

HIGHER EDUCATION IN PRISON READING PROJECT



Dr. Bettina L. Love's
*We Want to Do More Than
Survive (2019)*

Chapter 1: "We Who Are Dark"

- How does intersectionality (as opposed to a flat understanding of 'diversity') build community power?
- What does Dr. Love mean when she invites us to "welcome struggle", and how can we use this principle to help us in our work in higher education in prison? (8)
- Although reform can be good, what are some ways that it can hinder radical change? (10)
- What is Dr. Love's understanding and definition of anti-darkness? (14)
- What are the factors that contribute to rendering the American school system a locus for dark suffering?

Chapter 2: "Educational Survival"

- How is America's political economy and the structure of education intertwined in a perverse way? Is social mobility ever achievable in the US? (18)
- How can the 'educational survival complex' described by Dr. Love set people up for the prison industrial complex? (16, 27)
- What are the conditions that keep dark suffering in place? (22)
- Have you ever witnessed White rage triggered by Black achievement? Why do you think this happens? (22)
- What does Dr. Love mean when she talks about "spirit murdering"? (34)

Chapter 3: "Mattering"

- How did Rochester's urban landscape -- and the collapse of its economy -- affect the growth and struggle described by the author?
- Why was a program like FIST so powerful for Dr. Love and many other members of the Black community? (49)
- When it is brought up that "loving Blackness is an act of political resistance", what do you think this means? (50)
- What is Dr. Love's analysis (and critique) of integrated schools? What was lost, also, in bell hooks' words? (50-51)
- How is Dr. Love speaking about the carceral state, and what is the connection she is drawing with the school system? (62-63)

Chapter 4: "Grit, Zest, and Racism"

- What are the harms of so-called 'character education', and what is inherently anti-Black about it? (69)
- Why are words such as 'grit' and 'zest' essentially harmful to dark bodies? (73)
- Dr. Love mentions the need to protect potential and the importance of her community while growing up. Do you think marginalized and oppressed people need a stronger sense of community in order to thrive? If so, why? (79-86)
- When Dr. Love says, "civics for dark folk is our life", what do you think she is trying to express? (71)
- What does this chapter tell the readers about gender and poverty? (85)

Chapter 5: “Abolitionist Teaching, Freedom Dreaming, and Black Joy”

- a. “Abolitionist teaching is not a teaching approach”: it is a visionary endeavor. Explain what Dr. Love means with this statement. (89-90)
- b. How are the histories of particular spaces in Boston and New Orleans offering Dr. Love the opportunity to speak about abolition? (93-99)
- c. In the section “Watch Out For Takers”, what is so dangerous about “social movements and freedom dreams being co-opted”? How can this become an obstacle for radical change? (103-104)
- d. What is the crucial distinction between co-conspirators and allies? Which one seems superficial, and why? (117)
- e. How is joy crucial for the revolution for which Dr. Love advocates? (120)

Chapter 6: “Theory over Gimmicks”

- a. How is theory (via bell hooks) so crucial for understanding the world and its oppressive structures?
- b. Why is the “teacher education gap” so dangerous, and how does it hinder a teacher’s ability to connect with students in a more meaningful way? (126-129)
- c. How is Dr. Love speaking of settler colonialism, and why is this subject so fundamental for her reasoning? (134)
- d. Understanding and dismantling Whiteness is at the core of anti-racist work. How is Dr. Love thinking about Critical Race Theory as a tool for resisting (and potentially destroying) Whiteness? (136-139)
- e. How is neoliberalism a threat to social movements and radical change? (144-146)

Chapter 7: “We Gon’ Be Alright, But That Ain’t Alright”

- a. How is Whiteness harming the very lives of Black women and their children through a perverse understanding of their pain? (150-152)
- b. How does Dr. Love’s personal history interject into her theoretical arguments, in this chapter and elsewhere?
- c. What is the distinction between being ‘alright’ and being ‘well’ offered by Dr. Love in this chapter? (155)
- d. How can we engage in intergenerational healing, and why is this so important? (157-159)
- e. Dr. Love ends the chapter -- and the book -- with an important distinction between survival and freedom. How does abolition contribute to defying this binary? Why is abolition the only possible choice moving forward? (161-162)