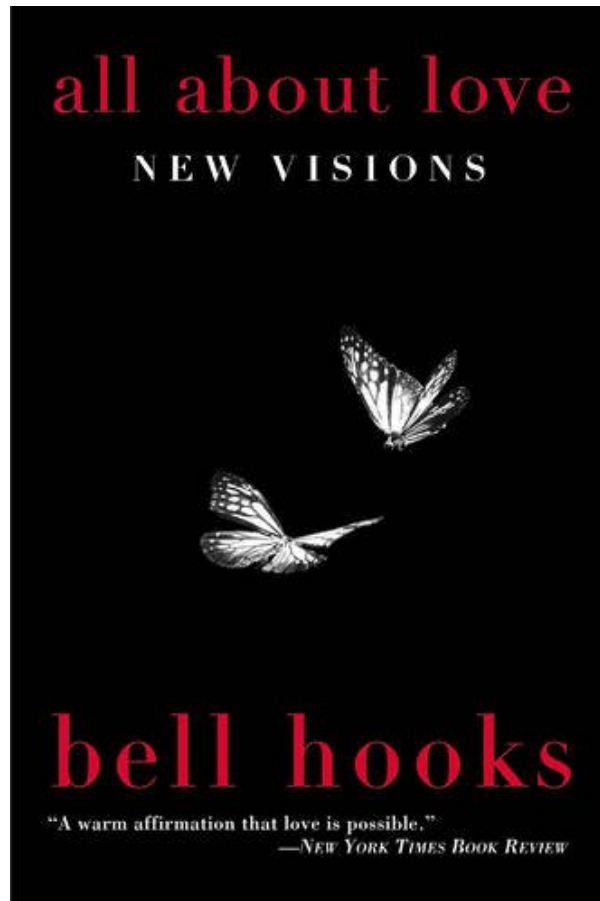


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all about love

NEW VISIONS



bell hooks

"A warm affirmation that love is possible."
—*NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW*

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Readers of bell hooks's fiery and eloquent attacks on racism and sexism might be surprised to see her take on the elusive subject of love, but in her own unique way, hooks beautifully weaves her childhood search for that emotion with society's misuse (and dire need) of it. *All About Love* takes apart the sentimental and often fleeting aspects of romance, stuck in the muddled urges of sex, and details the problems that arise from the confusion between the two. What hooks does best is reveal that the true force of love lies in its spiritual, redemptive power, which can impact positively on humankind: "When angels speak of love they tell us it is only by loving that we enter an earthly paradise," she writes. "They tell us paradise is our home and love our true destiny." --Eugene Holley Jr.

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From Library Journal

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"The word "love" is most often defined as a noun, yet...we would all love better if we used it as a verb," writes bell hooks as she comes out fighting and on fire in *All About Love*. Here, at her most provocative and intensely personal, the renowned scholar, cultural critic, and feminist skewers our view of love as romance. In its place she offers a proactive new ethic for a people and a society bereft with lovelessness.

As bell hooks uses her incisive mind and razor-sharp pen to explore the question "What is love?" her answers strike at both the mind and heart. In thirteen concise chapters, hooks examines her own search for emotional connection and society's failure to provide a model for learning to love. Razing the cultural paradigm that the ideal love is infused with sex and desire, she provides a new path to love that is sacred, redemptive, and healing for the individuals and for a nation. The *Utne Reader* declared bell hooks one of the "100 Visionaries Who Can Change Your Life." *All About Love* is a powerful affirmation of just how profoundly she can.

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A courageous book that should be widely read

By Aspen Leaf

There aren't many public discussions of love in America outside of popular culture -- movies, music, books, magazines -- but there should be, because lack of an expansive understanding of and capacity for love is behind much that is wrong in our society. When bell hooks noticed that the world she was living in "was no longer open to love" and that "lovelessness had become the order of the day," she decided to write about it. "I began thinking and writing about love when I heard cynicism instead of hope in the voices of young and old," she says.

The result is a book that's a refreshing change from relationship advice books that completely overlook the cultural context of love -- the ways in which love is difficult for both men and women, but especially for women, in a patriarchal culture; the ways in which a more expansive understanding of love is sorely needed to set things right in a country run by fear. hooks begins by addressing the pervasive confusion about what love is, defining it as M. Scott Peck does: "The will to extend oneself for the purpose of nurturing one's own or another's spiritual growth."

The chapters in which hooks names "the ways we are seduced away from love" read as a litany of soul-corroding cultural norms. There is, most fundamentally, injustice to children in dysfunctional families in a culture where family dysfunction is normalized. Then there's the increasing prevalence of lying in public and private transactions alike, most recently exemplified in the Enron scandal and the priest-pedophile scandal in the Catholic Church. There's the cultural obsession with power and domination instead of a love ethic. (hooks pulls no punches when she states: "An overall cultural embrace of a love ethic would mean that we would all oppose much of the public policy conservatives condone and support.") There's also the vast and unending greed encouraged by a consumerist society. And last but not least, there's our collective fear of and at the same time worship of death. (What else could explain the great popularity of movies saturated with violence, such as "Lord of the Rings"?)

Then there are the chapters where hooks explores the importance of self-love, the reality of divine love, the crucial role played by friendships and communities, the role of romantic love in helping us resolve and transform family-of-origin wounds if approached consciously, the real healing power of true love, and the yearning for love that lies behind the popular fascination with angels. The only topic I found missing from

her comprehensive look at love is biophilia, that love of nature named by Harvard biologist Edward O. Wilson. I'm coming to realize that any concept of intimacy with our particular place on earth is sorely absent from most American lives, imperiling our planet's health as well as our own.

Throughout the book, it's hooks's personal revelations that make what she says credible and that especially strike a chord in me. I found in her a sister spirit. Just my age, she could be describing my relationship history when she describes her own. And herein lies my biggest quibble with the book: wishing to avoid the kind of disappointments in relationships with men I've had in the past, I want to believe that I can find satisfying love with a male, but the many generalizations hooks makes about men in our culture make me wonder. I fear she may be right when she says that "most men feel that they receive love and therefore know what it feels like to be loved; women often feel we are in a constant state of yearning, wanting love but not receiving it" (p. xx).

According to hooks, many, if not most, men under patriarchy tell lies "to avoid confrontation or taking responsibility for inappropriate behavior" (p. 36), "use psychological terrorism as a way to subordinate women" (p. 41), "are especially inclined to see love as something they should receive without expending effort . . . [and] do not want to do the work that love demands" (p. 114), are usually prevented by sexist thinking from "acknowledging their longing for love or their acceptance of a female as their guide on love's path" (p. 156), "are convinced that their erotic longing indicates who they should, and can, love . . . [and] tend to be more concerned about sexual performance and sexual satisfaction than whether they are capable of giving and receiving love" (pp. 174, 176), and "choose relationships in which they can be emotionally withholding when they feel like it but still receive love from someone else. . . . [and ultimately] choose power over love" (p. 187). Hmm. Men, what do you say to this? Can you deny it?

"Profound changes in the way we think and act must take place if we are to create a loving culture," writes hooks. I, for one, would welcome those changes and am working on making them in myself. Despite being marred by unfortunate typos ("Living by a Love Ethnic" [viii], "perfect love casts our fear" [220]), this is a courageous and important book that should be read widely and taken to heart.

54 of 59 people found the following review helpful.

quiet fire

By Linda C. Jennings

My hope for the new millennium was that more people became aware of the writings of bell hooks. She helps us to lift off those rose colored glasses we seem to wear on our minds about current social issues that plague the american culture. Her current writing explores why our culture has leaned toward narcissism and excessive materialism...the lack of love in our lives. Her vision is simple and clean for this book, which makes it easier to understand her passion on the subject of love and the lack of it. She offers new ways to think about love for ourselves, our families and american humanity. Ms. hooks is a critical thinker who challenges us to rethink how to give and receive love in our lives.

22 of 23 people found the following review helpful.

Buy 2, Read , and give one to a friend. Excellent Book!

By living101

bell hooks has written an intelligent and heartfelt treatise on love. The ideas are Brilliant, Creative and New. The book is well written and truly a pleasure to read. Not a "self-help" book, it approaches the subject of love from a scholarly perspective, without losing the emotion needed to delve into the subject thoroughly. If you are in love, or want to be, or hate the very thought of loving anyone, then this book is for you.

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