

"Love as the Practice of Freedom" bell hooks

Social commentator, essayist, memoirist, and poet bell hooks (née Gloria Jean Watkins) is a feminist theorist who speaks on contemporary issues of race, gender, and media representation in America. Her many books include *Ain't I a Woman* (1981), *Talking Back* (1989) (*Killing Rage: Ending Racism* (1995), *Outlaw Culture* (1994), and *Remembered Rapture* (1999). In *Black Looks* (1994), she writes, "It struck me that for black people, the pain of learning that we cannot control our images, how we see ourselves (if our vision is not decolonized), or how we are seen is so intense that it rends us. It rips and tears at the seams of our efforts to construct self and identity." In *Outlaw Culture: Resisting Representations* (1994), hooks advocates a "progressive cultural revolution" by means of repudiating all forms of domination in a "holistic manner." In order to decolonize our minds suggests hooks, we must begin to "surrender participation in whatever sphere of coercive hierarchical domination we enjoy individual and group privilege." In the essay that follows from that book, hooks proposes an "ethic of love" as the means by which we might be guided to turn away from an ethic of domination.

USE A DICE  TO GET YOUR ROLE

●	THE HEALER
●●	THE CAREGIVER
●●●	THE DISRUPTOR
●●●●	THE LOVER
●●●●●	THE ARCHIVIST
●●●●●●	THE WITNESS

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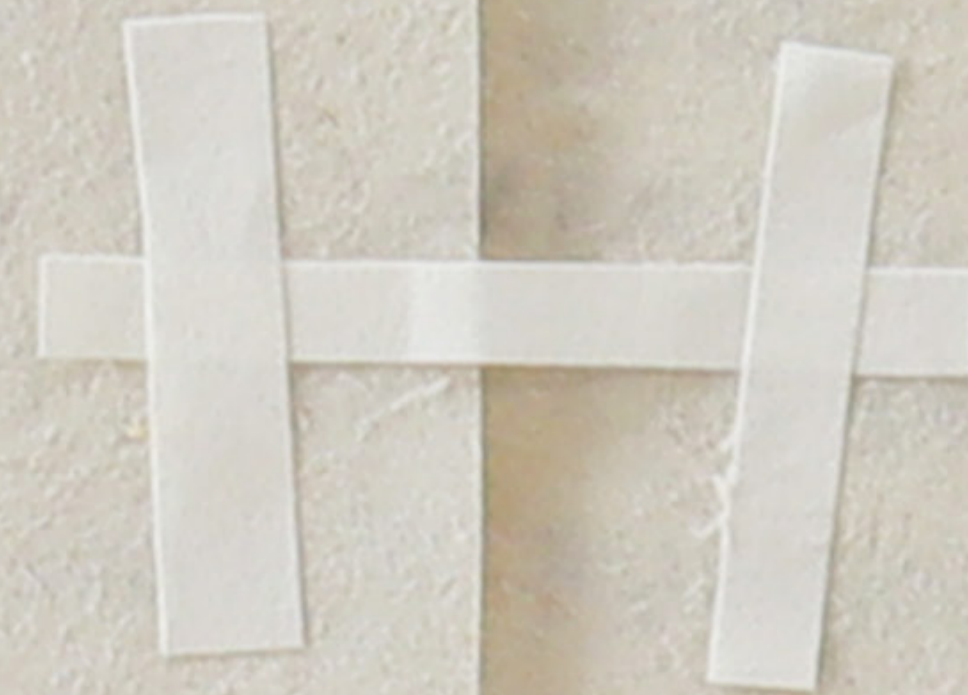
In this society, there is no powerful discourse on love ;

The absence of a sustained focus on love

is why we

are

doomed.



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i write this knowing that it may
never be found. OR, if it is, will
likely be discarded like a hiccup or a
shoulder sore.

Regardless, i must write for my own
sanity. why, i was told that i couldn't
survive — too soft, too fierce, too
unruly. Too impossible, too tender. Too
dangerous, i was.

The world tried to teach me that love must
be earned, that survival comes first. That
i must learn obedience, silence, making
myself small enough to avoid discomforting
others — always putting them first in
order to receive love, because only then
am i lovable.

but i call this bullshit.

SIGN YOUR NAME HERE
ALONGSIDE OTHERS WHO
HAVE COME BEFORE YOU



(bell)

Showing the way fearlessly and compassionately, the stream of
ancestral teachers, to whom we bow in gratitude.

(two sounds of the bell)

I write this knowing that it may
never be found. Or, if it is, will
likely be discarded like a scrap or a
shoulder sore.

Adaptation, I must write for my own
safety. I was told that I couldn't
survive — too soft, too fierce,
too tender. Too impossible, too tender.
I was, I was, I was.

The world tried to teach me that love must
be earned, that survival comes first. That
I must learn obedience, silence, making
myself small enough to avoid disappointing
others — always putting them first in
order to receive love, because only then
am I lovable.

But I call this bullshit.

For love is liberation, it is voice.
It refuses cages, spills over borders, and
holds space for what is turned away.

I know the recovery of love will come
from those who have suffered greatly
because they have looked deeply.

Heu, if this manifesto is ever in
your hands — help it come alive.
Mark it with your BEING.

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HAVE COME BEFORE



(bell)

Showing the way forward
ancestral teachers, to

(two sounds of the bell)

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blind spots :

many of us are motivated to
move against domination

solely when we feel our self-interest

directly threatened.

usably. Too impossible, too tender. Too
dangerous, i was.

The world tried to teach me that Love must
be earned, that survival comes first. That
i must learn obedience, silence, making
myself small enough to avoid discomfoting
others — always putting them first in
order to receive Love, because only then
am i lovable.

but i call this bullshit.

"decided to love"

is

to acknowledge blind spots

as we expand our concern
to care about the oppression and

exploitation of others.


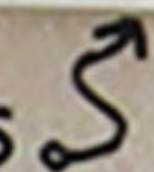
(bell)

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(two sounds of the bell)

see it, for the sake of all beings .

WHERE DO I CHOOSE TO LOOK
AWAY WHEN I SHOULD BE
WITNESSING?

 WRITE YOUR ANSWERS 


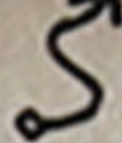
THE RECKONING

THIS RITUAL CALLS FORWARD THE
WITNESS AND THE DISRUPTOR.

RECOGNIZING THAT LOVE IS NOT
PASSIVE — IT REQUIRES WITNESS
-ING, CONFRONTING, AND COM
-MITTING TO STAY BEYOND WHAT
IS COMFORTABLE.

WITNESSING
WHAT WHEN SHOULD BE
WHERE DO I CHOOSE TO LOOK

WHERE DO I CHOOSE SILENCE
WHEN I SHOULD BE SPEAKING UP?

 WRITE YOUR ANSWERS 

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WHEN I SHOULD BE BEARING UP,
WHERE DO I CHOOSE SILENCE?

WHERE DO I PULL AWAY WHEN
SUFFERING NEEDS ME TO LEAN
IN?



WRITE YOUR ANSWERS



THE RECKONING

THIS RITUAL CALLS FORWARD THE
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-MITTING TO STAY BEYOND WHAT
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(All participants stand in a closed circle, forming a boundary of presence & commitment. Take a moment to feel the weight of being seen & seeing others.)

The Witness opens the ritual, leading participants through the 'seeing'.

(Place hands over eyes.)

(Pause. While hands remain over the eyes, each participant silently names - either in their mind, in writing, or in a whisper - what they have refused to see before.)

(Only after acknowledging it, remove hands from eyes. Let the silence settle.)

The Disruptor continues the ritual, guiding participants into the act of breaking silence.

(Place hands on throat.)

(Pause. While hands remain on the throat, each participant silently names - either in their mind, in writing, or in a whisper - what they have silenced themselves about before.)
(After acknowledging it, remove hands from throat.)

I have looked away from _____ But today,
I choose to witness. To see fully, even when it is
difficult.

(A candle is lit at the center of the circle.)

I mark this moment with my being.

I will NOT return to unseeing.

I will NOT return to silence.

(Each participant steps forward, one by one,
signing their name with breath alongside
those who have come before.)

I have silenced myself when _____ But today,
I choose to speak up, disrupting the status quo.

we read a
definition
of



Again and again,
participation
shifted away from
the love ethic.

The emphasis
was now more on
power.

The power that
equated love with weakness,
where hope had died —
announcing that the
willingness to coerce, do violence,
was a
weapon
to freedom

we had a
Redefinition
of

power.

had died —

was a

freedom

