

THE ETHIC OF LOVE

THE HOLISTIC APPROACH TO BUILDING COMMUNITY

FACULTY LECTURER OF THE YEAR

Tara L. Johnson

Associate Professor, Fashion Merchandising

WHAT'S LOVE GOT TO DO WITH IT?

Defining Love

CAN WE TALK?

The CROWN Act

IT WAS ALL A DREAM...

Thwarting Imposter Syndrome

LOVE'S IN NEED OF LOVE TODAY

Leveraging the Affective Domain

WE GONNA BE ALRIGHT

Love in Action



APRIL 2024

LAND AND LABOR ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Umoja Community at Chaffey College acknowledges our presence on the ancestral and unceded territory of the Gabrielino/Tongva peoples. These lands were the traditional birthright of indigenous peoples who were forcibly removed and have faced two centuries of struggle for survival.

We also acknowledge the enslaved Africans who built the structural, economic, and cultural foundation of this country and recognize their contributions continue to impact our institutions at every level. We understand that our nation was established through the exploited and unacknowledged labor of African peoples and their descendants.

We recognize our responsibility to the dispossessed and enslaved ancestors to strive for an equitable and inclusive future. We commit to creating a future founded on an Ethic of Love and healing the deepest generational wounds through building a community of mutual understanding.

Biography



Tara Johnson's journey began in Lynwood, California, where she spent her formative years before relocating with her parents and siblings to Bloomington in the late 80s. After graduating from Fontana High School, Tara enrolled at Chaffey College, in the era where courses were a mere \$6 per unit. Despite not having an education plan or ever seeing an academic counselor, which is something she does not recommend to her students, Tara eventually transferred to San Diego State University. There, she earned a Bachelor of Arts in History, made lifelong friendships, and had a ridiculous amount of fun. Go Aztecs!

Tara acknowledges it took her two decades to leverage her history degree into a source of income. However, she boasts she was able to apply the critical thinking, leadership, and collaboration skills honed during her undergraduate studies to forge a fascinating career in retail. Tara dedicated the initial 15 years of her professional life to various retail positions, starting as a salesperson and progressing to a manager. She eventually landed roles as a retail buyer for renowned luxury brands such as Nordstrom and Ralph Lauren, as well as for smaller companies that succumbed to the challenges of the 2008 recession.

In 2008, Tara accepted a position as a bookstore assistant buyer at Chaffey College, where she found herself enamored with the student community. She encountered some of the most motivated, intelligent, thoughtful, resourceful, and gritty individuals, which inspired her deeply. Despite juggling a full-time job, a husband, and three children under the age of five, Tara embarked on a journey to earn a Master's degree in Management at the University of Redlands. Her goal was to teach part-time, enabling her to work with students and contribute to their success.

After earning her second degree, Tara started teaching part-time at Norco College while maintaining her full-time position at Chaffey College until she transitioned into a full-time teaching role in 2018. Initially, her teaching responsibilities encompassed a diverse range of classes in business, management, and entrepreneurship.

Biography

Now, Tara teaches FASHION! She has come full circle in her professional journey as she teaches a subject close to her heart. She finds herself in a remarkable position as the sole full-time faculty member in the Fashion Merchandising and Fashion Design disciplines. She was promoted to Associate Professor with tenure in 2021. Tara's mission is clear: to deliver information in a way that is not only easily understandable and relevant but also actionable. She strives to keep her classes engaging and enjoyable while imparting an entrepreneurial mindset to her students. Recognizing the need for additional encouragement among creative individuals, Tara assumes the role of Bobby Boucher, the hero in the movie "The Waterboy" providing that extra boost of motivation. Her mantra to her students is simple yet powerful: "You can do it!"

Tara is not only a dedicated educator but also a wife and mother/aunty of four teenagers. Her primary goal is to nurture her children into becoming interesting, courteous, socially conscious, and productive citizens who care about the welfare of their country and are fundamentally decent human beings. Beyond her family life, Tara is deeply involved in various community organizations. She serves as the President of the African American Alumni Chapter at her beloved San Diego State University and the President of the African American Parent Advisory Council at Etiwanda High School. Additionally, Tara is an active and engaged member of her sorority, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.

In her leisure time, Tara finds joy in reading, relaxing on the beach, taking naps, and sewing. She has a particular fondness for watching natural hair reels on Instagram, sporting long decorated nails, and listening to 90's R&B and rap music. Tara also has a weakness for any food that includes bacon or features buttercream frosting.



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I must thank my amazing family, by blood and by choice, who are here today. My parents, Bob and Deb Russell, who have been married for 52 years. My brother Damon and nephew Zion. The Johnson 5 plus one, my husband Steve, and intelligent, amazing, and talented kids and niece Kyle, Dean, Ava, and Savanha. My bestie crew, my B.I.Gs (Beautiful, Intelligent Girlfriends) and my sorority sisters, as Shug Avery said in *The Color Purple*, thank you for “scratching my head when I was ailing.”¹ Thank you to my personally invited colleagues, past and present. Folks that I admire and respect and model how I interact with students. Thank you for coming. Last but not least, the Umoja Team, Brent, Charles, Donald, Dr. Emily Koenig, Dr. Tai McMickens, Phantana, Tanya, Adam "et al.," Juanda, Barbara, to quote the great urban philosopher, Aubrey Drake Graham, “Started from the bottom now we’re here!”

This talk will be presented in African American Vernacular English (AAVE) and peppered with pop culture and academic sources.



Calling the Ancestors and Pouring Libations

I want to introduce you to one of the practices we use to open all our Umoja events. This practice is rooted in the African tradition and, in some ways, has been translated into the Black church. We open all our events with a ritualistic ceremony where we call upon our elders and ancestors to set the tone and ensure the audience starts with the right mindset. The contemporary world would call this “setting an intention.” In the African and Black church tradition, we do not just sit and listen. If the speaker says something, the audience chimes in with “Hallelujah,” or “Amen,” or “Say that.” When I say something I want your agreement on, I will say “Asé.” Asé is a Yoruba word, one of the languages spoken in Nigeria, and it is a word of affirmation. It has multiple meanings.

1. Asé means the “Amen,” “Right on!” “Get it, girl,” you shout out loud and proudly. It is bold and powerful and affirms that which resonates in your heart as true.
2. Asé is a word that means life force or life energy. Our ancestors have generated Asé for us and leave behind a certain gravitas that becomes our Asé in this lifetime.
3. Asé means you have the power to create that which you speak. It is imperative to choose your words wisely. Every word that comes out of your mouth adds to the life force, and you should be intentional and deliberate with your words.

With that said, when I say something that I want to make sure you got the point, I’m going to say “Asé,” and you will respond with, “Asé” When I say something that is building to the life force or life energy, I’m going to say, Asé, and you will respond with, Asé. If I make a point that resonates with you, shout out, Asé!

Calling the Ancestors and Pouring Libations



When the Umoja Community gathers into a space, we start by asking an elder for permission to start. We invite an elder because they have generated the Asé, the life force the leader may need to open the hearts and minds of the audience. When I say elder, I need somebody seventy or over who will grant permission to start. Do I have an elder in this space that will grant permission to start? Asé.

I have given you the word Asé, which is also coupled with a practice. It is called the pouring of libations. I am going to pull out two elements: earth, represented by this orchid, and pure water. I am going to call on the ancestors known to me personally and those who have influenced me. Each time I pour the water, I am going to call on several ancestors. I may also invite you to quietly call upon your own ancestors. I will say Asé, and you will say... Asé.

I pour this water in the name of my ancestors, those born into slavery and those freed to struggle from then until now, who left an unforgettable legacy of achievement and overcoming oppression. Asé.

I am going to call on my colleagues who are no longer on this earthly plane, but without their support, I would not be standing here today. I call the spirit of Renee Ketchum, Sherm Taylor, John Machado, Ardon Alger, and Dr. Donna Colondres. As I pour the water, I invite you to call upon your ancestor colleagues. Asé.

I am going to call upon the spirit of those I did not know personally, whose influence nonetheless shaped who I am today. I call upon the ancestors whose words we quote and whose legacies we teach. I call upon the spirits of Dr. Dorothy Irene Height, Shirley Chisolm, Maya Angelou, bell hooks, and the great Prince Nelson Rogers. As I pour the water, I ask you to call upon your influential ancestors. Asé.

I now call upon the spirit of my bloodline ancestors who have poured their life force into me and whose lives serve as a benediction. I call upon the spirits of Henrietta Burchell Russell, Bernice Saunders Pritchard, and Jessie Mae Russell. As I pour the water, I ask you to call upon your bloodline ancestors. Asé.

What's Love Got To Do With It?

Defining Love

When I was notified that I received this honor, I received plenty of congratulations but even more questions about what I would talk about. The assumption was it would be some fashion fabulousness, but I decided to talk about something really simple: LOVE.

I will talk about love as a radical approach to fostering a sense of belonging, a holistic approach to building community, through an Umoja practice, The Ethic of Love.

“Early in the development of the Umoja Community, a group of faculty created a collection of pedagogical, communication, and cultural practices that represent a shared wisdom in language that resonated with the African American community. The Umoja Practice weaves together into a multi-colored fabric of community and connection. That fabric stretches to include students' and educators' lives.” The eighteen practices are:

1. Raising Intentional and Deliberate
2. Manifesting
3. Umoja Counseling: Affirming. Intergrated. Intentional
4. The Porch
5. Live Learning
6. Language as Power
7. Tapping African American Intellectual, Spiritual, and Artistic Voices
8. Awareness of Connectedness to the African Diaspora
9. Community-Building Communal Intelligence
10. Acceleration-Englis, Math, ESL, and Counseling
11. Occupy Study Spaces on Campus
12. Mentoring
13. Mattering
14. Umoja as a Power Base
15. Encircling Diversity
16. Gifting
17. Everbody's Business





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18. ETHIC OF LOVE-THE AFFECTIVE DOMAIN
When practitioners move with an ethic of love, they touch their students' spirits. Moving with an ethic of love means having a willingness to share ourselves, our stories, our lives, our experiences to humanize and make real the classroom. This leveraging of the affective-emotion, trust, hope, trauma, healing-moves the discourse deliberately as an inroad to the cognitive domain. Approaching one's practice with an ethic of love implies a holistic approach-Body, Mind, Spirit.⁴

In reality, I could lecture on all of these practices individually: Language as Power, Intentional and Deliberate, Mattering, and Gifting, but you know which one I picked. If you know just a little about the Bible, there is a whole chapter in I Corinthians about love. The last verse states: "But the greatest of these is love."⁵ Of Umoja's practices, the greatest of these is the Ethic of Love.

For some of you, I may have already started on the wrong foot, quoting Drake and the Bible. Stick in here with me. What I am going to share is a radical approach to building community. It is really simple, love on our students.

I will put a pin in the practice of The Ethic of Love. First, I want to start with the definitions of love. Defining love is a complex task, encompassing a wide range of emotions, attitudes, and behaviors that can vary greatly depending on cultural, social, and personal contexts. Generally, love can be understood as a deep and profound feeling of affection, attachment, and care towards someone or something. It involves a strong emotional bond that fosters empathy, compassion, and understanding. The ancient Greeks did not see love as a singular feeling. Ancient Greek society recognized that there were many kinds of love. There are eight different words for love in Greek, and defining each allows us to fully interpret the context of the love we feel for others.

1. Agape is unconditional, sacrificial love.
2. Philia is the type of love that involves friendship.
3. Philautia is self-love.
4. Eros is physical love or sexual desire.
5. Storge is familial love.
6. Mania is obsessive love.
7. Ludus is playful, noncommittal love.
8. Pragma is practical love. ⁶

"The moment we choose to love, we begin to move toward freedom, to act in ways that liberate ourselves & others."

bell hooks

What's Love Got To Do With It?

Defining Love

Today, we will focus on just three: Philautia, Storge, and Agape.

Philautia refers to how people view themselves and feel about their body and mind. The ancient Greeks believed philautia as one of the most important kinds of love because they recognized that you cannot share what you do not have. Without love for yourself, you cannot begin to extend feelings of love, in any form, to anyone else. Philautia is self-love, the sense of being comfortable in your skin and allowing your self-confidence to grow because of your experiences.

Storge is the primal, protective love we all feel for family members and friends. This kind of love is rooted in kinship and allegiance. It's the unspoken bond between two people that transcends both friendship and sexual attraction because it is driven by familiarity, belonging, and dependency.

Agape is the kind of love that is felt by a person willing to do anything for another, including sacrificing themselves, without expecting anything in return, as an empathetic love that is extended to everyone—family, friends, and strangers alike. Agape is a pay-it-forward approach to love, where you show a universal kindness to others and offer to understand those in need.

Now let's go back to the practice:

The Ethic of Love— When practitioners move with an ethic of love, they touch their students' spirits. Moving with an ethic of love means having a willingness to share ourselves, our stories, our lives, our experiences to humanize and make real the classroom. This leveraging of the affective—emotion, trust, hope, trauma, healing—moves the discourse deliberately as an inroad to the cognitive domain. Approaching one's students with an ethic of love implies a holistic approach—Body, Mind, Spirit.





CAN WE TALK?

THE CROWN ACT

I was hired at Chaffey in 2008, and many of you know I started in the campus store as an Assistant Textbook Buyer. I was excited to be on campus, and relatively quickly, I met some of the other Black folks who work here. One of the first things I was told about Chaffey's culture is that it was frowned upon for black women to wear braids. I had not worn braids in a while and did not plan on getting any, but I just thought, "Huh? That's not good." But I'm on probation, so I will roll with it.

Let me start by saying getting braids is a process; it's hours of sitting, several hundred dollars, and, depending on your braider, a tight scalp for a few days. Braids are freedom; it's a protective style and allows your hair a rest from heat styling and overuse of products. Braids are GREAT! You should know that it is a process to put them in and a process to take them out.

Fast forward to 2012, I met one of my beautiful, intelligent girlfriends, let's call her B.I.G, who is part of my bestie crew. When we met, she was already a former Chaffey employee but had worked at Chaffey in the 2000's. To protect the guilty, I'm not going to say where she worked or who she worked for. This is her braid story:

B.I.G. comes to work on Monday with fresh braids swinging and her scalp tight, knowing she looks cute. Before she gets to her desk, she runs into another Black colleague who compliments her on her braids but ends the conversation with, "Has our boss seen it yet?"

"No." is B.I.G's answer. On her way to her desk, she passes her first-level manager's office.

"Morning," B.I.G. says and keeps on pushing to her desk. About 2 hours later, her first-level manager calls and says, "Can you come over to _____ office?" It's an administrator's office, her first-level manager's manager.

B.I.G. walks over to that administrator's office, pleasantries are exchanged, and the conversation goes like this:

"Hi, B.I.G. We just wanted to talk to you about your role on campus. We work in a department that interacts with many people, administrators, faculty, and staff. We have students who work with us for whom we set the example. We expect everyone to project a professional appearance and your hair doesn't reflect the professionalism we expect."

You are right to gasp.

"I would beg to differ," B.I.G responded. Then there was a stare-down. B.I.G. was boiling internally, thinking,

"How dare you! Do you know how much this cost? How much time it took?" but she kept quiet since she is a professional.

The administrator and her first-level manager compliment B.I.G. on her work and how they can depend on her but don't rescind what we would all call an insult. B.I.G. returned to her desk distraught, rightfully so, but returned to work the next day with her braids swinging. And she came the day after that and the day after that, and in her words,

"Let them braids get raggedy." The whole time those braids were getting raggedy, she was looking for another job.

Can you imagine excelling at your job and being respected by your colleagues, and the only criticism is how you have styled your hair? Asé.

Here is my hair story...

When I received the notice, I was granted an interview for a tenure track teaching position; I called another member of my bestie crew, she is an administrator at a CSU, and she also wears her hair naturally, but in comparison. I have a LOT of hair. Y'all see this. It's big and gets bigger each day it is not drenched in water.

We were excited; we talked about the teaching demo, what I would wear, and then the question,

"Girl, what are you going to do with your hair?"

I knew what she meant by that question. We all know first impressions are important, and Black hair has been deemed not only as unprofessional but unkempt, dirty, and, in some instances, radical. The question was out of concern that someone on the committee would have an implicit bias or see my hair as a distraction.

"Girl, everybody at Chaffey knows my hair, but if this interview were anywhere else, I'd probably go to the interview in a slick-back ponytail." was my reply.

"Oh, good! One less thing to worry about," she responded.

The perception of "professional hair" is an obstacle for many Black women. In the midst of the pandemic, in October 2020, a viral tweet brought to light a Google search result for "unprofessional hairstyles for work," where the vast majority of hairstyles were of black women with natural hair. Not to be overlooked when a Google search for "professional" hairstyles is sought, the results are of white, straight-haired blond women. This bias makes for serious conversations for black women on how to wear their hair. This is why my bestie asked the question. Eighty percent of Black women have reported having to change their hair to fit their workplace, Black women's hair is two and a half times more likely to be perceived as unprofessional, and twenty percent of Black women ages 25 to 34 have been sent home from work because of their hair. One hundred percent of Black elementary school girls who attend majority white schools state they experience hair bias and discrimination by the age of ten.⁷ Asé.



The **CROWN** Act

Schools and workplaces across the country often have dress codes and grooming policies prohibiting natural hairstyles, like afros, braids, Bantu knots, and locs. These policies that criminalize natural hair have been used to justify the removal of Black children from classrooms and adults from their employment.

The **CROWN (Create a Respectful and Open Workplace for Natural Hair) Act** (SB 188) was introduced in 2019, the California State Senate enacted and Governor Newsom signed it into law. This law prohibits discrimination based on hairstyle and hair texture by extending protection under the Fair Employment and Housing Act (FEHA) and the California Education Code.⁸ You cannot hairstyle or hair texture to hire, to fired, to deny housing, and it cannot be a punitive action at school. It is the first legislation, in the United States, passed at the state level to prohibit such discrimination. Yes, there was a law enacted to protect my choice of hairstyle. The CROWN Act has been passed in 22 states and by the House of Representatives in 2021 and 2022.⁹ The CROWN Act has not been passed by the Senate.

Here are some of the hairstyles I have had in my sixteen years working at Chaffey. Inevitably, with every change, there have always been looks. Have I faced bias, uncomfortable conversations, and interactions at Chaffey? Absolutely. The curious or unfiltered poses the question: How did your hair get so long, so quickly? Why did you cut it so short? How did you do that? The worst is the slow-motion reach-ins where I have to karate chop a colleague to keep them from touching my hair. My Sista in the space, can I get an Asé? This is your public service announcement: Do not touch a Black woman's hair. Asé

How does this manifest under the Ethic of Love? How do we use our bodies in the holistic approach? We affirm identities. We model how to practice self-love. We validate, acknowledge, and celebrate the unique aspects of every student's identity. We understand they often have intersecting identities, including ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, culture, and abilities. Affirming identities involves creating environments where individuals feel seen, respected, and valued for who they are. We have honest conversations with our students about navigating those uncomfortable interactions and conversations. I come in with hair, nails, lashes, a red lip, plus my shoe and handbag game are TIGHT!! We show up as our whole selves. Students see us outside our roles as professors, counselors, or mentors. We model self-love and allow them the space to be their whole selves. Remember, the Greeks said *philautia*, self-love, was one of the most important kinds of love because they recognized that you cannot share what you do not have. Asé

IT WAS ALL A DREAM...

THWARTING IMPOSTER SYNDROME

Meet third grade, Tara Russell. I grew up at 11976 Peach St in Lynwood, CA. If you don't know L.A. well, Lynwood is sandwiched between Compton and Watts. Some of you are thinking, "Wow, Tara grew up in the hood." I did, and it's fully in me. It is why I love bamboo earrings, Nike Cortez, and red Kool-Aid. Lynwood Tara is different than the person you know, you know Professor Johnson.

Even though I grew up in the L.A. hood, in the 80s, Peach Street and most of the surrounding streets were diverse. We had a mix of two-parent, single-parent, and multigenerational families. I went to Lindberg Elementary School. My school looked like my community; we had Black, Brown, and White teachers; at no point did I ever feel like I received an underrepresented, marginalized education. I had great teachers. My third-grade teacher was Ms. Apt. She looked like Carol Brady, shag haircut and all, who we all know was the chilliest mom on T.V. On my report card, she wrote, "Tara is an ideal student; she's cooperative, good-natured, and eager to learn. She continues with her good work habits" and gave me the "Best Overall Learner" Certificate.

In fourth grade, I had Mr. Holzer. He was stern, eccentric and what Professor Johnson would describe as progressive. We didn't have to sit in the same seat every day; we could just come in and sit wherever we wanted. We had pets in class and were allowed to talk amongst ourselves, and he had a whole wall of books we could read. Finish your work, get a book. He encouraged us to enjoy learning; he made going to school fun. One night, Mr. Holzer called the house.

"Can we have a meeting about Tara?" Mr. Holzer said.

Right now, I need to talk to my fellow Gen Xers, my latchkey kids, my drinking out the water hose, take the meat out the freezer, my "get home before the street lights come" on folks. What was my first thought? "Oh, I'm in trouble." The next few days were torture; I kept a pit in my stomach and was on my BEST behavior. The day finally came, and Mr. Holzer wanted to talk to my parents about my results from the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills, the elementary standardized test. Since my mom saves everything, here it is: I'm in fourth grade:

- Reading vocabulary, 7th grade level
- Language expression, basically 10th-grade level
- Math applications, 9th grade level
- Reference skills, 9th grade level

Mr. Holzer wanted to meet with my parents because he decided I did not need to go to fifth grade. He had been giving me fifth-grade level work for months and said I was ready for sixth grade. That is what I did went from fourth grade to sixth grade.

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THWARTING IMPOSTER SYNDROME

I was fortunate early on in my educational journey. I had folks that acknowledged I was smart. I was not smart for a black girl. I was not smart for a girl that lived in the hood. My teachers lived there, too. They ingrained in me that asking questions and being curious was a good thing, I was capable and had the keys to be successful.

Fast-forward, my family moved to Bloomington, I graduated from Fontana High School in 1989, and seventeen-year-old Tara enrolled in Chaffey College. As my bio states, "I never got an ed plan or saw a counselor," and in 1991, I transferred to San Diego State University.

Transferring is challenging because students have their established friend groups. San Diego State in the 90s was a bonafide party school, a top 10 ranked party school in the nation, and I did not drink. I very quickly found my people and became the coveted designated driver for a couple of friend groups. Through a very convoluted set of circumstances due to my connection with upperclassmen, I wrote an opinion for the school paper, *The Daily Aztec*. Once a week, I would write an article on an issue pressing on my nineteen-year-old heart. Sometimes, I received feedback from students, high fives on the quad, had conversations before class, and even received some hate mail. Occasionally, the opinion staff would write on the same topic if something was pressing on campus or happening in the world. I wrote an article, one in a three-author series, titled "Jews, Blacks, and History." Other than the title, I cannot tell you what I wrote or what the other writers wrote, but the article came out and the next day I went to my Art History class. Before the lecture started, the professor ceremoniously called me to the podium.

"I read your article, and here are the corrections," he announced.

He then handed me a copy of the *Daily Aztec* with red marker all over it. Now, we are mid-semester, and I have turned in written work, and I have gotten a solid grade. I am confused. I shove it in my bag and sit through class HOT. When I finally read it, it was grammar, punctuation, and just question marks. I was like, "Dang!! He doesn't even grade this hard." This was the first time I ever was made to feel dumb by an instructor. I absolutely knew there were classmates smarter than me, more accomplished, or with higher aspirations, but this felt personal.

At the time, I was taking an English Composition class in the Africana Studies Department. My instructor was Dr. Shirley Weber, who you may know as our current Secretary of State. You could ask Dr. Weber ANYTHING, and she would give you sage advice you could put into practice or make you get your whole life together. I also had a solid grade in her class; she was the "Aunty" on campus. After class, we walked to her office, and I handed Dr. Weber the article, and she didn't even read it.

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THWARTING IMPOSTER SYNDROME

"Oh, you struck a nerve," she says.

She went on to explain that his criticism was not the mechanics of the article but the actual content. She asked who the instructor was; I named him, he was a colleague in the College of Arts and Letters.

She smiled and said, "Tara, this was an attempt to make you feel small."

She stopped and read the article, then continued, "This man read your article and thought, 'How dare this little Black girl have this opinion?'"

As deflated as I felt, Dr. Weber pumped me right back up. Dr. Weber shared I should expect to have professors who will not all be supportive.

"Some of them don't want us here, and when I say us, I mean me too." she continued.

She went on with the sage advice to "Not let anybody else's inability to see things from a different perspective, to see things out of the box that they live in, be the barometer for criticism. "

She told me, "As a Black woman in America, one with ambition, you will constantly be faced with people challenging you. Your professors, your boss, your colleagues, even the people you may supervise. "

This conversation stuck with me until this day. It has shaped how I interact in my professional life and spaces run by the dominant culture.

In 1978, Dr. Pauline Clance and Dr. Suzanne Imes published the paper, "The imposter phenomenon in high achieving women: Dynamics and Therapeutic Intervention." The abstract for the article states:

"The term "impostor phenomenon" is used to designate an internal experience of intellectual phoniness that appears to be particularly prevalent and intense among a select sample of high-achieving women. Certain early family dynamics and later introjection of societal sex-role stereotyping appear to contribute significantly to the development of the impostor phenomenon. Despite outstanding academic and professional accomplishments, women who experience the impostor phenomenon persist in believing that they are really not bright and have fooled anyone who thinks otherwise. Numerous achievements, which one might expect to provide ample objective evidence of superior intellectual functioning, do not appear to affect the impostor belief."¹¹

We now know this as "intellectual phoniness" as Imposter Syndrome¹². It is the psychological experience of feeling like a fake or a phony despite any genuine success that you have achieved. It can show up in the context of work, relationships, or even friendships. Those with imposter syndrome typically think of themselves as an undeserving fraud or as someone who just got "lucky" and did not actually earn their success. Guess what? The conversation with Dr. Weber freed me from ever having these thoughts. When someone says things like, "You are one of the lucky ones" or "People like you, and that's how you got..." I smile and think, that isn't it. Dr. Weber freed me from doubting that my opinion matters. She instilled

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THWARTING IMPOSTER SYNDROME

in me that brilliance manifests itself in many different ways. Brilliance is not just academic; it is empathy and compassion; it is how we interact with the world and how we interact with those around us. It gave me the audacity to say, "I deserve to be here." Even in spaces where I am the junior person on staff, in a space with mostly Ph.D's and Ed.D's, or in a place with people higher up on the org chart, I am comfortable sharing my viewpoint and expressing my opinion. Some of you on the front row can attest to it. I have definitely said something above my paygrade, a little radical, maybe even a little crazy because you asked my opinion.

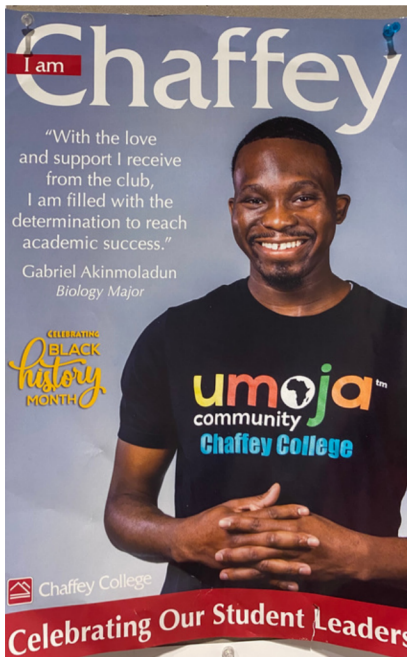
How does this manifest under the Ethic of Love? How do we use our minds and our intellect in the holistic approach?

1. Acknowledge and normalize feelings. We empower students to challenge and overcome feelings of self-doubt, inadequacy, and fear.
2. We celebrate achievements. We take time to acknowledge and celebrate student accomplishments. We cultivate a greater sense of confidence, self-worth, and resilience.

Just like Dr. Weber shared with me, I let them know. Brilliance is not just academic; it is empathy and compassion; it is how we interact with the world and how we interact with those around us. We empower them to have the audacity to say, "I deserve to be here."

In addition, the Umoja team is a team of scholars. We are each other's cheerleaders and it allows us to freely love on our students. It is the Greek storge, the love rooted in kinship and allegiance. It is the unspoken bond we have with each other and our students. Our students get to see Dr. Emilie Koenig, founder of the Hip Hop Studies Summit, who wrote her dissertation on the "African American rhetorical tradition rooted in performance," specifically tap dancing. Professor Adam, "et al." Martinez is a poet and rapper. Dr. Taisha McMickens is a Black Queer Feminist. Brent McLaren is studying the "Impact of Culturally Responsive Curriculum and Classrooms for Black Students." Charles Williams, what can I say about Charles Williams? That fool is just clever! We, the Umoja Team, are the embodiment of brilliance, which manifests itself in many different ways. Asé





LOVE'S IN NEED OF LOVE TODAY

Leveraging the Affective Domain

Last summer, the Transfer Center sent about thirty students on a Historically Black Colleges and University (HBCU) tour, where I served as a chaperone. If you want to get to know students, travel with them. We visited five schools: Morgan State and Bowie State in Maryland, the University of Delaware, Lincoln University in Pennsylvania, and the Mecca, Howard University. We spent our days touring campuses, having too much fun on the bus, and our evenings laughing at dinner and touring D.C. We hit the Lincoln Memorial, the M.L.K. Monument, and even spent a few hours in the National Museum of African American History and Culture.

The students were a mix of Umoja students I knew and students I met for the first time at 5 a.m. as we loaded up to go to the airport. We fly across the country and hit the ground running. At every campus, a few students are enamored. Morgan State and Howard are urban schools, and Delaware State and Bowie State are more suburban. Lincoln University is rural, like they have their own zip code and powerplant rural. Lincoln University is also the first HBCU. It was founded in 1854 as the first school in the U.S. to provide a higher education "for the scientific, classical and theological education of colored youth of the male sex."¹² While Lincoln has many notable graduates, its most famous is Langston Hughes, class of 1929. The renowned Harlem Renaissance poet and social activist bequeathed his personal library to his alma mater upon his death in 1967. The Langston Hughes Memorial Library had a treasure trove of items on display in their special collection, including a signed copy of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. I'm a history buff/reading nerd, but even the students were excited to see Black history living right on campus, intertwined in study spaces.

Part of the campus tour was meeting with admissions reps. Several students decided to apply. One of the students was super excited to apply; let's call her Roxy. Roxy was one of the students I met for the first time as we were loading up to go to the airport, and she did not know anyone else on the trip. Roxy was quiet and a little quirky. By the time we got to Lincoln, Roxy started to come out of her shell. She went from being introverted and small to more talkative and funnier.

In the library, Roxy was in awe. As we left the library, Roxy shared that she is an English major, loves writing, and her last name is Langston.



LOVE'S IN NEED OF LOVE TODAY

Leverageing the Affective Domain

"It's like everything aligns here," she said.

The tour culminates in the student services building where admission is being offered on the spot. Roxy disappears upstairs into the admissions office and comes down the stairs maybe 15-20 minutes later, beaming. She got in! We did a little happy dance and hugged. She is elated, and I am elated for her.

"I feel like I found my place," she says.

"Oh, that's so exciting; you feel like this is the place for you," I reply.

"Ms. Tara, I think I found my place on this earth," she states.

She goes on to tell me she had struggles in her short life. She is mixed race and struggles with her two racial identities. She does not always feel accepted by the Black students and often feels shunned by the white students. She's non-gender conforming and has an eclectic aesthetic. She has struggled due to a lack of family support, has been unhoused, suffered depression, and has acted upon her suicidal ideation. But at that moment, in Lincoln, Pennsylvania, she found her place "on this earth." Just like right now, my eyes welled up. The Momma in me breaks for her. I hug her tight and tell her I'm proud of her. She walks away and joins the other students, and I stand there stunned. This trip may have saved a life.

I am an empath. An empath is a person highly attuned to the feelings and emotions of those around them. Empaths feel what another person is feeling at a deep emotional level. Empaths have a profound ability to sense and understand the emotional experiences of others, often experiencing these emotions themselves at a deep level. Like a sponge, I soak up the energies and feelings of those I encounter, which can be both a gift and a challenge. However, it also enables me to connect with others on a profound level, fostering understanding and compassion in my interactions. I recognize the significant impact of emotions on cognitive processes and understand the importance of addressing students' social and emotional needs alongside their academic development. Doing this work can be an emotional rollercoaster; tapping into the affective domain, emotion, trust, hope, and trauma requires me to be vulnerable. Sometimes, it is exhausting. In addition, I am a Black woman in academia, and often, I am Blackhausted.

But this work is important. There is ample evidence that a diverse faculty population improves educational quality. Specifically, the diversity of racial and cultural backgrounds on campus is essential to enhancing every student's academic experience. The entire campus culture is improved when people are exposed to different viewpoints, making the learning environment more inclusive and dynamic.

LOVE'S IN NEED OF LOVE TODAY

Leveraging the Affective Domain

According to the National Center for Education Statistics, 6 percent of tenured faculty were Black, 4 percent Black female, and 3 percent Black male.¹⁴ This small group of faculty confronts an undue burden, referred to as the “time and effort tax” or “minority tax.” This “tax” disproportionately requires Black faculty to participate in efforts that include a combination of recruiting, mentoring, teaching, committee membership, and conducting trainings or workshops designed to, directly or indirectly, meet the institution's stated D.E.I. goals.¹⁴ These challenges cut across marginalized groups (e.g., as described by race/ethnicity, ability, immigration status, and LGBTQIA + identity), more so for those whose identities are intersectional. The Umoja Community speaks to the heart of these intersections. As crucial as the Umoja Community is for the students, it is just as vital for me. Asé

Umoja, a Kiswahili word meaning unity, is a community and critical resource dedicated to enhancing the cultural and educational experiences of African Americans and other students. We believe that when the voices and histories of students are deliberately and intentionally recognized, the opportunity for self-efficacy emerges, and a foundation is formed for academic success. The Umoja Community is a program, not a club or just a committee, but a program that actively serves and promotes student success for all students through curriculum and pedagogy.¹⁵ Along with the eighteen practices, which include the Ethic of Love, Umoja also has these organizational values:

1. **Ritual:** Engaging in cultural practices rooted in African traditions to strengthen the community and the people within it. This fosters a sense of connection, identity, and continuity with ancestral heritage and values.
2. **Connections to the African Diaspora:** Expanding students' cultural awareness of the diaspora and articulating their place in that experience. This promotes cultural pride, identity affirmation, and a deeper understanding of the historical and contemporary contributions of African peoples worldwide.
3. **Students Are Our Highest Priority:** Serving to promote student success for all students. This commitment ensures that every student is supported, valued, and empowered to achieve their full potential academically, socially, and personally.
4. **Culturally Relevant Pedagogy and Practices:** Developing curriculum relevant to the students' lives for learning. This approach acknowledges and incorporates students' cultural backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives into the teaching and learning process, making education more meaningful, engaging, and effective.
5. **Building Community:** Creating an environment that encourages students to be accountable to each other's learning. This fosters a sense of belonging, collaboration, and collective responsibility for academic achievement and personal growth.
6. **Touching the Spirit:** Using a holistic approach to reach each student—Body, Mind, and Spirit. This approach recognizes the interconnectedness of physical, mental, and emotional well-being and seeks to nurture students' holistic development.
7. **Ethic of Love:** Expressing compassion and care in the learning community. This ethic emphasizes empathy, respect, and support for all members of the community, fostering a nurturing and inclusive environment conducive to learning and growth.¹⁶

LOVE'S IN NEED OF LOVE TODAY

Leverageing the Affective Domain

We see the Ethic of Love not only as a practice but as a value. How do I practice the Ethic of Love, using my spirit in the holistic approach? Knowingly and unknowingly, I engage in acts of kindness and service towards others. I try to spread love and positivity in my daily life, whether through simple gestures like the "I see you" head nod, giving compliments, or actively listening to someone in need. By extending love and generosity to others, I nourish my spirit and create positive ripple effects in this community. I try to practice mindfulness in my interactions with others and the world around me. By being fully present and attentive, I create space for love to arise naturally within my spirit.

In my first ten years at Chaffey, I was a classified professional; as the Assistant Textbook Buyer for the Campus Store, I made many connections. Many of the members of the audience got to know me because of that role. My life before Chaffey also included an almost 10-year stint at Nordstrom. To this day, I am still a Nordy at heart. Mindful interactions and active listening are founding practices of the "Nordstrom Way."¹⁹ As a result, even though my job was as an Assistant Textbook Buyer, I was often tasked with resolving higher-level customer issues. If somebody is nutty, annoyed, or irate, get Tara. One more story...Right after I took this picture, a student stopped me.

"Do you remember me?" she asked.

"No," I replied shamefully.

"I am graduating because of you," she said.

I looked at her quizzically.



She went on to say, "My first semester at Chaffey, I enrolled in a class and bought the book. After the class started, I decided to drop the class and needed to return the book. I went to the bookstore, and they told me I could not return the book since I had unwrapped it and used the code. The book was expensive, and I needed the money back to buy another book. The lady at the window kept saying, 'No, you can't return it.' We kept going back and forth, and I got mad. That lady went to get you. You listened to my story and basically said the same thing, 'You can't return it because the code was used.' I was so mad and said, 'Maybe this school thing is too hard; I'm just going to drop my classes.' You reached through the window, grabbed my arm, and said, 'No, you are not!' You walked me back to your desk, checked to see the code wasn't used, and helped me get the other book I needed. That day had been tough on me; I was dropping the class due to a negative interaction with the instructor and was really scared about being able to 'do school.' You told me about EOPS and the Book Grant and seemed concerned. I almost stopped going to Chaffey that day but you kept me from it. You helped me another time, but I never saw you in the bookstore again. Thank you"

I know I'm not supposed to, but like Roxy, I hugged her tight. We parted ways, but I was really proud of her and a little of myself. An interaction, I don't remember, changed the trajectory of a student's life. This is the Greek definition of agape, which is the pay-it-forward approach to love, where you show universal kindness to others and offer to understand those in need. Asé



WE GONNA BE ALRIGHT

Love in Action

For the past 45 minutes, I've shared some of my stories of interactions with colleagues and students. I am going to wrap it up by sharing how Umoja centering our cultural, curriculum, and pedagogy to build community.

Dr. Beverly Daniel Tatum, president of Emerita of Spelman College, is a clinical psychologist widely known for her expertise in race relations and her role as a thought leader in higher education. Dr. Tatum's 25-year-old best-selling book, "Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?" and Other Conversations About Race, recently had a resurgence on the best-seller list in the aftermath of the George Floyd murder. Dr. Tatum talks about the critical importance of having curriculums, educators, and school communities that are dedicated to affirming and embracing students of color in general and Black students in particular. She explains the fundamental tenets of this practice in terms of what she calls "A.B.C.'s:" Affirming Identity, Building Community, and Cultivating Leadership."20 Umoja, through its practices and values, embodies the A.B.C.'s.

WE GONNA BE ALRIGHT

Love in Action

Affirming identities

I shared earlier that we affirm identities by validating, acknowledging, and celebrating the unique aspects of every student's identity. Umoja recognizes the intersecting nature of their identities. Umoja creates environments where students feel seen, respected, and valued for who they are. Umoja engages in genuine conversations to help them navigate uncomfortable interactions and discussions about their educational journey and identities. Through these efforts, we foster inclusivity, understanding, and a sense of belonging for all the members of our community. We have created an organizational culture that is like no other program on campus.

Building Communities

The Umoja faculty team came together haphazardly, and we genuinely love each other. We want to see the students win. It translates to how we interact with the students and how we have built a robust community. Let's talk about how we have built this community:

- The Black Resource Network is a Canvas hub showcasing links to student support resources, counseling resources, campus-wide and Umoja events. We post our events on the Black Resource Network and they generally fill to capacity in hours. In the last year, the Black Resource Network Canvas hub has grown from 1200 students to 1700 who have accepted the invitation.
- The Umoja Community program has grown from less than fifty students before the pandemic to over 350 students who utilize our counseling services, regularly attend our events, or are enrolled in Umoja courses.
- Starting in July and culminating in May, we host numerous academic and social events each month. They include:
 - We host a one-day Summer Bridge where we introduce incoming students to the Umoja Community.
 - We host a fall orientation that brings incoming and returning students together. We share campus resources and highlight our student leaders.
 - We host Sankofa Screenings, basically we go to the movies together. We have seen *The Woman King*, *Black Panther: Wakanda Forever*, *Spider-Man: I Across the Spider-Verse*, and last month saw, *The American Society of Magical Negroes*.
 - We host a U.C. and the Black Experience Workshop where admissions representatives and students from every U.C. school share what it is like to be a student on their campus.
 - We host several University Transfer Immersion Experiences (UTIE), taking students on overnight trips to U.C.s and C.S.U. Yes, we have taken them to my beloved San Diego State University at Homecoming Weekend. Do not worry, its not the party school of the 90's.
 - We host the Umoja Language as Power ceremony (ULPA) and the Rites of Passage Celebration. These events highlight students who have successfully completed English 1A and 1B and those who have completed their studies at Chaffey. At these celebrations, students are provided with graduation cords and kente stoles.
 - On the last Wednesday of every month, we host The Village Table. We bring students together to break bread, listen to music, and chill. They are a space where they can just be Black together. It's an invaluable time for building our community.

WE GONNA BE ALRIGHT

Love in Action

- This is the one that gets me excited; in the summer of 2021, Umoja introduced English pathway courses offering English 1A and English 1B students. Taught by Charles Williams, reading work by Black authors, writing essays on Black topics, and sitting in space with people like them is impactful. The IR data showcases statistically significant increases in student success and retention for African American students in the Umoja 1A and 1B classes. In Fall 2023, the Umoja English 1A course had a success rate of 72.2%. For the same period, the Umoja English 1B course had a success rate of 81.25%. Based on the most recent disaggregated data, for the 2021/22 academic year, Black/African American student success in Umoja English 1A was 25.95% higher, and the English 1B success rate was 14.45% higher than the success rates for Black/African American students in non-Umoja English composition courses. Learning in community matters. Asé

Cultivating Leadership

We spend a LOT of time with the students, academically and socially. We see students show up confident and driven, but we also see them blossom in their time with us. We recognize the potential of individuals to become influential leaders. We nurture and develop leadership skills to benefit the Umoja Community and the campus community as a whole. Through intentional and deliberate leadership development opportunities, we empower students to become confident, visionary, and impactful. The fruit of cultivating leadership can be seen in the student leaders we have all across campus. Go into Panther Care, Umoja leaders are working there, walk into the Transfer Center, Umoja leaders are working there, look at our Student Trustee, Tamia Newman, an Umoja leader.

The Holistic Approach

Even without scrutinizing the data, the inherent understanding of the transformative power the Ethic of Love is evident. It transcends statistical analysis, resonating with our experiences and shows the impact on student success. The numbers undoubtedly affirm the efficacy of embracing the Ethic of Love in our approach to pedagogical, cultural, and social aspects when engaging with our students. This comprehensive approach recognizes the interconnectedness of physical, mental, and emotional well-being, ensuring that we address the diverse needs of our students on all levels. By fostering a sense of self-love and acceptance, we empower students to navigate challenges, cultivate resilience, and embrace their unique identities. Through compassionate understanding and empathy, we create a supportive environment where students feel seen, heard, and valued. By nurturing their body, mind, and spirit, we enable students to thrive academically and emotionally, fostering growth and development. By infusing our interactions, teachings, and support systems with self-love, compassion, empathy, and genuine care, we are tapping into a holistic approach to reach each student—body, mind, and spirit. Asé

Thank you, Chaffey.

The Ethic of Love, the Holistic Approach to Building Community.

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