

Rurality, Sexuality, Geography: Black Women's Politics of Place and Body

LaToya Eaves
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McKittrick and Woods (2007)

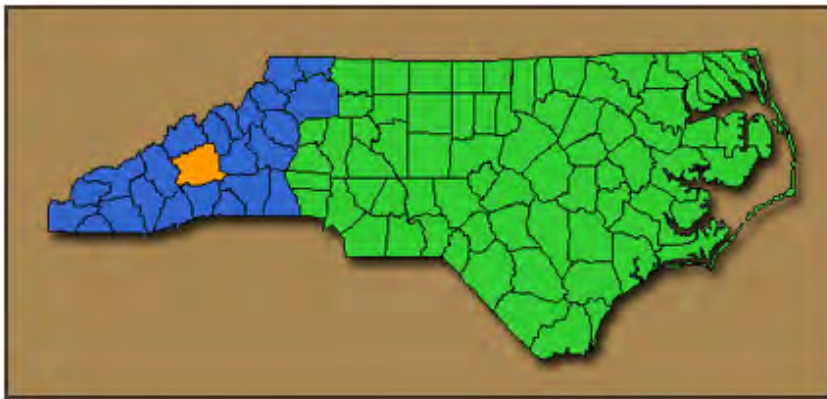
On Black Geographies

- ★ 'consists of the ways in which essentialism situates black subjects and other geopolitical concerns as being elsewhere'
- ★ 'how the lives of these subjects demonstrate that "common-sense" workings of modernity and citizenship are worked out, and normalized through geographies of exclusion'
- ★ 'the situated knowledge of these communities and their contributions to both real and imagined human geographies are significant political acts and expressions' (4).

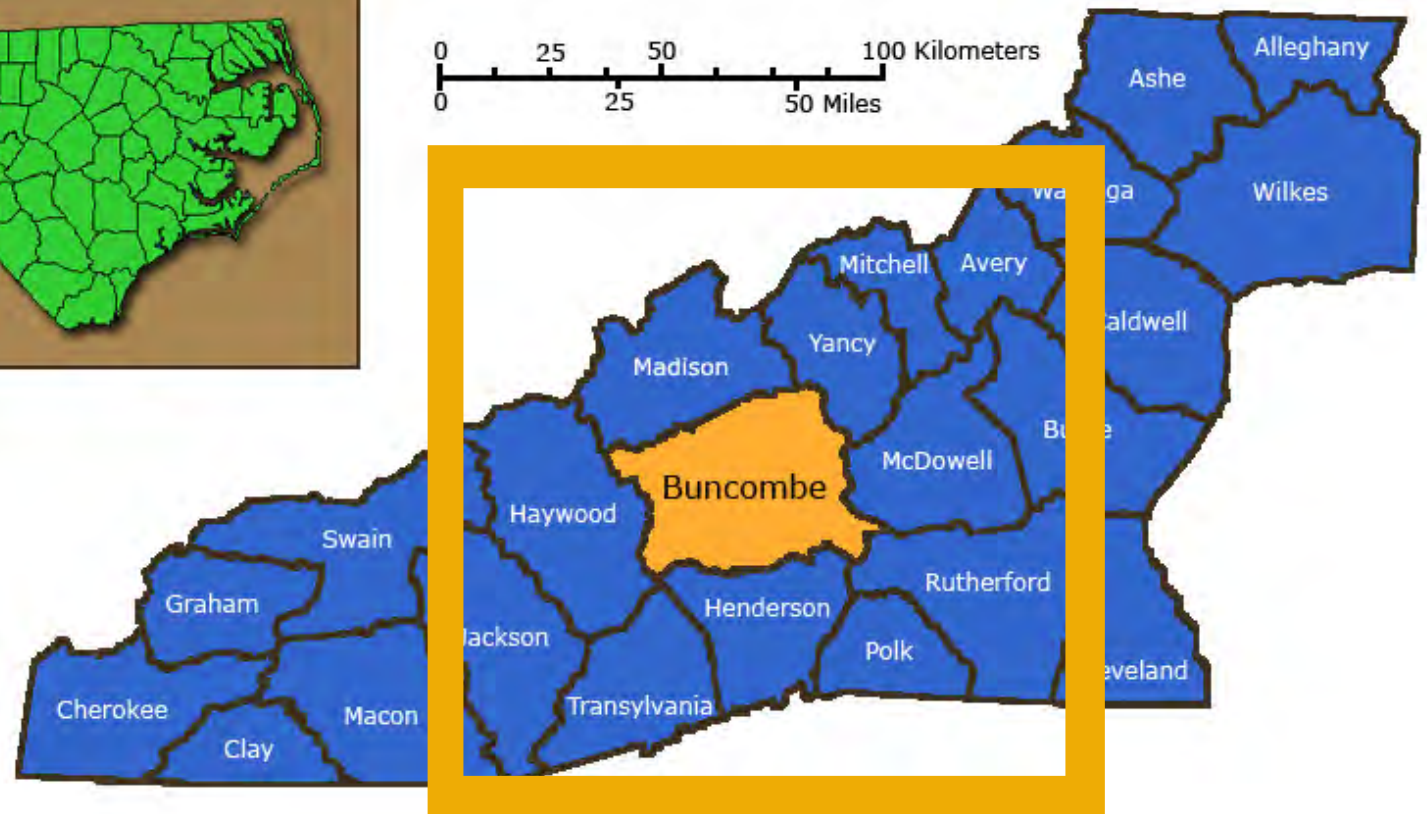
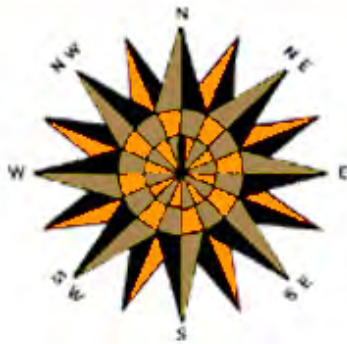
Tausha on "Queer Asheville"



Counties of Western North Carolina



0 25 50 100 Kilometers
0 25 50 Miles



Tausha's Background

“One of my very best friends was the same in the way that we both came from Waynesville so we knew what that small town was. And that everybody knew your name. And everybody had these other expectations for you and had already filled in the picture of your life regardless of whether or not that was your plan.”

Larry Knopp: Queer Quests for Identity

“By ‘quests for identity’ I refer to personal (and sometimes collective, as in the case of nationalisms) journeys through space and time – material, psychic, and at a variety of scales – that are constructed internally as being about the search for an integrated wholeness as individual humans living in some kind of community (if not society). In contemporary ‘Western’ contexts this amounts to a search for emotional and ontological security. Specifically, it is an effort to create order out of the chaos that is fractured identity combined with structures of power that discipline (and, too often for many of us, oppress) identity. This is accomplished through the creation and transformation of what sociologists call ‘communities of limited liability’ (Janowitz, 1952), from loose groupings that emerge out of some shared interest, and that enable individual self-actualization, into collective identities that demand a place at the table in some kind of a liberal imagination. For gays, lesbians, bisexuals, transgenders, and other queers, as for other oppressed groups, this means seeking people, places, relationships, and ways of being that provide the physical and emotional security, the wholeness as individuals and as collectivities, and the solidarity that are denied us in a heterosexist world.”

Global Gay Identity in Question

“So I was drawn into Queer Asheville, “Queer Asheville”, and found this family and for such a long time I was looking for something specific out of this chosen family. I was looking for color. Really. I was lookin’ for some black people. Like where are the black gay people? One, I met three or four and I knew that there had to be more. That there had to be more gay people, black gay people than the three or four people that I met. And all of those people were boys which was so weird to me because I was a girl and I was looking for like this queer lesbian of color space, which is not available in Asheville or if it is available in Asheville it’s on the way hidden underground because I’ve been looking for it for 10 years, 12 years now and I still haven’t found it.”

"...like there's all these queer spaces but they're so segregated. Everything's like there's the white gay males who do this and hang out in this space. And then there's the white gay women who hang out in this space and do this. And then there's the trans community who does their own thing. And then there's this Hispanic trans community and a Hispanic gay male community. But I still haven't found the Hispanic female community or either one of the spaces where male or female black gay people in Asheville hang out. And I just, I just think it's interesting that I haven't found that space or that space doesn't exist because it's something that's so need because of the silence in both communities surrounding glbt issues. Like, something that my mother said in passing to me years ago was 'Black people aren't gay. If you keep hanging out with those gay people, they're going to make you gay and that's not one of our issues. You have other things to worry about'."

The “R” Word - Racism

“Having grown up in this predominantly white space, everything is so foreign to me. Dating didn’t happen for me. And I heard a few people say to me, like friends, “friends” I suppose, say “Oh she’s really cool. Like she’s a really cool girl except she’s black.” Like “except she’s black”? Like that’s some huge big, bad problem? Which was apparently. Because there’s not this connection between black and gay or it could be another form of racism...”

McKittrick (2006)

“recognizing Black women’s knowledgeable positions as integral to physical, cartographic, and experiential geographies within and through dominant spatial models also creates an analytical space for Black feminist geographies: Black women’s political, feminist, imaginary, and creative concerns that respatialize the geographic legacy of racism-sexism” (McKittrick 2006, 53).

The Politics of Place and Body

“And I remember my friends were like “what is wrong with you? What is wrong with you?” I’m like, you don’t understand because from the time I realized that I liked women, that I loved women, that I was gay, there have been no people that look like me, that are like me. And that’s such a thing that’s taken for granted because privilege doesn’t allow you to see through invisibility or through your privilege to what your privilege is hiding or what your privilege is allowing you to participate in without your, without your even having to think about it.”

McKittrick (2007)

“that space and place give black lives meaning in a world that has, for the most part, incorrectly deemed black populations and their attendant geographies as ‘ungeographic’ and/or philosophically undeveloped” (McKittrick 2007, xiii).

“I’ve heard of people being harassed in Queer Asheville for being queer. But that hasn’t been my experience primarily because, I believe, that people don’t see me as queer or if they do first they see me as black. So that stops or starts or hinders their ability to see me as queer because they can’t get past my blackness. [pause] Which is interesting. [long pause] My blackness...that hides my queerness. Because black people aren’t queer. I am! Black and queer.”

Thank you!