



TED TALK DISCUSSION GUIDE

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THE TED TALK: 3 LESSONS OF REVOLUTIONARY LOVE IN AN ERA OF ENORMOUS RAGE

What is the antidote to tyranny, nationalism, polarization and hate in the US and around the globe? Movement lawyer, filmmaker, and civil rights activist Valarie Kaur argues that we must reclaim love as a public ethic. Kaur redefines love as a form of sweet labor — bloody, imperfect, life-giving. When we pour love in three directions — toward others, opponents, and ourselves, then love becomes revolutionary. Through a journey that spans the birthing room to sites of bloodshed, Kaur leaves us with a singular call to action: How do we begin to birth a new future? Do like the midwife says: Breathe. Then... Push.

ABOUT THIS DISCUSSION GUIDE

When Valarie Kaur's TED Talk "**3 Lessons of Revolutionary Love in a Time of Rage**" was released in February 2018, people came together to host more than 200 watch parties across the U.S. They used this discussion guide, created by the Revolutionary Love Project and #LoveArmy (a former initiative of Dream Corps). Now we invite you to watch the TED talk in community and use this guide. Hosting a watch party provides a chance to connect with each other and deepen our practice of the love ethic in our lives and movements. In hosting your own gathering, you are joining a movement of people who are committed to making revolutionary love a conscious practice in their lives and communities.

This guide is designed to support you in facilitating your discussion. It includes a suggested format, embodied practices, guidelines for holding space, and questions to provide a deeper exploration of the revolutionary love framework Kaur introduces in her talk. The times offered are suggestions - please feel free to cultivate the space and format that best suits your group.

FACILITATING YOUR DISCUSSION

1. **Welcome (3-5 mins):** As a host, we encourage you to **welcome everyone to the gathering**. Share briefly about why this event is meaningful for you, and let them know what to expect from the evening.
2. **Introductions:** If your group is small enough and includes people who do not yet know each other, we encourage you to **take some time to allow people to introduce themselves and share what brought them to the event**. For example: “Why are you here tonight?” Remind people to keep their answers brief.
3. **Breathe Together (Literally!):** Deep breathing invites the body into full participation and prepares the mind to embrace new information. If you are comfortable **leading a breathing exercise**, go through these steps with your group before the video:
 - *Breathe in on a count of one to four, inflating first the belly, then the rib cage, then the lungs, chest, throat and all the way up to the crown of your head.*
 - *Pause when you are at the top, full of breath. Hold the breath in for a count of four.*
 - *Begin to exhale, counting down from four to one, first deflating the chest, then the rib cage, then the belly.*
 - *Pause when the breath is fully emptied, and hold the navel in, restricting the breath for a count of four.*
 - *Repeat five rounds of breath.*

[Source](#)

(~1 min)

4. **Watch the video:** [click here to play](#) Valarie Kaur’s TED Talk, 3 Lessons of Revolutionary Love in an Era of Enormous Rage . (24 mins)
5. **Embodied Reflection:** After the film ends, **read the following questions** to your group for individual reflection. (~15 mins)

Sample: “In the talk, we heard Valarie ask the question, ‘Who have we not yet tried to love?’ This will be the question we take up together. Before we begin our group discussion, I’m going to read a meditation to help us reflect on this question. You can close your eyes and just listen and reflect, or use some paper to write your responses”

Allow a few moments of silence between questions - some folks may want to jot some notes down, and some may need to read the questions themselves.

- **#1. Love Others: See No Stranger: Who do you tend to see as a stranger?**

Imagine everyone around you is a part of yourself that you do not yet know. When you look at faces on the street or screen, can you imagine saying in your mind: Sister, Brother, Sibling, Son, Daughter, Aunt, Uncle? What will you now wonder about them? What new stories and histories might you hear? And if you see them in harm's way, where do your feet want to move? *(Allow for silent reflection)*

- **#2. Love Opponents: Tend the Wound: Who do you see as your opponent?**

Can you wonder about even them? Most people inflict harm out of their own sense of threat, real or perceived. What would happen if your opponent no longer felt threatened? How does this insight change the way you respond to them? If these questions trigger anger or grief in your body, what do you need for release and freedom? *(Allow for silent reflection)*

- **#3. Love Ourselves: Breathe and Push:** What is your labor in the world, in your family, in the movement? Whom do you pour love into, and who pours love into you? How do you breathe each day? Who is breathing with you? What would it take to bring the wellness you want in the world into your own body and home? Joy nourishes our spirits and strengthens our resolve to fight for what is good and beautiful. What brings you joy? What do you need to do to make joy part of your life each day? *(Allow for silent reflection)*

6. **Prepare to Discuss:** Invite people to break into small groups of at least 3 and at most 8. Before presenting the discussion question, you'll want to establish some agreements about the space. We offer one way to do it, but maybe you have your own! (~5 mins)

- You could read the following ground rules for discussion aloud in the same way:

*As we begin our discussion time together, remember that **our shared commitment is to learn from each other.***

*We ask that **we all acknowledge and value differences in backgrounds, values and life experiences.***

***Listen actively**—respect others when they are talking.*

*Share stories, not opinions. **Speak from your own experience instead of generalizing** (start with “I” instead of “they,” “we,” and “you.”)*

***Speak your discomfort.** Do not be afraid to respectfully challenge one another by asking questions, but refrain from personal attacks—focus on ideas.*

The goal is not to agree—it’s about hearing and exploring divergent perspectives.

*Be conscious of body language and nonverbal responses—**they can be as disrespectful as words.***

Participate with awareness of your intentions and impact to ensure they match.

*Maintain **confidentiality about personal sharing**; feel free to discuss the film with others.*

7. **Push Together:** Discuss. In small groups, invite people to share their responses to the following questions. (~30 mins+)

- *Who is it that I have not yet tried to love?*
- *Who is it that we as a community have not yet tried to love?*
- *What are the next steps we can take together?”*

8. **Keep Pushing: Closing** When you’re doing deep emotional work, it’s especially important to be intentional about closing down the meeting. At the end of the discussion time, reconvene the group, thank them for being willing to enter into this necessary discussion, and provide opportunities for the dialogue to continue. You’ll want to check in, give a few next steps or close any open business, and to provide a quick space for emotional resolution.

(10-15 mins)

- Do a temperature check with your group - are they interested in convening again to continue the conversation and develop your practice together? Maybe start a pocket of revolutionary love? We invite you to check out our [free online learning hub here](#) for additional tools to continue your exploration of revolutionary love (including a reader's guide for Valarie Kaur's book SEE NO STRANGER, a guide to the practices of the revolutionary love compass and a downloadable educator's guide).
- Take a deep breath together and ask everyone to share a single word that describes how they're feeling as they leave the gathering. Thank everyone again for being willing to enter this necessary and messy conversation.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

BOOKS

These seven books shaped Valarie Kaur's understanding on how to think about and practice love as a public ethic and force for social justice today.

[All About Love: New Visions](#)

bell hooks

William Morrow, 2010

This is the seminal work on love as a public ethic. bell hooks declares that “all spheres of American life -- politics, religion, the workplace, domestic households, intimate relations -- should and could have as their foundation a love ethic.” Because love is more than a feeling -- love is sweet labor that can be modeled, taught, *and* practiced.

[Becoming Wise: An Inquiry into the Mystery and Art of Living](#)

Krista Tippett

Penguin Press, 2017

If you order one book, let this one be it. It's a breathtaking tapestry of the prophetic voices of our time and includes mentors who have advanced my understanding of love and wisdom -- Eve Ensler, Parker Palmer, Brian McLaren, Rabbi Sharon Brous, and Sister Simone Campbell, among others. Reading this book is a meditation.

[Behave](#)

Robert Sapolsky

Penguin Press, 2017

This is my go-to encyclopedia! A dazzling history of the science behind our worst human impulses and our best human behaviors that equip us to love in revolutionary ways. The studies in this book allow us to ground practices of the love ethic in the latest research in biology and neuroscience.

[Teachings of the Sikh Gurus: Selections from the Sikh Scriptures](#)

Christopher Shackle & Arvind Mandair

Routledge, 2005

I have carried this book in my bag for more than a decade. It is my favorite compilation of devotional poems from the Sikh faith that call us to a vision of Oneness, *Ik Onkar*. These teachings inspired my own understanding of a fierce, embodied, warrior love. My copy is worn from multiple readings!

[We Too Sing America](#)

Deepa Iyer

The New Press, 2017

This is *the* must-read book on the social justice struggles of Sikh, Muslim, Arab, and South Asian Americans since 9/11. Our sister and veteran activist Deepa Iyer tells the stories America has yet to hear and presents a pragmatic blueprint for how we can shift culture *and* policy. My lessons in love in a time of rage were forged in the shared history she chronicles here.

[The Radical King](#)

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. & Cornel West

Beacon Press, 2016

It's time to remember and reclaim the King who opposed war and named the triple evils of racism, poverty, and militarism. It's also time to advance his vision for a new time. Check out this book and then come to the [Revolutionary Love Conference: Complete the Dream](#) hosted by the Rev. Dr. Jacqui Lewis to explore how love can end the triple evils *and* a fourth evil, sexism.

[Beyond the Messy Truth: How We Came Apart, How We Come Together](#)

Van Jones

Ballantine Books, 2017

So what in the world does love look like in politics? Our brother and co-conspirator Van Jones shows us in this book, part-manifesto, part-tough love letter to Americans at a time of escalation nationalism, polarization, and hate. This is a book for here and now -- and just might inspire you to seed your own pocket of revolutionary love.