

REIMAGINING
EQUALITY

*Stories of Gender, Race,
and Finding Home*

Anita Hill

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Exactly what Adams had in mind when she wrote to John is unclear. She lived at a time when a married woman could not own property, not even the home in which she lived, in her own name. Perhaps Adams wanted her husband to allow wives control over property—at least inherited property—something that was denied to them under English law. She most likely thought that women could best protect themselves from physical harm in the home if they were specifically granted the same rights that the men of the revolution were presumed to have. Those rights certainly would have exceeded the rights women enjoyed in England, but Adams viewed the break from British control as the opportunity for a new way of looking at every citizen's participation. She relished women's aggressive resistance to British authority during the Revolutionary War. Most likely the plea in her letters was for a formulation of the law that would protect women from the "cruelty and indignity" of men who would treat women "only as the Vassals of [their] sex."¹

Already Adams enjoyed an independence in her marriage that few women of any race knew. Gail Collins, author of *America's Women*, calls Adams "a widow to the Revolution."² With her husband away for long stretches of time, Abigail Adams raised their children, took care of the family's finances, and ran their farm. She renounced England as a "tyrannical state" in her own voice.³ Yet John Adams dismissed Abigail's plea for women's independence in the home with no more than a laugh.

FROM BABYLON TO ZION

As limited as Adams's political influence was, her home life was privileged well beyond what many women experienced. Many women, regardless of race or class, were subject to the cruelty Abigail described in her letter to John. For some, home may well have been a prison. Indeed, for most black women prior to the Civil War, home was a plantation or farm in the rural South from which there was no escape. Undoubtedly, despite romantic portrayals to the contrary, most aspired to leave the harshness of slavery for some kind of "promised land" where they could enjoy even a modicum of freedom. Harriet Tubman's engineering of the Underground Railroad is legendary. Yet even at the end of the war, my maternal great-grandmother Mollie Elliott and her son Henry lived within a stone's throw of her former owner. Liberation is not always freedom. In addi-

Gender and Race at Home in America

CHAPTER THREE

Home: 1. Any valued place, original habitation, or emotional attachment regarded as a refuge or place of origin. 2. The place where one was born or spent his early childhood, as a town, state, or country.

The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language

Since before the United States was formed, the home has figured prominently in the imaginations of individuals committed to gender and racial equality. At the urging of individuals devoted to equality and full citizenship, home became a powerful symbol of race and gender advancement, the great signifier of our belonging and independence, in the public imagination as well.

In March 1776, Abigail Adams was keenly aware of the domestic abuse that women in the colonies suffered when she implored her husband, John, to "Remember the Ladies" in her memorable letter. She sought protections for women, in particular married women, in the Declaration of Independence. Though women were largely ignored in the language set out in that document—and later in the United States Constitution, completed just over a decade later—Abigail Adams introduced two powerful ideas into the public discourse: that women needed legal protections that differed from those conceived of by men and granted to protect the power held by men, and that those safeguards must reach into the core of married women's experiences—the home. Women of all races and backgrounds knew that this hallowed space, often thought to be beyond the law's reach, was indeed a place where they could be tyrannized and that any chance they had to live as independent members of society must begin there.

tion to remaining on the slaveholder's property, like so many other former slaves, they continued to work his land years after the war was over.

A few slave women managed to escape Southern bondage to reside in the North or West. One such fortunate soul was Sybela Owens, writer John Edgar Wideman's great-great-grandmother. Wideman credits Sybela, a runaway from a farm in Maryland in 1859, as a founder of a community named Homewood that continues even today, where Wideman spent much of his early life.⁴

No more compelling example of the important role that black women played in establishing the family home exists than that of Biddy Mason. In 1848 Miss Mason, a mother of three daughters—one of whom was nursing at her breast—accompanied her owner, Robert Smith, along with his family and ten other slaves, on a journey from the Smith farm in Mississippi to a brief stay in Utah before settling in San Bernardino, California. On each portion of the journey, which took the caravan through Tennessee, Kentucky, Missouri, Iowa, Nebraska, Wyoming, Utah, and Nevada, Miss Mason's job was to walk behind the wagons and herd the livestock. It's also likely that during the trip she assisted in the birth of Robert Smith's child, as well as that of a child born to fellow slave Hannah Owens. The caravan arrived in San Bernardino in 1851, a year after California entered the Union as a free state. According to state law, individuals who had been brought into the state as slaves became free people once they took up residence there.

For five years Smith's party remained intact, with Biddy Mason and her fellow, ostensibly, former slaves working for Smith in San Bernardino. In 1856 Robert Smith decided to move his family, along with Miss Mason and the other slaves, to Texas. Mason resisted and petitioned the court for a declaration of her freedom, as well as that of the others Smith had brought to live in California. Smith's argument—that Mason and the others were members of his household who had been duped into asking to be freed—fell on deaf ears. The judge ruled in Mason's favor, on her behalf and on behalf of the other former slaves.

Biddy Mason's story does not end there. She became known for her medical skills and earned a living as a midwife and healer for residents of all races in Los Angeles. Eventually, with \$250, she purchased what she called "the Homestead," a lot on Spring Street in what is today downtown

Los Angeles. She continued to purchase land extending from Spring Street to what is now Broadway, between Third and Fourth Streets—but not for speculation, as many were doing during that period. Mason used her holdings to house her extended family and to stake family members who wanted to enter business, enabling them to make the successful transition from rural and frontier life to independent urban living.

According to historian Dolores Hayden, Mason's use of the property was "as an urban, economic base for her family's activities." In 1872 Mason gathered a group of black locals for a meeting in her home to organize the First African Methodist Episcopal Church. Her home became the location for her philanthropy, which she supported with income derived from other property. In 1884 she instructed a local grocer to open accounts for families made "homeless by season floods." In 1891, when Mason died at her home in Los Angeles, her grandsons had to turn away hundreds who, unaware of her passing, sought out her services as a midwife and healer. Biddy Mason's life story is a remarkable testament to her will to find her way out of slavery and create a home where she and her family would live as truly free people. After her death, Mason's family held the land until the beginning of the twentieth century.⁵

Biddy Mason was not alone among black female pioneers seeking refuge in the western United States. Religion drove some free black women to set up home in unlikely locations—like Boulder and Salt Lake City, and as far west as Hawaii—as missionaries. For example, in 1843, two years after hearing a sermon by a Mormon missionary, Jane James abandoned Presbyterianism. James, who had been born free in Connecticut, left the state of her birth and "followed the convert's departure from 'Babylon' to 'Zion'" to make her home as a live-in maid, first for Joseph Smith in Illinois and then for church leader Brigham Young in Utah. Later she married and set up her own home in Salt Lake City.⁶

Whether they came as servants or slaves, one common denominator in many of these women's experiences is the effort they made to overcome discrimination, establish their place in the communities where they settled, and thereby advance the race. Unlike Biddy Nelson, most of the women were not wealthy; some died impoverished. Yet many left a mark on the communities they helped establish. They were our founding mothers.

HOME, THE GRAND SIGNIFIER

Historians often view the "Great Migration" of blacks from the rural South to the urban North as a mass movement of black men and women made in anticipation of economic opportunity and freedom from racism. But such a description suggests a tidiness that is not altogether true. The movement was not simply from south to north or even west, nor from rural to urban. At the turn of the twentieth century, it was as if the "gale-force wind," to borrow Ben Brantley's image, that "picks up and scatters people as if they were dandelion seeds"⁷ deposited blacks in places beyond and between destinations like Los Angeles, Chicago, Detroit, and New York.

My mother's family was like so many black families that struggled to find their footholds on the land. Yet my grandparents took a different course than that of those who headed for the nation's cities. Henry and Ida Elliott left the site of Henry's enslavement in Arkansas in 1914 and moved west, still holding on to a belief in the land and a way of life that was fading.

With all such migrations, there is a push and a pull. According to historian Ira Berlin, the migration of African Americans incorporated "dispossession" and "unspeakable brutality" even as it occasioned opportunity for transforming culture and reshaping politics.⁸ At the turn of the twentieth century, southern blacks moved from their ancestral homes for a number of reasons. Some, like my grandfather, moved to escape violence. Nevertheless, he and others also moved in the direction of greater promise. It was during this time in particular, as our locations became more diverse, that where we called home became an indication of our race's advancement.

Educator and African American leader Booker T. Washington made the link between blacks' dwellings and their place in the nation. In Washington's imagination, a home that would come to be known as the "little cottage" became a model American home and thus the symbol of African American equality.⁹ Washington declared that the one-room cabins of the "great mass of negroes" were "the greatest embarrassment to the progress of the race."¹⁰ He proposed to replace the "log hovel that had been [the freedmen's] abode for a quarter of a century" after slavery

with a "comfortable, rasy, framed-cottage."¹¹ Integral to his formula for race improvement, this domestic ideal would be situated "in the middle of a garden, with fruit and flowers and vegetables growing all about."¹² According to Washington, such a cottage was the precursor to honorable participation in public life.

Washington wrote an article in which he described a black couple whose well-kept home, with its beautiful flower garden, so captivated a local white woman that in due course she ventured inside to examine the residents' books and papers. Soon, thanks to the endorsement of their white visitor, "there [were] few people in that community more highly respected than" Washington's couple—or so the legend went. Their model of domestic life was "more powerful than all the laws Congress can pass in the direction of bringing about right relations between blacks and whites," an object lesson in community building.¹³ Washington's story may have been little more than a fable, but we should not dismiss the connection between the home and full citizenship he made in the minds of his followers and donors to his college.

Fable or not, Washington's instinct about the role the physical abode could play in engendering racial equality was not entirely misplaced. Washington knew that in twentieth-century America, blacks' status as citizens began with their ability to establish a home in, and belong to, an American residential neighborhood.

Yet Washington's insight was limited. To the public, including his donors, Washington refused to acknowledge how law, politics, and even popular literature worked together to define black uplift and negated his effort to define black citizenship via the home. He was undoubtedly wrong about the ease with which "tight relations" could be achieved. (By way of illustration, in 1915, the year Washington died, D. W. Griffith's *Birth of a Nation*, glorifying Klan activity, became the country's top-grossing film following its screening in the White House.) As other race leaders in the early twentieth century pursued racial justice in the courts, Washington claimed that neither social integration nor civil rights were necessary for black uplift. The word "Tuskegee" means "warrior" in the Muskogee (Creek) language, but Washington's critics would assert that the head of the famed institution was more a social conformist than a fighter. Nonetheless, he led the Tuskegee Institute (now Tuskegee University).

But together Parker and Washington stumbled on the future. The building of the model home and the training offered within it presaged black men's and women's employment in the coming decades. As they moved out of the rural areas and began the Great Migration north, black women entered into domestic service as their primary employment, and black men worked in construction and industrial production. The jobs Washington and Parker were preparing their graduates to engage in—construction and domestic service—would allow them to build and clean the “tasty cottages,” but never earn them enough to own one. Neither man proposed a solution to that problem.

Washington understood race, and though women played a prominent role in his plot for achieving citizenship through the home, he failed to comprehend the limits that gender inequality placed on his scheme for racial equality. In general, he paid no attention to gender progress among African Americans as a whole, and, in his model, Washington addressed the female members of the race only as homemaker in the cottage. Many black leaders of the day stood with Washington in that particular oversight.

Nevertheless, black women persisted, often independently and even in defiance of the male leadership. Nannie Helen Burroughs urged men to get out of the way of women so that they could fully participate in leadership roles. Yet despite the urging of charismatic female and male leaders like Burroughs, Ida B. Wells, and W. E. B. Du Bois, early twentieth-century movements for equality of the races seldom fully considered how the so-called private sphere—the home—helped shape and define rights for blacks as they pressed through various means to strengthen their communities and secure their full place in national life.

FINDING A ROLE FOR HOME IN THE STRUGGLE FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Beginning with the struggle for the right to vote, white women chose legal and political parity as their defining marks of equal status with men. In some ways the quest for gender equality and the quest for racial equality operated on parallel tracks, as both groups sought equal access to jobs and education. But measures of gender and racial progress were not identical. There was one critical distinction between the two movements. As it gained momentum, the women's rights movement began to bring

not entirely better.

University) from its founding in 1881 to his death in 1915. Though historians have found evidence that he secretly supported civil rights initiatives, in his public pronouncements Washington advocated a formula for “negro” advancement based on individual effort and accommodation.

Washington proposed that, by building and maintaining the “tasty little cottage,” blacks would demonstrate that they were capable of self-improvement and worthy of citizenship. He was so certain of his ideal and his method that he remained steadfast even when his critics were potential financial supporters. In 1895 Washington solicited funds to build his model home on the Tuskegee campus, a two-story cottage that would serve as a “permanent object lesson” for the students and presumably the race. A. W. Parker, a wealthy Long Island attorney and potential benefactor, warned that the cost of such a cottage (“four to five hundred dollars”) was so out of the reach of Tuskegee graduates that it was “preposterous” to think it could serve as a model for social change. He estimated that less than 1 percent of the school's graduates could expect to afford more than a two-room cottage upon graduating from Tuskegee. Parker suggested that Washington either abandon the idea of a model or build three or four more modest one-story homes. Washington fired back that he meant to build something that would represent “an ideal toward which [blacks] could aspire” as they grew “in education.” In the meantime, the cottage would be used as a laboratory for teaching the female students “the principles of housekeeping.” Two days after he heard from Washington, Parker sent him a check for five hundred dollars, noting that he was funding the two-story home to reach black women how to keep house. Like many of the campus buildings, including a chapel and residence halls, the home was built with student labor.¹⁴

The reality of the black experience in Tuskegee, Alabama, might have given Washington second thoughts about the feasibility of his model cottage as a vehicle of African American advancement. Until the 1920s, blacks lived primarily in the South, in and around towns like Tuskegee. They either farmed on their own small plots of land or, more likely, worked on the larger plantations owned by white farmers. Parker was absolutely correct in his assessment that Washington's cottage was beyond the reach of a Tuskegee graduate, let alone most of the farm laborers who lived near enough to visit it. In truth, opportunities in the North were

attention to a broad range of domestic matters, beginning with a woman's right to own and control her own property regardless of her marital status. Issues associated with home life were included in the meaning of "equal protection under the law," right along with matters involving full participation and fairness outside the home.

Gender rights advocates came to the realization that home is a complicated and sometimes conflicted space. Home is a space that women have pursued both by choice and by compulsion. Home, for all women, has historically been a domain designed to limit our participation in our communities' and country's affairs—even our control over our own bodies. In the 1873 case *Bradwell v. Illinois*, Justice Bradley of the nation's highest court gave credence to such limitations, attributing them to the "paramount destiny and mission of woman . . . to fulfill the noble and benign offices of wife and mother." Due to their "proper timidity and delicacy," women were unfit to "occupations of civil life." "Man is, or should be, woman's protector," and "the domestic sphere" was where she properly belonged.¹⁵

As the law and social norms increasingly consigned women to the home, they struggled to gain control even there. The image of a drunken husband who came home and abused his wife and children helped energize the temperance movement.

The campaign for women's right to vote was sufficiently popular that an advertiser even linked suffrage with household decisions. Under the banner "Votes for Women," a 1913 ad for Shredded Wheat showed a woman in front of a ballot box and included text announcing that "twenty million women have voted for the emancipation of American womanhood by serving Shredded Wheat in their homes." The ad reflected the sentiments of suffragists, associating the right to vote with women's everyday (shopping) experiences and household routines.¹⁶

Most matters of the home were thus seen as gender issues and women's (read white women's) concerns. Black women and some black men, namely Frederick Douglass and Du Bois, often struggled along with women for gender equity. But race was a highly contentious subject in women's political and legal struggles, and black women were very often asked to serve in secondary roles in the gender movement. During the struggle for the vote, white women from the South insisted on upholding their communities' norm of segregation. In what is

now considered a turning point in the suffrage movement, during a 1913 parade down Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington, DC, white Northern women acquiesced to their Southern sisters' demands that all black women march at the end of the procession. Ida B. Wells, a Chicago resident who early in her life fought segregation in her native state of Tennessee, was initially shocked and offended that her white friends from Illinois agreed to the last-minute stipulation. According to her biographer, Paula Giddings, Wells was not deterred, nor would she acquiesce. Instead, she waited on the sidelines until the white delegation from her adopted home state came into view. As they approached, she stepped out of the crowd, joined them, and unofficially integrated the parade.

It is worth noting that one major women's organization, which started as an effort to provide homes for girls moving into urban areas, has long included ending racism and empowering women as equal platforms in its official mission. In 1913 the YWCA held its first interracial conference in Louisville, Kentucky. Yet even that organization operated segregated facilities for blacks, whites, and Native Americans.

Despite the restrictions of their social and civic possibilities, African Americans still sought to establish homes—places in their communities—for themselves and their families, and black women were at the forefront of that effort. Black women's desire for a home is not unique, but the route to America becoming our home is different from what Booker T. Washington envisioned.

Sharp lines between public and private spheres and between the political and the personal did not exist for African American women, a large portion of whom worked in some form of domestic service or farm labor. In 1881 Atlanta's black laundresses, who worked out of their own homes, engaged in one of the first labor strikes organized by women. The movement began with just twenty women, but through mobilization in the black neighborhoods, that number rose to three thousand, giving the women a political voice that was unparalleled in the black community or among women workers. There is no clear evidence of what specific concessions the strikers won, but as historian Tera W. Hunter notes, the efforts were "symbolically meaningful." In asserting the value of their skills, the Atlanta laundresses "demonstrated an astute political consciousness by making private household labor a public issue."¹⁷

daughter of a domestic worker, she embraced the significance of home in black women's lives but rejected the low status attached to it. Burroughs envisioned the home as a place for intellectual growth as well as a source for professional development. As a rejection of both racial and gender subordination, Burroughs considered housekeeping and child care as skilled labor. She advocated for providers to be licensed and unionized, thus elevating the work originating in the home. Like that of Atlanta's black laundresses, Burroughs's motivation was both economic and political. In the school she established for poor and working-class African American girls, "home" served as the platform for her students' education, economic self-sufficiency, and political engagement.

Nevertheless, Burroughs, a single woman, was criticized by some black male leadership for promoting black women's independence from black men. But this type of rebuke was not new to Burroughs. She had started as an outspoken leader in an association of black Baptist churches, the National Baptist Convention (NBC). Even as the NBC considered racial segregation unholly, it thought gendered restrictions to be biblically demanded. Nannie Helen Burroughs had bucked convention to become one of the most respected speakers in the organization's history. She would use the same resolve and her oratory skills to advocate for equality as she envisioned it, with women as breadwinners and civic partners.

WHO SPEAKS FOR BLACK WOMEN?

Nannie Helen Burroughs was also accustomed to rejection, which she felt was due to her upbringing as the daughter of a domestic worker and her dark skin color. Though those factors were rarely cited as a basis for rejection of her ideas, there was a battle among black leadership as to which black female leader was best suited to represent the "highest type of the race." In 1898 Richard T. Greener, a member of the Washington, DC, Women's Suffrage Convention by an African American woman, Mrs. Mary Church Terrell, entitled "Progress of the Colored Women," declaring that racial progress would be achieved through black women's progress. Also present at the event was Charles R. Douglass, son of abolitionist and suffragist Frederick Douglass, who noted the reaction of other suf-

relationship to home. Nannie Helen Burroughs spoke publicly on behalf of women's right to vote. Whereas many of the early white feminists and suffragists sought to use the vote to put in place laws that would help protect them from their husbands' dominance, Burroughs focused more on black women's economic independence from men.

CHAMPIONING THE HOME

Perhaps like no other person of her time, Nannie Helen Burroughs understood that home was emblematic of how women saw themselves, as well as how the world saw them. She was also infinitely pragmatic. The daughter of a maid who often was her family's sole support, Burroughs subscribed to the notion that the vote would mean nothing if women could not support themselves and their families on their own, whether married or single. So in addition to her political activism, she established a school—now Burroughs Elementary public school in Washington, DC—to prepare poor women for civic participation and economic self-sufficiency. In 1909 she brought cooks, laundresses, maids, clerks, and their daughters from all over the country to be educated in Washington. In addition to taking classes in domestic services and dressmaking, Burroughs's students were taught bookkeeping, shoe repair, and agriculture, along with English literature, Latin, drama, and black history. Perhaps inspired by the washerwomen's strike, Burroughs proposed that domestic workers be unionized and that service in homes be elevated to a profession.

The suffragists' approach to the role that home played in political thinking differed from Booker T. Washington's. Each accommodated the prejudices of white male leaders, but suffragists used women's roles in the home as a basis for empowering them with the right to vote. Washington used home—the place—more as a front, a facade of respectability taken on by blacks to win whites' acceptance. Neither denied women's interest in the home, but each wanted something different. Suffragists wanted legal changes; Washington wanted to change the hearts and minds of whites.

To some extent, Nannie Helen Burroughs, a contemporary of Washington's, wanted both, though she was less concerned with the latter. She conceived of home and its role in liberation in yet a third way. Burroughs envisioned the home as a base from which equality would evolve. As the

fragists, including Susan B. Anthony, to Terrell's eloquence. They were "so proud of their new discovery that they fell upon her neck upon the conclusion of her great speech and kissed her. She was covered with floral offerings." Douglass declared Terrell's presentation a success. "Her appeal for the women of her race was a soul stirring effort; and the long continued applause that followed at the close of her remarks attested that she had won her hearers to her."¹⁸

Mary Church Terrell may have had the blessings of Greene, Anthony, and Douglass to speak on behalf of her race and gender, but others would vie for the role as well. Journalist Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin and educator Mary McLeod Bethune were among the array of leaders who championed the cause of black women. But perhaps no two women were more directly related to the struggles of women trying to build their homes than Ida B. Wells and Nannie Helen Burroughs. Both women were fiery and unapologetic in their quest to move black women and the entire race out from under the dual oppression they experienced. While many of the black women leaders of the day were from educated and relatively wealthy, prominent black families, Wells and Burroughs were not. Wells was the daughter of slaves, and her well-known crusade against lynching gave some blacks hope that the nation would soon put an end to the violence that threatened homes throughout the South on an almost daily basis.

Burroughs championed education for what she called "ordinary" black folks and the professionalization of domestic service. In these ways, her ideas about education were not unlike Booker T. Washington's. "We specialize in the wholly impossible" was her patented response to her critics and others, like Washington himself, who doubted that a school for black women could sustain itself without Northern whites' financial support. Though her challenge to black religious leaders to address the obstruction of women's progress in the Baptist Church, as well as racism in the larger society, may have put her at odds with church leadership, it aligned her with the efforts of W. E. B. Du Bois, who was viewed as Washington's rival for control of the destiny of black folks. Yet Burroughs's very nuanced take on the political and social future of blacks was closer to the reality of black life than either Washington's or Du Bois's views. Hers were the kind of practical, yet entirely progressive and uniquely multi-

furious ideas that would pave the way for the majority of black women to imagine equality. She understood the hardships black Americans faced, but had faith in their ability to overcome them and make a home in the country that rejected them.

Despite the apparent challenges, Nannie Helen Burroughs showed her idealistic optimism in a speech she delivered one hundred years ago to the National Baptist Convention:

A new day is dawning for us. In spite of the fact that we are facing problems more grave and aggravating than any other race in the world and have less of material things to utilize in the solution of them, yet we are abundantly rich in faith and in physical powers to endure the hardships incident to foundation laying. The most hopeful sign is the awakening within to the fundamental needs and a setting in motion of a new force to beat back fanatic race prejudice. We have just seen clearly enough to discover that in the real American is the making.¹⁹

Burroughs's audience responded with thunderous applause. She would come to be known as "the black goddess of liberty" who dared to posit that black women would lead the way to defining "the real American." The practical side of Nannie Helen Burroughs knew that "foundation laying" for black women had to begin where they were strongest: in the home, whether their own homes or those in which they were employed. She also knew that all Americans had to have a different image of what "home," or at least the work done in it, meant in the public sphere if blacks were to achieve equality through it.

Abigail Adams's arguments for women's legal protections in the home were, for their time, bold and insightful. Women of all races and backgrounds knew that this hallowed space, often thought to be beyond the law's reach, was indeed a place where they could be tyrannized and that any chance they had to live as independent members of society must begin there. And Booker T. Washington knew that African Americans must first establish a place in communities if they were ever to enjoy the state of being at home in America.

Black women's actual control over their homes, like that of all women, today, economic conditions of most black families have meant that black women work outside the home. They have had to function in both the private and public sphere, without the benefit of protections afforded by race or gender in either. Nannie Helen Burroughs combined the thinking of both Adams and Washington, pursuing recognition outside the home of what women did inside the home. Due to their history and experiences, a safe and secure home for black American women is achieved differently than for black men and other women. Thus Burroughs viewed the home as a unique measure of equality that cannot be divorced from other measures. That perspective, as well as the fundamental social changes that the entire country was embarking on in the twentieth century, would shape how women and men of all races experienced day-to-day life, and Nannie Helen Burroughs knew that well.

All together, Adams, Burroughs, and Washington helped shape thinking about the meaning of equality and how it would be achieved, not only for their times but for the future as well. As the home became the icon of the American Dream through the help of government policies and private actions, those pushing for equality would come to challenge domestic abuse, promote women's rights to own their own homes and to join professional work ranks, and sue on behalf of African Americans' rights to own homes in neighborhoods of their choice.