



LOVE

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JOURNEY

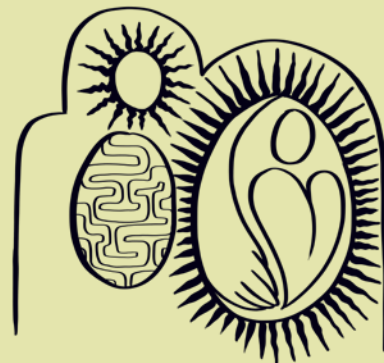
MEASURING LOVE in the JOURNEY
for JUSTICE:

A BROWN PAPER

Shiree Teng Sammy Nuñez

MEASURING LOVE

Preface: A Sovereign Perspective



As this is a Brown—not white—Paper, we want to give some perspectives before you dig in.

In a sovereign, self-determining perspective, we see Two Spirit people as sacred gifts. Children are treasured. Elders are respected and privileged. Womyn are beloved and respected and have power and voice. Fathers, sons, and boys are lifted up as the warriors, believers, and loyal friends that they are. Mothers, daughters, and girls are as valued as life itself, seen and treated as blessings. And all relations are sacred.

As oppressed, exploited people of color in this work of social and racial justice, we have seen — and are seeing—children separated from their caregivers, caged in concentration camps. We are living in another era of the systemic denial of democratic civil rights.

To be sovereign and free, our people need policies made of love, forgiveness, and connections. Our communities deserve health and educational equity; land and housing justice; economic independence;

To be sovereign and free, our people need policies made of love, forgiveness, and connections.

living wages (as in universal minimum income). Our people want restorative justice practices to replace punishment and lockup. Our communities want community organizing and advocacy, block by block. Our people need community-controlled governance and accountability systems. We want civic leadership everywhere, as the right to vote goes with the rights to drive, assemble, drink, and travel.

This Brown Paper flips the script of what is acceptable as a “Paper” on its head. It is not a “formal,” research-based, finished product of the traditional type. It comes from the heart and is meant to be used—like love. It is meant to spark dialogue and provoke.

In it, we are asking ourselves, “Are we loving bravely enough?”

And “How much am I loving?” “What else I can do to be in community from a place of love?” and “How am I wielding power fused with love?”

These are the essential questions posed in our brown paper. We are excited to bring this out into the world to provoke, connect, and build with you.

We have so much to love. We love YOU because we know if you’re reading this paper, you know what it’s like to be powerless and not feel loved—and are working on bringing about more justice in the world.

We release our intentions into the universe. We want to know what your reactions are. We thank you for honoring us by your comments and discussion.

Spread your love. And, we know we are rising as one.

Much love,

Shiree

Sammy

Shiree and Sammy



MEASURING LOVE Illustration Key

The illustrations throughout this paper tell the story of *Measuring Love* in a visual way. Use this key as a guide to new ways of looking at what we call love.



Decolonizing Self Love: Valuating requires not just knowing from my head but feeling with my heart and sensing from my body. [pg2](#)



Love Cracks Us Open: Cracks are how the light gets in. Welcoming the pain is an integral part of what it means to love. [pg6](#)



Love as a Threat: As an antidote to systems and institutions that rely on disconnection, love weaves connection that amplifies in orders of magnitude. [pg8](#)



Healthy Boundaries: My love for my community and its wellbeing doesn't come at the expense of my love for myself and my own wellbeing. [pg11](#)



Yes And: Every act of love is needed. All ways of perceiving and knowing are needed. All voices are needed. [pg12](#)



Breaking Binaries: We are interrupting the colonial act of separation by breaking binaries. [pg14](#)



Perception: A colonial lens values what it can see and quantify. How many ways can we perceive the value in our world beyond seeing? [pg16](#)



Interconnected: Love permeates in all directions, is decentralized, and—even when it's underground and can't be quantified—is always a channel for connection. [pg20](#)



Infinite Source: Love, despite what a capitalist story of scarcity might like to have us believe, is an infinite wellspring that is sacredly ours. [pg20](#)



Reishi: Reishi mushrooms thrive on fallen logs and dying trees and help the forest regenerate in its transformation of death into new life. [pg21](#)



MEASURING LOVE in the JOURNEY for JUSTICE: A BROWN PAPER

INTRODUCTION

**“We are each other’s harvest; we are each other’s business;
we are each other’s magnitude and bond.”**
—Gwendolyn Brooks, “Paul Robeson” (1971)¹

Love is the most powerful force in the universe if we understand and learn to wield it. To authentically love yourself and others around you: that is the sign of the true revolutionary in a society that teaches us to hate ourselves; where we are bombarded with pain and shame, stripping us of our power and traumatizing us; and where, as a result, we carry this baggage into every relationship, perpetuating further injustice.

In this Brown Paper, we call upon love as an antidote to injustice. We call for a catalytic, decolonizing, transformative love. We shine a light on the love that is practiced by communities like Fathers and Families of San Joaquin. We break open what we mean by self love; love for, with, and of others; love that is a community practice; and power fused with love. We discuss why it matters; where “we” are in the journey from the current state of this practice to where we want to (and need to) go; and how we believe we will get there. Finally, we discuss how we “measure” transformative love, or rather, how we can know it when we see it and how we can document its power for change.

This kind of love is not a “feeling” but an action—not a noun but a verb. It is love actively practiced in community, starting with ourselves, for positive material change, justice, and liberation. And efforts to measure it will challenge us to bring harmony between our intellectual, intuitive, and spiritual ways of knowing—to see with our hearts and minds.

¹ From Gwendolyn Brooks’ “Paul Robeson,” first published in Family Pictures (Broadside Lotus Press; June 1, 1971)



1. CONTEXT: WHY THIS BROWN PAPER?

Grounding our work for social and racial justice in love may not be a new concept. But often, in our movements for justice, we have been fueled by anger, trauma, conflict, and even rage. As a result, we can feel isolated, alone, as if we're drowning in our own powerlessness and despair. When we've spent most of our lives in dire poverty, wondering where we will sleep at night, or if we have enough to eat or to pay for gas to get to work, everything can feel like a crisis. When we have been deprived of love, an argument, conflict, or even the intimacy of a simple hug or touch can be triggering or threatening and to be avoided.

Yet our work needs to be tethered by love. This is a powerful idea, and one that is urgent and timely, especially in light of so much hate and intolerance. Love can be a potent medicine, to heal the present as well as the future.

We are facing an immense number and depth of social ills: mass incarceration of Black and Brown men; family separation at the border; endemic and often invisible violence against womyn and girls; erasure of historic and present-day violence against Native Americans, especially youth; poverty and homelessness among our children and families of color; disinvestment in our children as evidenced by the disparities in public education outcomes; the racial wealth and health gaps; overt discrimination against LGBTQ+ people of color...and the list goes on. All are symptomatic of a pervasive absence of love.

Yet in our social justice responses, we become pre- and overly-occupied not with centering love, but with campaigns on specific issues in specific places; strategic communications; turnout numbers and demographics; obsessed navel-gazing and over-intellectualizing; and stuck in the mind-centered think-analyze-write cycle.

If we're not about love in our social and racial justice work—and holding ourselves accountable in and to that love—then we might as well be doing something else.

As a whole, the social sector is too short on mentions of love as tied to results and transformation: its power and potential to bring positive and fundamental change in impacted communities, on our youth, and in our organizations. But isn't love the reason we're in this work? And, how do we "measure" that love and know it when we see, hear, touch, feel it? If we're not about love in our social and racial justice work—and holding ourselves accountable in and to that love—then we might as well be doing something else.

Love for ourselves allows us to be able to look back on our past traumas and be no longer held hostage or captive by whatever we lost. Love for, with, and of others helps us build and heal our relationships, which is fundamental to making social progress. Love, when practiced in our communities, enables us to organize, cultivate leaders with no strings attached, and mobilize for positive, material change. Love when fused with power is like a sword, with a sharp, able blade, to get to our purpose.

To make love intentional, deep, and durable—and the sacred act of loving (which is being vulnerable to hurt, heartbreak, and disappointment, and getting back up to do it again) explicit, measurable, and uplifted—is the intent of this Brown Paper.²

² We refer to this paper as a brown paper, written by brown people, not a white paper.



THE COLONIAL IMAGINARY

At the smallest scale, analysis necessitates separation, borders, division. I use my power to ensure that what I can see, study and objectify is what is valued. The world appears as resources, not relations. Disconnection makes love appear scarce and finite. I protect what I believe is mine.

I use rationality to analyze my world, posturing myself outside of it. If I can understand it, I can control it. I objectify my world and I believe in my objectivity.



2. LOVE = ANTIDOTE TO INJUSTICE

“The opposite of love is not hate, it’s indifference.”

—Elie Wiesel³

Colonization and imperialism have divided us. Rule by exploitation has been used as a means to control us. Rooted in such lovelessness, the founding of this country has a deeply violent, racist history perpetuated by implicit bias, colonization, institutional racism, and white supremacy.

This dominant culture has in effect disconnected us, separated us from each other and ourselves. Such “othering” is the basis of indifference, intolerance, and blindness to our fundamental interdependence—our shared destiny.⁴

In this context, **love is a threat to colonization and racial hatred**. The antidote to injustice is to love: to get connected in all our relations and to reclaim the sense that we belong to one another. We belong as a people, as a community, as an identity. For that to happen, we need to have love as a starting place that facilitates empathy, compassion, and understanding.

The opposite of love is indifference. Apathy. Giving into emotional fatigue. Being somewhere on the denial spectrum (turn your eyes away; don’t look), and not being courageous enough to say: “I feel helpless. These folks are my own. My heart hurts. I feel utterly terrified, powerless, ashamed....”

To base our work in love may land us being perceived as too idealistic, or “woo-woo”—yet we must. There are many in impacted communities who will say, “How can I feel or give love when I’ve never had it?” It takes courage when so much has been done that has stripped us of love.

Love is a threat to systems and institutions that rely on disconnection. Love weaves connection that amplifies in orders of magnitude.

Learning to love is a radical and conscious act of resistance. We are pushing a mountain up, ascending, boiling the oceans over, swimming against the pull of white supremacy culture and systems to love, to lay it all bare and to wholeheartedly love. We must be brave to feel the heartbreak, the disappointment—yet be in our full, powerful selves to be vulnerable in love. It is in this love that we can learn, hear, see, touch, feel, cry, laugh over each other’s stories. And to finally get to see that we are one.

Love is a community practice. Love emanates from the self—like a well, or spring—but to be in practice, love must show up in community. It is in community that we can see the true power of love in action. Not a romantic, anemic, Disney-fantasy of love, but a tough, gritty, honest, messy, chaotic, non-linear journey. Any meaningful transformation is messy. And worth the effort.

³ From “One Must Not Forget,” interview with Alvin P. Sanoff, US News & World Report, October 27, 1986.

⁴ We honor the work of John A. Powell, Director of the Haas Institute for a Fair and Inclusive Society, whose scholarship and leadership has informed how we understand othering and belonging in the context of racial and social justice.

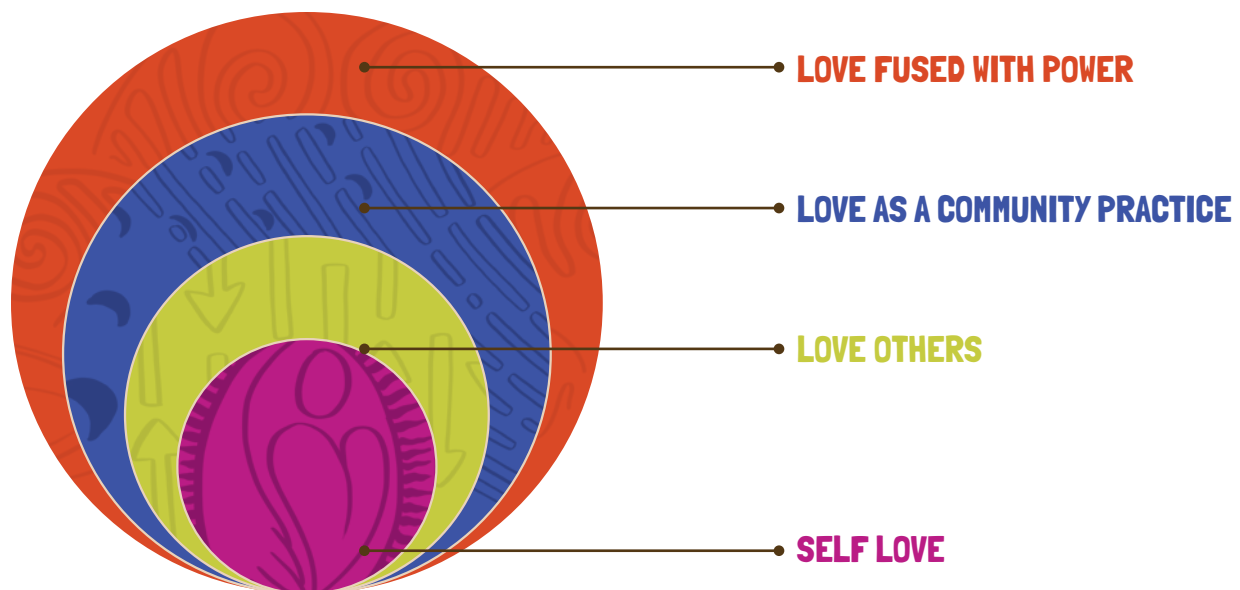
We're talking about love of justice. Love of those most impacted by the systemic lack of love, those who have been dismissed as unworthy and discarded. Love of those most unloved by capitalism and affected by racial hatred, and those most incarcerated, not because of what they've done or not done, but as a shameful holdover from this country's history of enslaving Africans and waging genocidal terror against our Native peoples.

No love, no justice. It's got to be truth, reconciliation, forgiveness, and reparations. We need to ground our social justice work in love to fundamentally change hearts and minds and tear down white supremacy. In our behaviors, we need to move from punishment to investment, from exploiting to sharing and inclusion. And in our systems, we must ensure equitable outcomes, not just opportunities.

"My work with the poor and the incarcerated has persuaded me that the opposite of poverty is not wealth; the opposite of poverty is justice."

—Bryan Stevenson⁵

We believe there are four dimensions of emergent, transformative, catalytic love. These are represented in the following concentric circles diagram:



These circles are integrated in the highest expression of love. Self love is connected to love of others; love of others is connected to love in community; and love as a community practice is connected to love that is fused with power. It develops from the inside out and back again, and it is not linear.

We posit that in each of the four expressions of love, there are at least three ways to know love when we see it, or "indicators." These 12 dimensions (as seen on the following page) are not **the** 12, nor are they the 12 that are most important; they are just 12.

⁵ Bryan Stevenson, *Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption* (Spiegel & Grau, 2015).

12 DIMENSIONS OF LOVE



Before we move further to “measuring” love, we need to ground ourselves in why it matters.

3. LEARNING LOVE OF SELF AND OTHERS: Grounding in the Most Impacted (Raymond's Story)



“No one taught me to be a good man, or a father. These are things I’ve learned through my struggles and bad experiences.

I’m gathering all of that to raise my son. I actually value and love someone in life. He can do no wrong; he throws the bottle and milk goes everywhere... I have to love him still. He’s teaching me patience, puts life in perspective. Knowing he will have everything he should have:

love, companionship, parents.... I never experienced it, but I’m giving it to my kid first-hand. He’s being raised in the ways that align with my principles—unconditional love, love as a bridge...across the waters of pain, and oppression.



VIDEO: Raymond Aguilar's story (YouTube) posted by National Center for Youth Law

When I come to work, I appreciate the men in here bringing their kids to work. It's a beautiful thing. One day I will bring my son here.... When I walk through the doors every day, I know I'm going to do work in the community; it gives me and reminds me of

my purpose every day to dismantle that schools-to-prison pipeline.... I want to believe I can save the world. If I can just change one person... This is an opportunity I'm given so I wanna try to give everything of myself.”

—Raymond Aguilar, with Fathers and Families of San Joaquin⁶

Raymond's story is a common story of a resilient young man who was raised in the system and passed from one foster home to another. In his search for righteousness and manhood, Raymond committed murder at age 15, was tried as an adult, then spent 25 years locked up in prison. Upon release, Raymond found his way to Fathers and Families of San Joaquin, in Stockton, California—the place where he's finding a kind of love that is transforming him.

⁶ Shared in a personal interview with the authors, June 4, 2019.

4. How Does Love Show Up as a COMMUNITY PRACTICE?



Fathers and Families of San Joaquin (FFSJ) serves the most vulnerable families in Stockton and the greater San Joaquin Valley—a community that’s un-served, under-served, ignored, neglected, left to its own devices, and divested from (though very invested in by) police and law enforcement. Since Fathers and Families first started, it has been grounded in social justice and racial justice principles and approaches. Its main ingredient, or secret sauce, is love for young people, for movement, for struggle, for neighborhood—for people who are often despised by mainstream society and labeled in very dehumanizing ways.

“For me, I’ve been in many spaces, unique spaces: as the first homeboy in the White House from my region. What propelled me into these spaces...it was motivated by love! Same as the love that motivated me to show up, join a neighborhood organization that was compelled to intervene, do anything. That display of affection and love manifested, for me, was the thing that was compelling. That’s the most radical revelation: love of our people and giving me a purpose. Sounds corny, or “out there”...but that’s what fuels me.

—Sammy Nuñez, Executive Director, FFSJ

If you’re compelled by love you have to feel the pain of our community. Compassion and love: ***When my family hurts, I hurt. When people I care about hurt, I hurt.*** In these spaces, we have to create a new paradigm—not in a vacuum far from the suffering and pain of our people. **We must constantly ask, “Where’s the love in this?” Any strategy absent love will fail, not be as successful as it could possibly be.**

We work with people who don’t feel love anywhere else, longtime enemies who dump on each other on the streets. But I’ve never had anything major erupt in our FFSJ space. They feel the love in here, that’s our best public safety strategy.

—Sammy Nuñez

When love is present in our justice work, it’s not about numbers, case files, or management... counting widgets. While those requirements are real, they rob us of our humanity and ability to connect with people’s stories of resistance, resilience, rise, and rebirth. Those stories are why we’re still here, in spite of all that dominant culture has done to erase and not see us.

Everything we do to transform and improve our communities—to build power and harmony for people who have felt powerless and loveless—has to do with building self-determination. Love is a powerful force. It compels and moves people into action. Our work is guided by our values: dignity, respect, trust, and love.

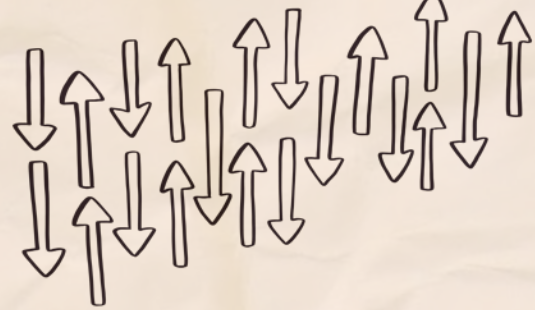
When working with our brothers and sisters returning from incarceration, we go from "What's wrong with you?" to "What happened?" Through that stance, I myself will be changed. All the great people I've studied and admired, it's about being in kinship and relationships, pushed to the fringes, with the "hard to love." Despite that, still love them. That's the most radical thing you can do, is to stay and love them. Why we're successful in building power, as an agency in Stockton, is evident by a lot of love here... and power. We can move a community, a city."

—Sammy Nuñez

Which 3 - 5 organizations, networks, coalitions do you participate in that lead with love?

Which 3 - 5 do not lead with love?

5. LOVE AND POWER: POWER AND LOVE

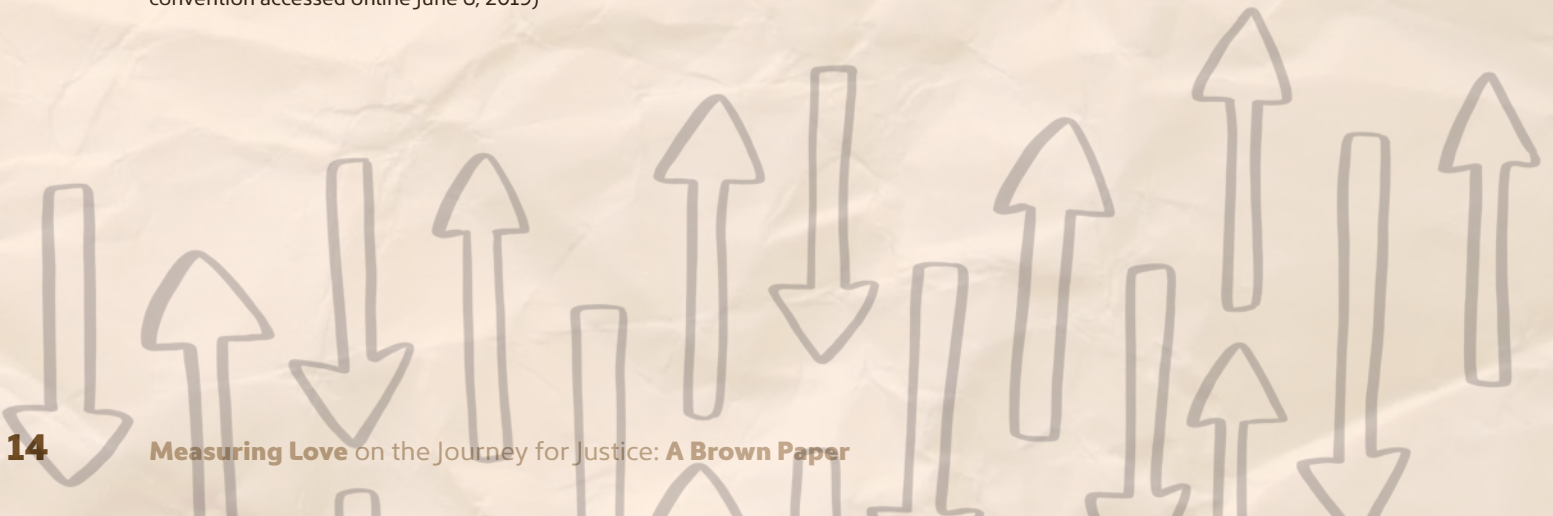


“Power, properly understood, is the ability to achieve purpose. It is the strength required to bring about social, political, or economic changes. In this sense power is not only desirable but necessary in order to implement the demands of love and justice. One of the greatest problems of history is that the concepts of love and power are usually contrasted as polar opposites. Love is identified with a resignation of power and power with a denial of love. What is needed is a realization that power without love is reckless and abusive and that love without power is sentimental and anemic. Power at its best is love implementing the demands of justice. Justice at its best is power correcting everything that stands against love.”

—Martin Luther King, Jr., from *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?* (1967)⁷

We start with the unapologetic recognition that **catalytic love is an intentional decolonizing act**. Our people are hurt. Our young live with daily pain that poverty and systemic disinvestment have caused. To love is essential if we are building power. The path to power has to go through love first. Power without love—deep love—is merely an ego-driven endeavor. Equally true is that to love without fighting for power is immature, short-lived, and bland. To love in the context of fighting for and building power in our communities requires courage, integrity, and a long-view.

⁷ Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., “Where Do We Go from Here?” (address delivered at the 11th Annual SCLC Convention), August 16, 1967 (<https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/king-papers/documents/where-do-we-go-here-address-delivered-eleventh-annual-sclc-convention> accessed online June 6, 2019)



“We refuse to be denied. We refuse to be erased. We refuse to be scared away from the truth of love inside us. You cannot legislate away the desire we feel for each other....

Let us love each other into the light. Let your subversive queer self infect your whole life, do not live in compartments that allow ignorance to feel safe and comfortable legislating hate. Transform yourself so that you cannot be ignored, denied, or made complicit in your own oppression. Let your experience, the truth of your queerness, free us all from any collective ignorance based in false superiority.”

—adrienne maree brown⁸

⁸ adrienne maree brown, “Motor City Pride: A Speech Unspoken,” June 10, 2019 (<http://adriennemareebrown.net/2019/06/10/motor-city-pride-a-speech-unspoken/>)

In your work, what examples of someone wielding power without love can you think of?

Who, in your experience, regularly wields power fused with love?

What difference does it make in terms of outcomes and results for the movement?



6. "MEASURING" LOVE: KNOW IT WHEN WE SEE IT

Let us start with evaluation and learning in mind when we talk about "measuring" love. The dominant definition of evaluation is "the making of a judgment about the amount, number, or value of something"⁹ that is conducted by "objective," "neutral," third party, mostly academic, and white/Anglo researchers.

"I think, therefore I am."

—Rene Descartes, often credited with being the "Father of Modern Philosophy"

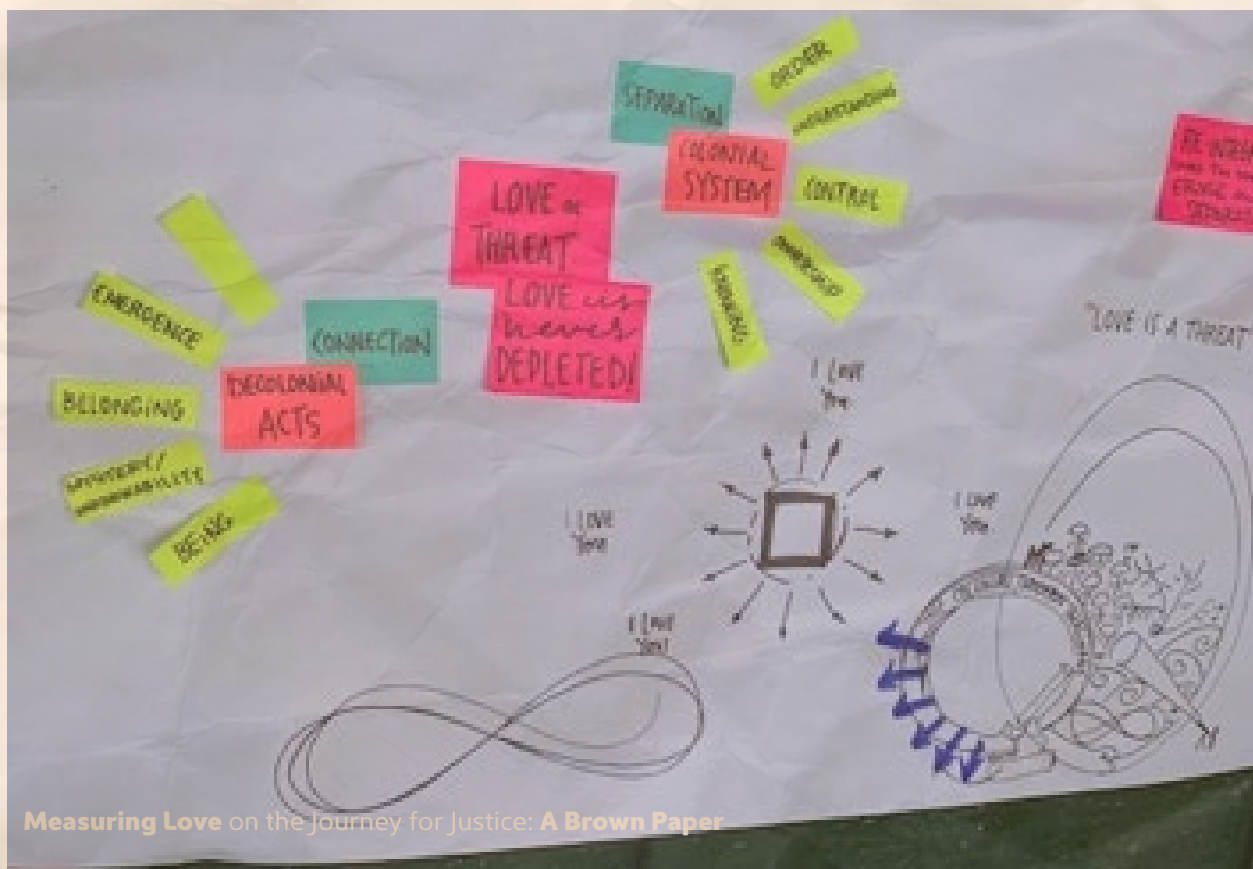
This false separation of those who conduct "evaluation" from movement makers, service providers, resident leaders, young people, and advocates is an unspoken but normative practice of the colonized culture.

White supremacy has established that there is one way of knowing: knowledge that is "rational," logical, and data-driven.

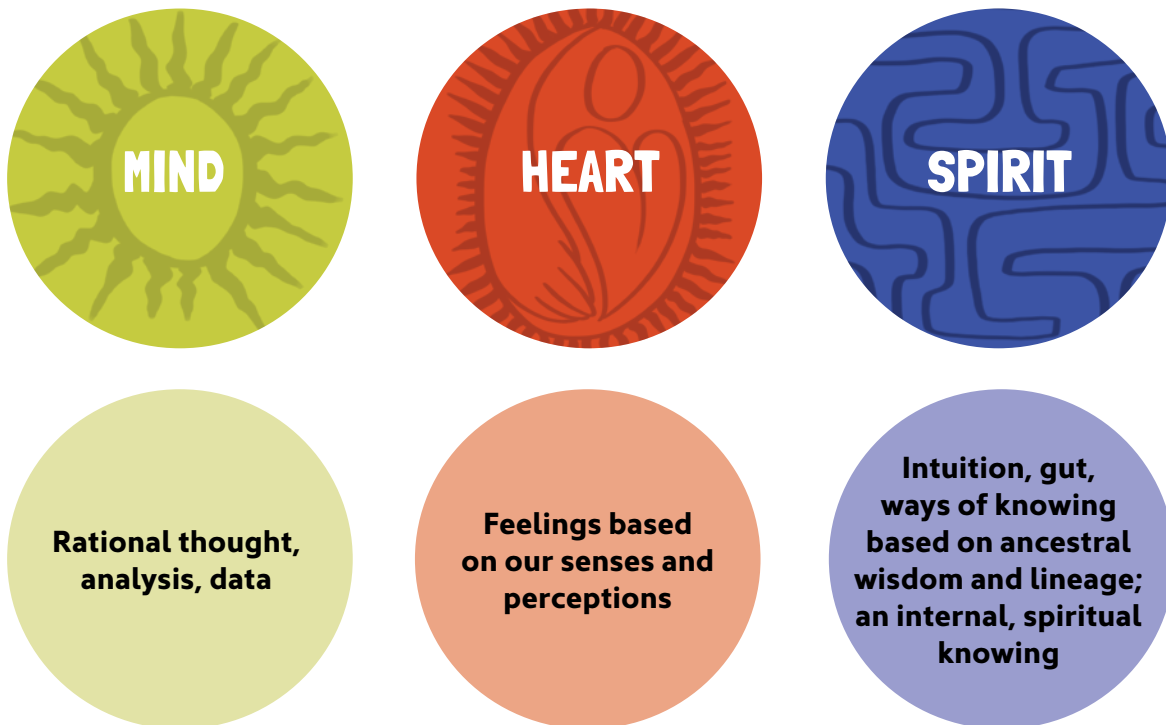
Because of the long history of colonization and deep structural racism, today, we have separated the various (all valuable) ways of knowing that are vital for our harmonious existence and placed the most value on the mental / intellectual ways of knowing over others. White supremacy has established that there is one way of knowing: knowledge that is "rational," logical, and data-driven.

We are interrupting the colonial act of separation by breaking the binary.

9 <https://www.google.com/search?client=safari&rls=en&q=definition+of+evaluation&ie=UTF-8&oe=UTF-8>



There are at least three ways of knowing, all residing within our bodies:



Further, the colonial mind focuses on that which can be rationalized as having a singular, supreme value—acquiring and ruling based on material things. And those who are not as highly favored as white, Christian, heterosexual, males, are objectified, categorized essentially as “things” from which it is justifiable to extract value, or to kill off.

The work of Tema Okum and Kenneth Jones explains what is valued in white supremacy culture.¹⁰ These are the dominant success measures that establish what the current system is, what it rewards and incentivizes, what establishes the “rules of the game” and the culture in which we all operate now. These characteristics of white dominant culture can be harmful, not in and of themselves but when they are used as norms and standards without being proactively named or chosen by the group. These attitudes and behaviors can show up in any group or organization—whether it is white-led, or predominantly white or people of color-led, or predominantly people of color-led—and include: “either/or” thinking; paternalism; competition and power hoarding; comfort with predominantly white leadership; individualism and separateness; fear of open conflict; superiority of the written word; perfectionism; and a narrow valuation of intelligence and performance.

These colonized, normative practices are pervasive in the mass culture, illustrated by this quote from Dan Brown’s *Inferno* (see next page):

¹⁰ Tema Okum and Kenneth Jones, “White Dominant Culture and Something Different: A Worksheet,” presented at North Carolina Center for Nonprofits Conference 2015 https://conference.ncnonprofits.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/DEI_AddressWhite-DominantCulture.pdf

“Everything he did was orchestrated to eradicate randomness and remove chance. Control was the provost’s expertise—foreseeing every possibility, anticipating every response, and molding reality toward the desired outcome. He had an immaculate track record of success and secrecy, and with it came a staggering clientele- billionaires, politicians, sheikhs, and even entire governments.”

For us to return to our most sacred-being selves, it is crucial to engage all ways of knowing and perceiving to adequately “measure” love. It is as important to measure in conventional, mind-knowing ways as in *heart- and spiritual-knowing ways*.

To reverse the colonized, white supremacist culture of “knowing,” where only the mind-knowing way is valued and maintains power dynamics that accrue value based on white dominant culture, we must actively value and integrate ways of knowing that are deeply ingrained from our ancestors: prioritize connections and relationships, emergence, belonging, the mystery of things that are not “knowable,” and our own being. **We are valuator, not e-valuators.**

Valuation is integration of all the ways of knowing.

– Audrey Jordan¹¹

Observing and “measuring” love in practice is part of our work as freedom and justice lovers. By infusing our work in the social justice movement with love, we give it value. We reclaim the act of loving as an antidote to colonization and structural racism.

The “iceberg” theory can be invoked here. Only what is seen and known now is what is above the water line in status quo terms (dominant culture). What we have to expose is what is under the water line. We must work for catalytic love to emerge.

Dominant culture has separated our mind knowing from our heart and intuitive and spiritual knowing, and made rational thought the only path.

separated our mind knowing from our heart and intuitive and spiritual knowing, and made rational thought and the rationalization of “zero-sum,” “winners and losers”—frames frozen in the binary—the only path, or the “studied” path to measuring success.

We need to integrate the emergent love¹² with what is in the tip of the iceberg. Dominant culture via the Christian church, academia, corporatism, the military, etc. has



¹¹ Audrey Jordan, CPCC, PhD, ADJ Consulting

¹² Emergent Strategy (Brown, 2017).

If the practice of “knowing” is an iceberg with the tip exposed above the water line, the majority of the iceberg mass lies beneath the water line. In this case, what is unseen is generative. Similarly, we can look at the practice of love as having both visible and invisible components. Above the water is love in practice, or behaviors we can see, hear, and touch. Underneath the water line is what we often cannot see because that’s where our intentions and feelings reside.



LOVE IN PRACTICE

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| Welcome someone with open arms | Be as willing to laugh as cry |
| Listen | Support a do over |
| Treat with respect | Lighten their load |
| Speak vision and hope | Forgive |
| Read to | Embrace cultural identity, diversity, and inclusion |
| Talk to | Be vulnerable |
| Give hugs | Understand |
| Expose to experiences | Hold the line on our commitments, boundaries |
| Be honest | |

INTENTIONS AND FEELINGS

- | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| See and want their best | Trust |
| Self love and healing | Resilience |
| Share their pain | A vision for the future |
| Carnalismo | Collective respect for the struggle of past generations |
| Mercy | Collective responsibility to leave a better world for future generations |
| Compassion | |
| Hope | |
| Optimism | |
| Belief in redemption | |

Through our love, people we work with and for (and we, ourselves) are transformed. If we sit in circle with young people, we're transformed. If we love them, they will be transformed by that love.

As a result of our practice of love, people we work with (especially young people) have more:



“Vulnerability is not winning or losing; it’s having the courage to show up and be seen when we have no control over the outcome. Vulnerability is not weakness; it’s our greatest measure of courage.”

—Brené Brown¹³

A CALL FOR MORE AMPHIBIANS, Code Switchers, Crossers to Flip the Script

In the justice sector, we need amphibians who can breathe air *and* water, go above *and* below the water line, and be code switchers, to shepherd the integration of what is seen *and* unseen.

What do these amphibians do? First and foremost, they are **valuators**, not e-valuators. They see value in people, relationships, and actions of the interplay between what’s above and below the water line. They use knowledge and thought, emotions and feelings, and intuitive, spiritual knowing to discern value.

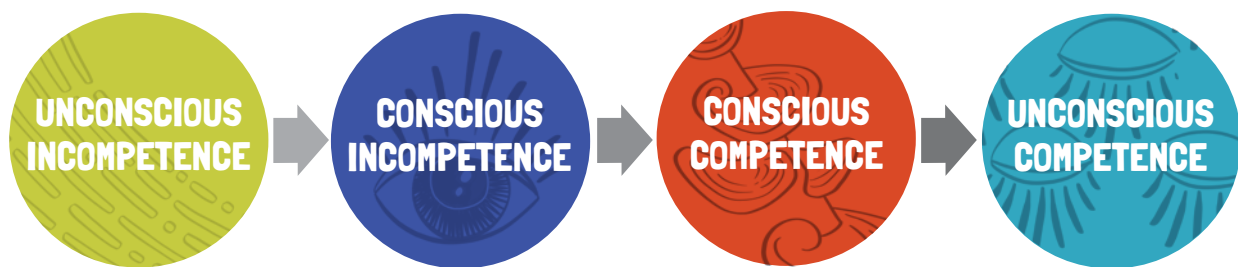
Amphibians’ work is to integrate, as code switchers, to be bridge builders, translators, boundary crossers, mediums, and spiritual medics. They (see next page):

¹³ Brené Brown, *Rising Strong: The Reckoning. The Rumble. The Revolution.* (Spiegel & Grau, August 2015)

- Erase the separation
- Make what’s wrong in a colonized context, right
- Integrate mind, heart, and spirit in our bodies
- Expose what’s under the water
- Move forward, in spite of the pain they’ve suffered
- Know some things don’t belong to us
- Let go
- Have faith
- Be vulnerable as things work out
- Deeply believe that love is action done in community for the good of the community to enhance the power and positive for those most unloved, unseen, unheard
- Define love as action that is done in community for positive power and justice in community
- Weave the connections and relationships for leverage, influence, and power in service of more justice
- Like ocean and tides, go in and out, pull and push in harmony

From Unconscious Incompetence to Unconscious Competence

We use two ways of understanding how the dimensions of love are developed over time. One (illustrated below) offers a frame for starting where we are: each person, each relationship, each community— with love and power—acting to influence the community outside the community of social justice warriors. It then recognizes and describes a pathway of change on which growth toward habitual love practice happens. It is the movement from unconscious incompetence to unconscious competence.^{14 15}



Second, the chart on the following page can be useful in understanding what the actions are—what the work or practice is—that promotes movement along the continuum, for each dimension of love. And for each dimension, the variables of dosage, duration, authenticity, and context matter. In addition, we can perceive observations of success for the three ways of knowing: mind, heart, and spirit.

¹⁴ Burch (1973). Gordon Training International.

¹⁵ https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Four_stages_of_competence

12 DIMENSIONS OF LOVE	DOSAGE*	DURATION	AUTHENTICITY	CONTEXT
<p>SELF LOVE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conscious of how we're in integrity with our own values • Critical analysis of our own thoughts and behaviors • Self care as revolutionary acts of resistance 				
<p>LOVE OTHERS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deep listening • Compassion and understanding • Forgiveness, chance to do over 				
<p>LOVE AS A COMMUNITY PRACTICE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organize and develop leaders • Spread vision and hope • Fight for material change 				
<p>LOVE FUSED WITH POWER</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Own and materialize our power • Share power with • Build power for collective liberation 				

*Rating scale on following page

Using these two tools together, we offer up the rating scale for assessing, and self-assessing, our work and progress along the continuum as one way of being in this frame:

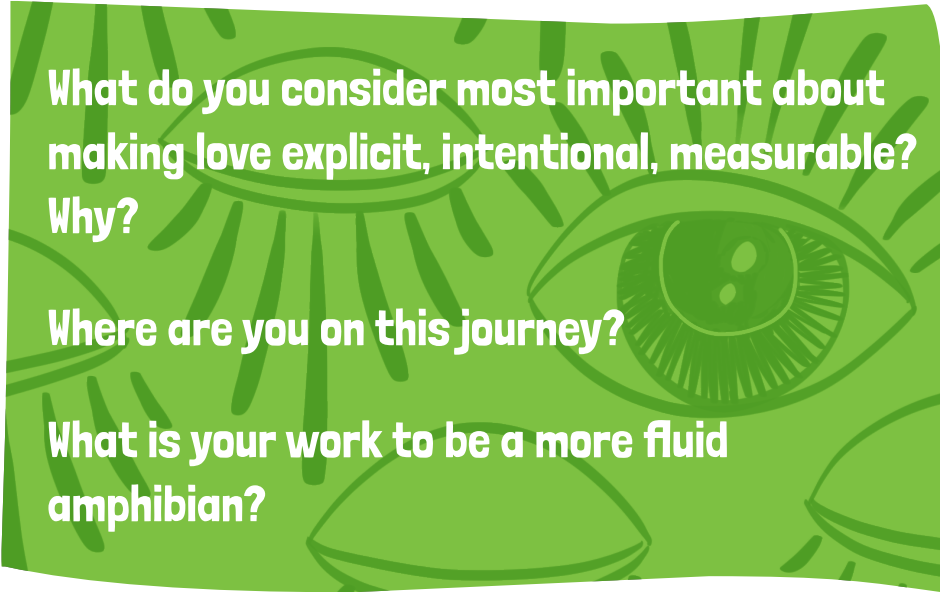
1 = UNCONSCIOUS INCOMPETENCE: It is important that at this stage it is not *willful* incompetence, which is to say that once there is awareness that there is incompetence, the desire to grow to the next stage must be there. If not, the rating is 0.

2 = CONSCIOUS INCOMPETENCE: At this stage some level of awareness that unlearning ways of knowing that enable the status quo, and working to do so, is required.

3 = CONSCIOUS COMPETENCE: Unlearning old ways and learning new ways is occurring (i.e., head, heart, and spiritual knowing is beginning), as are beginning practices of transformative love.

4 = UNCONSCIOUS COMPETENCE: Practice has become habit; all ways of knowing are happening in an integrated manner, including knowledge of when to lead and how to follow.

5 = BEYOND #4: Fusion is joining together under heat and pressure, stronger than connection—here, power and love are integrated, fused; when you rise, we rise.

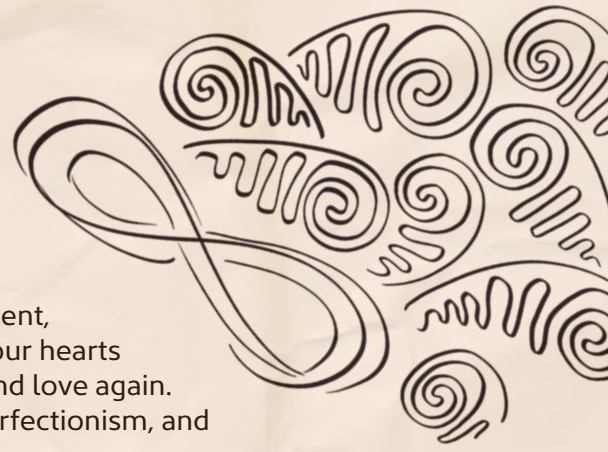


What do you consider most important about making love explicit, intentional, measurable? Why?

Where are you on this journey?

What is your work to be a more fluid amphibian?

7. Conclusion: Love Amplified, Lifted Up



To love means we must be willing to “rumble” with disappointment, expectations, and resentment.¹⁶ To be clear-eyed about having our hearts broken wide open. To be resolute to know we can get back up and love again. We will “compost failure,” and confront our own fear, shame, perfectionism, and regret.¹⁷

To love is transformational. It will change me, you, us. It will change the people we love. In this extractive and exploitative world, to choose authentic self-love takes utter courage. To translate this to others as demonstrated, explicit, and articulated love requires our whole hearts, minds, actions, and accountable systems. All of this is a profound act of resistance and culture shift. We are swimming upstream against the normative practice of checking off our to-do lists or “just doing our job.”

Love, when fused with power, is our tool for justice, freedom, and liberation. Love is our sword and power is the blade. Our very survival is wrapped in love and power. Our work is amphibious, living in the both/and, beyond the shores of the binary, colonized world of separation and othering.

Our practice is to love ourselves critically, to love others with deep humility, and to love in community in the struggle and movement for freedom and justice. We claim and assert our rightful power that is fused with love. All else is consciously or unconsciously upholding the colonized, white-supremacist paradigm that separates, tears apart, denigrates, and degrades.

Let us love ourselves critically. Let us love each other from a place of deep empathy. Let us practice fierce love in the community. And let us fuse power with love for the rise of our people.



**I profess the religion of love
Love is my religion and my faith
My mother is love
My father is love
My prophet is love
My God is love
I am a child of love
I have come only to speak of love.
—Jelalluddin Rumi¹⁸**

¹⁶ A reference to Brown’s *Rising Strong* (2015)

¹⁷ *Ibid*

¹⁸ From Rumi’s poem “Love is the Master,” (13th C)



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