“DON’T PUT HER DOWN YOU HELPED PUT HER THERE”:

WOMEN’S GRASSROOTS ACTIVISM IN APPALACHIA SINCE THE 1970S

A Thesis
by
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Abstract

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Since the 1970s, a growing number of women have become the leaders in movements for justice in Appalachia. Women's participation in grassroots movements in Appalachia has allowed them to bring about change through breaking gender norms, collective action, and protecting the environment and their communities for future generations. *"Don't Put Her Down You Helped Put Her There": Women's Grassroots Activism in Appalachia Since the 1970s* is an investigation of the motivational factors involved in women's activism, exploring what leads women to fight and how they take action. An important theme of this work shows how women's activism and art are related. Visual arts, music, and literature draw inspiration from the movements and also act as sustaining factors within the movements. This work seeks to examine Appalachian women's agency in activist movements. The work of these women can be represented in a way that gives them agency over their reasons for becoming involved. Women in Appalachia continually find ways to become involved in movements for social and environmental justice within their communities, acting in ways that use their strengths and available resources. Drawing from various identities, these women come together to bring change through their formal and informal wage work, collective action on

picket lines, and in ongoing fights to protect their communities from environmental exploitation. This work offers an understanding of historic and ongoing protest movements in Appalachia, representations of the women taking action, and the role of "artivism" in past, present, and future movements for justice in Appalachia.

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This work could not have been possible without the amazing support system I have. I would like to thank my committee chair Dr. Julie Shepherd-Powell, for her mentorship and involvement in this project. The independent study I did with Dr. Shepherd-Powell, in fall 2022, helped deepen my understanding of women's contributions to the Appalachian region. Dr. Sandra L. Ballard is a wonderful mentor and supporter. She spent countless hours talking though writer's block with me and giving me pep talks, which helped me complete this work. I was honored to have Dr. Allison Fredette as part of my committee. She is one of the most thoughtful educators and mentors I have known. Dr. Fredette has known me since I was a second year student during my undergraduate studies at Appalachian State, her mentorship over the years has helped me evolve into the educator and scholar I am. A special thank you to my Appalachian Studies mentor Dr. Meredith McCarroll. Over the years I have gotten to know her as a mentor and friend. She took me under her guidance at the beginning of my graduate work and has talked me out of my impostor syndrome more times than I can count.

To my graduate colleagues, thank you. You have been a huge part of my growth and development as a scholar and person. Thank you to my family both related and chosen—without their support, encouragement, and shaping me as an individual, this work would not have been possible.

Dedication

To Grannie Carter, the woman who taught me to use my voice and to tell stories. And all the women who got me here and those who came before me. Their lives, stories, writing, songs, and activism inspire me. Without them, I would not be here. I am standing on the shoulders of giants.

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INTRODUCTION: WOMEN'S GRASSROOTS ACTIVISM IN APPALACHIA

Born in the mountains, many years ago
Climbed these hills and valleys through the rain and snow
I've seen the lightning flashin', heard the thunder roll
I've endured, I've endured, how long must one endure
—"I've Endured"
by Ola Belle Reed[1]

Appalachia is a place that has long been defined by outside interests. From the days of color writing and travel narratives, the early cinematic debuts of hillbilly types, and the dramatized literary depictions, people know, or think they know, for better or worse, some form of Appalachia. What these narratives do not offer, however, is a more holistic view of a region and its people; they do not reveal the long history of struggle and triumph. Stereotypes overshadow the many contributions of women to the region and the ways in which they have brought change to their communities. Women have long been fixtures for social change in Appalachia's coalfields, standing on picket lines when their husbands and brothers could not, protesting labor and wage conditions faced by men in their community. This thesis explores women's contributions to grassroots activist movements in the Appalachian region. The core argument of this work is that women in Appalachia have brought about change by breaking gender norms, participating in collective action, and protecting the environment and their communities for future generations. The 1970s was a time where the nation heard many voices from the Appalachian region women who challenged the regional stereotypes. Their voices "spotlighted an area of the country where articulate and angry people were organized

[1]Ola Belle Reed, "I've Endured" (Smithsonian Folkways Recordings, 2010).

for basic social and economic change."[2] This work seeks to investigate the contributions of women to the Appalachian region.

The scope of my research takes an intersectional and interdisciplinary lens. Drawing from historical, sociological, and anthropological backgrounds for the primary scholarship surrounding women's activism, the interdisciplinary approach also allows me to draw from the literature, arts, music, and visual arts as sources of knowledge related to activism in Appalachia. For this work, I think of an intersectional approach as a means of looking at how various groups have been affected by extraction differently and how the detrimental effects of extraction industries influence how they act. In the words of lawyer and scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Intersectionality is a lens through which you can see where power comes and collides, where it interlocks and intersects."[3] Intersectionality is important when discussing the contributions of women in these movements. Although many women have participated in these movements from the same community, they experience and interact with these injustices in different ways based on their race, gender, and class. Women's community ties, kinship, and collective identities inform their work and activism. Though many have different stances in life, they often share certain commonalities regarding the people and place that surround them. This work investigates what leads women to fight for justice in their communities and how they take action. Early actions are used as a model and point of reference to see how historic movements inform modern ones.

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[2]Sally Ward Maggard, "Women's Participation in the Brookside Coal Strike: Militance, Class, and Gender in Appalachia." *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 9, no. 3 (January 1, 1987), 16.

[3]Columbia Law School, "Kimberlé Crenshaw on Intersectionality, More than Two Decades Later." June 8, 2017. https://www.law.columbia.edu/news/archive/kimberle-crenshaw-intersectionality-more-two-decades-later.

For this work, I define grassroots activism as the local movements for justice in Appalachia that are led and sustained by women. Shirley A. Rainey and Glenn S. Johnson's definition of the environmental justice movement is "a social movement that attempts to bring about political, social, and environmental equity to at-risk and disenfranchised communities in the United States and around the world."[4] I frame environmental justice as a social response to the environmental degradation of one's place of residence. Regarding grassroots movements in Appalachia, it is important to note that "Artivism," a combination of the words "art" and "activism," has become a popular form of participation. Artivism is defined as "the use of the creative expression to cultivate awareness, and social change that spans various disciplines including visual art, poetry, music, film, and theater."[5] I think about artivism as the intersection of art and activism; it is a means of responding to injustice through a creative outlet. Art as activism is an important component that is woven throughout this thesis.

Each chapter begins with an epigraph from songs written by women in Appalachia, their experiences of heartache, loss, hardship, and calls to action. Many of these women are deeply embedded in the movements discussed in this work. Their songs continue to play an important role in grassroots activism. Songs like "They'll Never Keep Us Down" by Hazel Dickens, which is included in this work, continue to be sung by women standing arm in arm throughout these movements. Florence Reece's "Which Side Are You On" is one of the most notable calls to action, offering a question asked to those who cannot decide where they

[4]Rainey, Shirley A., and Glenn S. Johnson. "Grassroots Activism: An Exploration of Women of Color's Role in the Environmental Justice Movement." *Race, Gender & Class* 16, no. 3/4, (2009) 145.

[5]Amy Funderburk, "Artivism: Making a Difference through Art," Art & Object, May 17, 2021. https://www.artandobject.com/articles/artivism-making-difference-through-art.

belong, or those who are sitting in silence, complacent. Both of these songs and positions are explored throughout this thesis.

The title of this thesis comes from the 1973 Hazel Dickens and Alice Gerrard song "Don't Put Her Down You Helped Put Her There." This song, about the struggles and exploitation of women, is also arguably about the exploitation and abuse of Appalachian landscapes by outside industrial forces. The first time I truly deeply listened to this song, I was in an "Old Time Music Traditions" class. Immediately, I began to see how women's tireless efforts as participants in grassroots movements were connected to their work as wage earners in the coal industry, and their efforts in the front lines of the battle against mountaintop removal. All of these things became incredibly inextricable from one another: women are part of activist movements, and music gives voice to the people, sustains movements, and carries stories throughout generations. It became clear then that it would be a glaring omission to omit the songs women in Appalachia wrote about working-class struggles and the injustices they witnessed first-hand. Ultimately, the song title "Don't put her down you helped put her there" is a phrase that can be used when people criticize the actions and activism of women in these movements. Each chapter of this work includes epigraphs by women whose music broke norms. Through their songs of endearment, hardship, calling out injustices, and everyday working class struggles, I find inspiration. Their songs fit into the narrative of this work and provide an artistic component.

The women who choose to act and stand up against injustice in their community and those who break through barriers to societal participation face ridicule and backlash for their actions and work. They are told sometimes they do not belong. However, those criticizing have not often taken a step back to evaluate the deeper and more embedded forces that put

women at the forefront of these movements. Artivism provides a unique perspective throughout my thesis connecting these various movements for justice in Appalachia.

Some questions that guided my research process are these: what leads women in Appalachia to become involved in grassroots activism? What are some instances where women are the primary change bearers, and what barriers are there to women's participation? What are the ways in which women act against these injustices in their communities? How can previous movements inform current and ongoing movements? How can I write about women's activism in a way that gives them agency for their involvement? What are the ways that art, music, and literature inspire, inform, and sustain these movements? How do I position myself into the larger ongoing scope of work regarding women in Appalachia?

All of these questions assisted in my research journey; many of them are answered and put into practice throughout this work. These questions continue to drive a deeper investigation of women and the changes they continue making in Appalachia. This thesis is a result of those questions that I could not shake.

Chapters Outline

In the first chapter, I ground my thesis by discussing the ways women in Appalachia have broken gender norms through their activism. I address how Appalachian women have been historically portrayed in literature and writings as passive members of society and solely participating in the private sphere. Breaking down these long-conceived notions of women as complacent and passive community members gives context to their activism. This chapter serves as a brief overview and lays the groundwork for how and why women fight for social and environmental justice. Women who are participants in justice movements draw

on similar roles. Some have argued that motherhood or caregiver roles and identities are predominant motivations for those participating in these movements. This section expands this narrative and investigates the voices of the women who do not identify as mothers or caregivers. These women take a stance because they do not like what is happening. They see injustice happening, and they do something about it, in spite of the barriers women face participating in specific movements and the backlash that women across movements have faced. Exploring how their participation was not always easy, but was necessary, brings women's experiences across movements into conversation with one another to show that similar actions and themes are present. Women have challenged traditional gender roles through activism, formal and informal wage work, and making and performing songs of protest. The main point of this chapter is to highlight how women in Appalachia have brought about change by breaking the gender norms prescribed to them by society.

Chapter two explores women's work surrounding picket lines and successful collective actions to create change. Examples include instances of organizing alongside coal miners for workers' rights and women organizing as wage earners to improve working conditions for all. The chapter seeks to uncover the motivational forces behind their participation in movements and explore the various identities from which their activism draws. This chapter explores women's work in the Pikeville Methodist Hospital Strike, the Brookside Strike, and the Pittston Strike. Investigation of these movements allows us to see how community ties, kinship, and collective identities influenced and informed their fights. Though the women of these movements were not all from the same backgrounds, they came together across class lines and across gender lines to work with men in their communities, putting aside differences, and collectively coming together for the greater good. This chapter

explores their barriers to participation in these movements. Taking place relatively close to each other within the span of a decade (1970s), these movements shaped women's activism in the Appalachian Mountains. The ultimate goal of this chapter is to emphasize and argue how women have used and are currently using collective action to bring about change in Appalachia.

The third chapter explores women who have and are still working against strip mining, mountaintop removal mining (MTR), and the construction of the Mountain Valley Pipeline. The focus is on the work of individual women, drawing from the work of Shannon Elizabeth Bell's *Our Roots Run Deep as Ironweed* and interviews conducted by a Political Ecology of Appalachia class at Appalachian State University, of which I was a part. This section places emphasis on the individual responses of women to their threatened communities. Looking at multiple cases of individual women or small groups allows us to see some of the shared reasons for fighting, where they overlap, and where they are different—allowing us to see that there is no one reason when participating in movements for justice. Women draw from various identities when participating in these movements. However, one thing that they all seem to have in common is a willingness and drive to protect their communities and environments. This chapter connects the ways women have brought about change by making progress toward protecting the environment and their communities for future generations.

Chapter four explores the ways in which environmental degradation and persistent activism to protect communities have inspired works of art and literature. Response to these environmental threats comes through "Artivism" repeatedly and "Solastalgia." Solastalgia is the lack of solace one feels with changing environments. The term was made popular by

Glenn Albrecht.[6] Artivism is a term many believe originated during the late 1960s in Los Angeles, California.[7] This section investigates the role of art, music, and literature in sustaining environmental justice movements and highlights. The way they help to reach wider audiences. Art is an important part of sustaining movements of environmental justice. In many ways, the artistic involvement of these movements is a collective response that has grown from individual responses. Songs that were sung on the picket lines of some of the most notable labor strikes are also sung while standing down bulldozers on MTR and MVP sites. Women yet again stand arm and arm, refusing to back down. Artivism allows people to act in ways that are most comfortable to them with the resources they have available. This section highlights how responses to environmental threats continue to be shaped through solastalgia and Artivism and why they are important to collective action movements.

In the final section, I conclude by bringing my argument about the important roles Appalachian women have played in grassroots activism. I acknowledge that women's participation in grassroots activism is ongoing. There are new developments constantly happening and there are still complex questions to be answered in the future.

[6]Glenn A Albrecht, Earth Emotions (Cornell University Press, 2019)

[7]Jennie Drummond, "History Runs Deep: How to Celebrate Artivism and Craftivism," The Art of Education University, February 4, 2022, https://theartofeducation.edu/2022/02/04/feb-history-runs-deep-how-to-celebrate-craftivism-during-black-history-month/.

LITERATURE REVIEW

If you don't think she's had it hard, my friend
Just take a look at where this woman's been
Take a look at her old, worn out callused hands
Take a look at the loneliness that never ends
—"Old Calloused Hands"
by Hazel Dickens[8]

Women have become key figures in social and environmental justice movements in central Appalachia. The coal industry's historic male-dominated culture contributes to women being the predominant group leading these movements. Women in Appalachia participated in activism surrounding the coal industry long before they worked as wage earners. Women have been significant contributors to labor strikes, where they stood on the picket lines when men in their families would have lost their jobs if they had joined the pickets so they could not. They act as mothers, daughters, and community members impacted by the coal industry. Since the 1970s, a growing number of women have joined local and regional environmental justice movements. A trend exists in the actions and justifications of women activists. Women that join these movements may not always identify themselves as activists but sometimes as mothers or Appalachians fighting for their community and families.

This literature review includes scholarship about women's work on the picket lines, their work as wage earners in the coal industry, their position in movements for environmental justice, and finally art as a tool for environmental activism. Viewing scholarship in this manner shows a theme in activism and a timeline of increased participation of women activists. These movements and actions taken by women build off

[8]Hazel Dickens, "Old Calloused Hands," *Hard Hitting Songs for Hard Hit People* (Rounder Records, 1980).

each other and reflect similar practices and barriers to involvement throughout history. When it comes to environmental injustices against communities, women are often at the forefront of the movements to stop the harm imposed. Women take action for many reasons, protection of their environments, promotion of a better future for the next generations, and the fear of losing their connection to that place, just to name a few. Women draw from various identities such as caregivers, mothers, and concerned community members, women justify their actions. One thing they all have in common, whether individually or collectively fighting, is their connections to place and willingness to do whatever they can to prevent their destruction. In Appalachia, these issues have played out time and time again.

Historic roots of extraction and the exploitation of communities have made Appalachians no strangers to the environmental degradation inflicted by extraction. For generations, depictions of the Appalachian region have painted the narrative of a poverty-stricken region where the people are complacent and unwilling to get out of poverty. Such national images and literature about the region, often portray Appalachian women as complacent members of their communities and depict women as nonparticipants of waged labor and working in their homes. However, resistance movements from within Appalachia paint a different picture. Women who take a stand against the injustices in Appalachia counter these narratives of complacency. The history of women fighting back against social and environmental injustices challenges and change these narratives. Their efforts have not gone unnoticed and are part of a long history from the region which continues to be well documented by various scholars from across disciplines.

Although women in Appalachia are well known as change bearers for environmental justice in Appalachia, it is essential to note that these environmental injustices within poor

communities are not geographically specific to Appalachia; women in other regions are taking action for similar reasons. There are lessons to be learned from all women-led movements across the globe. The following texts bring together three themes regarding environmental activism in Appalachia. The first is general discussions of grassroots environmental justice movements that will help ground the basis of my research and definitions. A second theme that emerges is women taking action against the issues surrounding Mountaintop Removal (MTR) and the coal industry. Third and final is the theme of alternative means of taking action through music and literature. Artivism is an emerging field with many possibilities, combining artistic creativity as means of bringing awareness to social issues, and one's activism. My research, writings, and arguments constantly evolve in conversation and contrast within the scope of these texts and their presented arguments. Through this literature review, this thesis positions itself into this narrative. My arguments and counterarguments have started to take shape through careful examinations of work by those who came before. Since the 1970s, many women have joined local and regional grassroots movements. Women that join these movements may not always identify themselves as activists, but sometimes as mothers or Appalachians fighting for their community and families. This work ultimately explores these reasons and how they connect movements throughout the region's history. Women in Appalachia have brought about change by breaking gender norms, engaging in collective action, and making progress towards protecting the environment and their communities for future generations.

Grassroots movements have emerged from communities facing various injustices in Appalachian communities, often concerning the environment. Appalachia is known for justice movements surrounding workers' rights, resource extraction, and land ownership,

among other things. Many have painted Appalachia as a distinctly unique region, as examined in, *Yesterday's People: Life in Contemporary Appalachia, Our Contemporary Ancestors in the Southern Mountains,* which painted Appalachia as a land stuck in the past, and people unwilling to adapt to modern times. *Appalachia on Our Mind: The Southern Mountains and Mountaineers in the American Consciousness, 1870-1920,* presented a history of the idea of Appalachia, arguing the region was never set apart from the rest of the world. These texts set the tone for how many view the region, and serve as an important starting mark for why women's activism is an important component of Appalachian history. For a general understanding of grassroots activism, environmental justice movements, and the role of connection to place, the following texts ground my work in place-based movements. Not only do they highlight the importance of connection to place in the lives of these activists, but they also help dismiss the idea that these movements are uniquely Appalachian.

Gender studies scholar Wendy Harcourt and anthropologist Arturo Escobar's book *Women and the Politics of Place* discusses women and their involvement in political movements. Women and the politics of place, as defined in their work, is the interrelation between gender, politics, and justice.[9] Women and the politics of place (WPP) is useful in discussing the actions taken by women to protect their communities from various injustices. Harcourt and Escobar's work analyzes women and their experiences mobilizing around various issues, including communities, land, and economics, across different locations. Their wide range of movements and location contribute to an understanding of the interconnectedness of these issues and how women across the globe face them. The WPP framework their work presents demonstrates how place-based movements and practices of

[9]Wendy Harcourt and Arturo Escobar, *Women and the Politics of Place* (Kumarian Press, 2005), 1.

women "involves an interrelated set of transformations around body, environment, and the economy that could provide alternative ways forward in their mobilizations."[10] Within this context, our works align; my thesis examines the reasons for women's actions, their connections to the movements in a way that gives them agency, and the change they work to bring about. A large part of my work is understanding how women organize and mobilize within their means. Harcourt and Escobar also do this in a way that brings other communities together in conversation which contributes to the narrative of women taking action in their communities, in these movements that are place-based but not place-bound.[11] Perhaps one of the most important places our scholarship aligns is their discussion of how the work of women activists highlights relations between ethnic and cultural rights and the environment. Ultimately, they say because of this culture, identity and protections of environments emerge.[12] Connection to place is an essential characteristic of women's participation in movements for environmental justice, something my work dives deeper into, especially concerning the fear of losing place.

Sociologist Shirley A. Rainey and scholar Glenn S. Johnson's article, "Grassroots Activism: An Exploration of Women of Color's Role in the Environmental Justice Movement," provides a good overview of grassroots movements and contributions of women of color within these movements. Their work contributes to an understanding of

[10]Wendy Harcourt and Arturo Escobar, *Women and the Politics of Place,* 1.

[11]Harcourt and Escobar, 5.

[12]Harcourt and Escobar, 11.

environmental justice movements, noting that environmental injustices are not microcosms because they expand beyond geographic locations.[13]

The article "Women's organizing against extractivism: towards a decolonial multisited analysis," by Martina Angela Caretta, Sofia Zaragocin, Bethani Turley, and Kamila Torres Orellana, provides two case studies from the United States and Ecuador. Their studies focused on West Virginia and Cuenca, Ecuador, and examined women working against extractivism in both locations.[14] Harcourt and Escobar's work concludes that movements are not bound to one location. Concerning the involvement of women in environmental justice movements, Rainey and Johnson discuss the involvement of everyday working-class women who address environmental inequalities in their communities.[15] They write the "experience of ordinary women makes visible a complex relationship between everyday life and the larger structures of public power."[16] This contribution is where our works overlap. Discussions of everyday women is essential, and the women participating in these movements often do not identify themselves as activists but as concerned members of their communities. Women involved in these movements come from various backgrounds, overcome barriers, and work together for collective causes.

Environmental Scientist Brinda Sarathy's article "An Intersectional Reappraisal of the Environmental-Justice Movement," fits into conversations about the importance of using an intersectional lens to discuss the environmental justice movement. She writes that "an

[13]Shirley A. Rainey, and Glenn S. Johnson. "Grassroots Activism: An Exploration of Women of Color's Role in the Environmental Justice Movement," *Race, Gender, and Class* 16, no. 3/4 (2009), 145.

[14]Caretta, et al., "Women's Organizing against Extractivism: Towards a Decolonial Multi-Sited Analysis." *Human Geography* 13, no. 1 (March 1, 2020), 50.

[15]Rainey and Johnson, 150.

[16]Rainey and Johnson, 150.

expansive and intersectional approach to environmental justice can help us better understand the varying ways environmental harm affects different communities."[17] Sarathy highlights the urgency of intersectionality when discussing the environmental justice movement, the movement's history, and its ties to environmental racism. Sarathy discusses how Love Canal is internationally known for its role in the anti-toxins movement; however, it is not typically associated in the "pantheon of environmental-justice scholarship."[18] The movement at Love Canal in New York State arose in response to Hooker Chemical dumping chemical and municipal waste into the canal between 1920 and 1953. The land was sold, a school was built, and the area became well populated with family homes built on top of this toxic waste.[19] During the 1970s, Love Canal began making national headlines upon realizing that there were increasing problems with reproductive health issues on the site. Sarathy highlights issues at Love Canal, discussing women of color as the primary renters of the low-income housing project in the area and among those impacted by reproductive health issues. Government officials blamed these women for putting themselves in that situation.[20] Environmental harm and impacts at Love Canal had disproportional class impacts within the struggle for government compensation. Sarathy writes that white women used their privilege to help draw and hold media attention to Love Canal as policymakers took action.[21] Sarathy's work on intersectionality in the environmental justice movement brings awareness to the

[17]Brinda Sarathy, "An Intersectional Reappraisal of the Environmental-Justice Movement," in *The Nature of Hope: Grassroots Organizing, Environmental Justice, and Political Change*, ed. Jeff Crane and Char Miller (University Press of Colorado, 2018), 28.

[18]Brinda Sarathy, "An Intersectional Reappraisal of the Environmental-Justice Movement," 37.

[19]Sarathy, 37.

[20]Sarathy, 39.

[21]Sarathy, 40.

movement's often overlooked and underheard voices, which is something that is often lacking when it comes to environmental justice scholarship on Appalachia. Saranty notes that "race, gender, and class intersect to produce different outcomes in terms of how working-class mothers contextualized their demands for safer homes and communities."[22] This understanding is crucial to understanding how women work within their means and comfort zones to bring about change individually and collectively at various rates.

Historian Amy M. Hay discussed Love Canal's influence on the movement. In "Recipe for Disaster: Motherhood and Citizenship at Love Canal," Hay asserts that "Love Canal residents invoked motherhood, homes, and families as the state's response to the chemical disaster."[23] Love Canal provides a comparative example of big industries exploiting and polluting low-income communities. Hay and Saranty's writings urge us to use Love Canal in conversation with other movements. Examining other movements when focusing on a specific region, such as Appalachia, can help break the myth of Appalachia as a unique or distinct place. It allows for an understanding of the interconnectedness of people to their community and the exploitation of the environment and why women are predominant leaders in many movements for environmental justice.

Anthropologist Mary K. Anglin's "Lessons from Appalachia in the 20th Century: Poverty, Power, and the 'Grassroots," follows the theme of ordinary poor and working-class people's participation in grassroots movements. As previously mentioned, in the case of Appalachia, poor areas are taken advantage of by natural resource extraction. Anglin's work presents an example of the political agency of poor people and their means of mobilization

[22]Brinda Sarathy, 39.

[23]Amy M. Hay, "Recipe for Disaster: Motherhood and Citizenship at Love Canal," *Journal of Women's History* 21, no. 1 (2009), 126.

through which "racial/ethnic, class, and gendered hierarchies have been sustained and contested."[24] Anglin highlights the different forms of collective actions taken by people in Appalachian communities in opposition to the forces that leave their communities impoverished. These problems she writes upheld the culture of poverty model.[25] Anglin's work shows how people organize around regional concerns and their cultural and community-based struggles.[26] From highlighting mobilization around worker's rights at Brookside and Pittston in the coalfields to women in the Moth Hill Mica industry of North Carolina, Anglin's work discusses mobilization around various issues faced by people of Appalachia. Comparisons of different industries located within different parts of the region provide an understanding of how organizations take similar shape surrounding different issues, a constantly evolving component of my writings. Anglin's book *Women, Power, And Dissent in the Hills of Carolina* provides a more in-depth study of women and their waged labor and mobilizing around issues in the mica industry of North Carolina. Ultimately Anglin's "Lesson's From the Grassroots" and the examples of Appalachian activism reflected the dissimilarities among participants involved in the movements, their objectives, and their successes.[27]

When it comes to specific scholarship on women mobilizing in Appalachia against extractive industries, there is a growing body of scholarship. Historian Chad Montrie's *To Save a Land and People,* provides a starting point for discussing the campaign to abolish

[24]Mary K. Anglin, "Lessons from Appalachia in the 20th Century: Poverty, Power, and the 'Grassroots,'" *American Anthropologist* 104, no. 2 (June 2002), 565.

[25]Mary K. Anglin, "Lessons from Appalachia in the 20th Century: Poverty, Power, and the 'Grassroots,'" 566.

[26]Anglin, "Lessons from Appalachia," 574.

[27]Anglin, 567.

strip mining. Montre's work discusses the activism of farmers and everyday people as the primary leaders working on the local level of the movement against strip mining. These ordinary people non-college-trained farmers, workers, and unemployed members of their communities played significant roles in the conversation, preservation, and environmental movements.[28] The participants of the movement collectively worked together, exposing correlations between strip mining and the ruining of the land, and played a role in sustaining the poverty many in the region faced.[29] Many times those most affected are farmers and community members whose families have lived in those hills for generations, something that continues to play out in the environmental destruction of Appalachia. Montrie presented the stories of people who felt that they had been forsaken and of those willing to place themselves in front of the bulldozers to stop the destruction. Many of those discussed in his writings were women, noting how they tested the industry, pushing limits further with their activism than many of their male counterparts because of fear of industry pushback.[30] His work highlights the rise of activism during the 1970s when many people in Appalachia began recognizing that outside private control of natural resources was at the core of many regional problems.

Sociologist Shannon Elizabeth Bell's book *Fighting King Coal: The Challenges to Micromobilization in Central Appalachia* also discusses the exploitative nature of the coal industry, primarily by focusing on mountaintop removal mining and how the permanent damage and destruction of the landscape led to the emergence of EJ activists. She was

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[28]Chad Montrie, *To Save the Land and People: A History of Opposition to Surface Coal Mining in Appalachia.* (University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 3.

[29]Montrie, *To Save the Land and People,* 4.

[30]Montrie, 104-105.

seeking to answer the questions of why so many local citizens are, "affected by industry-produced environmental hazards and toxins the nonparticipants in movements to bring about social justice and industry accountability."[31] Through her interview work with women, she evaluates why citizens chose to stay silent about the issues plaguing their communities. Understanding the barriers to their participation is essential in understanding their silence. Bell discusses groups like "Friends of Coal" that play off people's connection to the industry to manipulate them into staying silent. Bell's work discusses how these groups play to the emotions of coalfield residents, the belief that coal is essential to their livelihoods, and their generational ties to the industry. They utilize tactics that are divisive and lead many not to speak out.[32] Bell notes that women make up the majority of the activists in battles against the coal company stating; the underrepresentation of men in the environmental justice activism is in direct relation to the coal industry's influence on the hegemonic masculinity.[33] Her findings are that women are often more likely to act than men in the case of activism surrounding the coal industry.

American studies scholar Sylvia Ryerson's "Precarious Politics: Friends of Coal, the UMWA, and the Affective Terrain of Energy Identification," discusses the use of cultural manipulation through the work of organizations like Friends of Coal. She discusses the group Friends of Coal and their use of cultural manipulation tactics. Slogans like "Coal Keeps the Lights on" and "Coal Mining Our Future" are among the tactics used to play on the emotions and deep roots of those in mining communities. Other slogans, such as "Coalminer's Wife,"

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[31]Shannon Elizabeth Bell, *Fighting King Coal: The Challenges to Micromobilization in Central Appalachia. Urban and Industrial Environments* (The MIT Press, 2016), 249.

[32]Shannon Elizabeth Bell, *Fighting King Coal,* 90.

[33]Bell*, Fighting King Coal,* 4.

draw on women's historical proximity to miners. Friends of Coal also uses tactics of kinship through slogans like "It's a Family Tradition" and "Like Father Like Son" in their branding. They all portray people's connection to and reliance on the industry. Friends of Coal's employment of such slogans adds to the longstanding history of cultural manipulation in the coalfields and further perpetuates the miners vs. activists ideology. Ryerson's work ultimately contributes to understanding how groups like Friends of Coal are harmful and divisive to the communities. Such groups succeed mainly by manipulating people through their history and distracting them from the impending environmental damage and threats to their community at the hands of the industry.[34] This manipulation, presented in context by Bell and Ryerson, is important to understand those who act and those who do not and the reasoning from both sides of the narrative. Both scholars discuss how such cultural manipulation is a contributing factor to the underrepresentation of men within these movements.

Women's studies scholar Joyce M. Barry's article, "Mountaineers Are Always Free: An Examination of the Effects of Mountaintop Removal in West Virginia," is the first scholarly article on MTR. Barry uses the theoretical lens of environmental justice to evaluate the foundation of the controversies of MTR from the viewpoint of rural women in West Virginia.[35] As Barry discusses women's connections between grassroots movements and more significant environmental concerns; she lays out the interconnections of environmental

[34]Sylvia Ryerson, "Precarious Politics: Friends of Coal, the UMWA, and the Affective Terrain of Energy Identification," *American Quarterly* 72, no. 3 (2020), 727.

[35]Joyce M. Barry, "Mountaineers Are Always Free?: An Examination of the Effects of Mountaintop Removal in West Virginia." *Women's Studies Quarterly* 29, no. 1/2 (2001), 119.

and human justice issues.[36] Her article provides insight into early scholarship on women's fight against MTR. She concludes that many women who engage with social activism are rural women who get involved with the struggles that affect their homes, families, and communities.

Barry's writing on women's activism continued with her book *Standing Our Ground: Women, Environmental Justice, and the Fight to End Mountaintop Removal.* She focuses on the involvement of women in West Virginia impacted by mountaintop removal and expands beyond the scope of her original essay. Barry points out that the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977 allowed for the practice of mountaintop removal. Women in these Central Appalachian fights for Environmental Justice pushed MTR into national awareness. She cited women as the reason mountaintop removal became an environmental justice issue. Barry asserts that "MTR became an environmental justice issue through tireless work primarily of women dealing firsthand with the effects of Big Coal in their communities."[37]

Barry's writing covers how the coal industry shapes gender ideologies, placing the work of Appalachian women in the anti-MTR movement within the history and culture of grassroots protest in Appalachia. Barry points out how women have played a vital role in activism within coal mining communities. Using the example of the women of Brookside working to reform the coal industry is where their gendered interests intersected with the maternal conditions of working-class life. As many scholars, including Barry, argue, the gendered division of labor associated women with the home and private sphere of family and

[36]Barry,122-124.

[37]Joyce M. Barry, *Standing Our Ground: Women, Environmental Justice, and the Fight to End Mountaintop Removal* (Ohio University Press, 2012), 9.

home, while men were associated with the public arena and industrial work.[38] Women activists fighting against MTR brought awareness to the issue, pushing it to be seen by a larger audience and making it an environmental justice issue. Barry's work highlights the participation of women in environmental justice movements, centralizing gender within environmental justice theory. These women also exemplify the way women influence both the public and private spheres.[39] Women's work against MTR models their historic participation as activists while drawing on their caregivers' roles and connections to the home. Building on existing methods of activism, women have brought attention to MTR and made it an environmental justice issue.

The subject of women as the change barriers in movements against the coal industry continues within Bell's *Our Roots Run Deep as Ironweed: Appalachian Women and the Fight for Environmental Justice.* She looks at women and how they mobilize in their communities. *Our Roots Run Deep as Ironweed* includes interviews in which Bell presents the experiences of twelve central Appalachian women who dedicated their time to protect their communities, in an attempt to examine and discuss women and their leadership within environmental movements in the coalfields.[40] The region is a known epicenter of a grassroots struggle for human rights and environmental justice, a movement that continues to be initiated largely, led, and sustained by working-class women.[41] Bell's work exhibits the powerful nature of women's activism in Appalachia when it comes to seeing their homes,

[38]Barry, *Standing Our Ground,* 36.

[39]Barry, *Standing Our Ground,* 9-11.

[40]Shannon Elizabeth Bell, *Our Roots Run Deep as Ironweed: Appalachian Women and the Fight for Environmental Justice* (University of Illinois Press, 2013), 3.

[41]Shannon Elizabeth Bell, *Our Roots Run Deep as Ironweed,* 2.

communities, and health destroyed.[42] Her book gives voice to women, allowing them to tell stories of their own experiences with coal industry destruction in their communities. Bell ultimately presents the undeniable progress by Appalachian women in the face of injustice.

Global studies scholar Yvonne A. Braun and Shannon Elizabeth Bell explore the gendered nature of the coal industry in the article "Coal, Identity, and the Gendering of Environmental Justice Activism in Central Appalachia." Bell and Braun's article examines how environmental justice activism is gendered, through how the identities of men and women shape or hinder their willingness to participate. They write that EJ movements are different from other mainstream environmental movements because of their attention to social justice for the people living in polluted environments. Women have been heavily represented in these movements; the authors focus on how they draw on their shared identities as 'mothers' and 'Appalachians' to justify their activism. They also evaluate the hegemonic masculinity of the coalfields in Central Appalachia and how this further divides and genders EJ movements. Their research focuses explicitly on coalfield residents that were in some way connected to the coal industry. In-depth interviews with 28 environmental justice activists in central Appalachia provided the data for their study. Much like Bell's solo work, they ultimately find that women activists within their case study, "most often reference the shared identities of "mothers" and "Appalachians" as the driving force behind their activist work."[43]

[42]Bell, *Our Roots Run Deep as Ironweed*, 168.

[43]Shannon Elizabeth Bell and Yvonne A. Braun, "Coal, Identity, and the Gendering of Environmental Justice Activism in Central Appalachia," *Gender & Society* 24, no. 6 (2010), 802.

Historian Shirley Stewart Burns, in her book *Bringing down the Mountains: The Impact of Mountaintop Removal Surface Coal Mining on Southern West Virginia Communities, 1970-2004* discusses the decades-long issues surrounding the environmental effects of strip mining and the visible scars the practice leaves behind.[44] Burns also discusses the widespread use of MTR in response to the energy crisis in the 1979s.[45] Like many, she investigated cultural ties, often divisive tactics, and the coal industry's political nature. Citizens in these communities are at the mercy of the coal industry; the heightened use of MTR decreased jobs and increased community destruction.[46] Through her use of the world systems model, she argues that "WV exists as a peripheral region in the American global market system,"[47] and that this extractivism has increased dependence on the coal industry, ultimately keeping the coal-producing parts of the region dependent on the industry.

Sociologist Rebecca Scott's book, *Removing Mountains: Extracting Nature and Identity in the Appalachian Coalfields,* discusses the impacts of MTR and the success of activists in increasing the national attention and outrage regarding the practice.[48] Her work focuses on the perception of outsiders to the region of the environmental destruction and the culture surrounding coal within the region.[49] Her work not only focuses on the opposition but

[44]Shirley Stewart Burns, *Bringing down the Mountains: The Impact of Mountaintop Removal Surface Coal Mining on Southern West Virginia Communities, 1970-2004* (West Virginia University Press, 2007), 140.

[45]Shirley Stewart Burns, *Bringing down the Mountains,* 6.

[46]Burns, 58-59.

[47]Burns, 2.

[48]Rebecca R. Scott, *Removing Mountains: Extracting Nature and Identity in the Appalachian Coalfields.* (University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 5.

[49]Scott, *Removing Mountains,* 49.

also the supporters of MTR.[50] Echoing others, Scott discusses how those involved in the MTR opposition had ties in the industry, primarily keeping men out of the movement. Scott asserts, "gender ideologies and moralities around work impede the mobilization of coal miners and their communities for an environmentalist cause."[51] Despite focusing on MTR in the Appalachian coalfields, Scott suggests that while her work examines a particular part of the Earth, her work is not firmly located in a geographical site, asserting "MTR is a cultural practice wrapped up in national and global histories; it cannot be adequately understood only from a local perspective."[52] A point in the continuing conversations around environmental movement not being geographically fixed, Scott's acknowledgment of this allows space to see and conduct deeper investigations into connections to larger movements.

Historian Sally Ward Maggard's "Women's Participation in the Brookside Coal Strike: Militance, Class, and Gender in Appalachia" is an early example of scholarship regarding women's participation in labor strikes. During her research in the central Appalachian coalfields, she met several leaders of these movements, finding that women had long been leaders of local movements. She found that women have historically led campaigns surrounding miners' health, unionization and worker's rights, and public safety.[53] Maggard's article focuses on the 1973-74 Brookside strike in Harlan County, Kentucky, and the formation of the famous Brookside Women's Club. Maggard questions the high degree of women's participation on picket lines of strikes concerning miners' rights and investigates

[50]Scott, 113-114.

[51]Scott, 101.

[52]Scott, 26.

[53]Maggard, 16.

what got women mobilized and the motivations for their continued fights. Labor strikes were long and resulted in high degrees of violence due to challenging power systems.[54] Despite the longevity of the strikes, threats, and violence, women persisted as significant leaders in the movements. Maggard writes that women's activism counters conventional understandings of women as political beings. In previous scholarship, women were considered unlikely candidates for strike leadership. Their duties for strikes consisted of running food lines, caring for children, and supporting the men of the movements. Maggard's writing counters conventional scholarship on women's activism, where women did not appear as independent actors who shaped the region's history.[55] Ultimately her research on women's participation in collective protest concerning class conflict uncovered a rich history of female activism, declaring that the separation between the public and private sphere creates an artificial separation between them, and suggesting they are connected and directly impact each other.[56] Maggard found that the Brookside strike household operations and the composition of strikers relate in meaningful ways. Women of Brookside organized the first women's picket and took over the strike from when the number of miners striking at entrances was limited.[57] Maggard suggests that through maintaining certain family obligations as mothers and wives, the Brookside women never threatened the idea of women's place in the home.[58] Women of Brookside still maintained their lives in the private sphere of their homes while participating

[54]Maggard, 16.

[55]Maggard, 16.

[56]Maggard, 17.

[57]Maggard, 18.

[58]Maggard, 20.

in the strikes. They proved that women could be successful and active public and private sector participants.

Historian Jessica Wilkerson's "The Company Owns the Mine, but They Don't Own Us: Feminist Critiques of Capitalism in the Coalfields of Kentucky in the 1970s" is a more recent evaluation of women's participation at Brookside. She cites Maggard within the notes section of her article. Wilkerson explores women's involvement in coalfield activism after an injunction that limited the number of miners who could stand at mine entrances. The Brookside Women's Club organized and attracted support from all over the country and gained media attention. Similar Maggard's discussion of women being overlooked and oversimplified in previous scholarship, she writes that their social positions as women with connections to miners helped pushed them into the strike, and informed their sense of class solidarity. Their actions in turn helped to challenge the gendered relations of the collided communities.[59] Wilkerson's work suggests that working-class women's activism in coal-producing parts of Appalachia dramatized the primary struggles of the 1970s regarding labor uprisings and women's liberation movements. Participants in this activism had a foot in both movements and united them through their histories. These women drew from their collective memories and individual experiences as interpretive devices and forged what Wilkerson calls class-conscious feminism. Their activism exposed traumas of coalfield capitalism, women's unpaid work as caregivers, and unsettled the gender and class hierarchies that were a staple of coalfield communities.[60] Women of Brookside transformed activism in the region and symbolized power imbalance in the mountains. Wilkerson states the history of the Brookside

[59]Wilkerson, 200.

[60]Wilkerson, 200.

Women's Club can help broaden the understanding of the ways feminism touched the lives of American women. Their experiences as caregivers in the coalfields became powerful political narratives and meant for arguing the legitimacy of their concerns.[61] Women became the spokespeople for the movements, showing how structural class inequalities shaped their daily lives. Maggard and Wilkerson's work complement each other, reinforcing the idea of women upholding motherly duties while also being participants in the Brookside Strike. Both counter the long-standing narrative that women were not active members of society. Arguing that they were participants in justice movements early on and became the backbone of the Brookside Strike. Both argue that previous scholarship oversimplified women's class positions and contributions to society. By the late 1970s, Women became wage earners as members of the coal industry. While working for wages in the mines, female miners faced barriers to participation above and below ground. Women miners' social pressure was harsher than males; people constantly challenged women's sexuality and statuses as mothers and wives. Through their gendered position in society, they were able to do so

In *Daughters of the Mountain: Women Coal Miners in Central Appalachia,* Sociologist Suzanne E. Tallichet argues that female coal miners' gendered positions became agents of social change for women in the coal industry.[62] She focuses on the participation of women in local unions and the gendered elements of their work, along with the class consciousness of male miners. Women in the coalfields face barriers because of the industry's gendered nature and ideas of the public sphere versus the private and who belongs

[61]Wilkerson, 215.

[62]Suzanne E Tallichet, *Daughters of the Mountain Coal Miners in Central Appalachia* (Morehead State University Press, 2006), 177.

where and their resistance to male and capitalist domination.[63] Tallichet brings female coal miners into American history's narrative of working women.

Tallichet conducted most of her research through interviews and examination of the experiences of a cohort of Appalachia women who worked in the underground coal mines.[64] Her argument is that the gendered discrimination women coal miners faced, along with their perseverance and challenging the status of men within their patriarchal society, meant that the social pressure faced by women miners was harsher than that of males and people contested and challenged their sexuality, status as mothers, and wives. Tallichet says, "the full cultural impact of women in mining remains to be seen because their working lives exemplify the direction and ongoing nature of social change."[65] The conclusion she comes to is by venturing beyond their gendered socialization experiences, they deconstructed gender. Women advocated for workers' rights long before working as wage earners in the industry. Women's activism in Appalachia continued to gain traction in the late 1970s.

Environmental justice movements, grassroots activism, and actions of women activists in Appalachia have become a theme in literature, art, and music about the region, and the importance of this work in drawing attention to justice movements. Protest songs from Appalachia have played a significant role in these movements. The use of the arts as mechanism for change is the topic of many regional scholarship scholarships. It is an important theme in regards to grassroots movements and women's contributions that is prominent within the scope of my thesis.

[63]Tallichet, 7.

[64]Tallichet, 19.

[65]Tallichet, 7.

Scholar Courtney E. Brooks' article, "The Maternal Is Political: Appalachian Materialist Protest Songs," discusses the role of maternal protest songs as a mechanism for change. Music of the Appalachian region has long been used to showcase "romantic, idealistic, and also backward views of the region and its people,"[66] just as women have been stereotyped as complacent members of society. While the music has negative historical connotations, it is also a mechanism of change within the region and across various social movements. There are many notable songs from Appalachia that have found their way into movements across the world. Brooks writes that as strikers and singers, women violated gender conventions by invading spaces that were traditionally solely occupied by men.[67] They also challenged resistance narratives through their songs by connecting women's experiences as "mothers, wives, workers, and witnesses of social injustices to songs that give voice to their anger and dissent."[68] Notable women who brought awareness to social justices issue in Appalachia through song are Florence Reece, Aunt Molly Jackson, Sarah Ogan Gunning, and Hazel Dickens. They were drawing from their personal, experiences while also changing and challenging the narratives placed on them. Their strategic use of themes and lyrics allowed them a platform to voice their grievances. Brooks asserts that these women and their motherhood identities are rooted not only in their socially sanctioned roles as mothers but also in their deep connection to the land and culture.[69] Her work's ultimate argument and contribution are that through crafting songs through their reactions to the

[66]Courtney E. Brooks, "The Maternal Is Political: Appalachian Materialist Protest Songs," in *Performing Motherhood: Artistic, Activist, and Everyday Enactments*, ed. Kryn Freehling-Burton, Terri Hawkes, and Amber E Kinser (Demeter Press, 2014), 34.

[67]Brooks, 35.

[68]Brooks, 35.

[69]Brooks, 36.

injustices within their communities, women became the authors of their own stories and experiences. Their musical narratives broke the assumed complacency and culture of silence placed upon them by uncovering the harsh realities of working and living conditions.

Scholar H. Adam Ackley's, "In the Footsteps of Mother Jones, Mothers of the Miners- Florence Reece, Molly Jackson, and Sarah Ogan Gunning" explores' maternalistic protest songs' from Appalachia. Florence Reece, Molly Jackson, and Sarah Ogan Gunning drew on their identities of women and their proximity to men in the coal industry. These women witnessed firsthand the destruction within their communities. Their music brought working-class struggles from the coalfields to larger audiences. Similarly, Brooks argues that through their activism, their work contradicted the view of Appalachian women as passive and domestic.[70] Ackley asserts that their positions of mothers, wives, and family members of miners helped voice their concerns using the "more radical view of mother–labor organizer" pioneered by Jones.[71]

Alternative means of acting also come through literature and nature writing from Appalachia. Perhaps one of the most notable examples regarding mountaintop removal mining is Silas House and Jason Howard's book *Something's Rising: Appalachians Fighting Mountaintop Removal.* Their edited collection includes a collection of oral histories from people that have been in some way impacted by the coal industry. Their work discusses how "opposition to mountaintop removal has developed into a full-fledged movement, with several different factions fighting to change laws, debate the coal industry, and tell the stories

[70]H. Adam Ackley, "In the Footsteps of Mother Jones, Mothers of the Miners- Florence Reece, Molly Jackson, and Sarah Ogan Gunning." In *Women of the Mountain South: Identity, Work, and Activism*, ed. by Connie Park Rice and Marie Tedesco (Ohio University Press, 2015), 337.

[71]H. Adam Ackley, "In the Footsteps of Mother Jones," 337.

of the people affected by this destructive form of mining."[72] Compiling accounts from twelve witnesses to MTR within their communities provides a diverse narrative and uplifts people's accounts. Through the inclusion of personal accounts, they also hoped the narratives presented within *Something Rising* are that of people "fighting to make Appalachia a better place for themselves, for their children, for themselves and for generations to come."[73] The presented argument also arises within the scope of my research and writing. They highlight the lived experience of people from communities impacted by MTR.

Contributions from the region's artists are equally important in this fight. Production of music and literature on the matter help reach larger audiences mobilizing the anti-MTR movement and helping MTR to become a household issue. Their work relies heavily on lived experience and people's connections to place. Literature as activism against MTR is explored further by many contributing authors in Jason Howard's edited work *We All Live Downstream: Writings about Mountaintop Removal.* Another example of literature's use against environmental destruction is writings against the construction of natural gas pipelines; such works include Mara Eve Robbins's book *Seeing Red.* Her book uses poetry as a form of activism and brining awareness to injustices and draws attention to the MVP through primary source accounts via photos, interviews, and news sources. The arts in Appalachia continue serve means of mobilizing communities and documenting experiences. Women and their actions take different forms; some defend the frontlines of movements through direct action, and some write letters and take on the legal battle. An increasing field

[72]Silas House, and Jason Howard, *Something's Rising: Appalachians Fighting Mountaintop Removal* (University Press of Kentucky, 2009), 5.

[73]House and Howard, *Something's Rising,* 10.

is artivism and fighting these injustices through literature and music. No matter the form of their actions, they are part of a much larger movement.

Appalachian women have been major contributors to movements for justice in the coalfields. Scholars from many different backgrounds have documented their work. They ultimately come to believe that while women face backlash, they stand their ground and continue the fight. Many of the women who have and still are participating in these movements are ordinary individuals. Common themes exist through the women's actions in all justice movements surrounding the coal industry. Through participation as activists, women established themselves as part of the public sphere, advocating for workers' rights and becoming wage earners for the coal industry in the 1970s. They use the same organizational structure to lead movements for environmental justice in their communities. These women often attribute their actions to their roles as mothers who want a better future for their children. Their concern for their communities and those living around them goes far beyond self-serving interests. Women's contributions grassroots movements in Appalachia have brought about change through breaking gender norms, collective action, and making progress towards protecting the environment and their communities for future generations.

CHAPTER 1: BRINGING ABOUT CHANGE THROUGH BREAKING GENDER NORMS

You pull the string
She's your plaything
You can make her or break her, it's true
You abuse her, accuse her
Turn her round and use her
Then forsake her any time it suits you
–"Don't Put Her Down You Helped Put Her There"
By Hazel Dickens and Alice Gerrard.[74]

Depictions of the Appalachian region and people who live there are present in the media and literary representations of the region. Images of people with beards, running barefoot, and women with a lot of children come to mind for many when they hear "Appalachia."[75] Scholars such as Henry D. Shapiro, in his revolutionary text, *Appalachia on Our Mind: The Southern Mountains and Mountaineers in the American Consciousness, 1870-1920,* pointed out that people outside the mountain region created and published stereotypical images of Appalachian people. As stereotypes about the Appalachian region emerged, their representations of women left them without agency, often depicting them as complacent members of society and living on maternal instincts. Literary portrayals of Appalachian women often depict them as complacent members of their communities. Stories set in Appalachia depict women as non-participants of waged labor and working solely in their homes. However, resistance movements from within Appalachia paint a different picture. Women participated in various industries and have taken part in collective action and movements for unionization. Participation of women in both dismisses the notion of separate spheres and brings to light women's contributions to the public sphere and their relations

[74]Hazel Dickens and Alice Gerrard, *Don't Put Her down You Helped Put Her There* (Rounder Records, 1973).

[75]David C. Hsiung, "Stereotypes," in *High Mountains Rising: Appalachia in Time and Place*, ed. Richard A. Straw and H. Tyler Blethen (University of Illinois Press, 2004), 102.

across race, class, and gender lines. Intersectionality helps to highlight the struggles in their efforts and allows for a better understanding of their roles as workers and organizers. In the context of women's grassroots movements, an intersectional understanding is essential because no one specified reason explains women's involvement. Their social relations, kinship, and community ties are among the reasons for participation.

Many scholars have discussed the importance of women, and their contributions to the public and private spheres. Texts that contribute to larger conversations of women and separate spheres include, *Home and Work: Housework, Wages, and the Ideology of Labor in the Early Republic* by Jeanne Boydston and Nancy F. Cott's The Bonds of Womanhood: "Woman's Sphere" in New England, 1780-1835. These texts provide context for the separate sphere ideology within earlier periods of American history. Agency over women's contributions to their communities and the Appalachian region has sometimes been unclear. Anthropologist Patricia D. Beaver wrote that "women and African Americans receive short shrift in Appalachian history, as silent or invisible bystanders to or even nonexistent in the acts and events of white men."[76] Sociologist Barbara Ellen Smith wrote, "Women have been extras, hidden behind quilts and sunbonnets in tradition-bound domestic roles that supported the husbands, sons, and fathers as they transformed the region and made its history."[77] Beaver and Smith's statements resonate with how such notions of Appalachian women leave them without agency, hidden behind muddied narratives and in the shadow of men. This work seeks to clarify women's valuable contributions to their communities.

[76]Patricia D. Beaver, "Women in Appalachia and the South: Gender, Race, Region, and Agency," *NWSA Journal* Vol. 11, no. 3 (October 1999), xvii.

[77]Barbara Ellen Smith, "Walk-Ons in the Third Act: The Role of Women in Appalachian Historiography.," *Journal of Appalachian Studies* Vol. 4, no. No. 1 (Fall 1998), 5.

In "'Beyond the Mountains': The Paradox of Women's Place in Appalachia," Barbara Ellen Smith asserts, "Their distinctly ambivalent relationships with their homeplace and kin contest some of the most common and cherished assumptions about the residents of the region."[78] It is their connection to place and gender relationships that are important to their work and experiences as women from the Appalachian region. Sally Ward Maggard writes that the 1970s was a decade when the nation heard many voices from Appalachia that challenged the region's stereotypes. These voices "spotlighted an area of the country where articulate and angry people were organized for basic social and economic change."[79] Maggard further states that feminist scholars' arguments for women's participation over-simplifies their class position, defining their connection to husbands and families.[80] She calls attention to the lack of agency given to women when they are represented as existing solely within the home, declaring that separation between the public and private spheres creates an artificial separation. She asserts they are connected and directly impact each other.[81] Maggard's work is essential in recognizing that the separate sphere narrative is harmful and overshadows voices. Her work brings into conversation an acknowledgment that many women exist within the construction of the public and private spheres. Women working in Appalachia were never truly divided by private and public spheres, contrary to the notions of popular media and outdated gender norms. Examining how women have broken away from the stereotypical depictions of women is crucial to understanding their lives and contributions

[78]Barbara E. Smith, "Beyond the Mountains': The Paradox of Women's Place in Appalachian History," *NWSA Journal* Vol. 11, no. 3 (Fall 1999), 2.

[79]Sally Ward Maggard, "Women's Participation in the Brookside Coal Strike: Militance, Class, and Gender in Appalachia." *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 9, no. 3 (January 1, 1987), 17.

[80]Maggard, 16-17.

[81]Maggard, 17.

in Appalachia, letting them and their contributions speak for themselves. Barbara Ellen Smith writes, "If we grant this Appalachian mother an independent self, she may seek a life beyond domesticity, beyond the mountains, even beyond us."[82] Smith's statement is important because a growing body of scholarship, including this one, seeks to give agency to Appalachian women, moving them far beyond the narratives of acting solely as domestic laborers working out of motherly instinct alone. Giving these voices agency comes with the brutal truth of what women in Appalachia endured while working to have their voices heard. Women in Appalachia continue to defy the gender norms of the region, asserting themselves in highly male arenas and pushing back against the stereotypes placed on them. Through their work as activists, wage earners in the public sphere of the coal mines, the mica industry, their work earning wages from home, and the music industry, women in Appalachia have broken the gender norms and stereotypes of the region and brought about change.

The 1970s was a time of change and the larger women's movement that was in full swing across the United States. Their work and activism fit into this larger narrative, not only linking Appalachia to the rest of the nation, but allowing for comparisons across movements. The Women's Movement has been examined and written about in many, notable texts including Ruth Rosen's *The World Split Open: How the Modern Women's Movement Changed America*. Rosen's work discusses the impact of the women's movement, and contributions of women. She asserts that, "by the end of the twentieth century, feminist ideas had burrowed too deeply into our culture for any resistance or politics to root them out,"[83]

[82]Barbara Ellen Smith, "'Beyond the Mountains': The Paradox of Women's Place in Appalachian History," *NWSA Journal* Vol. 11, no. 3 (Fall 1999), 2.

[83]Ruth Rosen, *The World Split Open: How the Modern Women's Movement Changed America* (Penguin Books, 2000), xv.

which is a sentiment that is rampant within the work and activism of women in Appalachia. Maria Bucur's *The Century of Women: How Women Have Transformed the World Since 1900* further explores the contributions of women during the 1970s. Bucur's work evaluates women's participation as wage earners and their connections to global markets. She writes, "In a more strongly interconnected service economy, women have often climbed the political, professional, social, and economic ladder on the shoulders of other women."[84] Her analysis helps to define and frame "the century of women." She ultimately argues the ways "women have been central movers and shakers in these processes, with consequences we need to fully historicize as a way to better appreciate the potentialities and challenges of the world we inhabit today."[85] A base understanding of women and their contributions during the larger women's movement of the 1970s helps to contextualize the actions of women in Appalachia during this same time. It allows for a greater understanding of women's organizing, the interconnected nature of these movements, and diminishes notions that the activism of Appalachian Women is unique.

Early Women Activists Leading The Way

One of the most notable pacesetters is union activist Mother Jones, renowned for organizing miners nationwide in the early 20th century. Jones's name enacts the mother figure model for activism, one modeled by many activists to come. The mother of the miner persona is prevalent through the work of many women. Their activism and songs from the region speak on hardships, struggles, and the heaviness surrounding the mining industry.

[84]Maria Bucur, *The Century of Women: How Women Have Transformed the World since 1900* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2018), 4

[85]Maria Bucur, *The Century of Women*, 5.

Jones is well known for her work in organizing the West Virginia mining strike of 1913; this effort many call the height of her career.[86] She spoke openly about injustices in the coalfields and against mining operations. Though Jones faced persistent backlash for her work, she never backed down and always kept the greater good, her communities, and future generations in mind. Her fight was part of a larger one. Jones helped to set the example of the mother-labor organizer role, specifically surrounding the coal industry. She organized miners, wives of miners, and entire communities. Her work became part of a much larger movement, and her contributions still live on through activism today.

Women like Ollie "Widow" Combs and Hazel King broke gender norms with their actions against surface mining. At sixty-two, Ollie Combs sat down in front of a bulldozer to protect her homestead in Knott County, Kentucky, from being destroyed.[87] Notable images of Ollie "Widow" Combs being carried off her land hang in the mind of many people. Combs was in active opposition to strip mining, making demands that a stop needed to be put to the practice of destroying communities and natural resources.[88] Combs is one of many women in Appalachian history who physically placed themselves between the extractive industry and their community.

Hazel King is one of the most notable reformists surrounding surface mining and speaking out to bring change to her community. King retired from the military and moved back to her home in Harlan County, Kentucky. It was there that she fought tirelessly against surface mining operations. King was instrumental in the passage of the 1977 Surface Mining

[86]Ackley, 338.

[87]Chad Montrie, *To Save the Land and People: A History of Opposition to Surface Coal Mining in Appalachia* (University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 79.

[88]Chad Montrie, *To Save the Land and People,* 82.

Control and Reclamation Act (SMCRA).[89] SMCRA established regulations for surface mining and land reclamation processes that coal operations should follow. Despite its intentions to establish strip-mining regulations, the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977 was fundamentally a weak piece of legislation beset by loopholes allowing for mountaintop removal mining (MTR). In 1977 King filed a complaint against a surface mining operation that resulted in the act's enforcement for the very first time.[90] Her citizen complaint was groundbreaking, leading to the first federal cessation order issued under the 1977 Act.[91] Her activism did not stop with the passage of SMCRA; King spent her later years acting in opposition to mountaintop removal mining.[92] Like many women change-makers in Appalachia, King dedicated her life to making her community a better and safer place for all.

These women are just a handful of the individuals that forever changed views of women in Appalachia. Women have disproved the stereotypes of complacent Appalachian women and modeled for women's activism formed on motherhood, community interests, and personal agency. They are the leaders in a movement of women breaking free of the gendered norms to bring about change that this chapter follows. Their work inspired the movements that continue to be sustained by women in Appalachia.

[89]Silas House and Jason Howard, *Something's Rising* (University Press of Kentucky, 2009), 17.

[90]House and Howard, *Something's Rising*, 17.

[91]Roy Silver, "Hazel King Remembered," www.kyrc.org, August 9, 2007, https://www.kyrc.org/news/general/hazel-king-remembered.

[92]House and Howard, 18.

Women, Motherhood, and Early Songs of Protest

By way of music, women brought the region's issues to mainstream audiences through their songs. Giving a voice to the underrepresented and oppressed, these Appalachian women asserted themselves in the heavily male-dominated music industry and became the voices of future generations. Some of the earliest women known for doing this are Sarah Ogan Gunning, Molly Jackson, and Florence Reece. These three women are known best for drawing on their traditional maternal identities. Through their songs, they drew on the identities of mothers and wives of miners. Their proximity to miners and the labor struggles in the coal industry gave them a unique perspective on the happenings of their communities. They were singing about their love and loss with those family members in mind. Their songs gave a voice to national struggles and a regional movement. They directly contradicted the domesticated view of passive women confined to their homes.[93] These women led the way for Appalachian women musicians and wrote some of the most militant and memorable labor songs. As scholar R. Chelsea Sharp affirms, "This approach to mining songs comes out of a tradition that sees art as a weapon for social justice and environmental change."[94] Asserting themselves on the public stage, they contradicted the persistent domesticated view of Appalachian women as passive and confined to their homes.[95] Sarah Ogan Gunning wrote about her hatred for the capitalist system and her experiences of loss surrounding the coal industry. Some of her most famous songs are "I Hate The Capitalist

[93]Ackley, 337.

[94]R. Chesla Sharp, "Coal-Mining Songs as Forms of Environmental Protest," *Journal of the Appalachian Studies Association* Vol 4, no. 30 (1992), 51.

[95]Ackley, 337.

System," "Dreadful Memories," "Down on the Picket Line," and "Come All You Coal Miners," Another source of information on her life and work is the 1988 Appalshop film *Dreadful Memories*, directed by Mimi Pickering. The film tells the story of Gunning's life and dedication to telling stories of the lives of working people through her ballads.

Aunt Molly Jackson is known for her songs "Pistol Packing Woman" and "I am a Union Woman." Her songs moved the narrative away from marternalistic nature, were more outspoken, and on the free will of women. Some of her songs about hardships are "Hungry Ragged Blues" and "Hunger." Jackson's songs regarding Appalachian women and protest broke free of the usual domestic context.[96] Jackson was writing and performing an array of politically outspoken songs with ties to the coal industry as early as the 1930's.

Florence Reece wrote songs from her experiences and living through the 1930s Bloody Harlan uprising. Her song "Which Side Are You On" was written as her home was being raided during Bloody Harlan she is said to have ripped the calendar off the wall and wrote the song on the back. Reece's song has become one of the most popular songs to be used in protest movements. These women's songs draw on their identities as mothers and connections to miners. Their songs were about hard times and persistence; they believed in the union's power and the benefits it offered workers and communities. Speaking on their experiences as widows, mothers grieving their dead children, brothers, fathers, and husbands, such songs pushed them out of their homes to speak for other local workers and their families. By singing these songs in the public sphere and as means of organizing mining families into the union, they drew national attention to Appalachian suffering. Reece, Jackson, and Gunning all expanded the traditional Appalachian definitions of motherly

[96]Ackley, 332.

authority.[97] These women, scholar Courtney E. Brooks argues became, "Appalachian emblems and enigmas who used their voices to identify specific instances of suffering, honor fallen heroes, and name and insult their oppressors."[98] Their songs became a form of activism in and of themselves singing them gave them a unique perspective and platform that in turn wrought a feminism that is distinctively Appalachian.[99]

Hazel and Alice: Pioneers of Women in Bluegrass

Traditions of protest songs by women grew into the 1960s and 1970s. Women like Ola Belle Reed, Alice Gerard, Hazel Dickens, and Jean Ritchie continued the tradition of women's perspectives in the music of the Appalachian Region. Well into the era of commercial recording, these protest songs reached widespread popularity. Women continued the traditions of writing songs tied to place and movements. Hazel and Alice released their first record, considered the first women duet-led bluegrass recording, in 1965. The two recorded three more albums and toured extensively throughout the 1960s and 1970s.[100] The duo's 1973 self-titled album released through Rounder Records was groundbreaking. The tracks pack a punch, with songs about the struggles of working women. It was this 1973 album that truly put them on the map and established them in a heavily male-dominated industry. They wrote and performed songs in front of live audiences at a time when women songwriters/performers were not typical. Alice Gerrard later talked about her and Hazel

[97]Ackley, 333.

[98]Brooks, 35.

[99]Brooks, 47.

[100]Tatiana Hargreaves, "Won't You Come and Sing for Me? The Music of Hazel Dickens and Alice Gerrard – Field Trip South," UNC University Libraries, October 12, 2021, https://blogs.lib.unc.edu/sfc/2021/10/12/wont-you-come-and-sing-for-me-the-music-of-hazel-dickens-and-alice-gerrard/

Dickens's involvement in the women's movement. She talked about their music and how involved in the women's movement they were.[101] It was not until later on that they realized their true involvement in the movement and were riding it at the grassroots level.[102]

Hazel and Alice's 1973 album put them on the charts and positioned them as pioneering bluegrass women. Writing firsthand on women's experiences, songs like "Mining Camp Blues" speak on the experiences of women fearing the loss of their male miner family members and the possibility that they would not return from work. Other songs on the album speak directly to the experience of women and their communities, "Working Girl Blues", "Custom Made Woman Blues" and "Don't Put Her Down You Helped Put Her There" speak directly about the limitations society placed on women. These songs drive home the gendered expectations placed on women in the 1970s society, discussing service to men and ways to keep them. Their song "Beaufort County Jail" was written about a Black woman named Joan Little who was arrested in 1974 for shoplifting in Washington, North Carolina. One night a group of white prison guards attacked her, and she tried to defend herself. In the process one of the guard's died and she was charged with first degree murder.[103] Their song, "Beaufort County Jail," speaks to the injustice brought against Joan Little, and the injustices of prison system. Dickens and Gerrard tell the story of Joan Little and bring awareness to the case.

Regarding exploration and expectations of women, the duo's song "Don't Put Her Down You Helped Put Her There" is one of the most important to note. It is a song about the

[101]*Hazel Dickens: It's Hard to Tell the Singer from the Song* (Appalshop, 2000).

[102]*Hazel Dickens: It's Hard to Tell the Singer from the Song* (Appalshop, 2000).

[103]James Reston Jr, "The Joan Little Case," *The New York Times*, April 6, 1975, sec. Archives, https://www.nytimes.com/1975/04/06/archives/the-joan-little-case-in-a-small-southern-town-the-night-jailer-is.html.

struggles and exploitation of women. The song is also about the violence against and sexual exploitation of women. Her song helped to bring attention to the plight of women in the coalfields.[104] Hazel Dickens's voice delivers the lyrics, "She hangs around. Playing her clown. At the same time, her soul is aching inside. She's heartbreak's child. She just lives for your smile. To build her up in a world made by man."[105] These lines discuss using reactions and actions of women against them, and their constant battle in a dominant male world. The song ends with the line, "And if she acts that way. It's cause you've had your day. Don't put her down, you helped put her there." In the case of Dickens's song, she calls out men for putting women down, shaming them for their actions, when in reality, they contributed to where women are and their stance in life. The song "Don't Put Her Down You Helped Put Her There" reflects the work and activism of women in Appalachia. The tireless work of women in their communities as a means of bringing about change echoes this statement. Women are ridiculed for speaking out and taking a stand against injustices in their communities. Those on the side of ridicule often do not evaluate how their actions helped put them into that position. The song's namesake is a rallying cry for women taking action and a reflection of the forces that put them there.

In the liner notes to their 1973 album, which Hazel wrote, discussed the women she met in the bars she played. She describes women who got her sympathy because of the men who would use, abuse, and then laugh at them. Hazel asserted that "men can no longer place this burden of shame solely on the shoulders of women. He's as much to blame as she is."[106]

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[104]R. Chesla Sharp, "Coal-Mining Songs as Forms of Environmental Protest," *Journal of the Appalachian Studies Association* Vol 4, no. 30 (1992), 292.

[105]Hazel Dickens and Alice Gerrard, *Hazel & Alice*, Rounder Records, 1973, vinyl. "Liner notes"

[106]Hazel Dickens and Alice Gerrard, *Hazel & Alice*, Rounder Records, 1973, vinyl. "Liner notes."

Dickens asserted that the two were writing on their own experiences and saying the things that needed to be said.[107] Their career changed how people viewed women's contributions to music; they asserted themselves into highly male-gendered genres and used their platform to uplift the voices of many other people. They were writing about things that had been unheard of for women to do, and were doing it on a national recording label. In the words of Alice Gerrard, "we never looked at the music as making it to someone else's standards."[108] Hazel and Alice broke the glass ceiling, and they became the first women to front a popular bluegrass band.[109] Their artistry and songwriting followed the ways of people before them.

Hazel Dickens and Alice Gerrard changed the music industry, broke through many barriers in a male-dominated industry, and paved the way for future generations. The four albums produced as a duo expanded the nature of bluegrass music with the unique content of their songs and the politics of unions, feminism, and civil rights.[110] Although the duo split in 1976, they both went on to brilliant and impactful solo careers.

Hazel Dickens was an activist for coal miners in her home state of West Virginia, who made music until she died in 2011. Her songs influenced social movements writing songs that give voice to the exploited and live on in and sustain justice movements. Her 1980 solo album *Hard Hitting Songs for Hard Hit People* includes songs of struggle and life under capitalism, like the songs that preceded these Dickens highlights struggles of working-class

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[107] Bill Friskics-Warren, "Hazel Dickens, Folk Singer, Dies at 75," *The New York Times*, April 22, 2011, sec. Arts, https://www.nytimes.com/2011/04/23/arts/music/hazel-dickens-bluegrass-singer-dies-at-75.html.

[108]Hazel Dickens and Alice Gerrard, *Hazel & Alice*, Rounder Records, 1973, vinyl. "Liner notes."

[109]Grayson Haver Currin, "Alice Gerrard Didn't Plan a Bluegrass Career. She Broke Its Glass Ceiling," *The New York Times*, October 13, 2022, sec. Arts, https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/13/arts/music/alice-gerrard-pioneering-women-of-bluegrass.html.

[110]Grayson Haver Currin, "Alice Gerrard Didn't Plan a Bluegrass Career."

people. Songs from the table that particularly speak to this are “Scraps From Your Table”, “Old Calloused Hands” “Busted.” Her music continues to be featured in many documentaries about labor disputes from Appalachia. Dickens’ voice was prevalent on the soundtrack of the 1976 documentary *Harlan County USA,* for which she wrote “They’ll Never Keep Us Down.” Dickens song “Black Lung” is also featured in the film, and is written in response to all the people who had suffered and died from the deadly disease. In 2000, Mimi Pickering produced a documentary through Appalshop, about Dickens life and work titled, *Hazel Dickens: It’s Hard To Tell The Singer From The Song*. The documentary title references Dicken’s solo 1987 album “It’s Hard to Tell the Singer from the Song.”

Alice Gerrard’s solo career when the duo split continued to highlight themes of working class people. Gerrard has written and performed many songs about work in mills, such as “Payday at The Mill” and “Cotton Mill Girls.” Gerrard also wrote a beautiful tribute to fellow pioneering woman of music Elizabeth Cotten, titled “Sweet South Anna River.” In 2019 Kenny Dalsheimer produced a documentary titled *You Gave Me A Song: The Life and Music of Alice Gerrard,* which highlights her lifelong commitment to music. The titled taking its name from the track “You Gave Me A Song” from the 1973 album “Hazel & Alice.” a nod to their pioneering album. Alice Gerrard, at eighty-eight, continues to dedicate her life to speaking out against injustices, from songs about racial injustice and aggression toward the LGBTQ+ community. She still tours and sings songs about injustices. With many forthcoming projects, Gerrard is not ending her career anytime soon. She continues to mentor and uplift the voices of artists. Her work and dedication to this music and women’s involvement is still evident, she continues to uplift and inspire the voices of younger generations.

Dickens and Gerrard altered a genre and paved the way for many women who follow in their footsteps. They drew inspiration from personal experiences and seeing injustices unfold around them, like Florence Reece, "Aunt" Molly Jackson, Sarah Ogan Gunning, Jean Ritchie, Ola Belle Reed, and countless others did. They gave voice to the voiceless and spoke out against the injustices faced in their communities. These women musicians from Appalachia brought about change by breaking the gendered norms of their communities and the music industry, bringing to national attention the hardships of Appalachia through their tireless work. Their songs have inspired, sustained, and led movements for change. They are the path pavers that inspire current generations and urge folks not to be complacent. Women musicians work to educate, inspire, and give the fortitude to continue working for our beloved mountains and justice for all who live here.[111]

[111]Sue Massek, "Herstory of Appalachia: Three Centuries of Oppression and Resistance," *Appalachian Journal* Vol. 42, no. 3/4 (2015), 288.

Working Woman Blues: Women and Wage Work

Contrary to the long-conceived notion of Appalachian women as passive nonparticipants of wage work, women in Appalachia were earning money long before participating in the coal industry. They managed to maintain their duties in the domestic sphere, enter into wage labor, and find other unregulated sources of income. While not consistently recognized, women were often the breadwinners of their homes. Mary K. Anglin led groundbreaking work on women working in North Carolina's mica industry. She highlights the construction of women's identities in the mica industry regarding their class relations and experiences in waged labor. She argues that the literature representation of gendered identity is one of stereotypes and omissions. Stating the interconnections between gender, class, and ethnicity also provides a counter-narrative to the literature from the region. Anglin brings attention to how women formed social networks through their positions as workers, which allowed them to bring their community's concerns into their work environment as working-class women. The women working at Moth Hill were also active participants in their local religious organizations; such participation contributed to their daily work environment and, ultimately, the organizing of their workforce. [112] Work relations and family ties helped them bolster a spirit of liveliness and rebellion among their fellow workers.[113] Anglin wrote that the women of Moth Hill were acting on an "amalgam of gendered, classed, racial or ethnic, and regional consciousness privileged their identification as white, working-class."[114] Anglin's work on the women of Moth Hill contributes to

[112]Mary K. Anglin, *Women, Power, and Dissent in the Hills of Carolina* (University of Illinois Press, 2002), 118.

[113]Anglin, *Women, Power, and Dissent,* 121.

[114]Anglin, *Women, Power, and Dissent*, 121.

understanding the complexities of women's identities and their experiences working as wage earners. Women in workplace resistance movements have worked to defy the conventions of feminine behavior.[115] Anglin's scholarship aids in the conversation of women breaking through gender norms and asserting them as relevant members of the working class. While earning wages in the public sphere, women often organized with their fellow workers.

Informal Wage Work Making Ends Meet and Everyday Life

The complex nature of women's identities contributes to their life and work. People from different backgrounds act within their means to make a change, earn money, and assert themselves in their communities. Women's informal work in the Appalachian coalfields is just as important as that of women laborers in established industries. Gendered relationships in their homes influenced the women's decisions to participate in informal work from within their homes. Home-based work brought them in contact with other women as they sought out markets for their goods and services.[116] Women provide services such as baking, catering, child care, and producing handmade goods like quilts. They performed these everyday tasks for their own homes and through being employed by others. Such tasks allowed women to complete these and still maintain their households. Home-based work allowed women to earn money and connect them to more extensive networks of women, which created social ties. With waged work and producing these goods, women connected themselves to wonder networks and expanded their reach far beyond their homes and communities.

[115]Barbara Ellen Smith, "Walk-Ons in the Third Act: The Role of Women in Appalachian Historiography," *Journal of Appalachian Studies* 4, no. 1 (1998), 18.

[116]Ann M. Oberhauser and Anne-Marie Turnage, "A Coalfield Tapestry: Weaving the Socioeconomic Fabric of Women's Lives." In *Neither Separate Nor Equal*, ed. Barbara Ellen Smith (Temple University Press, 1999), 115.

Organizations such as the Federation of Communities in Service (FOCIS) allowed women to become involved in their communities while working at home. FOCIS member Monica Kelly Appleby's "Women and Revolutionary Relations: Community-Building in Appalachia" discusses women's economic contributions to their homes through FOCIS. Women often found ways to feed and clothe their families and generate income during bust cycles.[117] When there was no work in the coal industry, women got creative and found alternative ways to provide for and sustain their families. Many of the things women found leisure in, they soon found as a means of generating income. Women made cloth dolls and banners sold through church networks and formed craft groups. These women came from different backgrounds and were able to work together and create new opportunities for themselves and their communities.[118] Working within FOCIS allowed women in the Catholic Church to participate in their communities and within more extensive social networks of women. The experiences of working with women in Appalachian communities had their ups and downs. There has been a consistent theme of these women fighting to make ends meet not only for their families but also for other members of their communities.[119] Women involved with FOCIS highlight community improvement and solidarity within the networks of working women.

The work women did at their homes to supplement wages is equally as important as the work the women entered into mills and mines. From their homes, diverse forms of work took place that helped give new insights into women's community ties and their class

[117]Monica Kelly Appleby, "Women and Revolutionary Relations: Community-Building in Appalachia," 176.

[118]Appleby, 172.

[119]Appleby, 180.

relations.[120] So they and their families benefitted from both the income and the stronger relationships within their communities. When met with hard times, they found ways to make ends meet, and through that work, their community involvement grew.

Women Coal Miners

Historically, the coal industry has been highly gendered towards men. From the days of company towns and underground mining to mechanization, the coal industry primarily hired men until the 1970s, when some women began to work in the mines. While working for wages in the mines, women miners faced barriers to participation above and below ground. They dealt with backlash from many members of their communities; they also faced physical and verbal abuse. Despite all they faced, women miners did not quickly back down. Women miners' social pressure was harsher than men's; people constantly challenged women's sexuality and status as mothers and wives. In *Daughters of the Mountain: Women Coal Miners in Central Appalachia,* sociologist Suzanne E. Tallichet argues that because of women coal miners' gendered positions, they became agents of social change for women in the coal industry.[121] Tallichet's book offers more in-depth information on the experiences of women coal miners. Women in the coalfields face barriers because of the industry's gendered nature and ideas of the public sphere versus the private and who belongs where. Women are not always received well when they speak out and take stances on workplace issues and issues of other kinds.

[120]Barbara Ellen Smith, "Walk-Ons in the Third Act: The Role of Women in Appalachian Historiography," 6.

[121]Tallichet, *Daughters of the Mountain Coal Miners in Central Appalachia*, 177.

The gendered division of labor associated women with the home and private sphere of family and home, while men were associated with the public arena and industrial work.[122] The gender composition reduces women to unambiguous gendered identities. People addressed them as "coal miners' wives" or "coal miners' daughters" instead of recognizing their societal contributions. Even when working for wages as members of the coal industry, people often lessened women to their gender and used gender to limit women's opportunities.[123] Women who entered the mines in the 1970s and 1980s became part of the working force. Despite an influx of women miners, their entrance into the workforce was not met with open arms. Even the women that entered into unionized mines faced many challenges and barriers to their participation underground.[124] Women entered the mines at a time when the societal expectations they faced assumed women as belonging to the homes and maternalistic care work. While these domestic roles were comfortable for many, women were still active in the mines and caring for their homes and families. They asserted themselves in a highly competitive and general industry, working in dangerous conditions and maintaining responsibilities of the "private sphere." Women miners further prove that women successfully participated in waged work in Appalachia. Elizabeth Barret's 1981 Appalshop documentary "Coalmining Women" explored the life and work of women in the mining industry across the United States. The film includes interviews with women from the Appalachian coalfields and other coal operations across the United States. The women in the mines discuss how they often faced more backlash from the wives of male miners than the

[122]Barry, *Standing Our Ground*, 26.

[123]Jessica Wilkerson, *To Live Here, You Have to Fight,* 4-6.

[124]Marat Moore, *Women in the Mines* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1996), xxv.

men themselves. However, as many women employed by the coal mines noted, sexual harassment was extremely common. Men often teamed up with the women helping them with their job and teaching the trade when alone. But in larger groups, they participated in harassing them and trying to intimidate them. Other occurrences were unwanted sexual advancements.[125] Through unionization efforts, women who worked in the mines advocated for themselves and the male miners. Women who found themselves working in the coal mines wanted recognition as equal participants in the industry. They broke the notion of women solely existing in the home, maintained their duties as mothers, and actively fought for change for all. The gendered discrimination women coal miners faced, along with their perseverance and challenging the status of men as the breadwinners in the patriarchal working-class family, helped women establish themselves in society.[126] Suzanne E Tallichet argues that by venturing beyond their gendered socialization experiences women miners helped deconstruct gender. Stating "from the margins of their gendered positions, these working-class Appalachian women became agents of social change that have formed the bedrock of their legacy."[127] Despite the constant backlash, these women persisted. Their work brought about change for many other women working as wage earners and working against the persistent stereotypes placed upon them. They helped redefine what working women in Appalachia look like. Women could very much be breadwinners and homemakers. They proved in various industries, including coal, how they could successfully do both.

[125]*Coalmining Women* (Appalshop, 1981).

[126]Tallichet, 46.

[127]Tallichet, 177.

Songs Of Coal Mining Struggles—Women Give Voice To The Cause

Hazel Dickens dedicated her life to writing songs about the struggles of working-class people in Appalachia. Her song, "Coal Mining Woman," discusses women's experiences working in coal mines and their struggles and hardships. Lyrics like "Change can only come through you and me"[128] calls attention to the division of women and men in the mines and asserts that change can only happen through working together. Often these workers had to put aside their differences for the greater good. A notable line, "If you can't stand by me, don't stand in my way,"[129] is a critical lyric and stance of women working in the mines, calling out their fellow miners for standing in their way while actively working to improve the industry for all workers. Hazel Dickens' "Coal Miner's Blues" and "Mining Camp Blues" speak on the hardships miners faced related to industry dynamics and their daily lives as workers. Dickens' songs gave voice to these workers and helped them have their experiences heard.

Leaders of the Movement: Changing Times

Women in Appalachia, time and time again, defy stereotypes of them being complacent nonparticipants in their communities. Through their activism, wage work in industries like coal and mica, paid domestic work, and music, they broke the gender norms of Appalachian communities. Early activists like Mother Jones, Widow Combs, and Hazel King set a precedent for women and their activism; they were change-makers whose early contributions continued to inspire generations of women to follow in their footsteps. Their

[128]Hazel Dickens, *Coal Mining Women* (Rounder Records, 1997).

[129]Hazel Dickens, *Coal Mining Women* (Rounder Records, 1997).

outright political nature defied the notions of women and their places in society. Mother Jones was speaking out and organizing miners long before women had voting rights or could even work as wage earners for the coal industry. Widow Combs and Hazel King inspire countless other women to protect their communities from destructive mining practices. They used tactics of picketing mining offices, taking the legal route, and getting operations shut down to place themselves between the industries and their communities physically. In many ways, art and music continue to sustain movements for justice in Appalachia. Music, early activism, and breaking through their communities' stereotypes and gendered barriers allowed women's voices to be seen and heard. Though their entrance into such work was not easy, nor met with open acceptance, they did not back down from their fights. The music made by these women carries their stories through time and movements and gives firsthand accounts of the hardships they faced. Appalachian women continue to break stereotypes through their activism and efforts to protect their environments for generations.

CHAPTER 2: MAKING CHANGE THROUGH COLLECTIVE ACTION

We won't be bought, we won't be sold
To be treated right, well that's our goal
There ain't no way they can ever keep us down
—"They'll Never Keep Us Down"[130]
by Hazel Dickens

Womaning the Picket Lines: Motivation, Social Issues, Strengths For Collective Action

People who stand up for their communities often do so as a collective means of preserving their communities and creating a better future for their children. In the case of collective action in Appalachia, women are continuously at the forefront leading the charge. Connection to their communities and the people surrounding them leads people to take action in the face of injustice. Activists are often motivated to do whatever it takes to protect the place they love and preserve their connection to that place. Scholar Glenn Albrecht, author of *Earth Emotions: New Words for a New World,* would call this feeling "soliphilia": "the love of the totality of our place relationships, and a willingness to accept the political responsibility for protecting and conserving them at all scales."[131] Albrecht's term encompasses the feelings responding to environmental degradation but also surrounding community ties, kinship relations, and reactions to threats. Relationships and connection with place and people are significant reasons people get involved in justice movements.

Women in Appalachian communities continue collectively organizing for various social issues. Throughout history, they have linked arms and proclaimed they would not be moved. In Appalachia, women have been fixtures for social change; they stood on picket lines as a way of protesting labor and wage conditions faced by men when male miners in

[130]Hazel Dickens, *They'll Never Keep Us Down* (Rounder Records, 1976).

[131]Glenn A Albrecht, *Earth Emotions* (Cornell University Press, 2019), 121.

their community could not risk losing their homes and paychecks by becoming involved in protests. Women have led campaigns surrounding miners' health, unionization, workers' rights, and public safety issues. They led these movements even when they were not working as wage earners.

Women show remarkable strength and stamina in collective action. After they became workers in the coal industry, they continued as leaders.[132] Women on picket lines faced backlash from men and women from within their community; name-calling, intimidation tactics, and threats were typical. Labor strikes were long and resulted in high degrees of violence due to challenging power systems.[133] Even when strikers were using peaceful tactics, violence from the companies or other workers often erupted. Despite the longevity of the strikes, threats, and violence, women remain significant leaders in the movements. Women in Appalachia have acted on many issues surrounding workers and community rights through collective actions that allowed them to bring about change in their communities.

Women's Participation in Collective Action

In Appalachia, the most poignant issues women have organized around are related to labor and employment in the coal industry. Many scholars have pointed out women see themselves acting as mothers and wives, and have conceded their identity as community members. However, we cannot simply reduce women to the gendered roles of wives and mothers; this view is an oversimplification because it strips away their agency by suggesting

[132]Sally Ward Maggard, "Women's Participation in the Brookside Coal Strike: Militance, Class, and Gender in Appalachia," 16.

[133]Sally Ward Maggard, "Women's Participation in the Brookside Coal Strike," 16.

they are acting solely on behalf of others instead of for themselves and runs the risk of distorting or misrepresenting their reasoning for fighting. Women who organize together draw on these and other shared experiences. Sociologist Shannon Elizabeth Bell argues that "women activists' gendered identities often serve as both a legitimizing force and a resource for their actions."[134] Appalachian women participating in social and environmental justice movements draw upon their shared identities to organize together. Some of the identities these women have in common are Appalachians, women, mothers, and community members. These intersections of their identities make their fight unique; each contributes something different and brings different stances based on their life experiences. They often put these identities first before even considering themselves activists; some even reject the identity of activists. Historian Sally Ward Maggard writes that women's activism counters conventional understandings of women as political beings. Their duties for strikes consisted of running food lines, caring for children, and supporting the men of the movements. Maggard's writing counters conventional scholarship on women's activism, where women did not appear as independent actors who shaped the region's history.[135] She argues that feminist scholars' arguments for women's participation "over-simplifies women's class position, which is usually defined by a woman's connection to a man or families."[136] This thesis continues this conversation, arguing that reducing women to traditional roles precludes the narratives of progress and changes they wrought in their communities. Women have historically been and continue to be significant contributors to movements for justice in Appalachia; their

[134]Shannon Elizabeth Bell, *Our Roots Run Deep as Ironweed,* 7.

[135]Sally Ward Maggard. "Women's Participation in the Brookside Coal Strike," 16.

[136]Sally Ward Maggard, "Women's Participation in the Brookside Coal Strike," 16-17.

involvement in collective action has brought about change within their communities. Their efforts, work, and progress have bettered their conditions and those who would come after them. Women activists draw on their community ties, kinship, and connection to place, among other reasons. Their ability to work across class and gender lines with a collective outcome in mind continues to lead to successful outcomes. Women's participation in the following movements has proven their success in collective action and their ability to bring about change within their communities. The 1970s drew the nation's attention to Appalachia, where women emerged as significant contributors to regional movements for justice. These movements spread political action in Appalachia across the region and were continued by countless women for decades. Some significant women have led collective action in significant events: the 1972 Pikeville Methodist Hospital Strike, the 1973 Brookside Strike, and the 1989 Pittston Coal strike.

Pikeville Methodist Hospital Workers on Strike

On June 10, 1972, approximately 220 workers walked off the job at the end of the evening shift at the Pikeville Methodist Hospital (PMH) in eastern Kentucky.[137] The strike started over working conditions, low wages, overworking staff, and staff posting in underqualified positions. These factors led to the workers' growing resentment against the hospital. Unsatisfied with their conditions, the staff took to organizing. The majority of those who took action at PMH were women, making up over eighty percent of the strikers.[138] In total the strike spanned eleven years, and in over a decade of fighting, their tactics took

[137]Sally Ward Maggard, "Coalfield Women Making History." In *Back Talk from Appalachia: Confronting Stereotypes*, ed. Ronald D. Eller, et al., 228–250 (University Press of Kentucky, 1999), 228.

[138] Sally Ward Maggard, "Coalfield Women Making History," 231.

multiple forms, adapting with time. Women at PMH held some of the best jobs available, acting as the heads of their households and "breadwinners." Many joined the strike in an effort to improve their daily experiences at the hospital and improve jobs for those to come. Here women worked as wage earners in the public sphere. They advocated for their rights as workers and for others within their industry; the women were just everyday people who probably would not call themselves activists.

However, they brought about collective change within their community and altered history. When their place of employment failed to hear and acknowledge their complaints and petitions through nine months, they took matters into their own hands and organized.[139] Women and men employed by PMH worked alongside one another, advocating for their rights as workers and working to improve their daily lives. The PMH strike gained national attention, inspiring neighboring communities to join the movement. While women were significant participants in this strike, women's concerns were often not taken seriously. The union at PMH did not see women as candidates for leadership and did not give much credit to their claims. This division within the collective group created tensions and distracted them from the more significant collective action. Maggard writes that "a collision of social class, gender, and racial divisions defeated the Pikeville hospital strike."[140] Women organized alongside their peers for outcomes that would benefit them as hospital workers. Class and oppression, as Maggard writes, are often contributors and the focus of activism within Appalachian communities. She asserts that "social inequality in Appalachia, as elsewhere, as

[139]Sally Ward Maggard, "Coalfield Women Making History," 231.

[140]Sally Ward Maggard, "Gender, Race, and Place: Confounding Labor Activism in Central Appalachia." In *Neither Separate Nor Equal*, ed. Barbara Ellen Smith (Temple University Press, 1999), 202.

had multiple dimensions."[141] These themes are apparent in the PMH strike, where women advocated for themselves and their fellow workers. Despite women's contributions to the effort, their gendered identities led the union not to give them the attention they deserved.

The group at PMH failed to win a union contract but received a large payout from the hospital. In the 1980s, PMH had to reinstate the workers and repay the strikers for their economic losses. For their eleven-year battle, they received a payout of $697,000; it took another year after the payout for the money to reach the hands of the workers. Their payout was one of the largest payouts in strike history.[142] These women acted independently alongside fellow workers. This group of low-waged, working-class women changed the rights of workers and helped shape labor-management relations.[143] Some were mothers, and others were single women working alongside their male coworkers and advocating for all hospital workers' rights. Women fought even when fellow workers and union representatives did not take their contributions seriously.

There are lessons to learn from the strike at PMH. Women's collective action, class relations, and tireless efforts all played roles in bringing about change in their community. Strikers persisted throughout the eleven-year strike and saw the means to the end, collectively bringing about change in their community.

[141]Sally Ward Maggard, *Gender, Race, and Place*, 185.

[142]Sally Ward Maggard, "Coalfield Women Making History," 228.

[143]Sally Ward Maggard, "Coalfield Women Making History," 229.

The Strike at Brookside

One year into the PMH strike, pickets began forming at the Brookside mining company in Harlan County, Kentucky. The 1973 strike at Brookside would become well-known for women's collective action and advocacy for workers' rights. The strike started at the Eastover Mining Company, a subsidiary of Duke Power Company, when workers walked off their jobs because the company refused to allow them to form a chapter of the UMWA.[144] During the strike, Brookside set an injunction limiting the number of pickets to three miners per entrance. Because of this, women in the community stood on the picket lines for the miners who could not. The injunction brought about the establishment of the iconic Brookside Women's Club. Women were not just bodies filling up the picket lines; they were the brains behind the operation and concerned for their community and others like it. Women of Brookside organized the first women's picket at a coal company, and they took over the strike when the number of miners striking at entrances was limited.[145] They did so in a manner that they could take turns standing on the picket lines while also completing the duties they were expected to maintain within their family unit.[146] Through maintaining certain family obligations as mothers and wives, the Brookside women never threatened the idea of women's place in the home. Brookside strike household operations and the composition of strikers relate in meaningful ways.[147] However, they opened the conversation of women as active participants in both spheres.

[144]Jessica Wilkerson, "The Company Owns the Mine," 200.

[145]Sally Ward Maggard, 18.

[146]Sally Ward Maggard, 20.

[147]Sally Ward Maggard, 20.

Women of the Brookside Strike

Women's work organizing and standing on the picket lines diminished the idea that the two are separate. They collectively organized and held meetings to discuss how they could support the strike, negotiated with union officials, and talked with the press about their efforts. Brookside women were seeking to reform issues within the coal industry. As Joyce M. Barry argues, the women of Brookside working to reform the coal industry is where their gendered interests intersected with the maternal conditions of working-class life.[148] For many of the women involved, participation concerned their family and community as they related to the historical ties of the coal industry. Women at Brookside also complicated this narrative and the perceptions of their work and activism. Involvement in the strike and maintaining duties of the home disrupted the notion that they must exist solely in the private sphere. Historian Jessica Wilkerson states, "their social positions as daughters, mothers, and wives pushed them into the labor battle and informed their sense of class solidarity; at the same time, their actions challenged the gender relations that buttressed the coalfield economy."[149] The primary organizers for the Brookside strike were women who faced criticism in public and private spheres while working towards better working conditions for their community. The key to that disruption was forming the Brookside Women's Club.

Looking at Brookside, it is clear how gender shapes women's political actions. Women still maintained their lives in the private sphere of their homes while participating in the strikes. They proved that women could be successful and active participants in both the public and private sectors and that the two do not have to be separated to achieve equal

[148]Barry, *Standing Our Ground,* 73.

[149]Wilkerson, 200.

success, which is essential to note about women's activism. Women act on collective identities, community ties, and kinship. All have different reasons and people they fight for but have the same desired outcome.

Brookside is the perfect example of women working together to achieve a collective goal. Women who became involved at Brookside forever altered their coalfield community's social standards and relations. The Brookside Women's Club organized and attracted support from all over the country and gained media attention. These women, as Jessica Wilkerson argues, "became cultural icons, symbolic of a flinty, Appalachian working class that battled against capital in the coalfields."[150] They became a symbol of working-class battles and intense feminist activism. Their various social positions, including daughters, mothers, wives, and friends of miners, informed their success. These positions were among the factors that pushed them into the fight and informed their sense of class solidarity. Their actions at Brookside challenged the gender relations that buttressed the coalfield economy.[151]

A memorable image from the Brookside strike is Minnie Lunsford, the oldest woman who stood on Brookside's picket lines to support the striking miners. In the photograph, Lunsford holds a sign that reads 'Duke Power Company Owns the Brookside Mine, But They Don't Own Us.' Lunsford's sign made a powerful statement about the history of miners' exploitation by the industry. Lunsford's sign placed women into the conversation about the abuse that communities suffered at the hands of coal operations.[152] Her statement brings women into the conversations about living and existing within public and private

[150]Wilkerson, "The Company Owns the Mine," 200.

[151]Wilkerson, "The Company Owns the Mine," 200.

[152]Wilkerson, "The Company Owns the Mine," 199.

spheres. Working-class women's activism in coal-producing parts of Appalachia dramatized the primary struggles of the 1970s regarding labor uprisings and women's liberation movements. Participants in this activism had a foot in both movements and united them through their histories. According to historian Jessica Wilkerson, "Brookside women's support of striking miners was fundamentally about gendered class inequality: the denigration of working-class, female caregivers alongside the devaluing of men's labour." These women drew from their collective memories and individual experiences as interpretive devices. Their activism exposed traumas of coalfield capitalism, women's unpaid work as caregivers and unsettled the gender and class hierarchies that were a staple of coalfield communities.[153] Women of Brookside transformed activism in the region and symbolized power imbalance in the mountains.

The Brookside Women's Club on film: Women of *Harlan County, USA*

Barbara Kopple's 1976 award-winning documentary *Harlan County, USA,* offers more information on women's contributions to the Brookside Strike. Kopple's documentary follows the daily operations and organizing of the women at Brookside. The film includes Brookside Women's Club meetings, interviews with women and why they are acting, and footage of the strike. One of the most notable scenes is that of Florence Reece addressing the UMWA and members of the Brookside community. Reece gives a speech about the impact of the harsh realities of death and black lung at the industry's hand on her family. She recounts living through the 1930s, "Bloody Harlan," and the trials of the uprising but the

[153]Wilkerson, "The Company Owns the Mine," 200.

benefits of sticking it out.[154] To rally everyone together, she performs her song "Which Side Are You On?" She wrote the song during the 1930s, and "Bloody Harlan," forty years later, found its way into the movement at Brookside. Her song continues to find its way into movements across the country and repeatedly resurfaces when there are injustices in Appalachia. Reece's song is a call to action, a message to those organizing that the union will have their back.

Sudie Crusenberry, a Brookside Women's Club member represented in *Harlan County, USA,* discussed her participation in the strike. Crusenberry justified her participation in the strike by saying she is not only fighting for the rights of miners but for the children that she was raising.[155] She exemplifies people working for the conditions at hand and for making long-lasting changes for future generations. The tragedies she experienced were the foundation of her activism, knowing all too well the harm that occurs at the hands of the coal industry. These things shaped her activism.[156]

The Brookside Women's Club helped make history with their efforts and success in helping win a union contract at the Eastover Mining Company. The Brookside Women's Club helps broaden the understanding of the ways feminism touched the lives of American women. Their experiences as caregivers in the coalfields became part of the powerful political narratives and means for arguing the legitimacy of their concerns.[157] Women

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[154] *Harlan County, USA* (First Run Features, 1976).

[155]*Harlan County, USA* (First Run Features, 1976).

[156]Jessica Wilkerson, *To Live Here, You Have to Fight: How Women Led Appalachian Movements for Social Justice*. The Working Class in American History. (University of Illinois Press, 2019), 159.

[157] Jessica Wilkerson, *To Live Here, You Have to Fight,* 215.

became the spokespeople for the movements, showing how structural class inequalities shaped their daily lives.

The Pittston Coal Strike

Another prominent strike involving women is the Pittston Coal strike of 1989 which many have one of the last great industry and labor battles in the Appalachian coalfields.[158] Much like their participation in the Brookside strike of the late 1970s, women were heavily involved in organizing and actively participated in the strike at Pittston. Events of the 1989-1990 strike at Pittston coal company in southwestern Virginia and West Virginia began when approximately 2,000 members of the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) walked off their jobs.[159] The walk-off was a response to the company cutting workers' health benefits. Pittston cutting off health benefits affected workers, retired miners, spouses, and widows. Unhappy with the ruling of the company, workers decided to organize. The miners' previous contract expired in January of 1988, and they had worked for fourteen months without a new contract. During those fourteen months, they had many unsuccessful attempts at negotiating new contracts with company officials. When that did not work, they began to organize work slowdowns to gain company attention. The year-long dispute that followed is considered one of Appalachia's most prolonged and militant labor disputes.[160] UMWA members adopted

[158] Joyce M. Barry, "Remembering the Past, Working for the Future' West Virginia Women Fight for Environmental Heritage and Economic Justice in the Age of Mountaintop Removal Coal Mining." In *Women of the Mountain South: Identity, Work, and Activism.* ed. Connie Park Rice and Marie Tedesco (Ohio University Press, 2015), 74.

[159]Adrienne M. Birecree, "The Importance and Implications of Women's Participation in the 1989-90 Pittston Coal Strike," *Journal of Economic Issues* 30, no. 1 (1996), 187.

[160]Birecree, "The Importance and Implications," 187.

nonviolent civil disobedience and direct collective action tactics, such as sitting at mine entrances, mass sit-ins, and blocking plant gates. During the span of the strike at Pittston, miners from surrounding areas broke out in Wild Cat strikes, where they would stop working as fellow UMWA members standing in solidarity with the workers at Pittston.[161] The miners and strike participants at Pittston sustained a movement that changed how we view labor movements and nonviolent civil disobedience. Women were some of the strongest contributors to this strike; their actions and adaptations to the movement helped them make history.

Women of the Pittston Strike

Women organized alongside other community members throughout the strike through the UMWA. The strikers at Pittston adopted nonviolent tactics and methods of peaceful resistance, even when met with violence. Maintaining a constant picket line during the strike was essential; Virginia's status as a "right-to-work state" allowed the company to replace the striking miners as soon as they walked off the job. During the 14 months of the strike, Pittston continued accepting applications.[162] Strikers stood their ground, employing various tactics to meet their end. Despite the commitment to nonviolence, the strikers were, in turn, met with hostility from state troopers, mining officials, and the national guard.

[161] Richard A Brisbin, *A Strike like No Other Strike : Law & Resistance during the Pittston Coal Strike of 1989-1990* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 1-2.

[162]Birecree, 188.

Daughters of Mother Jones—Women's Collective Identities at Pittston

One of the most significant shifts in the movement from picketing to sit-ins was led by women of the Pittston community.[163] The first major sit-in occurred two months into the strike, on April 18, 1989. A group of women loaded into vans and drove to the Pittston Headquarters in Lebanon, Virginia. They exited the van, sat in front of the headquarters, and began a thirty-six-hour sit-in. This direct action was the only all-women collective action to occur during the year-long strike.[164] The women decided to call themselves the "Daughters of Mother Jones" as a way of denying the Pittston company employees their legal names when approached at the sit-in.[165] In a move much like Mother Jones's tactic, the women did not budge. Their name was a nod to Mary Harris Jones, "Mother Jones," the famous union organizer that came before. Like their namesake, these women advocated for their community and miners' safety and fair treatment. Many of them were mothers, wives, and widows of miners involved in the UMWA.[166] Something different about their activism at this time in history is that their actions benefited men who were miners and women who had begun working in the industry during the late 1970s. The women involved in the sit-in refused to leave the company headquarters, demanding a contract be signed. Their actions attracted the support of UMWA members and other community supporters who gathered

[163]Richard A Brisbin, *A Strike like No Other Strike*, 156.

[164]Karen Beckwith, "Collective Identities of Class and Gender: Working-Class Women in the Pittston Coal Strike," *Political Psychology* 19, no. 1 (March 1998), 153.

[165]Karen Beckwith, "Collective Identities of Class and Gender," 155.

[166]Birecree, 196.

outside during the Daughters of Mother Jones sit-in.[167] Women who participated in the strike linked arms and collectively sang songs like "We Shall Not Be Moved," "Down on The Picket Line" and "Which Side Are You On."[168] These songs served as a way of building solidarity; collectively singing them as a means of action against Pittston, they made their voices heard.

Scholar Karen Beckwith suggests that the name "Daughters of Mother Jones" implies their formed sisterhood collective as daughters that bound them together in a collective identity.[169] Beckwith's statement helps acknowledge women by giving them agency over their actions and showing how collective identities aided in their organizing. These women fought for different people and reasons. Still, their shared identities brought them together for a common purpose. Collectively they wanted to see the end goal of helping win the Union contract through whatever means necessary. The UMWA did not formally organize these women for this action; they gathered, formed the group, and carried out the plan independently. As with many direct actions in Appalachian history, these women put themselves physically between their communities and labor. They collectively sat at the Pittston headquarters, asserting they would not be moved.

The Daughters of Mother Jones sit-in was the most notable instance of women collectively organizing and was the only all-women-involved action at Pittston. However, their presence was present through other moments of the strike. They helped educate their communities about the dispute and relayed the UMWA's perspectives to others. Even while

[167]Birecree, 196.

[168]Brisbin, *A Strike like No Other Strike,* 157.

[169]Beckwith, 155.

standing on the picket lines, their hands were not idle. Many documented the names of people they knew who were applying to be replacements for the striking miners. Another tactic the women used was to apply for open jobs to see the questions asked of new applicants. They talked to local businesses and elicited support from them by getting them to hang signs in solidarity with the miners on strike.[170] Women involved in founding Daughters of Mother Jones were instrumental in the fight at Pittston. They worked alongside the UMWA and striking miners, assisting in whatever way possible. Women took matters into their own hands, staging one of the most important and memorable sit-ins of the strike without being asked.

Community Involvement at Pittston

The Pittston Strike gained national attention and inspired others with ties to the coal industry to stand in solidarity with the Pittston workers. During the 1989 strike, approximately 40,000 United Mine Workers from coal operations engaged in walkouts support which led to the shutdown of mines across eleven states.[171] Women at Pittston found many ways to get involved in the efforts. They participated in various actions to different degrees of intensity, stopping coal trucks from leaving or getting to the facilities through various tactics—often driving at radically slow speeds to keep trucks from getting to their destination on time. In attempts to stop the behavior, Virginia state troopers would block the roadways in response, and the strike supporters would park their vehicles in the middle of the

[170]Birecree, 197.

[171]Birecree, 197.

road and walk away, causing an even more significant blockage.[172] By whatever means necessary, they found it easy to be involved. The strike inspired many to be involved, including local high school students who staged walks in solidarity with striking workers, family members, and their community. The students were aware of workers' arrests and supported the union's efforts to secure a contract. These students proved that everyone can be involved in justice movements and care about where community is. Student involvement sheds light on how connected this fight was to the community. Many acted on soliphilia at Pittston, doing whatever it took to promote the well-being of their communities.

Justice in The Coalfields- The Pittston Strike on Film

The 1995 Appalshop Documentary *Justice in The Coalfields*, directed by Anne Lewis, gives a visual insight and recap of the Pittston Strike. Lewis's film captured the events in southwestern Virginia, the area considered to be the heart of the strike.[173] During the strike, the governor sent hundreds of state troopers to the Virginia coalfields. The film documents state troopers dragging peaceful protesters away. One pertinent scene includes state troopers carrying strikers away, and the crowd collectively sings "We Shall Not Be Moved," a song that repeatedly finds its way into movements for justice in Appalachia. Elaine Purkey, a songwriter and wife of a miner, discusses her experiences as a miner's wife and the fears of losing her husband to the dangers and side effects of the coal industry. Throughout the film, she sings about the hardships of life in mining communities, including a song that talks about being a poor Appalachian Coal miner. Her music about such hardships

[172]Birecree, 196.

[173]*Justice in the Coalfields,* directed by Anne Lewis, Appalshop, 1995.

is reminiscent of many other women who came before singing praises of the union, calling out the capitalist system, and giving industry issues a larger platform. Purkey is one of many women who have used their songs to draw attention to injustices and elicit support for striking workers.

The film includes footage of the April 1989 demonstration where miners' wives blocked the Pittston coal preparation plant entrance and were forcibly removed and dragged off by state troopers. Images of picketers peacefully blocking entrances and being carried off much resemble the memorable images of Ollie "Widow Combs" being carried off her land during a protest against strip mining. These women took a stand for their community; they physically and peacefully placed themselves between their community and the industry. While being arrested, a woman asserts, "I believe in what I am doing, and if it takes every day until we get a contract, we will be here. That's our jobs, and we don't want no scabs…The union is here to stay."[174] Her statement echoes the sentiment of doing whatever it takes to win the union contract. She was fighting for the jobs of her fellow workers and the town she loved, and she was willing to continue demonstrating to win a contract.

The End of The Strike at Pittston

The strike against the Pittston Coal company ended on February 20, 1990, after more than a year's fight. Women contributed significantly to the contract efforts at Pittston. Though many women fought for different reasons, among them being miners themselves, family members of miners, or concerned citizens, they all came together for a shared purpose, winning a union contract. Women participated in degrees that felt comfortable,

[174] *Justice in the Coalfields*, 10:33.

some more extreme than others, all just as valuable. Women at Pittston demonstrate how collective identity and collective action often go hand-in-hand. These women continued in the footsteps of many that came before them. The group called themselves the Daughters of Mother Jones and gave tribute to one of the most renowned union organizers in the region. All of these contributions are just as important as others. In turn, the women who participated in Pittston through collective action are part of a more extensive process of women bringing about change within the Appalachian region historically and currently.

Quilting as Collective Action and Participation at Pittston

Through social movements, art embodies activism and brings awareness to issues. In *Belonging a Culture of Place*, bell hooks wrote about quilting as a form of public art. She stated that quilts played a significant role in sharing beauty into the lives of people who lack economic power and privilege and may not have a formal education.[175] Her writing about how quilting as an art form has a range of possibilities and can open our eyes to many different ways that connect the social movement to the longstanding art form of quilting in Appalachia. Quilts are an art form that, throughout history, have told stories and tangibly preserved events for future generations. A quilt from the Pittston Coal Strike is in the Helen Matthews Lewis papers at Appalachian State University in the W.L. Eury Appalachian Collection. Hand-sewn by three women—Alma Puckett, Catherine Calo, and Lucille Green together these women produced a collaborative piece of art that embodies the realities of the Pittston Strike and the power dynamics at play—depicting a striking UMWA member wearing a camo uniform. Camouflage uniforms became a famous image of the Pittston

[175]bell hooks, *Belonging: A Culture of Place* (New York: Routledge, 2019), 168.

strike. The miner has his arms raised in the air peacefully. To his left is a Virginia State Trooper, gun in hand and pointed at the striking miner's head; to his left is a Pittston official, one hand in the pocket of the UMWA member's pocket, the other holding a bag of cash, a sheepish grin across his face. The imagery accounts for the relationship between striking workers, the Virginia state police department, and the company. The quilt documented the strike through the tradition of quilting in the mountains. The women who made this quilt took collective action, whether they knew it or not, and took a stand by creating this art piece.

Collective Action and Bringing About Change

Women participating in collective actions and unionization efforts brought about change in their communities. Through their work as hospital workers organizing for themselves and others, organizing against coal operations, and creating art, women continue to be leaders of justice movements. There is a lot to be learned from the successes, struggles, and failures of movements. These lessons lend themselves to others as a roadmap of collective organizing and taking a stand for one community. The women presented here brought about a change in their own ways and means. They are exemplary of how the 1970s became a decade of change. They show how movements in Appalachia evolved from one another and learned from one another. These movements and the art they inspired represent how music, art, and literature are forms of social change. Artivism is a powerful tool that continues evolving and taking shape in the hands of different movements. Women's participation in collective action for labor rights and the tactics employed paved the way for later activism. Appalachia continues to be met with abuse from the extractive industry, primarily in the form of environmental destruction. When these communities face such

destruction, women again find themselves at the forefront of these movements, asserting they will not be moved. Women in Appalachia continue to link arms, peacefully sitting in front of large vehicles, and collectively sing as a way of protecting their environments and making changes to improve their home communities?

CHAPTER 3: PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITIES FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

I come from the mountains,
Kentucky's my home
Where the wild deer and black bear so lately did roam
By the cool rushing waterfall the wildflowers dream
And through every green valley, there runs a clear stream
Now there's scenes of destruction on every hand
And only black waters run down through my land
–"Black Waters"
by Jean Ritchie[176]

Women in Appalachia have long been contributors to social change. Especially in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, as their communities become almost unrecognizable and altered through growth, extraction, and exploitation, women have become the primary leaders of the movements for protection. Shannon Elizabeth Bell writes that the region has become an epicenter for grassroots human rights and environmental justice struggles primarily initiated, led, and sustained by working-class women.[177] The industrial history of strip mining, mountaintop removal (MTR) mining, and now the fracking extraction of natural gas in Appalachia have led to injustices in the coalfields that have historically met resistance—and still do. Understanding the threats to Appalachian environments and learning about responses by individual women is a good way to begin to this discussion.

Extractive Industries and Power Relations: Threats to Appalachian environments

Coal extraction industries most associated with the Appalachian mountain region have had the greatest negative impacts on the region. Coal mining evolved into a mono-economy through various boom and bust cycles and mechanization, leaving people without

[176]Jean Ritchie, *Black Waters* (United States: Geordie Music, 1971).

[177]Shannon Elizabeth Bell, *Our Roots Run Deep as Ironweed,* 2.

jobs. After mining all the coal and blowing the mountaintops off to extract what remained, no jobs remain, and communities are left to put back what pieces of the community they can.

Natural gas extraction is becoming a significant industry in the region. The Mountain Valley Pipeline (MVP) is a natural gas interstate pipeline running through Virginia and West Virginia. The proposed pipeline is 42 inches wide and 303 miles long. Through the construction process, it destroys natural forest lands and personal property. People in these communities did not ask for a natural gas pipeline to run through their community.

With MTR and MVP construction, the disturbance of the land leads to more significant and long-term issues for locals. The clear-cutting and removal of vegetation from the landscape for both projects leaves communities susceptible to landslides and stream pollution, among other things.[178] In responding to those who work in mining or natural gas industries, community members sometimes hesitate to speak out, fearing backlash and violence from people with ties to the industry.

These industries have great power, primarily regarding wealth over the people in the communities. For much of history, depictions of Appalachian people as poor and ignorant dominated the narrative. Outside extractive industries have long played into this notion of ignorance, portraying people as unaware of the value of resources in their communities. These portrayals contribute to the culture of poverty model best known for being constructed by Jack E. Weller's *Yesterday's People: Life in Contemporary Appalachia.* Weller's work was one of many that tried to pinpoint why persistent poverty existed in Appalachia and why residents of the region were unwilling to accept help.[179] Social scientist J. Todd Nesbitt and

[178]Jack Wander, "Pipeland Mountain Valley Pipeline Resistance." YouTube. February 4, 2020.

[179]Jack E Weller, *Yesterday's People: Life in Contemporary Appalachia.* (University Press of Kentucky, 1965).

geographer Daniel Weiner write, "the culture of poverty model is a form of modernization theory because it is assumed that lagging development is caused by regional cultural traits which are common amongst Appalachian people."[180] The notion of people from Appalachia as poor and ignorant has made it easy for extractive industries to justify the exploitation of these communities.

Appalachia's resource extraction history often gets linked to its social and economic underdevelopment. Between 1870-1920, Appalachia experienced change socially, economically, and environmentally.[181] The coal industry moved into the region, buying up tracts of land and setting camp. Significant industry developments in these communities accelerated industry growth and left local populations socially and spatially marginalized.[182] Some people decided to speak out against careless actions taken for industry gain. Going head-to-head with industry and organizing for the greater good of communities is no new trend for people in Appalachia. The fight for environmental protection is an ongoing battle.

Women in the Fight Against Surface Mining

Direct action against extractive industries for decades has taken place in Appalachia; women physically place themselves between their communities and industry. One notable example is Ollie "Widow" Combs, who lay on a road to stop bulldozers at a strip-mining operation on the land where she lived. She did this in a way that caused her to act outside the norms deemed acceptable for women of the time and as someone trying to protect the place

[180]James T. Nesbitt and Daniel Weiner, "Conflicting environmental imaginaries and the politics of nature in Central Appalachia," *Geoforum* 32 (2001), 334.

[181]Nesbitt and Weiner, 337.

[182]Nesbitt and Weiner, 337.

she cared for. Hazel King is an early activist that was instrumental in the passage of the 1977 Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act which established regulations for surface mining and land reclamation processes that coal operations were supposed to follow. Despite its intentions to establish strip-mining regulations, the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977 was fundamentally a weak piece of legislation with loopholes allowing for mountaintop removal mining (MTR). Combs and King are two early activists who fought to preserve their communities. When injustices come to the hands of an extractive industry that threaten community safety and landscapes, people took direct action. Ultimately these women paved the way for other activists who dedicated their lives to fighting against environmental destruction in Appalachia.

Women in Resistance to Mountaintop Removal Mining

The practice of mountaintop removal mining gained momentum in the 1990s as more mining operations adopted it.[183] Mountaintop removal is a mining process that requires clearing vegetation from land, blowing up the land, digging out the coal seams, and dumping the leftover waste back into valleys. After the extraction of coal, it goes through chemical processing before being used, and some form of reclamation must occur at the mining site.[184] The environmental organization, Appalachian Voices, provides more information on this process and efforts to combat it. Mountaintop removal comes at a cost, permanently damaging land, polluting water, and negatively impacting citizens' health. Mountaintop removal is nicknamed "strip mining on steroids" because "its social and environmental

[183]Barry, *Standing Our Ground*, 3.

[184]Appalachian Voices, "Mountaintop Removal 101" (http://appvoices.org/, 2017).

impacts have far exceeded those of earlier forms of surface coal extraction."[185] While the fight against MTR started on local levels, the fight against its injustices has reached national and international levels. There is a growing field of scholarship and documentaries on MTR, allowing the news of its practices to reach a broader audience.[186] Joyce M. Barry cited women as the reason mountaintop removal became an environmental justice issue, "MTR became an environmental justice issue through tireless work primarily of women dealing first hand with the effects of Big Coal in their communities.[187]

Women have been fighting the issues of MTR and pushing them to gain the public's attention. Scholar and activist bell hooks wrote:

> We can not restore dignity both to the earth and to this rich resource. Mountaintop removal robs the earth of that dignity. It robs the folk who live in the cultural wasteland it creates of their self-esteem and divine glory. Witnessing up close the assault on the natural environment ravages the human spirit, the anguish it causes folks who must face daily the trauma of mountaintop removal.[188]

The work of many participants in efforts to end MTR echoes these sentiments from hooks. They face the ongoing and irreversible loss of their communities. Solastalgia gives voices to these pains, and motivations to take action. Her work and solastalgia give a better understanding of the environmental destruction of MTR has on communities. The alteration of landscapes cause those in the community to mourn the loss of a place they once knew, while grappling with its ever changing state. The work of many women from the region echo this; their personal accounts of destruction and environmental harm should not go unnoticed.

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[185]Bell, *Fighting King,* 25.

[186]Bell, *Our Roots Run Deep as Ironweed,* 3.

[187]Barry*,* 9.

[188]bell hooks, *Belonging: A Culture of Place* (Routledge 2008), 28.

Because it is through their work this thesis was born, through their sustained efforts, they are fighting to preserve the landscapes of Appalachia.

Maria Gunnoe's Fight in West Virginia

Maria Gunnoe is an activist from West Virginia who saw firsthand the devastation in the Coal River Mountain community from MTR.[189] She gave her accounts of living in fear from the hazardous mining conditions and her exhaustion of living through it. There are days, she says, she does not want to get out of bed, does not want to see the mountains blown up, and does not want to live it.[190] She lost the feeling of belonging in the place that is her home. Her belonging and connection to the place changed with every layer blasted off the mountain. Glenn Albrecht calls this feeling "tierrafurie," "the extreme anger unleashed within those who can see the self-destructive tendencies in the current forms of industrial-technological society and feel they must protest and act to change its direction."[191] Ultimately, Gunnoe attributes her fight to her children and their desire to have a better life than she did. She is an activist fighting mountaintop removal mining in West Virginia.[192] Witnessing this changing landscape motivates acting in hopes of stopping the destruction. She is one of many concerned citizens protecting Coal River Mountain. While working multiple jobs and being a mother, she still found time to organize with fellow community members against Massey Energy and their destruction of Coal River Mountain and the

[189]See Bell 2013, Barry 2012, Haney 2011

[190]Barry, *Standing Our Ground*, 15.

[191]Albrecht, *Earth Emotions,* 21.

[192]*The Last Mountain*, directed by Bill Haney. Dada Films: Uncommon Productions, 2011.

community. Gunnoe and her family were trapped in their home after a rainstorm turned into a flood. The flood destroyed their yard and nearly took their home. The flooding happened because of the lack of vegetation on a mountaintop removal site. Instead of taking responsibility, Massey Energy claimed it was "an act of God" and essentially out of their control. This response is one thing Gunnoe credited for keeping her fire burning.[193] This anger regarding blame placing is a common occurrence for those fighting a lack of accountability that leads people to organize and act against the corporations. She won the Goldman Environmental Prize in 2009 for her activism and "fought against the causes of solastalgia in her personal life and her community."[194] Gunnoe is one of many women acting on solastalgia to bring about change in their communities through environmental protection.

Terri Blanton's Fight in Kentucky

Teri Blanton considers herself an activist working to protect her community. In an interview with Shannon Elizabeth Bell for her *Our Roots Run Deep as Ironweed: Appalachian Women and the Fight for Environmental Justice* book, Blanton said, "I'm Not an Activist against Coal; I'm an Activist for the Preservation of My State."[195] She fights for clean water and air in her community. MTR mining poisoned their local water sources. That was the same water she and her family were drinking. When she discovered the harm it could do, she was mad, which was one of the leading factors in standing up against the industry. It is no secret that the coal industry is corrupt; most corporations are. Blanton wrote that even if

[193]*The Last Mountain*.

[194]Albrecht, 42.

[195]Bell, *Our Roots,* 88.

MTR stopped, their fight would not cease, stating that the coal industry has continuously operated above the law and is an outlaw industry. MTR Blanton said it is just one way they act above the law.[196] Despite the backlash and name-calling, Blanton never backed down from her fight.

Destruction of communities and homes leads those affected to speak out, especially for Appalachian activist Teri Blanton. Blanton lives in eastern Kentucky and has dedicated much of her life to protecting her community's landscape and natural resources. She has also encouraged others to speak up against the injustices they experience at the coal industry's greedy hands.[197] The acid drainage from a mining site near her house polluted the waterways, turning the creek orange. Blanton also saw her childhood home washed away due to a flood caused by a sediment pond left behind at a strip-mining site. This event first motivated her to speak up about the damaging effects of surface mining. When she became outspoken about "coal muck" damaging the roads, the company responsible told her that it was just something she had to learn to deal with since she lived in a coal mining community. Instances like this keep some people in coal communities quiet and complacent. Coal companies use hateful rhetoric toward those who speak out and often threaten people. In Blanton's case, threats came in the form of heavy mining vehicles circling the roads in front of her home to try to ward her off.[198] She fought because of the destruction to the landscape and for her children.[199] Blanton's experience demonstrates one of the underlying reasons women become

[196]Bell, 89.

[197]Bell, *Fighting King Coal*, 85.

[198]Bell, *Our Roots,* 85- 86.

[199]Bell, 87.

activists around MTR: they are close to many people whose health is affected by mine pollution. Of course, men are close to the same people, but gender norms encode women as caregivers, suggesting that women, especially mothers, have a particular responsibility to help the afflicted. Jessica Wilkerson argues that women participating in environmental justice movements "draw on social roles as caregivers while articulating the goals of their grassroots campaigns."[200] Indeed, it is common for some activists to cite their status as mothers to justify their efforts. Blanton is a case in point, attributing part of her speaking out to being a mother. Her activism made her one of the most well-known environmental justice activists in Kentucky, where she serves as a group leader for the grassroots organization Kentuckians for the Commonwealth (KFTC).[201] Like other women who actively speak out against the coal industry, Blanton has been dismissed and labeled as "emotional and passionate" for their activism. Like many women she fought for various reasons, not attributing the fight to one sole aspect. She acted for her community, the health of her children, and the hope for a better future.

Pauline Canterberry and Mary Miller Fighting in West Virginia

Pauline Canterberry and Mary Miller are two women from West Virginia who have dedicated their time to fight against the air pollution that results from processing coal. The work of Shannon Elizabeth Bell highlights their work through interviews she conducted. There was so much coal dust in their community that it would seep into their homes through their window seals and doorways; there was no escaping it. They took their complaints to the

[200]Wilkerson, *To Live Here, You Have,* 4.

[201]Wilkerson, *To Live Here, You Have,* 85.

West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection, which ignored them. So they took their grievances and photographic evidence of coal ash damage to the Office of Surface Mining, established by SMCRA. They spoke at a hearing at the Office of Surface Mining about the destruction and won.[202] They had voiced their concerns about how the coal ash was destroying their homes, and their small victory led them to wage a more significant fight.

Massey Energy, a significant player in the coal industry, was responsible for the coal ash. Under pressure from the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), Massey Energy agreed to reduce coal ash. However, they only followed through when they knew the DEP was coming for an inspection. Having pacified an oblivious DEP with this charade, Massey Energy did the least amount possible to contain the coal dust they produced. Massey did this because running sprinklers and wetting coal reduced its value.[203] The company's failure to set safer practices is yet another instance of the coal industry placing a higher value on coal than people of these communities. In response, Canterberry and Miller started taking dust samples weekly for two years to document the extent of the problem and the extent of the company's negligence.[204] The two women took it into their own hands when the company failed to meet, fighting against coal industry pollution. They had become this local movement's face and led their community to victory over Massey Energy. Canterberry and Miller were older citizens in their communities; their love for their community influenced their choice to get involved. Their fight was one for preserving their community, hoping the coal company would be held accountable for the destruction it had caused. These women had

[202]Bell, *Our Roots,* 28-30.

[203]Bell, 30.

[204]Bell, 31.

watched the coal industry destroy their land, and when coal dust began to take over, they decided that enough was enough. They worked as women concerned about their community and its residents; together, they worked for the common good. One thing that kept them both going in their fight is the support they received from their community. Their actions are the right way of seeing how others are inspired to get involved in the local movement for their community, everyone working together and keeping the fight alive.

These are a few examples of women fighting for environmental justice in Central Appalachian mining communities. These women encourage and inspire other women to speak up and join the movement. They endure the environmental costs associated with bringing cheap energy' to the rest of the nation.[205] These women have won what may seem like small victories' but are just a few examples of women doing the same things. Their small victories' add up; they make a change and bring awareness to environmental issues. It's not such a small victory when the lasting impacts mean a cleaner community for generations. Like the many women who have fought for justice in Appalachia for generations, these women did it for their communities and others who could not speak out. Their fights were not always easy, but they pushed through with larger goals in mind, just like many Appalachian women throughout history. Their stories are important to ongoing fights to protect communities for future generations.

Mountain Valley Pipeline Construction Inspires Resistance

Just as many have protested against the coal industry for their negligence and mining practices, many outside of the coal rich areas of the region are fighting back against fracked

[205]Bell, *Fighting King Coal,* 249.

gas. Although women fight in different parts of the region against extractive industries, their actions and reasoning share many commonalities. Women are leading the charge in many of these movements. The interconnected nature of their identities, connections to communities, places, people, and their actions across these movements are special. Holding these movements in conversation allows us to see these are not singular issues but part of a long history in Appalachia. Women choose to act for themselves, their communities, and future generations. The forces that drive them to do so and the barriers they face vary across backgrounds.

"Pipeland" Internet Documentary Brings Awareness to MVP

In the mini-documentary "Pipeland" a farmer named Betty from Franklin County, Virginia states, "If all of us are fighting, then how will they arrest all of us."[206] Her statement aligns with many women who have decided to take action because there is strength in numbers. She documented the destruction, asked questions, and spoke out against MVP. Betty saw their local activism as part of more significant movements in the United States and the world. In the short documentary, locals like Betty give accounts of what the land was once like and express their grief for future generations not having the same experiences.[207] The proposed pipeline has spread destruction throughout Virginia and West Virginia communities. Many people have seen family lands and communities change by miles of pipe they still have not placed in the ground, and construction seems never-ending. Women involved in the fight do so for their own reasons: to protect family farms, some who fear the

[206]Jack Wander, "Pipeland Mountain Valley Pipeline Resistance."

[207]Wander.

changing landscape and the resulting pollution, and some who do not like having a natural gas pipeline imposed upon them. Their motivators for acting are different; one theme that connects them is the fear of losing their sense of place and belonging in that place.

I Stand With Red—The Activism of Red Terry

On April 2, 2018, Theresa "Red" Terry, at the age of 61, climbed to the top of a treestand atop Bent Mountain.[208] Minor Terry, her daughter, climbed up in a neighboring tree in support. They placed the stand in the pathway of Mountain Valley Pipeline construction as an attempt to halt construction. Their land had recently fallen prey to the MVP through eminent domain. The Mountain Valley Pipeline obtained an easement against the Terry family's wishes with the legal power of eminent domain and claimed complete control of their land. The two built the tree stand on that same strip of land to halt MVP construction.[209] On the day Red planted herself atop the platform, she spoke of her generational connection and love for the land that had been in her family for seven generations.[210] Once on her platform thirty feet in the air, she spoke out, declaring that she would be up there "as long as it takes" to stop MVP workers from cutting down the trees.[211] She continued her speech by saying, "I have three children, and this mountain is like my fourth child… take it from me, I would do anything within my power to protect this mountain."[212] Fellow tree sitters who

[208]Laurance Hammack, "A Tree-Sit Protest of the Mountain Valley Pipeline Has Spread to Roanoke County," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, April 2, 2018, https://richmond.com/news/virginia/a-tree-sit-protest-of-the-mountain-valley-pipeline-has-spread-to-roanoke-county/article_6dc43133-e3f4-5a9f-ba9f-49238f1cc9f2.html.

[209]Hammack.

[210]Hammack.

[211]Hammack.

[212]Hammack.

were making attempts to protect Jefferson National Forest inspired her efforts.[213] Disheartened by the impending destruction of their family land, Red and Minor took matters into their own hands, physically placing themselves in the pathway of destruction to protect their home.

When it comes to her reasoning for going up in the tree, Red said, "If they're going to stomp on my heart and kill me anyway, why not go up in the tree?"[214] While it may seem like a no-win scenario, Red reasoned it was better than sitting back and doing nothing. She and Minor hoped to slow down construction at least and buy those who were mobilizing some time.[215] Red and Minor stayed in their treestands thirty feet in the air for 34 days endearing all kinds of weather conditions. They lived on eight-by-four-foot wooden platforms covered with a tarp to protect them from the elements.[216]

The mother and daughter duo only came down after a federal judge ruled that they would receive a fine of one thousand dollars per day if they remained in the trees. The judge told them if they did not come down, then United States Marshals would forcibly remove them.[217] Both received fines and charges, including misdemeanors that included trespassing, obstruction of justice, and interfering with property rights.[218] The mother and daughter duo's

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[213]Hammack.

[214]Mason Adams, "'This Land Is My Heart': A Mother and Daughter's 34-Day Stand against the Mountain Valley Pipeline," *Belt Magazine*, May 17, 2018, https://beltmag.com/tree-sits-against-mountain-valley-pipeline/.

[215]Adams, "'This Land Is My Heart.'"

[216] Hammack.

[217]Adams.

[218]"Pipeline Protesters Leave Tree Stands on Bent Mountain," WDBJ 7, May 5, 2018, https://www.wdbj7.com/content/news/Tree-sitters-on-Bent-Mountain-come-down-from-stands-481835151.html.

efforts did not stop when they descended from the trees on May 5, 2018; their fight had just begun. In an interview after coming down from the tree, Red said, "I got their attention; now let's start our fight."[219] Once on the ground, Red and Minor went on a speaking tour to help rally with other pipeline protestors. These women were willing to do whatever it took to save their family's land. Red Terry became the face of a movement. The phrase "I stand with Red" became a rallying cry for several people across the Mountain Valley pipeline protest movement.[220] Red inspired the book *Seeing Red* by Mara Eve Robbins. Her book centers around the story of Red's tree sits and how they gained international attention in her fight to protect family land.[221]

A Fight For Family Land and Community

Grace Terry is a sixth-generation Roanoke County, Virginia resident and is the sister-in-law of Red Terry, the notable tree sitter. Like many, she was shocked when the Mountain Valley Pipeline showed up unannounced; she never dreamed that a 42-inch pipeline carrying fracked gas could come through the middle of the property that her family loved and cherished.[222] She has dedicated her time to fighting the MVP, speaking out against the pipeline's damage to the Bent Mountain Community. Like many who first found out about

[219]Matthew Fultz, "Red Terry Brings Pipeline Opposition to the Valley," https://www.whsv.com, May 8, 2019, https://www.whsv.com/content/news/Red-Terry-to-speak-in-two-Valley-cities-about--482242931.html.

[220] Gregory S. Schneider, "Perched on a Platform High in a Tree, a 61-Year-Old Woman Fights a Gas Pipeline," *Washington Post*, April 21, 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/virginia-politics/perched-on-a-platform-high-in-a-tree-a-61-year-old-woman-fights-a-gas-pipeline/2018/04/21/3b8284b4-435e-11e8-bba2-0976a82b05a2_story.html.

[221]Mara Eve Robbins, *Seeing Red* (Propertius Press, 2021).

[222]Grace Terry, group interview by author and classmates under direction of Julie Shepherd-Powell, April 2022, Roanoke County, Virginia, transcript by author, personal collection of Julie Shepherd-Powell, Appalachian State University, Boone, NC.

the coming of the MVP, Grace was shocked and never thought something of this nature would happen in her community. She took action into her own hands, contacting anyone who would listen and doing anything she could to help stop the pipeline's construction.

The community she has built with others is essential to the fight. Working against the MVP brings together people from all different backgrounds. One way of doing this is by asking questions, pushing back, and doing the little things to make it tough on the pipeline companies. The concept of costing them time and money is a driving factor behind their fight, and attempts to delay the project are common among protestors. Grace spoke about Red, and Minor Terry's tree sits and how there was an outpouring of support from the community. People came during their tree sit and played music and sang and made art, and they made prayer flags.[223] Grace believes in the movement and fighting in ways that make the individual comfortable, whether making a phone call, holding a sign, or checking in with those on the front lines. She believes that every contribution is essential and needed.[224] Every small action builds and makes the fight much easier for everyone else.

Grace has been involved in the ongoing fight against the MVP for eight years and is hopeful for the future. In an interview with students at Appalachian State University, she said that "I believe that this could be the pipeline that changes things because it's been so problematic, and I really believe this could be the one that what we've done to fight it maybe will help people in the future."[225] Every little bit helps in the efforts to fight the MVP, and different efforts can reach other people and help the movement gain traction.

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[223]Terry, interview.

[224]Terry, interview.

[225]Terry, interview.

A Professor Takes Her Stand Against The MVP

Dr. Emily Satterwhite is a professor of Appalachian Studies at Virginia Tech who acted as a private citizen during her direct action. In the early morning of June 28, 2018, she locked herself to a John Deer excavator approximately twenty feet in the air on the top of Brush Mountain. Satterwhite used a device called a "sleeping dragon" that makes it complicated to remove someone once locked in.[226] Sleeping Dragons are a popular device used by MVP protesters to lock their arms in and secure themselves to a piece of equipment. She sat atop the excavator locked in for nearly fifteen hours and blocked the pathway to MVP construction. People gathered together in support of her direct action, cheering her on. Signs spanning the excavator's length read, "Water is life. We won't back down" and "VA Dems pipelines or democracy you decide." Law enforcement officers told her that they would take her to jail if she did not come down voluntarily. She still refused to move, shouting, "It's not what I want to do; it's what I'm willing to do."[227] Satterwhite continued, "I want to say that this is not a game, this is about our livelihoods and our very survival and protecting our water, protecting our future. Not just for our generation but for the next generation and the generation after that."[228] Her speech echoes the voices of many fighting to protect the land where they live; Satterwhite, like many other women, was willing to do whatever it took.

During her time atop the excavator, she provided commentary about how the pipeline

[226]Hammack.

[227]Hammack.

[228]"Virginia Tech Professor Speaks after Coming down from Mountain Valley Pipeline Equipment" (WSLS10, June 28, 2018), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k8p1qf3vaas.

was environmentally damaging to the land and expressed her frustration about state officials not stopping.[229] Satterwhite wore a "Stand with Red T-Shirt" in tribute to Red Terry. Around her neck, she wore a red bandanna, a historical symbol of Appalachian Resistance, which was made famous during the 1921 Battle of Blair Mountain. Both were a nod to activists that came before her.

Law enforcement had to use cherry pickers to reach her, and it took them nearly two hours to carefully cut her out of the sleeping dragon device using angle grinders.[230] Once released from the device, they charged her with interfering with someone else's property.[231] In August 2018 she went to and agreed to do 200 hours of community service without accepting a guilty plea. After the hearing, she walked from the courthouse to the crowd chanting, "Be like Emily. Not like MVP."[232] In a press conference that followed, she talked about how people in the path of the MVP have asked the State Water Control Board, the governor, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, and courts to do the right thing. None of them had done anything. Frustration often leads people to fight back for their communities. Since none of the people in power had done anything, she took action, stating, "it's taken just regular everyday people who have had enough, dozens of who have been arrested in this pipeline fight."[233] She is one of many who decided to fight the MVP head-on

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[229]Hammack.

[230]"Virginia Tech Professor Speaks after Coming down from Mountain Valley Pipeline Equipment," www.youtube.com (WSLS 10, June 29, 2018), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k8p1qf3vaas.

[231]Shayne Dwyer, Heather Butterworth, Irisha Jones, "Virginia Tech Professor Charged and Released for Mountain Valley Pipeline Protest," WSLS, June 29, 2018, https://www.wsls.com/news/2018/06/29/virginia-tech-professor-charged-and-released-for-mountain-valley-pipeline-protest/.

[232]Joe Dashiell, "Mountain Valley Pipeline Protester to Perform Community Service," WDBJ7, August 30, 2018, https://www.wdbj7.com/content/news/Protester-who-blocked-pipeline-construction-ordered-to-perform-community-service-492109211.html.

[233]Dashiell, "Mountain Valley Pipeline Protester to Perform Community Service."

as a private citizen.

On March 26, 2019, Dr. Emily Satterwhite spoke on the campus of Appalachian State University. She delivered a presentation titled "What I Did on My Summer Vacation: The Role of Professors in the Climate Crisis." During the presentation, she discussed her role in the fight against the MVP. Her love for the region and privilege as a white-tenured professor shaped her actions. She spoke about using her positions to advocate for the public good.[234] Appalachian Studies has a long history of scholars and activists coming together. People like Satterwhite are where these worlds collide; she is both. Her presentation discussed the history behind women standing up for moral causes, stating how women act as mothers and the spot their actions have in a larger political sphere.[235] Satterwhite left the crowd with two thought-provoking questions: one was if direct action activism is something that a professor should be doing. The other was how did students feel about a professor's involvement in something like this? That was nearly four years ago, and the fight against the MVP has not ceased. People like Emily Satterwhite helped draw attention to the issues and make efforts to halt pipeline construction. In April 2022, construction on the Brush Mountain site where she took her direct action is still incomplete.

The Role of the Internet in MVP Activism

The internet has been an outlet to spread awareness of the Mountain Valley pipeline since the beginning. Groups like Appalachians Against Pipelines (AAP) have been on the

[234]Emily Satterwhite, What I Did on My Summer Vacation: The Role of Professors in the Climate Crisis. Public Presentation March 26, 2019.

[235]Satterwhite, What I Did on My Summer Vacation.

ground and documenting direct action from the beginning. Their platforms act as a means of spreading awareness of the issues and helping them gain national attention. People documenting action against the pipeline are activists as those chained to equipment and sitting in trees. There is no one way to fight; everyone's voice in action is part of a much larger movement. Just like Grace Terry said: Find a way of acting that makes you comfortable. The online presence of AAP, brings those activists and communities into the homes and lives of folks that may not be aware of their efforts. Their online platforms offer an archive of resistance efforts and provide updates for the ongoing fight against the MVP. In many ways, their work humanizes the issue and gives faces and voices to victims of the MVP. It allows folks to see those directly affected and suffering at the hands of the corporation.

Above all, it gives people a platform to voice their own stories to hear first-hand the detriments of the pipeline. In the movement, social media has played a major role in spreading awareness in an incredibly unique way not previously seen in larger movements for environmental justice in the region. Social media has played an important role, much like women have documented destruction, pollution, and water quality due to poor surface mining regulations throughout history, AAP does this in a way that projects them onto a national stage, bringing awareness to many.

Women and MVP Activism

These women fighting tirelessly against the MVP are not united simply because they are women; their roles and reasoning for fighting are much more complex. Some are fighting as mothers, and some are fighting because of anger over injustice and because they want to

protect the environments in which they live. One significant commonality among them is their willingness to stand up for their community in hopes of preserving the place they know in love for themselves and the future. Before their eyes, they have seen the destruction of the Mountain Valley Pipeline, not for the common good, but for corporate greed. They have seen the land irreversibly damaged to the point of no recognition.

In the years since its initial construction is underway, the Mountain Valley Pipeline has sparked interest among many activists in the areas it directly affects. The women mentioned here are a few of many taking a stand against the MVP. Their work has not gone unnoticed; they are fighting for something much larger than the interests of individuals. They are fighting for the protection of land and the preservation of their sense of belonging.

CHAPTER 4: TOWARD PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT: FACING DOWN ENVIRONMENTAL THREATS

These hills hold my soul.
King Coal owns my land.
Oil barons own King Coal.
It's time we made our stand
—*"Who Owns Appalachia"*
by Sue Massek[236]

Responding to Environmental Threats in Appalachia with Solastalgia and Artivism

Connection to place is a significant factor in inspiring women choosing to fight against environmental injustices in their communities. For many, ties to their community and the land give them a sense of belonging. When extractive industries set out to take natural resources such as fracked gas and coal, they not only take away resources but also destroy the land in an irreparable way. Seeing the landscapes altered often motivates people to act on behalf of their communities and the changing environment.

The picturesque landscapes are often left scarred, which results in emotional impact and longing for the state it once was. In his premier work, *Earth Emotions: New Words for a New World,* Scholar Glenn Albrecht gives voice to human emotions surrounding impacts on the environment. As explained earlier, Albrecht calls this feeling of environmental loss solastalgia, which is "the pain or distress caused by the loss or lack of solace and the sense of destruction connected to the present state of one's home and territory. It is the lived experience of negative environmental change. It is the homesickness you have when you are still at home."[237] Solastalgia combines "solace" and "nostalgia" or longing to give voice and

[236]Sue Massek, "Herstory of Appalachia: Three Centuries of Oppression and Resistance," 283.

[237]Albrecht, x.

meaning to the emotions felt by generations of people in Appalachia who have seen their communities destroyed.

People's hardships in changing environments push them to take action, and connectedness to place is important to the human spirit. Scholar and activist bell hooks wrote, "our relationship to the earth is radical: it lies at the root of our consciousness and our culture of any sense of a rich life and right livelihood"[238] Connection to homes and communities is a valuable part of human existence; seeing these environments destroyed is painful. Appalachians have watched their communities carved up by corporations and the communities they live in become unrecognizable. Destruction of the landscape often strengthens people's social ties and the desire to maintain them because of the dependence on environmental resources for "social reproduction, cultural identity, pleasure." [239] People have strong social ties to the community and environment. Their deep-rooted connection to the place motivates them to maintain their sense of belonging within the place.

Throughout generations, women have witnessed these issues firsthand and decided to take action, although many of those who act will never see the benefits of their actions. These women are the forerunners bringing about change and are making progress toward protecting the environment and their communities for future generations. One source of knowledge about environmental injustice comes from artists from the Appalachian region, specifically in Kentucky and West Virginia. Attention to these issues comes through art, music, and literature.[240]

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[238]bell hooks, *Belonging : A Culture of Place* (Routledge, 2008), 61.

[239]Nesbitt and Weiner, 334-335.

[240]House and Howard, 5.

Art has long been a form of protest in the Appalachian Region. Glenn Albrecht discusses art's role in helping us understand the world around us. Albrecht states, "art and craft help us see and react to what is often almost invisible and unspeakable."[241] Not only does solastalgia give activists a voice, but it also makes them a source of inspiration in their communities the creative arts world.[242] Solastalgia gives us a new perspective on responses to environmental loss in Appalachia and the emotions surrounding it.

Artivism Against Coal Extraction

The word "artivism" is a combination of "art" and "activism." Artivism can be interpreted as the intersections of art and activism. It is the artistic expression of taking a stance against injustices within communities. Organizations such as "ARTivism Virginia" create connections between artists and activists working for environmental justice. Their organization uses strategy, messaging, event and campaign production, music, spoken word, visual design, sound, videography, and photography as forms of activism. Artivism gives people an outlet to fight in a way that is comfortable to them. Disrupted connections and loss of place are enough to lead anyone to fight. Women have fought for generations to protect Appalachian landscapes from destruction by extractive industries. There is no sole mobilization method, so successful strategies often come from acting with whatever means and resources are available. Sometimes, poetry is an effective means, sometimes music or fiction. The ultimate goal in the struggle for environmental justice is protecting the environment for future generations.

[241]Albrecht, 45.

[242]Albrecht, 45.

Poetry As A Form Of Protesting Environmental Change

Poetry is a method of discussing environmental issues in Appalachia. Themes of loss of place are present throughout works from across the region. Poets contribute responses to the gradual loss of a loved environment.[243] At the age of ninety-four, Appalachian Studies pioneer and scholar Helen Matthews Lewis started writing poetry as a means of protest, stating, "As I got too old to sit down in front of bulldozers in protest, I began writing poems of protest."[244] Her collection *The Nature of Things* is composed of poems of protest. The book includes watercolor paintings by Patricia Beaver. This poetry collection is full of the lessons nature teaches us, precautionary tales, and calls to action. At its core is a love and dedication to protecting the Appalachian landscape. Lewis dedicated her career to advocating for Appalachia; she is a known advocate for the working class, and educated many about the harm surrounding the coal industry. She was a fierce advocate for community research and continued her contributions to Appalachia adapting throughout her life. Like many, she utilized both research and art to spread awareness of environmental issues, helping her words and passions to reach broader audiences and contribute to protecting the environment for future generations.

A much younger poet, Crystal Good, works toward similar goals. Crystal Good is an artist, advocate, and entrepreneur based in West Virginia. She is a member of the Affrilachian Poets and founder of Black by God, The West Virginian, an emerging news and storytelling organization that centers Black voices from West Virginia. For over a decade, her work has made its way around the internet, and her YouTube videos and TedTalks have

[243]Glenn Albrecht, *Earth Emotions,* 45.

[244]Helen Matthews Lewis, *The Nature of Things: Poems of Flora and Protest* (Iris Press, 2018).

allowed her to reach wide audiences. Her work has brought attention to countless social and environmental injustices in Appalachia. Good's work explores the complicated relationships between Appalachian communities and the coal industry, highlighting exploitation and hardships. Her poetry collection *Valley Girl* is her first book of poetry, getting its namesake from her poem "Valley Girl" which speaks to life in the Chemical Valley. The poem makes connections between the coal industry and fearing pollution with lines like, "Coal miner's daughter is now a chemical plant step kid."[245] Good's poem highlights the work of corporations like DuPont and outside interests that destroy and pollute land before up and leaving. She writes, "Just today I caught a three eyed-carp. Pollution vs. the Solution, that's the way DuPont du."[246]

Her poem "Boom Boom" brings awareness to environmental injustices and the harsh reality of those who experience them. The poem alludes to strip mining, abusive practices of coal operations, and changing landscapes. She describes the mountains of West Virginia as a woman and her life 'stripping' for a living, an allusion to strip mining. Strip mining damages landscapes until they cannot return to their natural state. A line that resonates with the damage is "them girls cry hardest when the rain falls, causing landslides and toxic masses. Cause in her mind, this is what she deserves."[247] Stripping the landscape's vegetation causes runoff, landslides, and water pollution. Good's poem discusses the role of outside industry, taking all that is of value and then moving on. Her poems have circulated the internet for nearly a decade, and videos of her reading "Boom Boom" have reached large audiences on

[245]Crystal Good, *Valley Girl* (San Bernardino, CA: Crystal Good, 2012), 5.

[246]Good, *Valley Girl, 5*.

[247]Good, 21-22.

YouTube.[248] One online poem version displays videos of the MTR process as she recites her poem. One version from 2018 gives imagery to the things she is alluding to and has the potential to reach someone who was not previously aware of the issue.[249]

Good's poem "WV Mourning" is another poem responding the harsh realities surrounding mining, "Mountain mama had history of violations, sirens sounded, emergency in the dark."[250] This poem also represents the mountains as a woman, giving imagery of mining equipment drilling into the hills, and referring to them as "her." The history of injustice is prevalent in this poem, as is the endurance of both women and the actual landscapes that are forever altered. A powerful line that stands out is "Wearing resilience and tears like stickers on a hard hat."[251]

She explores historical and current injustices in the Appalachian Region and often makes cross-movement comparisons, pointing out the long tireless history of such injustices. Two of her works are particularly poignant: "Black Diamonds" and "Civil Up and Rising." Her poem "Black Diamonds" is a mix of poetry and song. "Black Diamonds" examines the impending possibility of miners not coming home due to disasters. She dedicated the work to Jenny Lynch, a woman who lost her man in a mining accident. The black diamonds in her work are "formed by blood, sweat, love, from slaves buried in unmarked graves."[252] She references April 5, 2010, the date of what became known as the Upper Big Branch Mine

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[248]Crystal Good, "Boom Boom," www.youtube.com, October 26, 2011, https://youtu.be/UCHpg24Vilc.

[249]Douglas John Imbrogno, "'Boom Boom: The Video,'" www.youtube.com, June 26, 2013, https://youtu.be/e2DgaVqFDQM.

[250]Good, *Valley Girl*, 32-33.

[251]Good, 33.

[252]Crystal Good "'Black Diamonds,' Civil up and Rising," TEDxCorbin August 25, 2019, https://youtu.be/aXU0H2EexjY.

disaster. It was a day that, as she said, started just like all the other days that the earth fell in on miners. The Upper Big Branch Mine disaster killed twenty-nine men. The black diamonds that formed under pressure that day can be seen as the miners buried under the pressure of the mine collapse, those who did not make it home to their families. When these miners do not come home, these women "who love their men deep into the earth" fight back.[253] Good's work examines the pressures from the coal industry on workers' safety, company stores, and black lung. She voices the many emotions these communities feel and their historical ties to industry.

In her lyrical, poetic work "Civil Up and Rising," Good compares and contrasts the 1921 Battle of Blair Mountain and the 2015 Baltimore Uprisings. During her performances of this poem, she recites parts of Florence Reece's "Which Side Are You On," a fitting addition to the call of collective actions. She recounts imagery of Blair Mountain, how miners took to shooting, and the red bandannas they wore around their necks. She repeats a line: "but you ain't never heard of this?" because these are movements typically not taught in public schools. The Battle of Blair Mountain became one of the most deadly labor uprisings in history and set the tone for labor organizing in Appalachia. The Baltimore Uprising started after the arrest of Freddie Gray, a black man who suffered when the police used too much force, injuring his neck and sending him into a coma. Residents of Baltimore took to the streets. Good's poems and their space on online platforms have spread awareness of these issues. Good ends her poem by saying, "which side are you on?" arguably a call to action for future injustices in Appalachia. Her poem and use of Reece's lyrics are a call to action and a way of recounting historic and ongoing harm indicted upon Appalachian communities.

[253]Crystal Good "'Black Diamonds,' Civil up and Rising," TEDxCorbin August 25, 2019, https://youtu.be/aXU0H2EexjY.

Crystal Good's work continues to find a way to highlight various injustices in Appalachia, and she gives these issues a platform. Her career is dedicated to uplifting the unheard voices of the Appalachian region.

Literature is a means of expressing frustrations with issues and is a platform to have voices heard. These works reach audiences that may need to be made aware of the issues. They are, in and of themselves, a form of activism. These writers bring awareness to the issues; they write about women's activism and inspire others to get involved.

Sense of Place and Music as Activism

Belonging to a place or community shapes human identities. People who act against environmental injustices often fear losing that feeling, or worse; they see it entirely altered to become unrecognizable. Feelings of solastalgia and disconnect go hand in hand. Being homesick while still at home and never returning to a place because it will never exist in the same way is a theme in many art forms that come from Appalachia. Songs of protesting these environmental injustices and the feelings of those witnessing them firsthand have been made popular by musicians such as Jean Ritchie.

Most notably, Jean Ritchie's song "Black Waters" was first released in 1971 and tells a story of seeing the water that runs through the land forever altered by mining runoff. Her song proclaims that she comes from Kentucky and the mountains are her home. She details the wildlife, natural beauty, and roaming animals. The picturesque landscapes that she had always known and loved soon became nonexistent. Her song tells the story of mining companies blowing up land, causing landslides, and polluting the waterways, all as means and results of mining in ways the company can most benefit. She declares, "Then they tore

down my mountain and covered my corn. Now the grave on the hillside's a mile deeper down. And the man stands and talks with his hat in his hand While the poisonous waters rise over my land. Sad scenes of destruction on every hand black waters, black waters, run down through the land."[254] We see her longing to return to how she had once experienced it. Ritchie sings, "Well I ain't got no money, not much of a home, I own my land, but my land's not my own"[255] If she did have money, she would buy Perry County, Kentucky, and run out all of the mining operations and go fishing while watching the clear waters like she once had. She sings, "Well, wouldn't that be just like the old promised land?"[256] Ritchie's song tells the narrative of being in a place she called her home while being exiled simultaneously. Not only does Ritchie's song tell the story of emotional distress caused by seeing one home destroyed she also brings awareness to the issues. Music acts as a form of activism; it spreads the message to more mainstream audiences. It gives others who experienced the same things something they can relate to. To be an activist, one does not have to be in front of a picket or holding a sign; they use available resources. Her song embodies the anger she experiences and calls out mining operations. Her music reached wide audiences, bringing attention to her loss and pain regarding the changing landscape.

Similarly, John Prine finds this loss of place in "Paradise" where he echoes the longing for a place and how returning to that place will never be the same. Prine sings, "daddy won't you take me back to Muhlenberg County, down by the Green River where Paradise lay. Well, I'm sorry my son, but you're too late in asking. Mister Peabody's coal

[254]Jean Ritchie, *Black Waters* (United States: Geordie Music, 1971).

[255]Jean Ritchie, *Black Waters.*

[256]Ritchie.

train has hauled it away"[257] The paradise he sings about cannot be found, because the landscape has been altered beyond repair. Prine's "Paradise" was released in the same year as "Black Waters." Both songs discuss places the singers long to return to but cannot. They could not return because of how the land was irreversibly altered. If they were to return, the place would not be the same. The song serves as a reminder that people should speak out and have a voice and a say in protecting their communities. Songs of this nature become calls to action, a reminder that when you see something you do not like, you have the power and a voice to bring about change. Just as songs bring attention to issues spreading them to wider and more mainstream audiences the same can be said about literature.

Appalachian Novels and Stories of Women's Environmental Activism

Women's activism in Appalachia has inspired many works about the region to draw on themes of resistance and protection of communities for future generations. These works highlight women's work and draw attention to the adverse impacts of the environmental injustices people in Appalachia face. Some novels that stick out regarding Mountaintop Removal and Strip-mining are Silas's House's *The Coal Tattoo* 2004, Ann Pancake's 2007 novel *Strange as This Weather Has Been,* and Robert Gipe's 2015 illustrated novel *Trampoline*. These works are fiction but have strong female characters questioning the coal industry's practices. Like the fight against MTR, these women face barriers when speaking out and resistance from the male characters they are trying to protect. Seeing MTR addressed in a novel may come as a surprise, but this has also opened another door for bringing awareness to MTR and inspired by actual events faced by people of coal mining

[257]John Prine, *Paradise* (A&R Studios, New York: Atlantic, 1971).

communities. In all of these novels, women lead the charge in movements. They organize and attend meetings, physically put themselves in the path of destruction, and speak out against injustices.

Silas House's *The Coal Tattoo:* Women and Direct Action

In Silas's House's *The Coal Tattoo,* Anneth and Easter are sisters living in Kentucky for generations. Their family had their community. Anneth had long been the more outspoken of the two by the novel's end; we see them come together in the fight when they learn about a strip-mining operation on the mountain near their home. Anneth warns that if the company moved toward strip mining, people would turn against the company because of the way it tears up the land, underground mining is hidden, but strip mining is visible for all to see.[258] Her early statement warns of what will come against the mining company.

We see Easter come into her role as an activist joining the reigns. Anneth suggests that they lay down in front of the bulldozers. They received a warning that they would just run over them with the dozers if they did so. Easter declared, "they'll have to do it then...there's no way I will let them tear down that mountain...So you might as well get ready for a fight. Because that's what they're going to get."[259] Anneth, Easter, and their Aunt Sophie climb into the dozer scoop while a driver is still operating; they are thrown to the ground.. Refusing to give up, they link arms and decline to move out of the path of a bulldozer and eventually lay down in front of it. They physically placed themselves in the destruction line as many women in Appalachia. The novel ends with three arrested for their

[258]Silas House, *The Coal Tattoo* (Chapel Hill, NC: Algonquin Books, 2004), 180.

[259]House, *The Coal Tattoo*, 245.

action against the company, and they all make the paper's headlines, which read "Women Protesters Jailed."[260] While in jail after her arrest, the community meets Easter with support from the community. People gather outside the jail singing Hazel Dickens's song "They'll Never Keep Us Down" in solidarity with her actions.[261] Dickens's song has found its way into movements throughout the region's history, echoing messages of resilience and women unwilling to be moved. In this novel we see three fearless women come together and say enough is enough, they take a stand to see a change in their community

Ann Pancake's *Strange as This Weather Has Been:* Families at Work

Ann Pancake's novel *Strange as This Weather Has Been* is particularly poignant because it was published when MTR was not in most Americans' consciousness. Pancake's novel brought awareness to the issue of MTR in an unsuspected and captivating way. Her novel is based on real activists fighting for environmental justice in their communities in central Appalachia. Set in a West Virginian town, the characters are dealing with a coal mining boom related to the practice of MTR for the first time. Lace, one of the main characters, actively speaks out against the mining practices, despite what her partner Jimmy Make, who works for the coal company, says.

Regarding her activism, Lace says, "I'd rather die showing some spine and get shot in my front than sit and watch them kill everything that matters to me." [262] She fears losing the community and mountains she loves. Her daughter Bant is often caught in Lace's and

[260]House, 301.

[261]House, 301.

[262]Ann Pancake, *Strange as This Weather Has Been* (Counterpoint, 2007), 131.

Jimmy's fights concerning the coal company. Bant realizes the gravity of everything happening in her community. She discovers that the landscape is irreversibly altered by the coal company. Bant sees things are changing and wrestles with losing the mountains and the feelings you have for them, questioning which was worse.[263] She grew up knowing the perspectives of everyone around her and their connections to the mountains. The first time Bant saw the damage, she asked if Jimmy Make understood the gravity of what was happening. She questioned if he understood the wrongness of it all and if he understood her and her mother's choices to defend the place they loved. [264] Lace and Bant fight for the mountains and community they love, much like the women that inspired the novel. They cared about their home and the damage and took action. Connection to the mountains is essential for them. A quote from the novel that echoes feelings of solastalgia is: "We live in our mountains. It's not just the tops, but the sides that hold us."[265]

On the dedication page, Pancake states, "For the people in the central Appalachian coalfields who struggle against catastrophe daily. Nowhere have I seen courage and integrity like theirs." [266] The acknowledgments credited the work of many activists, including Teri Blanton, Pauline Canterberry, and Marry Miller, for inspiring the novel. At the end of the novel is a list of resources and nonprofit organizations committed to fighting for environmental justice.[267] Mentioning these organizations points readers to more resources on the issues surrounding MTR. The work of these Appalachian activists, primarily women,

[263]Pancake, 167.

[264]Pancake, 167.

[265]Pancake, 173.

[266]Pancake, 1.

[267]Pancake, 359-360.

demonstrates how they have overcome gender barriers in their communities to incessantly fight the coal industry to make a change in their communities. Pancake's novel was ahead of its time and bright about change and drew attention to the issues of MTR faced daily by the people of central Appalachia.

Robert Gipe's *Trampoline* Activism of Dawn Jewell

In Robert Gipe's illustrated novel *Trampoline,* Dawn Jewell is a teenager who joins her Mamaw, one of the town's best-known'tree huggin' activists. Together they fight against strip mining on Blue Bear Mountain. Mamaw grew up on Blue Bear Mountain, lived there her entire life, and saw it altered before her eyes. Mamaw is a true organizer; she brings people together for meetings, organizes group trips to mining sites to assess the damage, and writes letters to the governor. She ensures people in her community know what is happening; she shows them the damage, then organizes them against it. She is known to attend hearings and speak on behalf of her community for the collective good. Mamaw dedicated much of her life to protecting the place she loved and was rumored to have stood against strip miners long before SMCRA became federal law.[268] Dawn tags along with Mamaw on these occasions; while attending a community hearing, Dawn steps in to defend the actions of her Mamaw. She speaks up, saying, "what do you want us to say?' Go ahead and tear up the world. We'll just get out of the way while you destroy everything our friends ever had? Here take my house; I'll just live here in this hole in the ground. Yeah, go ahead and set that big yellow rock on our heads. We'll be fine."[269] In this instance, we see Dawn speak up. She

[268]Robert Gipe, *Trampoline,* 219.

[269]Gipe, 16.

understands people's connection to Blue Bear Mountain, the fear of seeing it changed, and the consequences of their actions. Dawn's sentiment is echoed throughout the work of countless women in Appalachia fighting to protect their environments.

Through spending time with mamaw and other elders in the community, Dawn learns about historical injustices and cycles of abuse from the industry. She learns about the women like Hazel King who came before her, how her and mamaw's actions carry that legacy, and how they are the changemakers. Dawn is fiercely determined, and by the end of the novel, we see her become an activist; whether she would call herself one or not, we see her stand to protect the place she loves. A moment that stands out is when a woman from the governor's office sees Dawn at a public hearing. And Dawn tells her that the world is old and it will die soon. The woman tells Dawn she has her whole life ahead of her. Dawn is furious and responds with: "things is used up...Come up and look at Blue Bear Mountain and I'll show you. There ain't nothing for me. The world is old and it's made me old."[270]

Dawn took action as a young person aware of the gravity and effects of the mining industry. She was not looking for consolation; she was looking for policy and actions. The feeling of hopelessness is echoed throughout the work of young activists in Appalachia working to make a change in their communities. Dawn that folks from all over had written to the governor about Blue Bear Mountain; he could tell it was a big deal to them and that they were going to protect that mountain. The Governor announces the mining will stop crediting Dawn's frustrations for helping sway the decision. Stating: "I say to her and the rest of the commonwealth's young people that their future, like the top of Blue Bear Mountain, will be

[270]Gipe, 281.

there for the rest of their lives."[271] Dawn becomes the face of hope for the future and the preservation of Blue Bear Mountain, proving that you are never too young to take a stand for something you believe in.

Visual Arts As Activism Against Surface Mining

On the cover of Ann Pancake's novel *Strange as This Weather Has Been* is a photograph of a sculpture by Kentucky artist Jeff Chapman-Crane titled *The Agony of Gaia*. The sculpture represents "Mother Earth as a mountain, lying on her side in agony, as heavy equipment tears into her to remove coal." [272] Chapman-Crane's sculpture is an example of many works created in response to Mountaintop Removal and its destructive practices. You can see the emotional pain in her face as she clutched her head in agonizing pain. Her body is the mountain, and it is being ripped apart layer by layer, just as the mountains of MTR sites. It is fitting that Pancake included it as the cover of her novel because she has described the Mountains of Appalachia, stating that it had a "closer likeness to a human body than any landscape I've ever seen." [273] Anthropologist Bryan T. McNeil in his book Combating *Mountaintop Removal: New Directions in the Fight against Big Coal,* writes, "people have come to know parts of the land…like they know parts of their own body. The body of landscape, memory, and experience comes alive in the stories people tell about life in the mountains."[274] Many residents of coal communities can relate to the feelings of connection

[271] Gipe, 304.

[272] "Mountaintop Removal Sculpture, Sculptor, at Lexington Church." *Lexington Herald Leader* September 1, 2009. https://www.kentucky.com/news/state/kentucky/article44007258.html.

[273] Bryan T. McNeil, *Combating Mountaintop Removal: New Directions in the Fight against Big Coal* (University of Illinois Press, 2011), 2.

[274]McNeil, *Combating Mountaintop Removal,* 2.

with the land and the devastation that comes with destruction. Jeff Chapman-Crane's work, *The Agony of Gaia,*[275] embodies these expressions of connection to nature and mountains as the human body. Activism against destructive surface mining practices is just one movement in Appalachia's quilted traditions of environmental activism.

Artivism In The Fight Against Fracked Gas Pipelines

Fracking is one of the most recent developments in extractive industry assault on Appalachia, and it is not surprising to see the range of women's artistic responses to it fit a pattern of earlier eras. To protest songs, visual artists, and poetry, they have added a multidisciplinary symphony, documentary films, and direct action. Women and their efforts to stop the Mountain Valley Pipeline have not gone unnoticed. They inspire works of art which help to sustain these movements, helping the high levels of destruction meet new audiences.

Protest Songs About Pipelines

Sue Massek writes about environmental destruction in the song "Williams' Poison," she too fears losing the place she is connected with. Massek's song addresses the construction of pipelines in Kentucky communities. The song acknowledges all of these feelings while also encouraging people to not lose hope, with lyrics like "Hold on, stand strong, don't let Williams' poison pass through our land. Hold on, stand strong, the fate of

[275] To view an image of the sculpture see "Mountaintop Removal Sculpture, Sculptor, at Lexington Church." *Lexington Herald Leader* September 1, 2009. https://www.kentucky.com/news/state/kentucky/article44007258.html.

our homeland is now in our hands,"[276] Massek talks about how the pipeline would run fracked gas from up north through her home in Kentucky all the way to the Gulf coast. Similar to Jean Ritchie's "Black Waters" Massek's song speaks to pollution from extractive industries. Massek sings out, "Their pipeline would run right through my home."[277] Her song is a call to action, a preventative measure asking people to take action and stand against pipelines. She discusses connection to the place and her deeply rooted ties as someone whose family has lived there for 200 years. She sings about the generation that will come after and call this very place their home. The song speaks of fear of the loss of place, and the pollution at the hands of the extractive industry.

Poems of Protest Against Fracked Gas Pipelines

Poet Annie Woodford is from Basset, Virginia, and currently resides in Deep Gap, North Carolina. Her collection, *Where You Come from Is Gone,* explores the complexities of rural America. The collection of poems embodies the lush, often damaged landscape and the resilience of the human spirit. Woodford's poem "Demijohn: Bent Mountain'' is about the Bent Mountain community in Roanoke County, Virginia. It explores the devastating feelings that accompany the impending pipeline, hopelessness, loss of solace, and environmental damage surrounding the MVP. She writes "Somewhere, deep in the Appalachians, perhaps not far from this gorge where a pipeline will cross Bottom Creek at least eighty times."[278] The MVP and its construction threaten local waterways and creates irreversible damage. The

[276] "Williams' Poison by Sue Massek" (New Pioneers for a Sustainable Future, August 14, 2013), https://youtu.be/jrxu9uG_EEI.

[277] "Williams' Poison by Sue Massek."

[278] Annie Woodford, *Where You Come from Is Gone* (Mercer University Press, 2022), 31.

poem goes on to say, "on a map for the proposed pipeline route, there is a Blast Zone, a Evacuation Zone, a geologic explanation for Karst Formation, which means everything seeps through these mountains."[279] The poem "Demijohn: Bent Mountain" speaks of the environmental damage and persistent wildlife in the pathway of the pipeline on Bent Mountain. The concept of "where you come from is gone" echoes the feelings of solastalgia and longing for a place irreplaceably altered.

The "Blued Trees Symphony" as Artivism

Aviva Rahmani's "Blued Trees Symphony" is a way of using art as activism. The Blued Trees project is a transdisciplinary experiment in which trees in the pathways of natural gas pipelines are painted with musical notes. Rahmani, an environmental artist, and activist, started the project in response to the Algonquian Incremental Pipeline.[280] Rahmani discusses her work as an ecological artist and how she looks at degraded systems and designs solutions based on aesthetic principles. She looks at the places natural gas pipelines are proposed for construction and expansion and thinks of them as musical lines. Within these lines, they designate specific trees to be painted; those trees become notes, or sign waves as Rahmani calls them, are part of a musical score.[281] The trees are marked using a non-toxic ultramarine blue and buttermilk paint which creates a permanent casein layer that encourages moss growth over time.[282] Installments of Blued Trees have been used to protect trees from

[279]Woodford, *Where You Come from Is Gone,* 32.

[280]Marino Colmano, "PIPELINE - 19 - BLUED TREES - REVISED," YouTube (Lucid Media, November 12, 2016), https://youtu.be/hkbJKUI9S_w.

[281]Colmano, "PIPELINE - 19 - BLUED TREES – REVISED."

[282]Aviva Rahmani, "The Music of the Trees: The Blued Trees Symphony and Opera as Environmental Research and Legal Activism," *Leonardo Music Journal* 29 (September 20, 2019): 8–13,

being consumed by emanate domain through painting the trees into a symphony and copyrighting them under the Visual Artists Rights Act (VARA) which under U.S. law protects the ownership and destruction of a work of art. They assert the "moral rights of art."[283] Copywriting the art that is on their property allows owners to protect art that has been placed on their property.[284]

In 2016, artist Aviva Rahmani visited Blacksburg, Virginia, where an installation of her Blued Trees Symphony had been utilized. People of all ages came together to paint the installment in Montgomery County, VA, hoping to protect their communities. Many said they were painting as a way of protesting the pipeline and the state of their drinking water. Because they worked to copyright the art, if the land was condemned, MVP would have to pay for the art's value and the land itself. Similar actions have previously deterred corporations from destroying the land because of how it costs them money.[285] The Blued Trees Symphony is a means of utilizing art as a form of activism, and it is one of many ways people are actively involved in the fight against the MVP. The installation at Blacksburg allowed community members to come together and help with the project. The community came together and collectively painted the trees, which is a form of both artivism and collective action. People of all ages joined in proving no one is too young to be involved in justice movements.

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https://doi.org/10.1162/lmj_a_01055.

[283]"Conversations | Aviva Rahmani's'Blued Trees Symphony,'" New York Foundation for the Arts, September 20, 2018,https://www.nyfa.org/conversations-aviva-rahmanis-blued-trees-178288450088#:~:text=Ecological%20artist%20Aviva%20Rahmani.

[284]Colmano, "PIPELINE - 19 - BLUED TREES - REVISED,"

[285]Colmano, PIPELINE – 19.

Protecting Environments For Future Generations

The feeling of solastalgia alone brings some complicated emotions for many, but also fuels the fire for the fight. In *Belonging: A Culture Of Place,* bell hooks writes, "We create and sustain environments where we can come back to ourselves, where we can return home, stand on solid ground, and be a true witness."[286] Women's work echoes her sentiment through the tireless work fighting to protect their communities not only for themselves but for future generations.

Women in Appalachia's environmental justice movements continue the legacy of those who came before fighting against the coal industry. However, it may look different today, but many of the same goals are at the heart of these movements. Women involved in environmental justice issues have spoken out and helped mountaintop removal gain national and global recognition through their work. Women in environmental justice have made progress on local levels pushing for stricter mining regulations and making mining operations accountable for the damage done to their communities. Ultimately they are bringing about change in their communities by protecting their environments for future generations.

[286]hooks, 11.

CONCLUSION: WHERE WOMEN'S ACTIVISM GOES FROM HERE

"Change only comes when the work is done
By those whose lives are altered by the changin'
New power is racing through the Appalachian Nation
From the work of this young mountain woman"
—"Sweet Winds of Change"
by Sue Massek[287]

No matter the way they decide to take action, women have very much altered the history and narratives of the Appalachian region. They fight for better communities and better futures. Though many will never know the true depth of their influence, their legacy are sustained by those who have come after them. Women in Appalachia have brought about change by breaking gender norms, through their participation in collective action, and by protecting the environment for future generations. They do so as mothers, activists, community leaders, everyday women, and Appalachians. Their connections and fear of losing their place call them to act. Shannon Elizabeth Bell says, "Appalachian women have time and again proved themselves to be a major force to be reckoned with."

Their involvement, reasoning for doing so, and execution of it is ever evolving and expanding. I have come to know that there is no simple or sole justification for their actions; their involvement is far more complex than they are often given credit for. There is no "one size fits all" mode of action; people are ever adapting to find means of activism that most aligns with their values and comfort levels. A lot of the behind-the-scenes work of women does not get the credit that it deserves.

There is much to be learned about how culture and tradition advise these movements. My thesis contributes to the larger understanding of women's activism in Appalachia. By

[287]Massek, 295.

incorporating Glenn Albrecht's term "solastalgia," this work brings into conversation human emotions regarding our connection to the earth. Solastalgia gives voice to emotions felt by countless individuals in the Appalachian region, regarding disappearing and changing places. Solastalgia is reflected through their activism and art. Albrecht's other "earth emotions" lend themselves to this work and contribute to the narrative or women protecting their communities and environments for future generations. Examining the intersections of art and activism with "artivism" expands this narrative beyond the academy and uncovers works that help these movements reach larger audiences. The visual artists and their works explored here create a visual representation of the emotions by people in these communities. Novels and poetry provide similar narratives regarding people, their connections to place, and emotions. These literary works and discussion of life and activism in Appalachia help reach larger audiences. They find their way into the lives and hands of people far beyond the region and connect them back to this place and people. Songs have been inspired by injustices and continue to be used as means of resistance and sustaining these movements. Art is a powerful tool, and artivism serves as a tool for getting people involved in ways that are comfortable to them. Art is inspired by these movements and also is used in a way to sustain them. The work of artists and writers from Appalachia is as much a part of activism as those standing on picket lines and holding signs.

A goal of this thesis was to expand the narrative of women's activism beyond solely the motherhood identity. While many women act on their maternal identities, seeing all women activists as drawing from maternal instinct is limiting, and overshadows the voices of many. Within this same narrative, it is essential to consider the multidimensional nature of women and their identities. Intersectionality allows for this conversation, introducing the idea

that all of these women may be from the same communities, but they experience the harm being done in different ways. Their positions in their communities often contribute to the ways in which they get involved in the movements and work with others. Within conversations on women's grassroots activism, there is so much to be still explored through the lens of intersectionality. Women and their community ties, kinship, and collective identities are very much a part of these conversations and influence and inform their activism. A further examination of community ties, kinship, and collective identities will come down the line. Women and their contributions to the ongoing fight against the Mountain Valley Pipeline are among the most important contributions of this work. My journey of researching and writing about women's environmental activism would not have started without Dr. Emily Satterwhite and her direct action on Brush Mountain in 2018. Her story and work compelled me to take a deep dive into this work, and I have been following MVP resistance ever since. The movement against the MVP deserves recognition and coverage through scholarship; it is very much informed by the region's rich history of activism at the grassroots level.

Holding that movement in conversation with previous movements allows for connections to be made about historical and current work from the region. Women like Ollie Comb who laid in front of a bulldozer inform the work of other women who have physically placed themselves between extractive industries and their communities. The creativity of such women inspire others, including those who see art is a tool for social change. It inspires and sustains us, giving beauty to the most troubling things. Most importantly, I have come to know that my work on working-class struggles and women's activism is nowhere nearly done. There are so many avenues I have yet to explore.

Much is to be learned about how culture and tradition advise these movements; traditional practices such as quilting can be used as resistance in beautifully practical ways. Questions my work will continue to explore and answer are why women are still the primary leaders of these movements. Long after the right to vote, the ability to be wage earners, and in a time where gender norms are further dismantled, why is it that women are still at the forefront? How can I continue this narrative in a way that gives women agency over their actions? The ways that art, music, and literature inspire, inform, and sustain these movements are something that deserves a deeper investigation. Exploring women's participation in a cross-cultural connection seems necessary in future endeavors. The questions which guided my research will continue to haunt me. A deeper exploration of the mountain valley pipeline, and its constant evolution, will be a component of projects to come. Dr. Emily Satterwhite and her direct-action against MVP did, in fact, start me on this journey. One concern that I do not think I can shake anytime soon is the ongoing battle people those communities face with ongoing MVP developments.

There are many other questions I started out to answer that this body of research was unable to answer, but my quest in doing so is not over. These questions will be the basis of future scholarship. First, a deeper investigation into the roles of Black women activists is still to be explored. With limited scholarship on the matter, it is essential to start those conversations and dive deeper into the influence of Black women in the environmental justice movement in Appalachia.

Their contributions will be part of my future works of mine, as well as their contributions to social justice in Appalachian communities. Black women were the leaders and founders of the environmental justice movement at large, but their contributions to the

same movement in Appalachia are often overshadowed by the narratives of poor white women. Bringing them into conversation together is necessary for future scholarship on environmental justice in Appalachia. There is also a need to expand these conversations of grassroots activism to include the voices of queer and nonbinary voices, which fit into the context of these larger movements. The Civil Rights Movement in Appalachia is another avenue to be explored regarding the history of movements in the region and connections to the United States. There are several movements and moments to be explored, from women's wage work in cotton mills[288] and songs about those experiences and conditions, including further investigations on working-class women in mills and their responses to the deindustrialization of those industries and the effect it has on their communities. There is an inevitable loss caused by industry leaving that is echoed through the works and songs of women. I am in no way done with the work surrounding change wrought by women in Appalachia, as it is the journey I am on and will be for the foreseeable future.

[288]For more, read Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, "Disorderly Women: Gender and Labor Militancy in the Appalachian South," *The Journal of American History* 73, no. 2 (September 1986) 354–82.

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