

Influential feminist writer bell hooks dies at 69

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Gloria Jean Watson, known by her pen name, bell hooks, died on December 15, 2021, at her home in Berea, Kentucky, where she was a resident professor of distinction at Berea College. She was 69. According to a statement on Twitter by her

niece, Ebony Motley, she died surrounded by family and friends. *The Washington Post* reports that she died of end-stage renal failure.

Born in Hopkinsville, Kentucky, on September 25, 1952, hooks became one of the most renowned feminists of her time. Known for her writing on race, gender, class, and systems of oppression, hooks published more than 40 books. She took her maternal great-grandmother's name as her pen name and used all lowercase letters to focus attention on her message rather than herself, she told interviewers.

She was also a practicing Buddhist for more than 30 years, often identifying as a Buddhist Christian. "If I were really asked to define myself,

I wouldn't start with race; I wouldn't start with blackness; I wouldn't start with gender; I wouldn't start with feminism," she said in a 1992 interview. "I would start with stripping down to what fundamentally informs my life, which is that I'm a seeker on the path. I think of feminism, and I think of anti-racist struggles as part of it. But where I stand spiritually is, steadfastly, on a path about love.

"To commit to love is fundamentally to commit to a life beyond dualism. That's why love is so sacred in a culture of domination, because it simply begins to erode your dualisms: dualisms of black and white, male and female, right and wrong."

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