

# Belonging in Movement: Appalachian Racial Formation, White Flight, and Lived Experience

SANDRA CARPENTER

“I feel like there is a nation of us—displaced southerners and children of the working class. We listen to Steve Earle, Mary J. Blige, and k.d. lang. We devour paperback novels and tell evil mean stories, value stubbornness above patience and a sense of humor more than a college education. We claim our heritage with a full appreciation of how often it has been distained.

And let me promise you, you do not want to make us angry,”  
(Dorothy Allison, 27).

My story is full of contradictions, the past often paying a visit to my present when I come across folks who sound like home: with a certain down-to-earthedness that reminds me of my mother who never met a stranger or of my Nana whose mantra was “Well where yuh been?” But my mother stole cars and never paid the bills and my Nana was actually of no blood relation to me. Until recently, I thought of my family as being part of what Dorothy Allison refers to as the good poor: “The good poor were hardworking, ragged but clean, and intrinsically honorable” (2). But memories have a funny way of wafting back into consciousness. Like watching a childhood movie after growing up, I finally began to pick up on the punch lines of our poverty. I never questioned my mother when she painted our old Buick with house paint and moved us to Kentucky. I naively assumed that we couldn’t afford car paint rather than thinking my

The Popular Culture Studies Journal, Vol. 3, No. 1&2  
Copyright © 2015

mom was disguising the car and skipping the state to avoid repossession. Our final home count before my mother, my sister, and I split paths was 25 different houses/trailers/apartments and 17 different schools clustered in and around the Ohio valley. Moving from place to place, the three of us made home where we could find it and forged integrity into a life marked with shame.

I always knew we were poor, but it wasn't until we moved to Kentucky that I was able to see myself as a racialized subject. When in Ohio, my sister and I attended some city schools (coded in southern Ohio as poor and black) and mom would sometimes take us to predominantly Black churches because she felt more at home there. I don't know enough about my mom to explain why she, as a white woman, felt such a deep connection to most things marked black. What I do know, though, is that trying to qualify the swing in her hips when she sang to the sink full of dishes or her bittersweet cry of "Oooh child things are going to get easier," feels almost sacrilegious. Like the Bible on our coffee table that no one ever read, you don't question it; it was just there. These small things—the Bible, mom's shoulder towel, her worn out Tina Turner album—were all things that kept us safe in our homes. When you move around so frequently, comfort becomes a luxury you can't afford and safety resides in maintaining a familiar connection to the few things you take along.

Growing up in a constant state of motion situated me in a place between trying to belong where I was and yearning for the familiarity of where I had been. This ambivalence would travel with me as I entered the university to study social justice and literature. Trying to both earn my spot in academia while also navigating home's rough terrain led me to seek out stories of women who'd somehow reconciled their Appalachian identities with their investments in larger social justice and scholarly projects. My story, paired with an analysis of bell hooks and Dorothy Allison's personal narratives, takes a systems approach—"a structural view of racism that enables us to see the connections between seemingly

independent opportunity structures” (Kirwan Institute)—to the phenomena of white flight in the United States, illustrating that Appalachians navigate the neoliberal white supremacist capitalist (hetero) patriarchy in such situated ways that we are simultaneously complicit to it as well as victims of it. In this sense, Appalachian narratives of belonging become our resistance, our epistemology, our outsider narratives within systems that both benefit and erase us.

### Research Practices

I employ a combination of practices to provide both a situated context for white flight as well as an intersectional feminist textual analysis of narratives of home. In order to avoid homogenizing Appalachian folks, I analyze narratives of authors who identify as feminist, are racially and geographically diverse, and vary in their stories’ emphases on class and race-based experience. I look at accounts such as bell hooks’s narrative of “Kentucky is My Fate” and Dorothy Allison’s *Trash* to provide racialized and classed narratives of Appalachian belonging different than my own. I then draw from my own epiphanic moments of racial visibility living in both rural, predominantly white, Appalachian settings and urban, more racially diverse, cities in the Ohio Valley.

I trace my experiences using feminist autoethnography to disrupt the white flight narrative and move toward diversity and antiracism. Feminist autoethnography is an especially appropriate method for this project because it explicitly connects the personal to the political by way of displaying multiple layers of consciousnesses (Ellis 37). Doing so illustrates a connection between the more traditionally academic analyses and the embodied lived experiences of queerness, fatness, poverty, and racialized Appalachian identity—identities about which feminist scholars often theorize and that this project will materialize. Additionally, autoethnographers often incite emotion to inspire action and “use narrative

as a source of empowerment and a form of resistance to canonical discourses” (Ellis 121). I often find myself critical of the distance between many researchers and their subjects, especially when they make claims to objectivity and rationality; thus, I aim to disrupt the notion that the personal cannot be academic by materializing my experience in such a way that illustrates that my epistemology as a scholar consists of both academic and lived experience.

I elect to layer these practices in order to provide both an Appalachian narrative of home that disrupts the homogenized narratives of white poverty and political conservatism as well as to critique academic and popular narratives of urban renewal that inherently promote post-racial and neoliberal ideologies. Due to the scope of this current project, I am focusing solely on textual analysis and personal narrative; however, there is more to be said about feminist and anti-racist activism in Appalachia. Analyzing personal narrative, then, requires contextualization and an understanding of the situated experiences of the author: “the researcher describes the context by which she or he moves from personal narrative to how both person and narrative were located and back” (Peterson and Langellier 136). Thus, I analyze hooks’ and Allison’s disclosed positionalities as well as the processes of producing their narratives and the impetus to write itself.

## Racial Formation and White Flight

Racial formation is defined as a process describing how racial identities are created, lived, transformed, and destroyed (Omi and Winant 109). Popular discourse tends to see racial formation as only having to do with people of color; however, racial formation informs all identities—even if that formation would lead to signify a racial identity that is typically invisible, or so close to the neoliberal capitalist white supremacist (hetero)patriarchy that it does not define itself in its difference. Looking

explicitly at the notion that whiteness is often seen as an invisible racial category, Ruth Frankenberg interviews white feminist women as well as more politically conservative white women to trace their perceptions of whiteness and their cultural identities. Frankenberg finds that white women overwhelmingly see their culture as one that is invisible, unmarked, and even boring at times (94). This particular discussion of whiteness is one my Appalachian narrative disrupts, as whiteness becomes quite visible and tangible when it intersects with other forms of oppression within the neoliberal capitalist white supremacist (hetero) patriarchy. Further, racialization occurs when racial meaning is assigned to a particular social practice or group (Omi and Winant 109). hooks's, Allison's, and my narratives all disrupt the racialized implications for our geographical and racial situations, thus disrupting a process of racialization that would homogenize Appalachian folks into simplified groups.

Racial formation, however, is not simply a product of social construction. Dorothy Roberts provides a keen insight into the social construction of a biological race—leading to racialized lived realities. This biologizing of race serves to create propaganda that upholds white supremacist racial projects such as gentrification and white flight, displacing many raced and classed populations from their homes (Roberts 288). Some scholars use “suburbanization” as a euphemism for white flight. Using coded language to discuss these racial projects normalizes them and, consequently, renders their racialized nature invisible, motivating a mass denial of racialized oppression. Robert Beauregard perpetuates this post-racial notion that social movement and inequities have more to do with resources and less to do with race:

The nation celebrated its suburban lifestyle, consumer products, and high wages. It also had to contend with pictures of boarded-up buildings, rioting African Americans, looted stores, burnt-out

automobiles discarded on inner-city highways, and idle and abandoned factories. (35)

Using coded language, Beauregard creates a binary between white, suburban “national” citizens and black criminals by suggesting that the nation celebrated its collective suburban lifestyle and “contended” with (read: criticized, pathologized, and problematized) the black others who remained in the cities. This popular notion of white flight is one that creates a simplified narrative of racialized movement and, I argue, also hints at a white flight discourse within narratives that promote post-racial and essential points of views. Whereas, Allison’s, hooks’s, and my narratives of home, movement, and racial formation all metaphorically disrupt this essentialist, theoretical white flight and create new paths that illustrate the need for movement among counter-hegemonic Appalachian cultures. We create racial meaning-making within the movements themselves.

### Epistemology and Movement

This project works explicitly with black feminist standpoint epistemology and alludes to theories of third space feminisms, or feminisms that work from knowledge situated in borderlands, contradictory and paradoxical spaces wherein “a dialectic of doubling” undercuts the notions of essentialized racial and gender identities (Perez 57). Black feminist epistemology, then, utilizes standpoint theory to legitimate subjugated knowledge in a way that contextualizes the knowledge in the lived experience of women of color: “I approach Black feminist thought as situated in a context of domination and not a system of ideas divorced from political and economic reality” (Hill Collins 252). I also work from Sandra Harding’s explanation of existing in borderlands as women, racial/ethnic minorities, the victims of imperialism and

colonialism, and the poor occupy spaces within the margins, the periphery; they are “outsiders within” or on the “borderlands,” in two influential standpoint phases. More specifically, “A standpoint is not the same as a viewpoint or perspective, for it requires both science and political struggle . . . to see beneath the surfaces of social life to the ‘realities’ that structure it” (Harding 334). Our Appalachian narratives of belonging and of home forge a connection between the science and political struggles of oppression and the realities of the social lives that structure and are shaped by oppression.

Further, emotional epistemology informs this project in terms of the discussions of survival throughout the narratives. In response to a masculinist, imperialist legitimating of knowledge, Allison Jaggar argues that few challenges have been raised thus far to the purported gap between emotion and knowledge . . . I wish to begin bridging this gap through the suggestion that emotions may be helpful and even necessary . . .to the construction of knowledge. (Jaggar 379)

In an attempt to work from a decolonizing theoretical framework, emotions play a large part in contributing to a feminist construction of knowledge. Additionally, Maria Lugones’s notions of “‘world’ travelling” will guide the narratives in and through places of being as opposed to places of belonging, or being “at ease” in a world, characterized by being a fluent speaker of the shared language, normatively happy in the environment, human bonding, as well as a shared experience with other folks within that “world” (12).

### Racialization and Moving to Kentucky

Much of my early childhood was spent bouncing from one city school to the next in and around central Ohio. The daughter of a woman who felt more at home with black folks than she did her own family, I grew up comfortable being white in mostly people of color spaces. I grew up

knowing how to talk about racism and oppression and felt a deep commitment to anti-racism from a young age. What I didn't grow up knowing how to talk about was my own race and how I was different from my black peers. Despite the contemporary push to move "beyond race" (Omi and Winant 218). I think colorblindness, in my case, mostly applied to how I saw myself. I knew my peers were black, but I've not always been conscious of my own whiteness, that is, until my family moved to eastern Kentucky.

At thirteen, I had mentally prepared myself for what I knew of Kentucky, based mostly on what I'd seen on TV. I knew about southern hospitality and that people talked differently, but I'd also heard that Kentucky was a dangerous place, especially for women. My mom, my sister, and I moved to a small town in eastern Kentucky where we didn't know anyone—I later learned that this refuge-style move was my mother's intention. My first day of school was bizarre: I woke up at 4:45am to catch the 45 minute bus ride to school then was told to wait in the gym with the rest of the bussed kids until homeroom. As kids started to trickle in with each bus drop off, I began to notice that many of them looked the same, and a lot like me—poor, fat, and white. Partly because of how backward I had heard Kentucky was but mostly because I had yet to see any black kids, I walked up to my homeroom teacher's desk and asked if the schools in Kentucky were still segregated. Shocked at my question, she explained that they weren't and that there weren't a whole lot of black folks who lived in eastern Kentucky.

The lack of faces of color in eastern Kentucky made room for many to be ignorantly and complacently—if not intentionally—racist. What was even more bizarre than the long commute was the fact that, for the first time, I consciously felt like an outsider, despite the fact that most of these kids and I seemingly shared racial and class identities. I was teased for acting "ghetto," how fast I talked, and the music I listened to. Soon after we moved to Kentucky, some of our close friends came to visit from Ohio



and I understood why they were too scared to leave our house, and subsequently didn't visit again. Their small family complemented ours well, consisting of a single mother, a daughter my age, and a son my sister's age. I was nervous during their visit partly because of the poor condition of the trailer we lived in but also because of the confederate flags waving from our neighbors' porches. Most of the people I talked to about the flags referred to them as rebel flags and expressed their connection to heritage rather than white supremacy. I hadn't paid too much attention to these flags until I got word of their visit, then I saw them everywhere. The idea that they represented some subversive Appalachian counter—or "rebel"—culture became impossible to reconcile with the perceived threat it posed to our friends. If my peers were willing to criticize and police me for "acting black," I couldn't imagine how folks would treat our friends for actually *being* black. Much like the flags, it was then that my whiteness became visible. I was growing to realize that I wasn't like my black peers—that the teasing I got at school for the way I acted was in no way comparable to the fear our friends felt in our home during that visit.

Since that move, any kind of naïve hope for colorblindness I held onto when I was young has been erased. Whiteness began to mean an unfair freedom I possessed, but my black friends didn't. Literally speaking, I was able to leave my house that weekend to grab some food or go to the grocery, while my black friends didn't set foot outside until it was time to leave. Throughout the years that I lived in eastern Kentucky, I remained resistant to any kind of affiliation or identification with the area, rejecting even some of the positive aspects. I consciously policed the way I spoke, being sure to say I was from Oh-hI-oh instead of from Oh-hai as to avoid acquiring a twang like my sister did. Disciplining myself to be critical of Appalachia, then, served a dual purpose of my goal in maintaining some stable identity that I'd assembled along the way as well as becoming hyperaware of my identity situation within a historically white region. On

one hand, I did feel a sense of belonging because it was a space where I could be poor and not necessarily cast out; but on the other hand, I felt a strong urge to flee and reject the iteration of whiteness that feared my unfamiliar alliance with antiracism and people of color.

### Deciding to Write – Deciding to Live

As I, hundreds of miles away from home, read hooks's "Kentucky is my Fate," I am reminded of the kind of ambivalence Appalachians feel towards places of belonging. Belonging is a matter, not of convenience or preference for class-oppressed and racialized Appalachians, but of safety. We are scattered, displaced, moving through our stories like we move from city to city for adjunct gigs, social activism, and education. For many poor Appalachians, going to college is a means of survival. If you demonstrate academic potential and are poor enough, scholarships and federal grants combined will pay you to go. What young Appalachians don't often account for, though, is the trauma involved in leaving their families for an institution bent on making them "global citizens." For instance, Allison poignantly discusses her experiences and thoughts of suicide during her first few years away at college:

There I met people I always read about: . . . children to whom I could not help but compare myself. I matched their innocence, their confidence, their capacity to trust, to love, to be generous against the bitterness, the rage, the pure and terrible hatred that consumed me. (1)

Going to the university, Allison was faced with the impetus to travel to that "world," or to be distinctly different in that world than she was in the world of poor folk in South Carolina.

Both Allison and hooks describe writing through their experiences in their native places as means of resisting suicide while situated in places of being—that is, places where one isn't at “ease” with one's surroundings (Lugones 12). hooks alludes to the in-between space of being both critical and nostalgic of home once she's left:

The intense suicidal melancholia that had ravished my spirit in girlhood, in part a response to leaving the hills, leaving a world of freedom, had not been left behind. It followed me to all the places I journeyed. (16)

hooks continues to explain that writing through her experiences helped her reconcile the emptiness she felt leaving home, while also allowing space to continue to journey through different “worlds”: “Resurrecting the memories of home, bringing the bits and pieces together was a movement back that enabled me to move forward” (18). Not only does writing down one's personal narrative help heal the wounds inflicted when leaving home, but it also aims to disrupt the violent erasure of racialized and classed Appalachian narratives.

Allison echoes hooks' need to write through one's history not only as means of catharsis and survival, but also as a way of inserting one's narrative into the conversation:

Every evening I sat down with a yellow legal-size pad, writing out the story of my life . . . Writing it all out was purging . . . More subtly, it gave me a way to love the people I wrote about—even the ones I fought with or hated. In that city where I knew no one, I had no money and nothing to fill the evenings except washing out my clothes, reading cheap paperbacks, and trying to understand how I had come to be in that place. (3)

Moving from home, then, is not necessarily a way *out* of Appalachia and all of its connotations; rather, it becomes a way *in* to a world where you either leave your Appalachian identity and ways of being behind, rendering you unable to go home, or you retain what fragments of home you can, but risk remaining in a constant state of exile. Once in exile, Appalachians might imagine their material homelands as both “prison and protecting cocoon,” assembling the nurturing aspects of home alongside its violent and stifling characteristics (Stewart 42). Movement through the narrative and through the “worlds,” then, becomes a perpetual contradiction.

### Racialized Appalachians

Both hooks and Allison reflect on what made them leave their native places, both pointing to racialized identities that didn't blend with their surroundings. hooks discusses how Kentuckians navigate white supremacy:

Even though the forces of imperialist white supremacist capitalist patriarchy did ultimately subordinate the land to its predatory interests it did not create a closed system, individual Kentuckians white and black, still managed to create sub-culture, usually in hollows, hills, and mountains, governed by beliefs and values contrary to those of mainstream culture. (20)

hooks points to a culture that both perpetuates white supremacy and a culture of anarchist white hillbillies who threaten the white supremacist capitalist (hetero)patriarchy. Living in the mountains teaches Appalachians to forge their own communities, become simultaneously interdependent and self-reliant, as well as to resist oppressive power structures (hooks). bell hooks and Dorothy Allison, then, become major

names in a group of anti-racist Appalachian radicals as they express counterhegemonic identities that disrupt oppressive power structures, not because of theories learned in state schools, but because of lived experiences of racism and class oppressions. These lived experiences interact with one another in a way that establishes a situated Appalachian anti-racist epistemology: “the way in which that culture of anarchy had distinct anti-racist dimensions accounts for the unique culture of Appalachian black folks that is rarely acknowledged” (11). hooks suggests that this distinctly anti-racist Appalachian counter culture is one that is often overlooked, if not intentionally erased.

Allison experienced a similar, but not identical, yearning to leave one’s home because of its complicity in oppressive systems:

It is the first thing I think of when trouble comes—the geographical solution. Change your name, leave town, disappear, make yourself over. What hides behind that impulse is the conviction that the life you have lived, the person you are, is valueless, better off abandoned, that running away is easier than trying to change things, that change itself is not possible. (19)

Allison’s narrative continues to disrupt a romantic notion of “good poor,” reflecting that no one in her family ever joined a union and that their racism coupled with grit and endurance contributed to her ambivalence about her upbringing: “I would grind my teeth at what I knew was my family’s unquestioning racism while continuing to respect their pragmatic endurance” (25). Travelling from one world to another, Allison expresses an epiphanic moment in racial solidarity when she conducted two speaking engagements regarding her coming out as lesbian: one at a predominantly white Episcopalian Sunday school class and another at a predominantly black and Latino juvenile detention center. She expresses frustration and contempt at the politeness expressed by the Episcopalians, their stammering questions illustrating that they are in some way complicit

in perpetuating the shame surrounding her sexual and classed identity. Her experience with black and Latino youth, on the other hand, was more comfortable, more at home, as they teased her and shamelessly asked blunt questions about her sexuality. Allison saw herself in the black and Latino youth heckling her, resisting power structures, refusing to raise one's hand and instead belting out what begs to be spoken.

Both hooks and Allison take up racial formation in a way that explicates the particular situatedness of Appalachian anti-racism. hooks suggests that there is a thriving counterculture of Appalachian anarchists and anti-racists, but that they are also conflicting with the hegemonic culture of white supremacy that is also tied in with southern US identity. Allison illustrates in her narrative a sense of contradictory allegiances to both one's racist family and also to one's commitment to political activism. Racial formation, in these cases, is found in the movement from one place to another, as these Appalachian radicals discover and write through their journeys—Allison reclaiming the term “trash,” traditionally used to connote a particular kind of whiteness marked as poor and ignorant, and hooks writing blackness and Kentucky into her work, even as she lives and works in more cosmopolitan areas such as New York City.

### Journeying Home

Returning home for hooks and Allison, then, becomes a nuanced journey. hooks recalls her decades of living away from home as necessary both for her own survival and development as a black Appalachian social activist and for her to even become able to recognize home for the place of belonging it signifies to her. In this particular movement, hooks illustrates a larger back-and-forth migration of young Appalachians from their homes to places of study or work. Young people's “drifting back and forth from the city to the hills” brings with it “revivalistic” progress in exchange

for the sacrifices made in exile (Stewart 48). hooks describes this progress with a certain amount of hesitancy and fear:

Each year of my life as I went home to visit, it was a rite of passage to reassure myself that I still belonged, that I had not become so changed that I could not come home again. My visits home almost always left me torn: I wanted to stay but I needed to leave, to be endlessly running away from home. (17)

Realizing that racism informed her experience at home, she expresses that she doesn't simply desire to leave home, but that she needs to; however, hooks does ultimately realize that her place of belonging is in Kentucky. Seeing how the capitalist white supremacist (hetero)patriarchy dehumanizes black folk and Appalachian folk outside of Kentucky, hooks returns home for the sense of belonging that resonates with a specific geographical area.

\* \* \*

Examining my Appalachian homes from my current location in Tampa, Florida has challenged me to look past my experiences of exclusion within Appalachia and long for the places that once nurtured and embraced me. Examining my home after a literal move away from it situates me at a "point in between" where my impression of home is not only influenced by my experiences there, but my feelings about Appalachia once in exile (Straight 8). Similar to hooks's experience in exile, I have become "more consciously Kentuckian than I was when I lived at home" (13). It wasn't until I moved to Tampa that I realized I'd found a place of belonging in Louisville, Kentucky. I'd moved there initially for graduate school, but dropped out after a year because I couldn't continue without funding. When I moved to Louisville, my only criterion in finding a place was affordability. I'd told myself that I could live anywhere so I searched for a place with cheap rent close to campus. I

ended up renting an unfinished basement apartment in the Old Louisville neighborhood, not knowing much about how different neighborhoods were racialized there.

I initially planned on staying at this apartment for only one lease cycle, but when I began to see folks I knew from school or work moving from Old Lou, claiming that it was too “ghetto,” I was reminded of the times folks used the term around me as a coded word for blackness, using it to describe something as simple as my favorite potato chips. I remembered riding the “ghetto” bus from a trailer park in Chillicothe, Ohio to a county school where most students did not receive the same free lunch ticket I did. This “flight” that I’d read about was, for the first time, happening right in front of me. Or at least at a time and place where I could recognize the white flight away from racialized Old Louisville for what it was.

During my time in Louisville, I continued to read about poor folks and black feminists, and tried desperately to reconcile what home meant to me. Louisville being a border city between Northern-liberal and southern-hospitable connotations, folks were constantly asking me where I was from, and I never knew the answer. I felt the need to choose between the counter-hegemonic whiteness I picked up as a poor kid in city schools in Ohio and the creek-dwelling, frog-hatching Appalachian identity I picked up as a poor kid in rural Eastern Kentucky. My need to create a sense of home and belonging led me to write through my experiences. After I’d finished my one year of graduate school, and in between part-time jobs and adjunct gigs, I took to the road with my sister to photograph all of our old homes that we could find. Even though my sister still lives in Eastern Kentucky, we were both desperate for evidence of our existences, moves, flights, and, ultimately, identities.





*Frankfort, OH. Fourth and fifth grade.*

We were only able photograph about a dozen of the 25 houses we lived in as some of the trailers were removed from the lots or simply because we couldn't find our way back to others. Photographing our homes did not immediately provide us with the answers we'd been looking for, but the process of looking for them did. We spent hours at a time navigating interstates, highways, county roads, and hollers talking about what the homes looked like and why we moved there.

As I began to recollect the traumas that caused us to move as well as the parts of myself I had to hide, I discovered that I was beginning to find a place of belonging in my counter-hegemonic, queer, anti-racist, grassroots activist community in Louisville. Although I returned to these places hoping to retrieve something I felt I was missing, I ultimately found that it wasn't any singular place that developed my racialized identity. These physical homes failed to provide us with the figurative and imagined sense of home that Appalachian Others long for in the movements from place to place. Rather, it was the movements themselves that shape how I can recognize a sense of belonging (Straight 92). Travelling through different "worlds," it becomes clear which ones are

more at ease with the poor, anti-racist, queer, and sometimes-trashy iteration of whiteness I perform.

*Wittensville, KY. Fifth and sixth grade.*

## Final Thoughts



Throughout the three narratives, a theme of epistemic privilege emerges. Appalachian radicals not only have situated knowledges within racialized and classed Appalachian identities, but also illustrate a specialized way of knowing that is often overlooked, whitewashed, or erased altogether. Resisting normative feminist narratives that would lead me to dissect my positionalities and suggest that I work from a more essential standpoint of oppressed woman or sexual minority, I choose to identify with the movement – the paths in between temporal and geographical locations that highlight and make visible the interlocking patterns of oppression of the neoliberal capitalist white supremacist (hetero)patriarchy. Identifying with the movement illustrates a notion of being on “the verge of home” or an idea that, for many Appalachian

women, home is a place in between the movement and the staying still, the idealized and the inaccessible, the urban and the homely (Straight 2).

*Chillicothe, OH. Sixth and seventh grade.*

Throughout my discussion and narrative, I participate in a counterhegemonic white flight that guides me through whiteness and the shame associated with poverty and away from white supremacist notions of white performativity. Identifying with the movement helps me resist the compulsion to “overcome” my poverty or to “get out” of the Appalachian region I’ve come from. Allison’s truths speak to mine in a way that



connects us both to a larger reclamatory space: “the inescapable impact of being born in a condition of poverty that this society finds shameful, contemptible, and somehow oddly deserved, has had dominion over me to such an extent that I have spent my life trying to overcome or deny it” (viii). Dorothy Allison and bell hooks both illustrate that this journey is necessary for the literary, social, and epistemic survival of Appalachian radicals, for the dominant culture frequently shames us into the pressures of assimilation.

## Works Cited

- Allison, Dorothy. *Skin: Talking About Sex, Class, & Literature*. New York: McNaughton & Gunn, 1994. Print.
- Allison, Dorothy. *Trash*. New York: Penguin, 2002. Print.
- Barlow, A. L.. "The Contemporary Crisis of Neo-Liberalism and Black Power Today." *Black Scholar* 40.2 (2010): 24-33. Web. 15 Apr. 2015.
- Beauregard, Robert A. *When America Became Suburban*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006. *eBook Collection (EBSCOhost)*.
- Dippel, John V. H. *Race to the Frontier: "white Flight" and Westward Expansion*. New York: Algora Pub, 2005. Print.
- Ellis, Carolyn. *The Ethnographic I: A Methodological Novel About Autoethnography*. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2004. Internet resource.
- Frankenberg, Ruth. "Whiteness as an 'Unmarked' Cultural Category." *The Meaning of Difference: American Constructions of Race, Sex and Gender, Social Class, and Sexual Orientation*. Eds. Karen A. Rosenblum & Toni-Michelle C. Travis. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2003. 92-98. Print.
- Harding, Sandra. "Borderlands Epistemologies." *Just Methods: An Interdisciplinary Feminist Reader*. Ed. Alison M. Jaggar. Boulder: Paradigm, 2012. 331-42. Print.
- Hill Collins, Patricia. "Black Feminist Epistemology." *Just Methods: An Interdisciplinary Feminist Reader*. Ed. Alison M. Jaggar. Boulder: Paradigm, 2012. 247-57. Print.

Hill Collins, Patricia. "Learning from the Outsider Within: The Sociological Significance of Black Feminist Thought." *Just Methods: An Interdisciplinary Feminist Reader*. Ed. Alison M. Jaggar. Boulder: Paradigm, 2012. 308-20. Print.

hooks, bell. *Belonging: A Culture of Place*. New York: Routledge, 2009. Print.

Jaggar, Alison. "Love and Knowledge: Emotion in Feminist Epistemology." *Just Methods: An Interdisciplinary Feminist Reader*. Ed. Alison M. Jaggar. Boulder: Paradigm, 2012. 378-91. Print.

*Kirwan Institute*. "Structural Racialization: A Systems Approach to Understanding the Causes and Consequences of Racial Inequity," 2013. Web. 20 Apr. 2015.

Lugones, Maria. "Playfulness, 'World' Travelling, and Loving Perception." *Hypatia* 2.2 (1987): 3-19. Web. 3 Feb. 2015.

Omi, Michael and Howard Winant. *Racial Formation in the United States*. New York: Routledge, 2015. Print.

Perez, Emma. *The Decolonial Imaginary: Writing Chicanas into History*. Ithaca, Indiana: Indiana UP, 1999. Print.

Stewart, Kathleen. *A Space on the Side of the Road: Cultural Poetics in an "Other" America*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1996. Print.

Straight, Belinda. "Cold Hearths: The Losses of Home in an Appalachian Woman's Life History." *Women on the Verge of Home*. Ed. Belinda Straight. Albany: State University of New York, 2005. 89-107. Print.

Straight, Belinda. "Introduction: Women on the Verge of Home." *Women on the Verge of Home*. Ed. Belinda Straight. Albany: State University of New York, 2005. 1-25. Print.