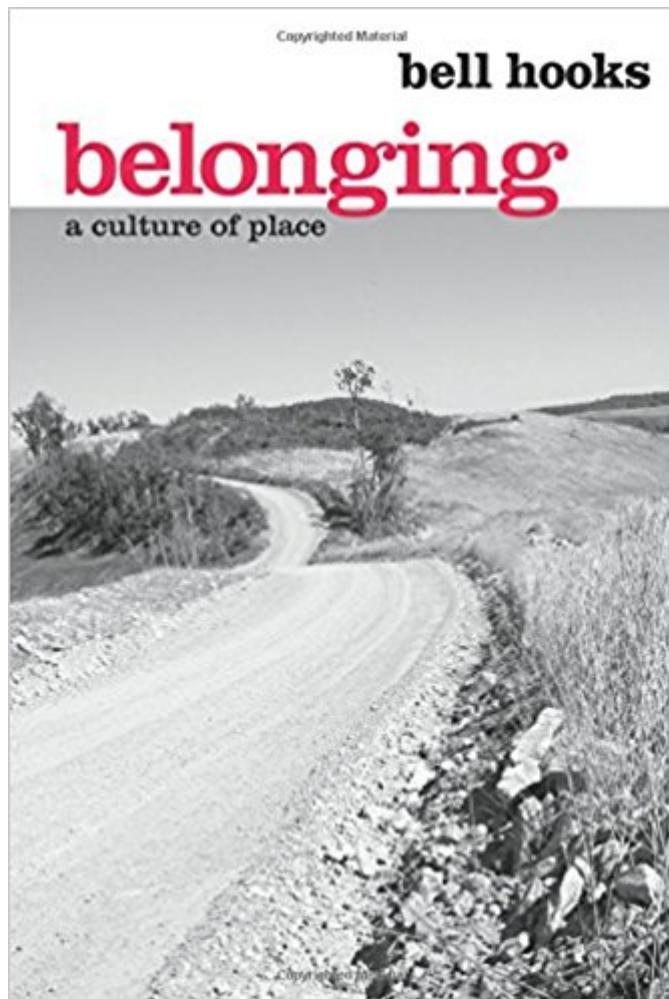


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# Belonging: A Culture Of Place



## **Synopsis**

What does it mean to call a place home? Who is allowed to become a member of a community? When can we say that we truly belong? These are some of the questions of place and belonging that renowned cultural critic bell hooks examines in her new book, *Belonging: A Culture of Place*. Traversing past and present, *Belonging* charts a cyclical journey in which hooks moves from place to place, from country to city and back again, only to end where she began--her old Kentucky home. hooks has written provocatively about race, gender, and class; and in this book she turns her attention to focus on issues of land and land ownership. Reflecting on the fact that 90% of all black people lived in the agrarian South before mass migration to northern cities in the early 1900s, she writes about black farmers, about black folks who have been committed both in the past and in the present to local food production, to being organic, and to finding solace in nature. Naturally, it would be impossible to contemplate these issues without thinking about the politics of race and class. Reflecting on the racism that continues to find expression in the world of real estate, she writes about segregation in housing and economic racialized zoning. In these critical essays, hooks finds surprising connections that link of the environment and sustainability to the politics of race and class that reach far beyond Kentucky. With characteristic insight and honesty, *Belonging* offers a remarkable vision of a world where all people--wherever they may call home--can live fully and well, where everyone can belong.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

Righteous cultural critic hooks continues her deep inquiry into how we might live more meaningful

and sustainable lives in essays that combine an ecological perspective with arresting insights into African American agrarian history. Hooks writes about the solace she found as a girl in the hills of Kentucky, her long years away, and her return, which has inspired a fresh look at the self-reliant communities of black Appalachians and their nurturing connection to the land. As hooks parallels the environmental crime of mountaintop-removal coal mining with the injustices poor people face, she retrieves the lost stories of black farmers and ponders the psychological consequences of the great migration to the industrialized, urban North, and the degradation of tobacco from a sacred plant to a deadly product. Paying tribute to her quilt-maker grandmother, who instilled in her a spiritual aesthetic, hooks, at once intellectually rigorous and warmly personal, creates a quilt of radiant essays that defines a culture of belonging • rooted in reverence for life and a genuine involvement with place and community. --Donna Seaman

bell hooks is a writer and critic who has taught most recently at Berea College in Kentucky, where she is Distinguished Professor in Residence. Among her many books are the feminist classic *Ain't I A Woman*, the dialogue (with Cornel West) *Breaking Bread*, the children's books *Happy to Be Nappy* and *Be Boy Buzz*, the memoir *Bone Black* (Holt), and the general interest titles *All About Love*, *Rock My Soul*, and *Communion*. She has published six titles with Routledge: *We Real Cool*, *Where We Stand*, *Teaching to Transgress*, *Teaching Community*, *Outlaw Culture*, and *Reel to Real*.

I bought this book with great enthusiasm. As a visual artist and woman of color working on issues of belonging, I felt for sure this work would help me structure my ideas. I could not have been more wrong! To begin with, this book has so many grammar, punctuation and spelling errors that I remain astonished that it made it to press. Did anyone at all look at this book before it made it to print? My word. I have never seen anything like this under two covers before. There is NOT ONE page that does not have some kind of problem. That alone is a complete turn off. You cannot read the book but for the errors! In addition, if you have read any of hooks's other books, like I have done, there is literally nothing new here. A rehashing of the same ideas, which are important, but just feel really used up and tired in this book. Indeed, the best part of this book is the cover image "This is Appalachia" by Priya Thoresen.

The book spoke to my soul. Provised a list of authors and writings known and unknown. Thank you Tyler Elliot.

Very insightful!

Insightful. Heartfelt. Expands my perspective. Thank you!

Love anything written by bell hooks

bell hooks is perhaps the BEST person to write about a culture of place. She uses her personal story as a way to ground the essays, and she relates it to a broader community that includes what we all grapple with: class, race, and gender among others. I particularly loved her writing on nature as a healing force.

I am currently taking an elective, looking at comparative inequities in cultures, races, gender and LGBTQ matters. My professor is a bell hooks fan, and I wanted to understand his passion for her work. I also wanted a better sense of her experience, as native Kentuckian, transplant to California, New York, and Arizona (to name a few places), and how she reclaims her roots in her native state of Kentucky. I like the idea of examining place, belonging and how we go about reclaiming our healing space after we've been injured by our own native identity. Let's start with the positive attributes, here - great passages, like recounting sharecropper's experiences in Kentucky, the culture of quilting and reconnecting with seven generations of legacy and anguish. What doesn't work is that the editing, here, is deplorable. I even caught typos. It was embarrassing, at times. Also, the last portion of this book scraped the enamel off of my teeth, my patience was tried so much. It became preachy and even annoying. If this book stopped at the halfway mark, it would have been a hit. A pity!

This kind of book is worth 50 books. Fans of bell hooks might prefer other volumes of hers (she spoils her readers), but I immensely enjoyed reading this book and feel it is essential to her oeuvre, because it talks about where she is from, and what the people were like there. She writes about her love and respect for "backwoods" people, who in her experience lacked the racism wrongly ascribed to them by many cityfolk, who callously disregard anything nonurban and themselves often lack open-mindedness toward race. She writes about what it means to describe yourself as being from a certain place, and to call a place home. Very enlightening. Strangely, there are occasional minor misedits, but nothing to do with her writing, which is intensely accomplished and eminently human,

as always.

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