

NATIONAL BESTSELLER

all about love

NEW VISIONS



bell hooks

Author of Salvation: Black People and Love

“A warm affirmation that love is possible.”

—NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW

Praise for bell hooks's
all about love

"It is a warm affirmation that love is possible and an attack on the culture of narcissism and selfishness."

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"A gracefully written volume . . . her treatise offers a deeply personal and—in this age of chicken-soupy psychobabble—unabashedly honest view of relationships."

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"Pay attention to bell hooks. The American writer and cultural critic is becoming a household word . . . hooks's writing typically inspires, enlightens and provokes. She is an academic wild card, the brilliant feminist whose sharp mind can slice the latest scholarly shibboleth."

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—*Seattle Weekly*

"Every page offers useful nuggets of wisdom to aid the reader in overcoming the fears of total intimacy and of loss. . . . hooks's view of amour is ultimately a pleasing, upbeat alternative to the slew of books that proclaim the demise of love in our cynical time."

—*Publishers Weekly*

"A spiritual handbook, weighty with platitudes, yet refreshed with some thoughtful analyses that offer seekers a way to explore love's meaning, or meaninglessness."

—*Kirkus Reviews*

"*All About Love: New Visions* promises to be one of the most engaging, life-affirming reads of the year. Come to it with an open mind, and an open heart, and prepare to be transformed."

—*Black Issues Book Review*

"Like love, this book is worth the commitment." —*Toronto Sun*

HARPER  PERENNIAL

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the first love letter i ever wrote was sent to you. just as this book was written to talk to you. anthony—you have been my most intimate listener. i will love you always.

in the song of solomon there is this passage that reads: “i found him whom my soul loves. i held him and would not let him go.” to holding on, to knowing again that moment of rapture, of recognition where we can face one another as we really are, stripped of artifice and pretense, naked and not ashamed.

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Preface

WHEN I WAS a child, it was clear to me that life was not worth living if we did not know love. I wish I could testify that I came to this awareness because of the love I felt in my life. But it was love's absence that let me know how much love mattered. I was my father's first daughter. At the moment of my birth, I was looked upon with loving kindness, cherished and made to feel wanted on this earth and in my home. To this day I cannot remember when that feeling of being loved left me. I just know that one day I was no longer precious. Those who had initially loved me well turned away. The absence of their recognition and regard pierced my heart and left me with a feeling of brokenheartedness so profound I was spellbound.

Grief and sadness overwhelmed me. I did not know what I had done wrong. And nothing I tried made it right.

No other connection healed the hurt of that first abandonment, that first banishment from love's paradise. For years I lived my life suspended, trapped by the past, unable to move into the future. Like every wounded child I just wanted to turn back time and be in that paradise again, in that moment of remembered rapture where I felt loved, where I felt a sense of belonging.

We can never go back. I know that now. We can go forward. We can find the love our hearts long for, but not until we let go grief about the love we lost long ago, when we were little and had no voice to speak the heart's longing. All the years of my life I thought I was searching for love I found, retrospectively, to be years where I was simply trying to recover what had been lost, to return to the first home, to get back the rapture of first love. I was not really ready to love or be loved in the present. I was still mourning—clinging to the broken heart of girlhood, to broken connections. When that mourning ceased I was able to love again.

I awakened from my trance state and was stunned to find the world I was living in, the world of the present, was no longer a world open to love. And I noticed that all around me I heard testimony that lovelessness had become the order of the day. I feel our nation's turning away from love as intensely as I felt love's abandonment in my girlhood. Turning away we risk moving into a wilderness

of spirit so intense we may never find our way home again. I write of love to bear witness both to the danger in this movement, and to call for a return to love. Redeemed and restored, love returns us to the promise of everlasting life. When we love we can let our hearts speak.

Introduction

GRACE:
TOUCHED BY LOVE

It is possible to speak with our heart directly. Most ancient cultures know this. We can actually converse with our heart as if it were a good friend. In modern life we have become so busy with our daily affairs and thoughts that we have lost this essential art of taking time to converse with our heart.

—JACK KORNFIELD