



COMMISSION ON HUMAN RELATIONS

LOS ANGELES COUNTY

"Enriching lives through effective and caring service"

December 29, 2021

MEMORANDUM TO THE COMMISSIONERS

FROM: Guadalupe Montañó, President

SUBJECT: Commission Meeting- **Monday**, January 3, 2021

Our Commission will meet **virtually** on Monday, January 3, 2022 at 12:30 p.m., Via Microsoft Teams Video and Audio Conferencing call. To participate in the meeting, **please open your Teams Calendar Invitation and [Join Microsoft Teams Meeting](#)** . If you are unable to do so, you may Dial: **(323) 776-6996; ID#: 706 244 576#**.

Attached is the Agenda, Draft Minutes of December 6, 2021 and other pertinent information for your review and approval.

If you are unable to join the meeting, please call Grace Löwenberg at (213) 639-6089 no later than 9:00 a.m., Monday, January 3rd.

See you Monday via Audio/Video Conferencing!

GI

Ad Hoc Committee on Policing and Human Relations will meet prior to Commission meeting, via Teams Conference Call Jan. 3rd from 10:00-11:30 am.
Members: Commissioner Isabelle Gunning, Chair, Preeti Kulkarni, Derric Johnson, Jeanette Ellis-Royston, Tonya McKenzie, Fredrick Sykes, and Sandra Thomas.

Board of Supervisors
Holly J. Mitchell, Chair
Second District
Hilda Solis
First District
Second District
Sheila Kuehl
Third District
Janice Hahn
Fourth District
Kathryn Barger
Fifth District
Fesia Davenport
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Human Relations Commissioners

Guadalupe G. Montañó, Ed.D
President

Ilan Davidson
Vice President/Secretary

Derric Johnson
Fredrick Sykes
Sandra E. Thomas, Ph.D.
Vice Presidents

Michael Gi-Hao Cheung
Helen L. Chin
Adrian Dove
Porter Gilberg
Isabelle Gunning, Esq.
Kevork Keushkerian
Preeti P. Kulkarni
Tonya McKenzie.
Jeanette Ellis-Royston
Gay Q. Yuen, Ph.D.

Honorary Member
Philip R. Valera

Human Relations Staff
Robin S. Toma, Esq.
Executive Director

Robert Sowell
Assistant Executive Director

Intergroup Relations Specialists
Pierre Arreola
Roland Gilbert
April Johnson
Monica Lomeli
Josh Parr
Gustavo Partida
Ray Regalado
Fidel Rodriguez
Terri Villa-McDowell
Marshall Wong

Administrative Staff
Grace Löwenberg
Siranush Vardanyan
Sharon Williams

Dispute Resolution Program

**Workforce Development
Aging and Community Services**

Kelly LoBianco
Executive Director
Otto Solorzano
Acting Director



Los Angeles County Commission on Human Relations
510 W. Vermont Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90020 (213)
738-2788

AGENDA
MEETING OF THE COMMISSION/EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
Monday, January 3, 2022 – 12:30-2:00 pm
Via MS Teams Video and Audio Conferencing(323) 776-6996; ID#: 706-244-576

[Join Microsoft Teams Meeting](#)

Our mission: to transform prejudice into acceptance, inequity into justice, and hostility into peace

- 1. Call to Order** (12:30)
- 2. Motion** finding a state of emergency continues to directly impact the ability of the members to meet safely in person, and/or state or local officials continue to impose or recommend measures to promote social distancing.
- 3. Review & Approval of December 6, 2021 Meeting Minutes** (12:33)
- 4. President’s Report** (12:35)
 - 4.1. New Year’s greeting and message
 - 4.2. Commissioner spotlight
- 5. Executive Director’s Report** (12:45)
 - 5.1. IAOHRA Conferences Recent and Future
 - 5.2. December Network Against Hate Crime Meeting
 - 5.3. Update on Commission’s new location in County Org. Structure
- 6. Committee Reports** (12:55)
 - 6.1. Ad Hoc Committee on Policing and Human Relations
 - 6.2. Ad Hoc Committee on Strategic Planning
 - 6.3. John Anson Fords (JAF) Awards Committee
- 7. Public Comment** (3 minutes per person) (1:05)
- 8. Action/Discussion Items** (1:10)
 - 8.1. Strategic Planning Issues and Timeline
 - 8.2. *LA vs. Hate* Update: report* and discussion on events incl. Black Asian Solidarity mural
 - 8.3. Federal ARP funding for Addressing Pandemic-caused Harms via *LA vs Hate* and Eviction Prevention Project (DRP)
 - 8.4. Facebook and Instagram impact on hate activity and human relations
- 9. Commissioner Announcements** (2 minutes per Commissioner) (1:55)
- 10. Adjournment:** Human Rights Activist and Author bell hooks; Nobel Peace Prize laureate Archbishop Desmond Tutu (2:00)

Para más información en español, favor de comunicarse al (213) 738-2788.

* Denotes that this agenda packet includes written material regarding the agenda item.

Meetings are held in English. If interpretation in other languages or accommodations for persons with disabilities are needed, please contact the Commission at (213) 7388 at least 3 business days before the meeting. The meetings of the Human Relations Commission are accessible to persons with disabilities. Access to the facility is via the Sixth Street entrance.



Los Angeles County Commission on Human Relations

510 South Vermont Avenue, 11th floor
Los Angeles, California, 90020
www.lahumanrelations.org
(213) 738-2788

[PROPOSED] MINUTES
COMMISSION ON HUMAN RELATIONS
Meeting of December 6, 2021
Via Microsoft Teams Video & Audio Conferencing

PRESENT:	Michael Cheung	Kevork Keushkerian
	Helen Chin	Preeti Kulkarni
	Ilan Davidson	Tonya McKenzie
	Adrian Dove	Guadalupe Montaño
	Jeanette Ellis-Royston	Fredrick Sykes
	Porter Gilberg	Sandra Thomas
	Isabelle Gunning	Gay Q. Yuen
	Derric Johnson	
STAFF:	Robin Toma	Grace Löwenberg
	Robert Sowell	Siranush Vardanyan
GUEST:	Audrey Comber	

- 1. Call to Order and Land Acknowledgement of Indigenous Peoples:** Commission President Commissioner Guadalupe Montaño called the meeting to order at 12:32 p.m. with a quorum of 8 Commissioners in attendance. President Montaño included in the opening a land acknowledgement of indigenous peoples in our county.
- 2. Motion** finding a state of emergency continues to directly impact the ability of the members to meet safely in person, and/or state or local officials continue to impose or recommend measures to promote social distancing. President Montaño invited such a motion be made. Commissioner Preeti Kulkarni made the motion as stated in the agenda, and Commissioner Sandra Thomas seconded. The motion passed unanimously.
- 3. Review & Approval of November 1, 2021 Meeting Minutes:** It was moved by Commissioner Thomas and seconded by Commissioner Tonya McKenzie to approve the minutes of the Commission meeting of November 1, 2021. The motion passed unanimously.
- 4. President's Report**
 - 4.1 Release of Annual Report on Hate Crime:** President Montaño reported that a press conference was held on November 10 to announce the release of the 2020 Annual Report on Hate Crime. She also reported that there was considerable press coverage. In addition, she reminded the Commissioners that a meeting of the Network Against Hate Crime is scheduled for this afternoon. Staff member Marshall Wong will present on the main findings of our report in that meeting. In response to President Montaño's request, Executive Director Robin Toma added that this hate crime report press conference used a different approach with fewer speakers, including LA County District Attorney,

George Gascón, Commission President Montaña, and ED Toma, and that an advance copy of the report had been sent to the LA Times per their request with the understanding that the information would not be released until the press conference. He said that staff recently had reviewed the press coverage and found that it was substantial and more in-depth, including some Spanish-language media and an interview by ED Toma with the 'Good Day LA' program. He added that the press coverage was more than in many years, possibly because of the reported increase in hate crime overall as well as an increase in racial hate crimes, and that for the first time, there was positive coverage about LA vs Hate as part of the attention given to the report. He acknowledged staff who produced the report led by Marshall Wong, and including Monica Lomeli, Roland Gilbert, Robert Sowell, and other staff. Presentations have been and will be made to other groups and partners. ED Toma urged the Commissioners to share the report, noting that it is an effort we should be proud of.

4.2 Commission guest speaker: President Montaña asked Commissioner Kulkarni to report on the work of the ACLU. Commissioner Kulkarni informed the Commissioners that the ACLU is a national organization with at least one affiliate office in every state. In California, there are four. Commissioner Kulkarni said the ACLU strives for a democracy in which fundamental rights are extended to everyone not only in theory but also in practice. Strategies used for this purpose include litigation, policy research and advocacy, media, and community organization. Locally, priorities include an emphasis on immigrant rights. An example of their work includes the FBI vs Fazaga case which deals with what occurred at an Orange County mosque where the FBI sent someone to infiltrate and secretly record members of Muslim community. The ACLU is one of the organizations representing some members of the mosque who are suing the FBI. This case was recently argued before the US Supreme Court and the decision is pending. Another area of emphasis is criminal justice reform. Commissioner Kulkarni referenced a graphic that she sent to the Commissioners that shows different views of criminal justice change from abolition to reform. Commissioner Kulkarni also said the ACLU is monitoring what is happening with access to abortion. She said the ACLU joined partner organizations who argued a Mississippi abortion law case before the US Supreme Court. ACLU is expecting women's right to choose abortion to be eliminated by Supreme Court decision. ACLU is trying to decide how to best help pregnant persons. They estimate that 25 or more states may severely restrict pregnancy rights following the court decision. ACLU is unclear if anyone who helps someone in Texas gain access to an abortion would be liable for fines under Texas law. ACLU and others currently are exploring whether California can be a safe haven for abortion access. Commissioner Kulkarni commented that the local ACLU office, ACLU of Southern California, is proud of its advocacy on behalf of the Asian American community and stated that ACLU Southern California was the only ACLU affiliate that opposed the Japanese internment during World War II. She added that the local ACLU office platform includes a focus on economic justice which is not an emphasis for other affiliates. Commissioner Kulkarni reminded the Commissioners that Commissioner Isabelle Gunning is a member of the board of the local ACLU office. In response to Commissioner Kulkarni's invitation, Commissioner Gunning referred to a recent presentation on the Charleston, South Carolina white supremacist gathering by the local office to a national ACLU event. The presentation distinguished between ACLU historical support for free speech, including, for example, a group of Nazis who marched through a Jewish neighborhood, and what happened in Charleston. An important difference is that many of those who gathered in Charleston were heavily armed members of a paramilitary group that had been calling for violence.

5. Executive Director's Report

ED Toma introduced Siranush Vardanyan who was in the meeting. Ms. Vardanyan now fills the position vacated by Jaye Winter. In response to ED Toma's invitation, Ms. Vardanyan said she is excited to be working with Robin and to help the Commissioners. She thanked the Commissioners for their emails welcoming her. ED Toma also introduced Audrey Comber who was attending the meeting. Ms. Comber is a graduate student at UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs. In response to ED Toma's invitation, Ms. Comber said she is happy to attend the meeting and see the process.

5.1 LA vs Hate's United Against Hate Week (November 14-19): ED Toma reported that November 14-19 was the second United Against Hate Week which is part of our LA vs Hate initiative. He stated that the release of the annual Hate Crime Report the week before informed people of the seriousness of hate in LA County. Conducting the United Against Hate Week the week after promptly gave people opportunity to do something about acts of hate. There were many gatherings during the week including a panel on a Future Without Hate, a panel with community-based organizations, and a workshop for law enforcement officials. ED Toma remarked that there was energy, excitement, and many ideas during the week. ED Toma invited others who attended any part of the week to comment. Commissioner McKenzie said that chalk art events were conducted at selected locations in Redondo Beach, Hermosa Beach, Manhattan. She commented that there is a need to engage leadership from more cities in the future. ED Toma agreed and reported that there were more than a dozen cities in LA County that made proclamations and conducted events as part of this special week. There were many more participating this year, but there are many more to involve. Continued expansion will be accomplished through the LA vs Hate Action Committees. Commissioner McKenzie asked about the possibility of County Supervisors making it a priority to help enlist cities in their Districts to participate. ED Toma said the Supervisors made a proclamation of the week and observed that it is a good idea to ask them to encourage their cities to take action. He recognized staff members Terri Villa McDowell and Fidel Rodriguez for their work to plan and conduct the week along with community partners and TaskForce, 211LA, and Special Services for Groups.

ED Toma announced that the annual International Association of Human Rights Agencies conference is tomorrow and Thursday entirely online. He said we're hoping to host an in-person meeting next year. He reminded the Commissioners that information for this year's conference was sent to them and asked that Commissioners let him and staff member Grace Löwenberg know if Commissioners want to attend so a link can be sent to them, and arrangements can be made for them to participate.

5.2 Update on Commission's new location in County Org. Structure: ED Toma reported to the Commissioners that we were informed by Supervising Administrator (SA) Epifanio Peinado that we will be moved to the Executive Office of the Board in the middle of January. ED Toma pointed out that this was the second choice the Commission identified in its previous decision about our place in the County structure. He stated that this makes sense for us if we can't be independent within the County. Other commissions are located in the Board Executive Office, including the Civilian Oversight Commission and the Youth Commission. The LA City/County Native American Indian Commission also will move to the Board Executive Office in mid-January. ED Toma also reported that the CEO has decided to move the Dispute Resolution Program to the County Department of Consumer and Business Affairs. ED Toma said we responded to this information by sharing concerns with SA Peinado and some Board offices. ED Toma thanked the Commissioners who assisted with this effort. ED Toma reported that we are not losing any staff members with this transition, but that funding for one position will be moved to DCBA. ED Toma added that we will continue to collaborate with DRP partners for multi-party disputes. Commissioner Gunning asked why this decision was made and what we will do about support for

community disputes. ED Toma responded that the DRP mediation providers mediate all kinds of disputes and that will continue, though, when contracts need to be renewed, DCBA can make changes in the design. ED Toma said we have made the case for the kinds of programs we believe are important and how we have related this program to human relations. Regarding why this decision was made, ED Toma observed that DRP was in the Department of Workforce Development, Aging, and Community Services when we came in 2009. (It was the Department of Community and Senior Services at the time.) In the recent transitions that are separating WDACS into 2 departments, part of DCBA came to the newly formed economic and workforce development department, and perhaps DCBA looked for something they could get in exchange. In addition, the chief deputy of the County CEO's office is the former head of DCBA. DCBA has a lot of well-placed people. ED Toma stated that our hope is that DCBA will continue the important aspects of this program. We are eager to protect the restorative justice work and engagement with complex community disputes. ED Toma also reported that there are no plans for staff to move to a different physical office location before the end of the current fiscal year, June 30, 2022. He reminded the Commissioners that staff currently is mostly working remotely.

6. Committee Reports

6.1 Ad Hoc Committee on Policing & Human Relations: Committee Chair Commissioner Gunning reported that the Committee met during the usual time shortly before the Commission meeting. She stated that there is no action item from the Committee today. During the meeting this morning the discussion focused on My Tribe Rise with whom we have a good ongoing relationship. She said that she and other Commissioners along with staff visited Supervisor Barger and staff about support for My Tribe Rise and the result was less than what had been hoped. As next steps, Assistant Executive Director Robert Sowell will work with staff member Josh Parr and Commissioner Thomas to talk with someone on Supervisor Barger's staff to get a contact that might assist My Tribe Rise with applying for Measure J funds and gaining more information about what kind of collaboration with city and law enforcement Barger has in mind for My Tribe Rise. Commissioner Gunning also said that Commissioner Derric Johnson might assist My Tribe Rise and other community organizations to know how to request discretionary funds from Supervisors' offices in advance of fiscal year starts. In addition, Commissioner Gunning said the Committee plans to encourage My Tribe Rise to collaborate with other groups on a voter registration drive because Supervisors care about civic engagement through voting. Commissioner Gunning reported that next year the Committee wants to give attention to training for police and how to determine what is best, including working with information from the International Association of Chiefs of Police about trauma-informed training. Commissioner Gunning informed the Commissioners that Commissioner McKenzie hosts a podcast and is interested in having Committee members and other Commissioners talk about what they do. Commissioner Grace Yuen asked about the purpose of the Committee and stated that she hosts a weekly Zoom conversation with 10 people focused on the city of Los Angeles in which policing has been at the top on the agenda. Meetings have included LAPD Chief Moore and lieutenants. Next week the focus will be on the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department. Commissioner Gunning encouraged Commissioner Yuen to go to the Commission web site and see the report that was released in the summer of 2020 and the accompanying video. Commissioner Gunning also said Commissioner Yuen will have the link to participate in the next Committee meeting.

6.2 Ad Hoc Committee on Strategic Planning: Committee Chair Commissioner Kulkarni reported that ED Toma sent the Commissioners an email earlier today requesting their response to possible dates for two 2-hour strategic planning sessions. She asked that Commissioners respond by tomorrow. Commissioner Kulkarni also pointed out that some Commissioners have not submitted written summaries of their interview with community partners. She asked that Commissioners prepare to

share results from their interviews in the strategic planning sessions. ED Toma said there will be a document prepared for these sessions that summarizes what Commissioners and staff have written about community partner interviews. He clarified that during these sessions we will be talking about the direction of the Commission and staff for the next 3 years and said we want as many Commissioners as possible to participate. Commissioner Kulkarni stated that also included in the sessions will be attention to individual goals for the Commissioners to help with promotion of the work of the Commission.

6.3 Policy and Advocacy Committee: Committee Chair Commissioner Montaña reported that the County Board of Supervisors passed a motion to make the UN Convention to Eliminate Discrimination Against Women the “law of the land” in Los Angeles County with broad goals to promote rights of women and girls and prevent discrimination. Commissioner Gunning affirmed this great, fabulous work and thanked Commissioner Montaña for leading this effort. Commissioner Gunning added that we want to continue to push for implementation of these goals.

6.4 John Anson Ford (JAF) Awards Committee: Committee Chair Commissioner Ilan Davidson informed the Commissioners that all Supervisors have confirmed the nominees. Requests for scrolls and videos are being sent and awardees are being notified. Commissioner Davidson also said he wants to discuss with Commissioner Adrian Dove how to spotlight the awards and nominees in the King Day Parade this year or next. He said a meeting of this Committee will be scheduled soon and thanked staff, led by AED Sowell, for their work in preparation for the January 10 online event. He also commented that it would be a benefit to the awardees if they received information about how to apply for discretionary funds from the Supervisors.

7. **Public Comment:** None

8. **Action/Discussion Items**

Due to the time, President Montaña asked if there were any of the remaining items on the agenda that could not be tabled until the next meeting. It was agreed that there are no matters that must be dealt with today. So without objection, the following items were tabled to the next meeting: 8.1. Strategic Planning Issues and Timeline; 8.2. LA vs. Hate Update: report and discussion on events incl. Black Asian Solidarity mural; 8.3. \$2 Million in federal ARP funding for Addressing Pandemic-caused Harms via LA vs Hate and Eviction Prevention Project (DRP); and 8.4. Facebook and Instagram impact on hate activity and human relations. In response to a question, President Montaña said that if there are organizations invited to speak to the Commission, these remarks could be included in future meetings as part of the President’s report.

9. **Commissioner Announcements:** In response to President Montaña’s invitation, Commissioner Yuen announced the Chinese American Museum annual gala will take place December 16. It will be free and online. She also said that up to \$100,000 in donations will be matched by an anonymous donor. Commissioner Jeanette Ellis-Royston announced that her NAACP branch is working with a descendant of one of the historic Buffalo Soldiers to raise money for a memorial in Nogales, Arizona. She requested if she can email information about this to ED Toma for distribution to all the Commissioners. ED Toma agreed and asked that she send the information to him and staff member Löwenberg. Commissioner Dove announced that the 37th annual King Day Parade will take place on January 17 and invited everyone to watch it. Commissioner Ellis-Royston announced that this Saturday in Pomona there will be a parade and the grand marshal will be Astronaut Victor Glover who is originally from Pomona.

10. **Adjournment:** In response to President Montaña's request, Commissioner Dove made, and Commissioner Fredrick Sykes seconded, a motion to adjourn in memory of Mary Louise Longoria, long-time former staff member of the Commission and Jacqueline Avant. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Ilan Davidson
Commission Vice President-Secretary



Los Angeles County

Commission on Human Relations

Department of Workforce Development, Aging Community Services
3175 West Sixth Street, Suite 406
(213) 738-2788
Los Angeles, CA 90020

Ad Hoc Committee on Policing & Human Relations

Meeting Notice
Monday, January 3rd, 2022
10:00 AM – 11:30 AM

Microsoft Teams
Teleconference Meeting
Los Angeles County, CA

Members: Commissioners Isabelle Gunning, Sandra Thomas, Preeti Kulkarni, Fredrick Sykes, Derric Johnson, Jeanette Ellis-Royston, Tonya McKenzie

Staff: Robin Toma, Robert Sowell, Ray Regalado, Pierre Arreola, Joshua Parr

AGENDA

1. County Updates – **20 Minutes**
 - a. Public Safety Cluster
 - b. Alternative Crisis Response Convenings
 - c. Care First Community Investment Initiative
 - d. Countywide Criminal Justice Coordination Committee
2. Project Updates – **25 Minutes**
 - a. My Tribe Rise
 - b. Care First South Pasadena
 - c. City of Long Beach
 - d. CAT 911 SFV
3. Topics of Interest – **45 Minutes**
 - a. Planning for 2022
 - b. Current Events

Feminism

bell hooks obituary

Trailblazing writer, activist and cultural theorist who made a pivotal contribution to Black feminist thought



bell hooks in 2018. She wrote 40 books in a career spanning more than four decades. Photograph: Holler Home/The Orchard/Kobal/Shutterstock

Margaret Busby

Fri 17 Dec 2021 09.57 EST

A trailblazing cultural theorist and activist, public intellectual, teacher and feminist writer, bell hooks, who has died of kidney failure aged 69, authored around 40 books in a career spanning more than four decades. Exploring the intersecting oppressions of gender, race and class, her writings additionally reflected her concerns with issues related to art, history, sexuality, psychology and spirituality, ultimately with love at the heart of community healing.

Using storytelling as effectively as social theory, she was creatively agile in a range of genres, including poetry, essays, memoir, self-help and children's books, as well as appearing in documentary films and working in academia. However, her outstanding legacy may be her pivotal contribution to Black feminist thought, first articulated in her 1981 book *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism*, which examined both historical racism and sexism, going back to the treatment of Black women from enslavement to give context to continuing racial and sexual injustice.

The daughter of Veodis Watkins, a postal worker, and his wife, Rosa Bell (nee Oldham), she was born Gloria Jean Watkins in the small rural town of Hopkinsville, Kentucky, and her upbringing was affected by being part of a working-class African-American family in the US south, initially educated at racially segregated schools. A gifted child, she enjoyed the poetry of William Wordsworth, Langston Hughes, Elizabeth Barrett Browning and **Gwendolyn Brooks**, and was encouraged to write verse of her own well before she reached her teens. Scholarships enabled her to study at Stanford University, in California, where she earned a BA in English in 1973, and she took an MA in English from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 1976.

That year she began teaching at the University of Southern California, and during her time there her first publication, the poetry chapbook *And There We Wept* (1978), appeared under the pseudonym bell hooks – a name she adopted

in tribute to her maternal great-grandmother, styling it in lowercase so as to keep the focus on her work rather than on her own persona.

She had begun writing her major work, *Ain't I a Woman* – its title referencing a celebrated speech by the 19th-century Black abolitionist Sojourner Truth – as an undergraduate. Harshly criticised from some quarters, the book eventually achieved influential status as a classic that centres Black womanhood. Another key title, *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center* (1984), is a critique of mainstream feminist theory in which Black women exist only on the margins, with the women's liberation movement being primarily structured around issues relevant to white women with class privilege.

The journalist and media consultant Joan Harris recalled the historical context, when “it was almost considered anathema, almost traitorous, if you were Black also to be a ‘feminist’” and joining a white women's group was not an option, given the differing concerns at the time. Harris said: “Bell's work clarified things ... Her work, her presence, made me, and so many others, feel validated during a truly fraught time.”

During the 1980s and 1990s, hooks taught at a number of educational institutions, among them Yale University, Oberlin College and the City College of New York. In 2004 she joined the faculty of Berea College in her native Kentucky, where in 2014 the **bell hooks Institute** was established. She received the American Book awards/Before Columbus Foundation award for *Yearning: Race, Gender and Cultural Politics* (1990) and was nominated for an NAACP Image award for her 1999 children's book *Happy to Be Nappy*.

An advocate of anti-racist, anti-sexist and anti-capitalist politics, she produced radical writings that shaped popular and academic discourse. Her books illuminated a wide range of topics, evidenced by just a selection of the titles: *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black* (1989); *Breaking Bread: Insurgent Black Intellectual Life* (with Cornel West, 1991); *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (1992); *Reel to Real: Race, Sex and Class at the Movies* (1996); *We Real Cool: Black Men and Masculinity* (2004); and *Soul Sister: Women, Friendship, and Fulfillment* (2005).

Her writing resonated far beyond the US, and her work was translated into 15 languages. Invited to London for the International Book Fair of Radical Black and Third World Books in 1991, she spoke and took part in debates and readings, engaging with local activists. In my 1992 anthology *Daughters of Africa* I included the title essay from her collection *Talking Back*, which in many ways encapsulates the origins, motivation and inspiration that propelled her forward from early in life.

“In the world of the southern black community I grew up in, ‘back talk’ and ‘talking back’ meant speaking as an equal to an authority figure. It meant daring

to disagree and sometimes it meant just having an opinion,” she explained. For a child, to speak when not spoken to was to invite punishment, so was a courageous act, an act of risk and daring. It was in that world that the craving was born in her “to have a voice, and not just any voice, but one that could be identified as belonging to me ... Certainly for black women, our struggle has not been to emerge from silence into speech but to change the nature and direction of our speech, to make a speech that compels listeners, one that is heard.”

Her spirit refused to be crushed by the somewhat harsh reception her first work received and, tellingly, she wrote: “Now when I ponder the silences, the voices that are not heard, the voices of those wounded and/or oppressed individuals who do not speak or write, I contemplate the acts of persecution, torture – the terrorism that breaks spirits, that makes creativity impossible. I write these words to bear witness to the primacy of resistance struggle in any situation of domination (even within family life); to the strength and power that emerges from sustained resistance and the profound conviction that these forces can be healing, can protect us from dehumanisation and despair.”

For hooks, it was “that act of speech, of ‘talking back’, that is no mere gesture of empty words, that is the expression of our movement from object to subject – the liberated voice”.

She is survived by four sisters, Sarah, Valeria, Angela and Gwenda, and a brother, Kenneth.

bell hooks (Gloria Jean Watkins), writer, born 25 September 1952; died 15 December 2021

Desmond Tutu, Whose Voice Helped Slay Apartheid, Dies at 90

The archbishop, a powerful force for nonviolence in South Africa's anti-apartheid movement, was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1984.

Desmond M. Tutu at Washington National Cathedral in 1984. The archbishop was a spellbinding preacher, assuring his parishioners of God's love while exhorting them to follow the path of nonviolence in their struggle. Credit...Associated Press

By **Marilyn Berger**

Published Dec. 26, 2021 Updated Dec. 28, 2021

Desmond M. Tutu, the cleric who used his pulpit and spirited oratory to help bring down apartheid in South Africa and then became the leading advocate of peaceful reconciliation under Black majority rule, died on Sunday in Cape Town. He was 90.

His death was confirmed by the office of South Africa's president, Cyril Ramaphosa, who called the archbishop "a leader of principle and pragmatism who gave meaning to the biblical insight that faith without works is dead."

The cause of death was cancer, the Desmond and Leah Tutu Legacy Foundation said, adding that Archbishop Tutu had died in a care facility. He was [first diagnosed](#) with prostate cancer in 1997, and was hospitalized several times in the years since, amid recurring fears that the disease had spread.

As leader of the South African Council of Churches and later as Anglican archbishop of Cape Town, Archbishop Tutu led the church to the forefront of Black South Africans' decades-long struggle for freedom. His voice was a powerful force for nonviolence in the anti-apartheid movement, earning him a [Nobel Peace Prize in 1984](#).

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When that movement triumphed in the early 1990s, he prodded the country toward a new relationship between its white and Black citizens, and, as chairman of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, he gathered testimony documenting the viciousness of apartheid.

"You are overwhelmed by the extent of evil," he said. But, he added, it was necessary to open the wound to cleanse it. In return for an honest accounting of past crimes, the committee offered amnesty, establishing what Archbishop Tutu called the principle of restorative — rather than retributive — justice.

His credibility was crucial to the commission's efforts to get former members of the South African security forces and former guerrilla fighters to cooperate with the inquiry.

Archbishop Tutu preached that the policy of apartheid was as dehumanizing to the oppressors as it was to the oppressed. At home, he stood against looming violence and

sought to bridge the chasm between Black and white; abroad, he [urged economic sanctions](#) against the South African government to force a change of policy. What's the Best Book of the Past 125 Years? We Asked Readers to Decide.



In 1986, he was named archbishop of Cape Town and became spiritual head of the country's 1.5 million Anglicans, 80 percent of whom were Black. Credit...Steve Hilton Barber/Associated Press

But as much as he had inveighed against the apartheid-era leadership, he displayed equal disapproval of leading figures in the dominant African National Congress, which came to power under [Nelson Mandela](#) in the first fully democratic elections in 1994.