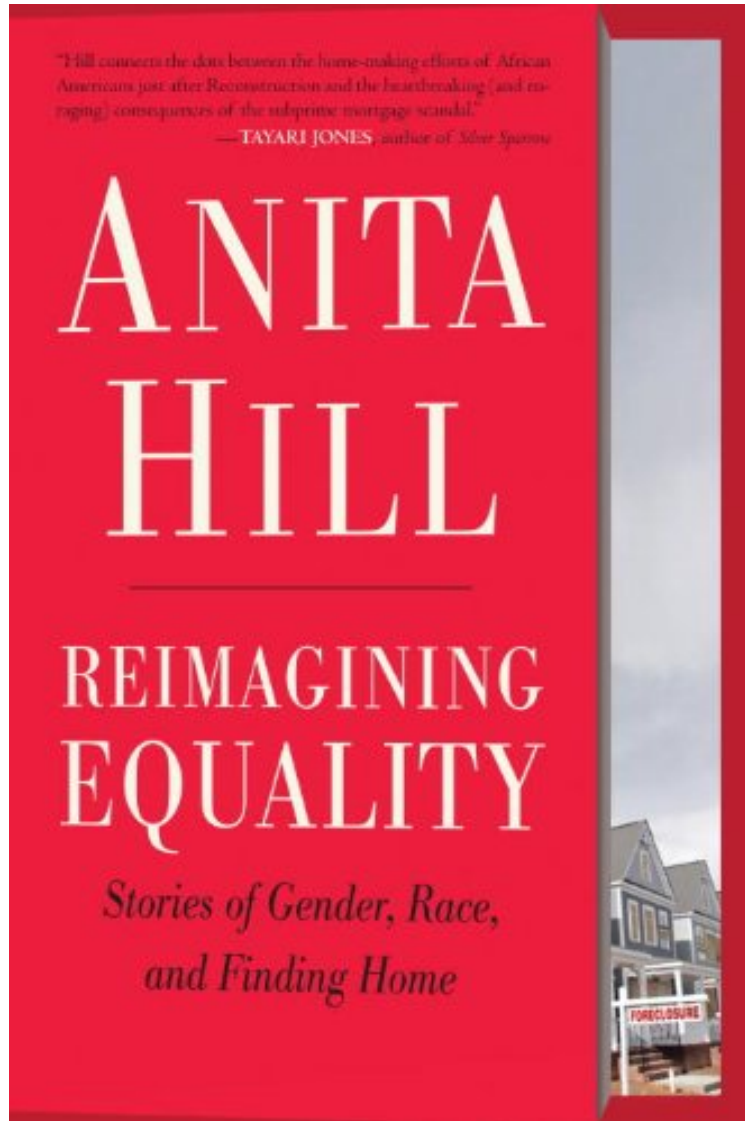


(Download pdf) Reimagining Equality: Stories of Gender, Race, and Finding Home

## Reimagining Equality: Stories of Gender, Race, and Finding Home

Anita Hill

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**Anita Hill : Reimagining Equality: Stories of Gender, Race, and Finding Home** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Reimagining Equality: Stories of Gender, Race, and Finding Home:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Ahead of her Time (Again).By Lisa BorgeWas obsessed with the Hill/Thomas Hearings in the early nineties and recently read her book "Speaking Truth to Power" and watched her harrowing grilling by the men of the Senate Judiciary Committee in full on the internet. Just watching it was

BRUTAL. It's wonderful to see how gracefully she has moved on and have the benefit of her insights at a time when economic inequality is such an urgent issue of national concern. Anita Hill was ahead of her time in 1991 and still is nearly 25 years later. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Finding HomeBy Catherine OnyemelukweProfessor Hill's book helped me understand the difficulties we have talking about race mainly, but also gender issues. I contacted her for assistance with questions to use as I lead discussion of the book. The conversation was revealing and stimulating. I especially love this in talking about home: "I would encourage a generation of Facebook users to forego [where are you from] and ask instead, "Where is your home?" Then she says, think about the role race plays in your choices and in your answer. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. blumaxBy BLUMAX(maxineallin)Fascinating book..as is Anita...thanks Anita...wish i knew you. ..

From the heroic lawyer who spoke out against Clarence Thomas in the historic confirmation hearings twenty years ago "This ambitious book provides just as dignified and well intentioned a performance as the one she gave at those hearings." —Megan Buskey, The New York Times Book Review Through the stories of remarkable African American women, including her own great-great-grandmother, playwright Lorraine Hansberry, and Baltimore beauty-shop owner and housing-crisis survivor Anjanette Booker, Anita Hill demonstrates that the inclusive democracy our Constitution promises must be conceived with home in mind. From slavery to the Great Migration to the subprime mortgage meltdown, Reimagining Equality takes us on a journey that sparks a new conversation about what it means to be at home in America and presents concrete proposals that encourage us to reimagine equality.

"An eloquent continuation of her giving voice to the invisible, the voiceless, the undocumented, the hopeless and, yes, the all too literally homeless." —Patricia J. Williams, The Nation "This ambitious book provides just as dignified and well intentioned a performance as the one she gave at those hearings." —Megan Buskey, The New York Times Book "Hill superbly articulates the nuanced spaces inside the home where gender inequities might be present, and outside the home where gender and race disparities create barriers to housing stability. She concludes with a call to US leaders and citizenry to proactively engage as partners for a more just society. Summing Up: Recommended. All academic levels/libraries."—Choice "Serious readers of all kinds, especially those interested in current affairs and social policy, will appreciate a book that is both highly readable and deeply analytical."—Library Journal "In the first sweeping history of Parks's life, Theoharis shows us a long-time activist committed to fighting white supremacy from her earliest days. From underground investigations of white-on-black rapes in rural Alabama, where no law respected or protected black people, to her work alongside Robert Williams, Malcolm X, and Queen Mother Moore, Rosa Parks not only sat down on the bus; she stood on the right side of justice for her entire life."—Julian Bond, chairman emeritus, NAACP "With extraordinary grace and clarity, Anita Hill weaves the story of her family with that of other American families struggling to find and define homes for themselves. What emerges is a powerful story of our nation's ongoing quest for equality of opportunity, viewed through the eyes of the people who have been deeply engaged in that quest. Beautifully written, elegantly seen, compellingly argued."—Robert B. Reich, author of Aftershock "It has taken an astute author to find the real Rosa Parks. . . . Parks was no accidental heroine. She was born to it, and Theoharis ably shows us how and why" —Kirkus s "Her book, lucid about law, lively with smatterings of history and reminders of cultural markers, may open that conversation."—Publisher's Weekly "Combining the sincerity of memoir and the rigor of sociology, Anita Hill looks at home as a physical space, but also as a microcosm of American society. The women profiled in this engaging and moving book illustrate the challenges of living in America as a raced and gendered person while simultaneously demonstrating the beauty of resistance and the triumphs of family, community, and faith. Hill connects the dots between the home-making efforts of African Americans just after Reconstruction and the heartbreaking (and enraging) consequences of the subprime mortgage scandal. After reading this book, you will never see a house as just four walls and a roof. It is a dream and we, as Americans, are the dreamers."—Tayari Jones, author of Silver Sparrow "Anita Hill's bravery, intellect and commitment to justice galvanized a generation of women. If that weren't enough, it turns out she's also a wonderful story-teller. Re-Imagining Equality will change your ideas about home, race and gender—and it's also great fun to read."—Peggy Orenstein, author, Cinderella Ate My Daughter "In a book that is rigorous and heartfelt, sharply analytical and deeply moving, Anita Hill examines the idea of what 'home' means to Americans. Bringing to bear her formidable skills as a scholar of American law, history, and culture, Hill has produced a personal narrative that reaches across color and class to explore how our family homes and our national home are inextricably linked to how we understand achievement, opportunity, and equality."—Henry Louis Gates, Jr., Alphonse Fletcher University Professor, Harvard University "In her new book, Reimagining Equality: Stories of Race, Gender, and Finding Home, Professor Anita Hill has written a sobering and compelling book about the plight of woman historically and now. This book is a must read for anyone who is committed to gender equality, and will be invaluable to those who are trying to understand many of the burdens that women, black and white face, in their everyday lives. An easy read, this book has both tragic and triumphant stories and covers the life of women through slavery, and those who now live in the Obama era. They remind us that we still have to come to grips with issues of race and gender, and that we need to re-imagine the question of equality for all. I recommend it with great enthusiasm

and excitement about its value to a large audience of readers.”—Professor Charles J. Ogletree Jr., author of *The Presumption of Guilt: The Arrest of Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Race, Class, and Crime in America*

About the Author  
Anita Hill is a professor of social policy, law, and women’s studies at Brandeis University. She is the author of *Speaking Truth to Power*, in which she detailed her experience as a witness in Clarence Thomas’s Supreme Court confirmation hearings. Excerpt. © Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved.

Introduction  
"Home: The place of one’s dwelling or nurturing, with the conditions, circumstances, and feelings which naturally attach to it and are associated with it . . . not merely 'place' but also 'state.'" *The Oxford English Dictionary*

This is a book about home. As the first decade of the new millennium came to a close, the country was still reeling from a housing crisis that caused both physical and psychological distress. The centrality of home to individuals of all stripes was never more apparent. Millions of Americans, male and female, of all races, had been set adrift as a result of reckless personal and institutional financial behavior, the precipitous decline of manufacturing industries, and in the case of Hurricane Katrina, an unprecedented natural disaster. And whether as a place or as a state of being, the significance of home to neighborhood, city, and national well-being was becoming clear. Moreover, the crisis raised questions about whether our country is indeed a welcoming location of endless possibility to those seeking the American Dream. Our national identity was being challenged by the home ownership crisis. Many have lost faith in homeownership, a bedrock of the American Dream. This loss is further complicated by the role of the home in defining equality and democracy—a role that is often overlooked, even though where one lives determines school assignments, voting opportunities, and often the availability of jobs, goods, and services. Yet little attention is paid to the complicated interrelationship between where one calls home, what happens inside the home, and equality outside the home. I plan to examine home as a place and a state of being by interweaving discussions of law, literature, and culture with stories of individuals, focusing on women, and African Americans, in search of equality. These stories reflect each woman’s experience in finding and shaping a home where she could achieve some measure of equality for herself and her family. Beginning with my own story, I invite readers to think about their experiences and yearning for home, even as they read of others whose experiences are different but who share a desire to be equal participants in our democracy. The women featured and I have learned over the course of our lives that home, as well as equality, need to be reconceived as our worlds change. These stories of gender, race, and finding home guide us through a history of imagining and reimagining equality. They also address issues that have long been neglected in this country but must be grappled with in order to ensure that every American has the opportunity to achieve the sense of belonging that comes from being at home. As black women have come to head the majority of black households, they have become the primary “homebuilders.” They have also become dominant forces as community builders in African American neighborhoods. Their determination to build their lives, their families, and their communities, despite harsh perceptions of them, is evidence of their belief in the promise of America, even in times when that promise may seem irreparably broken. Their struggle points to an important lesson: we may have reached the limits of current rights legislation’s ability to assure liberty and equality for all. For these women and others who have yet to be perfectly at home in our nation, we need to find other strategies. Black women know what it means physically, socially, and economically to possess a gender and a race. They know that race and gender equality must both be realized if either is to be achieved. Like other women, they struggle to balance work and family obligations, and they suffer from violence in their homes and on the streets of their communities. Along with African American men in many racially isolated neighborhoods, they endure crime, inadequate schools, and a lack of public and private amenities. With all women and black men, they face limited employment and educational opportunities, as well as underrepresentation in political arenas. We have passed many laws to try to address these inequities, to level the playing field, and yet we have not finished the work. They struggle, as millions do, to find home in America. How one conceives of home is deeply personal. As the poet T. S. Eliot wrote, “Home is where one starts from.” For me, home is inextricably linked to the story of how my family, in one generation, went from being property to owning property. In the first two chapters, I will explore the beginnings of the meaning I give to home by tracing the path that three generations of my family took to leave behind slavery and its vestiges. Their journeys kept them searching for an attachment to the land, their symbol of survival and belonging. Mollie Elliott, one of my maternal great-grandmothers, was seventeen years old and a slave in 1864, when she gave birth to my maternal grandfather in Little River County, Arkansas. That son, Henry Elliott, went on to homestead eighty acres of land at the turn of the century, only to lose them. Nevertheless, he and his wife, Ida, summoned the courage to move, along with seven of their children, to Oklahoma. They settled very near the farm on which I and my twelve siblings were raised by Erma, their youngest daughter, and her husband, Albert Hill. From the bucolic vantage point of the small, rural community of Lone Tree, our family experienced sweeping social change—from Jim Crow to the civil rights era. My parents remained on the farm well into the 1990s, beyond the time when many Americans had left rural life for a more promising, urban existence. But being well into their sixties by the time the law’s protections began to take hold, they saw the promises of equality not so much for change in their lives, but for the potential to transform the lives of their children. In particular, the advances ushered in by the civil rights and women’s rights movements offered women born in the 1950s and ’60s the kind of independence that Erma Hill could never fully imagine, much less realize. But this much she knew: neither the land, nor a house full of children,

nor even a husband would define the place or the state of her daughter's home. With the rights movements, my path to equality followed an entirely different trajectory from my mother's. Yet in 1973, Erma Hill approached my departure for college with optimism and with little thought of the challenges inherent in imagining a life not only outside rural confines, but also without the constraints of overt discrimination. And why not? The country was on the verge of a new day. A generation of children was making its way into the world to live out America's promise of equality, and she would enjoy a front-row seat knowing that she had prepared me to be a part of it. As personal as the concept of home is, within its contours are principles with universal application. In chapter 3, I explore the history of how home became a preponderant symbol of race and gender advancement in the United States, simultaneously denoting belonging and independence. In 1776, likening the tyranny of husbands in the home to the tyranny of King George over the colonies, Abigail Adams implored her husband, John, to "Remember the Ladies" by including protections for them in the "new Code of Laws." At the turn of the twentieth century, the African American leader Booker T. Washington urged fellow former slaves to abandon the "hovel" and establish respectable homes as evidence that they had earned the right to be recognized as citizens. Washington's contemporary Nannie Helen Burroughs established a school for workingclass African American girls, using the home as the foundation for their intellectual and economic enterprises. Renouncing both gender and race subservience, she encouraged her students to be wage earners and "professional" homemakers. To Adams, Washington, and Burroughs, home stood as a reference point from which equality and civic and economic participation sprang. Piercing the veil between the public and private spheres, Adams imagined women's equality as safety at home, which could be secured only by recognition in the Constitution. For Washington, African Americans' citizenship would emanate from their ability to establish homes that would affirm them as neighbors in the word's fullest and most meaningful sense. The keys to Washington's ideas for equality were community and interconnectedness. In Burroughs's vision, the economic recognition of work that women did in the home rightly established their social and political worth outside the home. In a society dominated by men, Burroughs saw and advocated the dignity and value in women's contributions and in women themselves. Home, a critical component of the American Dream, was at the heart of the quest for an inclusive democracy as pursued by women and people of color. Through the stories of Adams, Washington, Burroughs, and others, I hope to show how home became a positive symbol of advancement. Advocates of equality took a concept that had represented gender and racial oppression and transformed it into a means of empowerment. Eighteenth and nineteenth-century activists argued that liberation required society to reimagine the home, and that the freedom to choose where and how one lives was a vital component of a free society. Moreover, they laid the groundwork for aligning the interests of women and blacks with those of the entire society. Their ideas and their work would take root and develop into twentieth-century migration patterns and equal rights movements. Nothing better represents the twisted path to racial and gender equality in America than the search for home as a place of refuge, financial security, and expression. At the end of the Civil War and well into the twentieth century, for African American families, the search for roots that had been lost to slavery became a search for land, a place where they could earn a living and escape the vestiges of bondage and the brutality of Jim Crow laws. Beginning in about 1915, during what is known in American history as the Great Migration, black men and women began to leave the rural South and make their way to northern industrial cities to find work and a new home. Despite racial restrictions in the North, the bright lines drawn by segregationists were starting to blur. Black women who were domestic workers started to form enclaves in rental housing in affluent neighborhoods. As the number of blacks in the North grew, the demand for housing began to exceed the supply of homes unencumbered by racially restrictive covenants. The idea of challenging those covenants by buying homes in white neighborhoods took hold; purchasing a home in a racially restricted neighborhood became a symbol of racial equality, a way for blacks to realize the desire of all Americans to find a place to belong. Litigation in the 1930s and forms of civil resistance to discrimination ultimately led Congress to pass equality-promising, antidiscrimination legislation in the 1960s.