

1           A RESOLUTION honoring bell hooks (Dr. Gloria Jean Watkins) for her induction  
2 into the Kentucky's Women Remembered exhibit.

3           WHEREAS, the Kentucky Women Remembered exhibit was created in 1978 as a  
4 display at the Kentucky State Fair intended to bring attention to outstanding women who  
5 have made significant contributions to Kentucky history; and

6           WHEREAS, the Kentucky Women Remembered exhibit became a permanent  
7 exhibit in the West Wing of the Kentucky Capitol Building in 1996 with portraits of  
8 dozens of inductees, though there have been no new inductions since 2014; and

9           WHEREAS, one leading Kentucky woman deserving of such an honor is Gloria  
10 Jean Watkins, better known by her pen name, bell hooks, who left a lasting impact on the  
11 Commonwealth of Kentucky and the United States of America as an author, critic,  
12 feminist, and public intellectual. Hooks and six other Kentucky women were inducted  
13 into the Kentucky Women Remembered exhibit. The induction coincides with the  
14 Kentucky Commission on Women's celebration of Women's History Month; and

15           WHEREAS, bell hooks was born on September 25th, 1952, in Hopkinsville,  
16 Kentucky, to Veodis and Rosa Bell Watkins. She began her education in segregated  
17 public schools and then transitioned into the integrated Hopkinsville High School in the  
18 late 1960s; and

19           WHEREAS, bell hooks was deeply influenced by her childhood in then-segregated  
20 Hopkinsville, talking of how her inventive community turned the racism that they faced  
21 into a source of strength and how her experiences would also shape her thinking around  
22 feminism; and

23           WHEREAS, from a young age, bell hooks was an avid reader and writer, writing  
24 her own poetry by age ten, and at age 19, while a student at Stanford University,  
25 beginning to write her first full-length book, "Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and  
26 Feminism," published in 1981; and

27           WHEREAS, bell hooks took her maternal great-grandmother's name as her

1 pseudonym because, in her own words, her great-grandmother "was known for her  
2 snappy and bold tongue, which I greatly admired." She opted to write her pen name in  
3 lowercase letters, telling interviewers that she intended to emphasize the substance of her  
4 books rather than who she was; and

5 WHEREAS, in her debut book, bell hooks laid the groundwork of her feminist  
6 theory by giving historical context to the sexism endured by Black female slaves and  
7 showing how that legacy continues to impact Black women today. She examined themes  
8 including the historical impact of sexism and racism on Black women, devaluation of  
9 Black womanhood, media roles and portrayal, the education system, the idea of a white-  
10 supremacist-capitalist patriarchy, and the marginalization of Black women; and

11 WHEREAS, in the 1980s, bell hooks established a support group for Black women  
12 called the Sisters of the Yam, which she later used in a title of a book published in 1993  
13 celebrating Black sisterhood; and

14 WHEREAS, bell hooks studied English at Stanford University and the University  
15 of Wisconsin, going on to earn a PhD from the University of California, Santa Cruz; and

16 WHEREAS, bell hooks taught at institutions including Stanford University, Yale  
17 University, and The City College of New York, before in 2004 joining Berea College in  
18 Berea, Kentucky, where she established the bell hooks center; and

19 WHEREAS, bell hook's lectures, writings, critiques, and other works were a key  
20 influence on the feminist movement throughout her career. Her extensive writing on  
21 gender and race was critical in pushing feminism beyond its white middle-class bounds to  
22 include the voices of Black and working-class women in intersectionality, with her  
23 saying that, "Feminism is a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and  
24 oppression"; and

25 WHEREAS, bell hooks published more than 40 books circulated in more than 15  
26 languages over the course of her career. In 2015 she established the bell hooks Institute at  
27 Berea College and in 2017 dedicated her papers to the college, ensuring that future

1 generations of Kentuckians will know her work and the importance of her thinking on the  
2 intersections of race, gender, place, class, and sexuality. In 2021, Berea College renamed  
3 their Women's and Gender Non-Conforming Center as the bell hooks center; and

4 WHEREAS, bell hooks was a recipient of numerous awards across her storied  
5 career, including The Writer's Award from the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund, being  
6 named one of the nation's leading public intellectuals by The Atlantic Monthly, and  
7 being named one of Time Magazine's 100 Women of the Year in 2020. Bell hooks was  
8 also nominated for the NAACP Image Award in 2001, and she was inducted into the  
9 Kentucky Writers Hall of Fame and the International Literary Hall of Fame; and

10 WHEREAS, after a storied lifetime of activism amplifying women of color in the  
11 feminist movement, bell hooks passed away peacefully in her home at the age of 69 on  
12 December 15th, 2021, surrounded by her beloved friends and family; and

13 WHEREAS, in 2022, Hopkinsville proclaimed March 1st as Gloria Jean Watkins  
14 Day in her honor, and the official proclamation at the Christian County Public Library  
15 began a month full of events celebrating bell hooks; and

16 WHEREAS, a portrait of bell hooks will be commissioned to hang in the Kentucky  
17 Women Remembered exhibit, enshrining her memory for posterity in the Capitol of our  
18 Commonwealth;

19 NOW, THEREFORE,

20 ***Be it resolved by the Senate of the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of***  
21 ***Kentucky:***

22 ➔Section 1. The members of this honorable body hereby honor bell hooks (Dr.  
23 Gloria Jean Watkins) for her induction into the Kentucky Women Remembered exhibit.

24 ➔Section 2. When the Senate adjourns today, it does so in honor and loving  
25 memory of bell hooks (Dr. Gloria Jean Watkins).

26 ➔Section 3. The Clerk of the Senate is directed to transmit a copy of this  
27 Resolution to Senator Gerald Neal for presentation.