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Leading with Love

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Dear Community,

I have learned that love is such a complex feeling and requires a lot of energy out of each and every one of us. It can drain us, take away from us, and make us feel defeated. However, I have also discovered that the absence of love will lead to our entire demise. When we cannot step back for a moment from our own personal beliefs and understand that there exists multiple truths in the world we will always forget our humanity. We cannot be so tied to what we have always known that we are unwilling to empathize with others. This lack of love will be our eventual downfall.

After traveling to Costa Rica on a study abroad immersion where I learned of so many people who were so invested and concerned with giving back to their communities. With no motives other than to see their communities flourish and be as sustainable as possible in a society that has built itself on destroying what was once theirs. The black and indigenous communities that we met spoke on this heavily as many of their goals were to continue this work throughout continuing generations. It was important to all of them that their work didn't stop with their generation but rather it continued and only expanded into the future ones. It caused me to think of what in my communities I am doing to create sustainable change so that those after me can continue my work. Everything was done because they simply cared about the people in their communities who needed extra support physically, mentally, and emotionally.

These community meetings at farms with black and indigenous women/ women identifying groups showed me what can easily happen when we aren't afraid to care for one another. They showed me that we are meant to love, protect and nourish our communities, people and land included. This wasn't love like infatuation, but rather the love that makes you feel protective, that keeps you up at night, and makes you feel as though you are unable to go to sleep without doing something to help. Being able to experience the love that these women had for their communities altered the way in which I viewed my own role within my communities.

I couldn't be more thankful for this part of my experience as it has made me think of the ways in which we can begin to create more and more For Us By Us models in the places and spaces that we occupy simply because we care about the wellbeing of one another. This has become an essential philosophy that I live by because my liberation is tied into the liberation of all other people. If everyone isn't free I will never understand or know what true freedom is in this world.

The women I met and the communities I spoke to radically changed my perception on the value of my work. These black and indigenous women have inspired me to find purpose and value in the work that I do. As a result, after this trip I want to be as intentional as possible with what I put my energy into, and make sure that the work that I do only uplifts the communities and spaces that I occupy.

With love,
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