

# Natorie Beckford

Lehman College; Natorie.Beckford@lc.cuny.edu

11/6/15

Chynn Family Foundation

2015 CUNY Ethics and Morality Contest

Asian American/ Asian Research Institute- CUNY

AAARI, 25 West 43rd Street, Room 1000

New York, NY 10036

To whom it may Concern:

In this essay, "Love Theory" I will be discussing the virtue of love and why it is worth striving for and why it is essential in my own life. I reference to 9/11 firefighters and policemen, Immanuel Kant, Mother Teresa, and Martin Luther King Junior to give examples of people who lived a life that represented what love is. I also speak about my own experiences trying to live up to these same expectations and how I overcome obstacles that stand in the way of this.

Sincerely,

Natorie Beckford

It's like an amazing trip. It knows you before you even know yourself. It's that feeling of collision when the spectacular meets the catastrophic. Sometimes you fly and you feel more powerful than you have ever felt before and sometimes it feels blank and desolate leaving you crying on the bathroom floor. There is no other greater virtue, no higher principle nor imperative moral duty than to love others and to love as unconditionally as humanly possible.

What is love you may ask? It's the kiss you let yourself have when your eyes are closed. It's the time you forgave a brother when he should've been stoned. It's when you walk up to someone who is homeless and you give your last dollar or give voice to the oppressed, who can't even make a holler. Just think of songs from a church choir. Love is honest service. It is the service of "patience and kindness, without envy or boastfulness, nor is there proudness in your speech, self-seeking motives in your bosom, unrighteous anger or record of wrongs. When you love, you will fancy yourself with no evil of any sort but put on the full armor of righteousness. And most of all you will always protect, trust, love, hope and persevere in all circumstances."

*(1 Corinthians 13:4-8)*

An example of an honest service of love was on September 9, 2001. According to History.com "343 firefighters, 60 police officers, and 8 paramedics lost their own lives while trying to save the lives of others in the twin towers." This act was done selflessly and with all dauntlessness. They thought nothing of themselves while moving into a burning building. They thought only of the suffering of others, never the risk of losing their own lives in the process. Love is exactly this. It's putting others before yourself like those brave firefighters and policemen did.

Immanuel Kant said it best in his essay “Categorical Imperative” found in Moral Ethics by Steven Cahn when he stated that people ought to “Act in such a way that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, never merely as a means to an end, but always at the same time as an end.” In simpler terms, Kant is stating that people should not be used deceitfully for one’s own purposes but people should be treated loyally and humanely. This is what love is exactly. It is not the sacrifice of the other person for the bettering of oneself, but it is making a commitment to do what is right by everyone.

Mother Teresa knew of the power of love when she said “A smile is the beginning of love.” (BrainyQuote.com) This is what I do when I think of the way love, the love that I choose to show, has benefitted others: I smile. I smile because it’s stopped my cousin from taking her own life, it has given me something to live for and it makes a cruel world worth fighting for. Another quote from Mother Teresa also stated “I have found the paradox that if you love until it hurts, there can be no more hurt, only more love.” (Philosiblog.com) Even when love isn’t given back, all it does is make the love inside yourself even stronger.

Another faithful devotee to love was Martin Luther King Junior. He is a great example because even in the midst of protest, resistance against law, abuse, aggravation and oppression King remained peaceful. He stuck by his morals. When they “slapped one cheek he turned to let them slap the other.” (Matthew 5:39 ) He states that “Love is the only force capable of transforming an enemy into a friend.” (BrainyQuote.com) Through his work of passive resistance and peaceful protest, for the civil rights movement, King was able to be a symbol of love even in such an adverse situation and he became a friend to even the people who oppressed him.

The people I have mentioned above were all self sacrificing, kind hearted and nearly perfect representations of love but in my own life, I have had many struggles living up to those same standards. For example, my younger siblings love to come into my room and use all my nail polishes, steal my favorite clothes and make a mess of my perfectly spread bed. When I realize what they've done, my first instinct is to avenge the wrong. I want to destroy their rooms until it looks like a tornado passed through. I want to yell at them until I see tears form at the side of their eyes. But yet, what I'm supposed to do, in the act of love, is to forgive them and have patience. I should realize their young and their exploring. It almost their job to make a mess of things. But still, I didn't always take this road. There were times I decided I would let them see the worst of me and have nothing to do with love at all. To help myself not to revert to my instinctual actions, I thought about a verse in the bible. It states "Do unto others what you want done unto you." (Matthew 7:12) From this I learned, it was never about reattributing the wrongs done to me but always treating others the way I want to be treated. This helped me learn to forgive my sisters and even join in now when they make messes. I also learned from my mistake that although love is perfect and the capability to love is in us, we are not love so therefore we are not perfect. So when we love, many times we will fail. The most important thing to do is to love yourself enough to forgive yourself. And once you've done that, get up again and keep on going.

Although this road of living a life of love is a tough one. It is still one worth striving for. If I didn't attempt to love each and everyday, my life would be completely different. I would not be able to build strong relationships with others because my motives within the relationships would be completely different. Instead of being selfless, understanding, kind and forgiving towards others in the name of love, I would think of myself, hold grudges and remember wrongs. For example, I had a best friend who in the tenth grade, told everyone that I had a crush on a boy in our class named David. I told my friend this secret in confidence. I didn't think she'd end up telling everyone. Part of me wanted betray all of her secrets and never talk to her again but when I thought of what the right thing to do was, when I thought of love, I knew that my first choice wasn't it. So when she came to me sincerely apologizing, I decided to forgive her and to this day we still have a strong friendship. If I didn't make a conscious effort everyday to live a loving life, if I never knew about love, my best friend and I would not still be friends.

To conclude, love is an intentional action. It's more than something you feel. It's sacrifice, bravery, selflessness, compassion and most of all it's forgiveness for wrongs. My life would never be the same without it. So for this reason I know, there is truly no other moral duty more potent or more imperative than love.

## Work Cited

- "9/11 Attacks." *History.com*. A&E Television Networks, n.d. Web. 04 Nov. 2015.
- "Martin Luther King, Jr. Quote." *BrainyQuote*. Xplore, n.d. Web.
- "BibleGateway." *Matthew 7:12*. N.p., n.d. Web.
- "BibleGateway." *1 Corinthians 13:4-8*. N.p., n.d. Web.
- "BibleGateway." *Matthew 5:39 NIV*. N.p., n.d. Web.
- "I Have Found the Perfect Paradox..". - Philosiblog." *Philosiblog*. N.p.,
- "Mother Teresa Quotes." *BrainyQuote*. Xplore, n.d. Web.
- Cahn, Steven M. "The Categorical Imperative." *Exploring Ethics: An Introductory Anthology*. New York: Oxford UP, 2009. N. pag. Web.