"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 identify." 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

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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YOU ARE INVITED TO A SECRET SOCIETY TO DRAFT A QUEER MANIFESTO OF LOVE. THIS IS A LIVING DOCUMENT — PART PROPHECY, PART COLLECTIVE VI-SION — NEVER FINISHED BUT ALWAYS LEARNING, EXPANDING, & CHANGING.

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)

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.

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

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blind spots :

many of us are motivated to

move against domination

solely when we feel our self-interest

directly threatened.

usually. 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.

"decided to love"

is

to acknowledge blind spots

as we expand our concern
to care about the oppression and

exploitation of others.

(bell)

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

(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.

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

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

WRITE YOUR ANSWERS

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

(All partipants 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 too 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 partipant 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 choose to speak up, disrupting the status quo.
I have silenced myself when _____. But today,

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

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

(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.

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

I mark this moment with my being.
I will not return to unseeing.
I will not return to silence.

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

MARK THIS MOMENT

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

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

we need a
redefinition
of

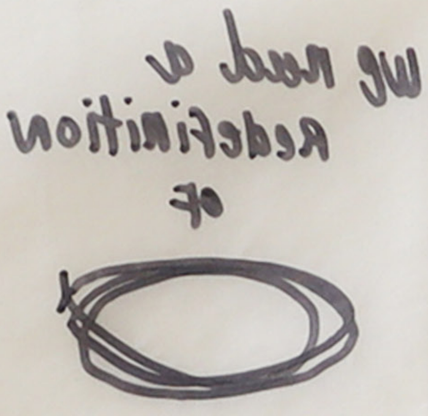
power.

had died —

was a

weapon

freedom



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

the willingness to coerce, do violence,

was a

weapon

to freedom