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Review of *Reimagining Equality: Stories of Gender, Race, and Finding Home*. Anita Hill. Reviewed by Wilma Peebles-Wilkins.

Wilma Peebles-Wilkins
Boston University

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between education and rising social inequality in American society. Several national and local databases were incorporated in a number of the chapters, and some studies rely upon econometric methodology, in line with the policy-oriented direction of the book.

The policy-oriented focus, however, limits the book's ability to explain the process of schooling as dynamic and multifaceted. Throughout, schools were presented as one dimensional black boxes, where inputs into schools were associated with predictable outputs. With this view, it comes as no surprise, as nearly each study in the edited volume suggests, that poorer students fare worse than richer ones. Although several of the last chapters in the book discuss school reform models that either employ internal behavior changing models such as the "No Excuses" approach of the Harlem Children's Zone or external comprehensive community-based models, such as the Broader Bolder Approach to educational reform, the analyses still fail to ask how schools and individuals within schools have agency and can interact and react to rising inequality.

In the end, *Whither Opportunity* provides a comprehensive review of inequality's effects on achievement and education in America. However, when one finishes reading *Whither Opportunity*, a lingering question remains: is describing the mechanisms of unequal opportunity enough? The answer to this question is no, and requires initiation of another discussion that will focus researchers to ask not only what is happening when inequality increases in an age of expanding educational opportunity, but also, how can we ensure that in an age of increasing inequality and increasing educational opportunity, equitable outcomes are achieved?

Catherine Kramarczuk Voulgarides, Metropolitan Center for Urban Education, New York University

Anita Hill. *Reimagining Equality: Stories of Gender, Race, and Finding Home* (2011). Boston, MA: Beacon Press. \$25.95 hardcover.

This latest work by Anita Hill simultaneously contributes to gender studies and the social inequality literature by linking personal stories of homelife and research to the

predatory lending practices associated with the national foreclosure crisis.

As Hill states herself, she “outlines the trajectory from the slave cabin, to segregated housing, to rampant discrimination in mortgage lending practice and now to reverse redlining—targeting women and communities of color for toxic mortgage agreements.” Focusing on the combined factors of class, gender, and race, Hill emphasizes the need to understand historic institutional discrimination and its relationship to modern day insidious practices, such as those practices prevalent in the nation’s lending institutions. The unique approach of connecting personal stories to institutional practices is a particularly powerful approach. The story of her own family is woven with that of other struggling American families trying to achieve the American dream of home ownership. The quest for equal opportunity has never been a joke to the single women, African Americans, Asian Americans, and Latinos who have experienced losses in the current economy. Hill notes that 65 percent of the wealth among these groups has been lost.

This book includes numerous anecdotal accounts of socio-economic struggles of single or divorced women which, as noted by the author, are interwoven with discussions of culture, law and literature. The reader sees a different Anita Hill, one other than the female attorney who accused Clarence Thomas of sexual harassment in the 1991 Supreme Court confirmation hearings. Hill’s stories begin with her own ancestors and family as she describes the story of Mollie Elliot, her maternal great-grandmother who, as a single parent at age seventeen, experienced great difficulties after slavery ended. Hill, influenced by a retired African American school teacher, left her small rural farming community in Lone Tree, Oklahoma to pursue her desire to “earn a living with her mind” at Oklahoma State University. Unlike her ancestors, Hill reaped the benefits of the emphasis on women’s rights and racial equality, thus experiencing a more positive path to equality of opportunity.

The concept of finding home is central to Hill’s focus on building an inclusive democracy. As African Americans migrated from the rural south to improve their lives, she reminds us that the famous African American accommodationist, Booker T. Washington, urged the black community to gain equality by acquiring homes and becoming model neighbors.

Unfortunately, given the recent housing crisis, low income families were exploited when they acquired homes through predatory lending practices. Hill therefore proposes a “new narrative” which focuses on creating a society where there is a sense of belonging and where everyone can secure the full opportunities available in American society. Hill’s emphasis is on an inclusive democracy and her role in helping to bring that about.

Consciousness-raising is an important element of the truly American stories found in this work. In her introduction, Hill points to Lorraine Hansberry’s struggle for home ownership which is chronicled somewhat in her well-known play, *A Raisin in the Sun*. However, socially aware readers quickly make the association between Hill’s narratives and the struggling African American family portrayed in Hansberry’s work. *A Raisin in the Sun* chronicles an African American family’s home ownership struggle. Surprisingly, some years back when Hansberry’s play was done at a local predominantly white college here in North Carolina, there was a startling misinterpretation of the realities of African American life. Early ads (which were later corrected) listed the play as a comedy. This faux pas alone signals the lack of social awareness and lack of sensitivity to African American life experiences as well as other groups experiencing social inequality. We see this insensitivity as well as we listen to wealthy and out-of-touch potential candidates for the next U.S. Presidency express the desire to eliminate the federal food stamp program in a country where far too many folk suffer from hunger and homelessness.

The narratives in the book make for interesting reading and confirm what social scientists already know about social inequality and the struggle for equal opportunity in America. Discussions of President Barack Obama as representative of what Hill considers “finding home” are of less interest because we have already heard so much of all this because of his prominence. We also recognize the challenges President Obama faces in his struggles as the first African American President.

*Wilma Peebles-Wilkins, Dean Emerita, School of Social Work,
Boston University*