



# First-Gen Voices: Creative and Critical Narratives on the First-Generation College Experience

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## Radical Love: Embracing Connection and Dismantleing Shame

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# *Personal Philosophy*



Lisette Gonzalez

### Radical Love - Embracing Connection and Dismantling Shame

People who feel, love, and care, especially those who do so deeply and intensely are disappearing day by day. I first noticed this when a friend not so long ago pointed out how scared people are to love. He talked about how there's so much shame and second guessing is present in little moments of love. Tiny moments like waving "hi" at a passing classmate or telling your friends how much they mean to you. We are living in a world where people are being taught and conditioned to be scared to love. However, to love, you must feel and care simultaneously. To be scared to love means to be scared to feel and care.

The people who continue to feel, love, and care are made to feel crazy and alone. In the face of so much oppression, marginalization, political and civil unrest, I do not blame people for being scared. I understand how much easier it is to ignore the pain and the hurt of others; however, this is not a justification. I urge everyone to join the journey that strives to feel, love, and care and to do so publicly. As a person who finds themselves struggling when feeling, loving, and caring deeply, I know how exhausting and overwhelming it is. It's also incredibly isolating and I feel crazy 95% of the time. Unfortunately, my intense feelings, love, and deep caring have been attacked in attempts to make me a cold person, only furthering the hurt and pain I feel as a consequence for feeling, loving, and caring. Systematic attacks like this are active attempts to scare and stray people away from feeling, loving, and caring into becoming people who won't and cannot stand to feel, love, or care.

While deep feeling, loving, and caring are important, it only marks the first step and should not make the end. Acting on the deep and intense love and care manifests in meaningful and radical change. Nothing has taught me more than this trip to Costa Rica. Reflecting on all the amazing, empowering, and inspiring people, organizations, and stories, none of their work would

have beautiful or productive without feelings, love, and care. All the work being done by these amazing people is radical because it encompasses feelings (pain, hurt, joy, disappointment), care, and love to become this special thing that creates a better world starting locally. This special thing connects all the different mission statements into a collective fight to rescue and preserve humanity.

With all the wars and genocides happening, we all must stand with Palestine, Congo, all indigenous peoples, and countless more. We cannot stand to lose hope, feeling, love and care. The day all the people who feel deeply, love intensely, and care tremendously “die” out, humanity will die with it. This work is not easy, it is exhausting, lonely, and a continuous uphill battle against systems that produce a cold and uncaring majority. We must be brave in the face of horror and scared people. We must care in the face of cold systems and produced people. We must love in the face of hate from the people who have been taught to be ashamed of and for loving and institutions who instill this. We must be comfortable with feeling publicly and to do that takes bravery, courage, feeling, love, and care. We can give all our love, care, and feelings without giving none to ourselves and as much as it is to share our feelings, love, and care, we also must have some for ourselves.

The next time someone shares a painful truth, experience, and story and you feel it all. It is exactly because you are emotional. You are sensitive. That is not bad to be either one of these things. There is nothing more beautiful and empowering then to be someone who feels a lot, loves radically and cares in a big way.