

BLACK LOVE MATTERS: A Painting to Express Black Love in the Era
of New Jim Crow.

by Donald "C-Note" Hooker

Recently I have began to make charity donations of some of my favorite and long held works of my art. This particular work, *Black Love Matters*, I have donated to the national office of Critical Resistance. Critical Resistance (CR) is a national grassroots organization. They are building an international movement to abolish the Prison Industrial Complex. CR publishes a print publication three times a year called the *Abolitionist*. When most people hear the word "Abolitionist," they think of slavery. The Thirteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution which ended slavery states, "Slavery shall be abolished unless duly convicted." That means slavery has not been abolished in the United States but is still legal for all its prisoners. If you don't know who I am, or are unfamiliar with my work, my name is Donald "C-Note" Hooker, or better known as C-Note. I am also known as "The King of Prison Hip Hop," or the "American Ai Weiwei." So named after the former Chinese prisoner, artist, activist, dissident, and probably the biggest contemporary artist on the planet right now. You can look me up on Google, and if you were to ask Google, "Who is America's most prolific prisoner-artist?"; or "Who is the world's most prolific prisoner-artist?"; I would

be ranked #1. I have asked several persons or groups with websites or other social media platforms, if they would publish the background story in the making of *Black Love Matters*.

Black Love Matters is a painting that was specifically produced for an epic poem I had written entitled, *It Must End!: BLACK FEMALE BOYCOTTS AGAINST BLACK MEN IN THE PEN*. The poem is about the intimate relationship between the incarcerated Black man, and the free Black woman in the era of Black Lives Matter. It is an exemplary piece of work that exemplifies Neo Jim Crow. For the uninitiated, Neo Jim Crow is a prisoner led art movement by African Americans. Neo Jim Crow is the drawings, writings, sound recordings, and videos, of incarcerated African Americans, and functions as a cultural record of incarceration on the Black experience in America. It is the artistic expression of New Jim Crow. The poem was initially titled, *I Hate Black Women*, but because I don't hate Black women, but love Black women; I felt some sort of visual was needed to neutralize the harshness in the poem's title. Much debate went into the title of the poem with fellow prisoners; until I eventually settled on the title being *Dear Black Women*. The painting was then published under that title. After some more back and forth with other prisoners who felt my gut instincts to the title *I Hate Black Women* was correct, I decided to change the name back to *I Hate Black Women*. Also, it didn't help that the name *Dear Black Women* was too much

akin to Tupac's *Dear Mamma*. In other words, my title, *Dear Black Women*, lacked originality. When it dawned on me that Google and Facebook algorithms would probably only see the title of this work, and deem the work as hate speech, once again I had to change the title of the piece. I finally settled on its current incarnation of *It Must End!*. I then republished the painting under this new title. As a result of the Millions for Prisoners Human Rights March, and the length of the title, I changed the painting's name to *Black Love Matters*. Since you can purchase the piece on canvas or in greeting cards, this name change was commercially more appealing. The painting is my very first collage. I look to using collages as a visual medium of expiency when I already have some literary piece finished, but I want to publish it with a visual, as in a Paintoem.

The prison bars was done with multiple colored ink pens. Ink is a traditional medium for prison art. The woman is of a darker skinned Black woman, and that was by design. Historically, it's been the lighter spectrum of Blackness as being held up to epitomize Black feminine beauty in America. This implication being her hue is nearer to White feminine beauty. This narrative of Black feminine beauty has been perpetrated even when Blacks control the casting, especially Black males, e.g., music videos. Because this is a known complaint in the Black community, that

our lightskinned sisters are our go to girls, I could not participate in that. This is a painting about love for the Black woman, and for me, the darker hued sister leaves no ambiguity that Black womanhood is being held up as a standard of beauty. As to the photo, it was a photo I had took in the auts after the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation lifted a 10-year-ban on prisoner photo taking within the institutions. Obviously, the picture just fits.

[Editor's Note]: You can purchase *Black Love Matters* online, in print, on canvas, clothing, greeting cards, and other fine products at Fine Art America.

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Black Love Matters (2016)

5.5 x 8.5 (14 x 21.6 cm)

Collage and ink on paper

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<http://fineartamerica.com/featured/black-love-matters-cn.html>