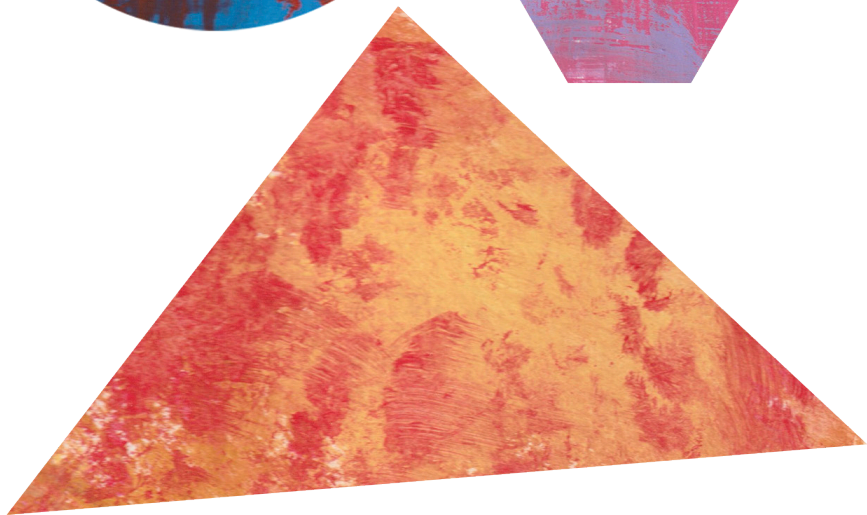
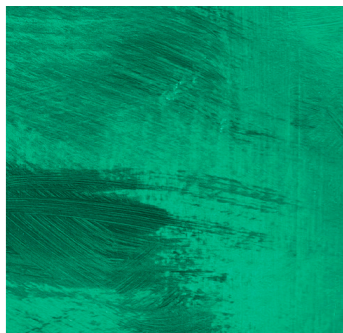
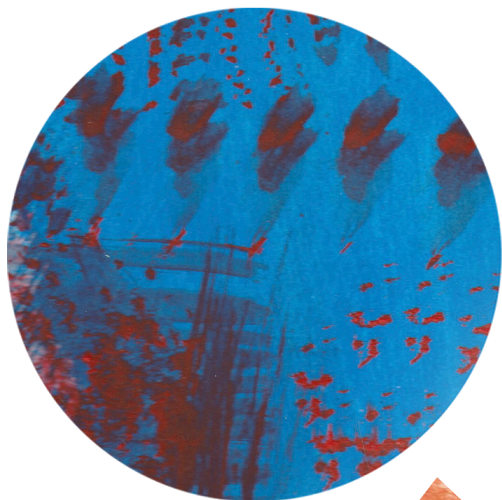


# Relationships



Volume 1

This zine is a collage of ideas, a gemstone with many facets in which hopefully you will find yourself reflected. Part ethnography, part love letter, part sandbox, consider as you read your relationships — what shapes do they take? Why? What's working for you? What isn't?

What possibilities exist beyond the systems and structures that determine how we connect, how intimacy is formed? There are more options out there. There are people who want to see you thrive in your authenticity!

We hope this little art object you now hold in your hands pulls aside the curtain of normativity and gives you a peek into the world of ethical (consensual) non-monogamy. This ain't a Google search, and it ain't therapy (although both are highly recommended). This is an opportunity for the reader, you, in the privacy of your own mind, to rearrange the shapes of your life and perhaps even discover new and loving ways of relating to others, and relating to yourself.

I like being a representation of the fact that

# LOVE IS INFINITE,

you know? I love embodying that. That's not to say everybody should be polyam, or that monogamy can't have its own version of infinitude.

It feels very natural to me to just be loving multiple people. It's a feeling that's hard to describe for people who have not experienced it. It's like a self-generated cycle. When you have partnership, and you both are committed to openly communicating, and to loving each other and actively being in each other's lives, to be able to share your love and excitement about a different partner with another partner, it's just like—

First of all, you have to already be at such a good level. They have to already feel confident and respected for you to even bring it up, and then you bring it up and you share it, which is its own feeling of goodness, and then they just reflect that love back to you or maybe even add onto it.

They can add to it.

So it's just like, this feeling is like ---

it's so hard to describe just how powerful it is.

Of like, "Damn, our relationship is solid. Damn, I have this other person who I also fucking love, and damn, I can talk to you about it. You're not only not jealous and not upset, but you are loving and happy about it." Which, let's be real, it just makes me want to fuck the shit out of that person, too. I'm like, "Oh my god! I want to give you a good orgasm."

You still are always going to have pangs of insecurity, jealousy, all of that.

But that's just the work.

Those are the places where it's like, "Oh, what's that about?" I can't really think of an equivalent, honestly, to try to explain to straight people or monogamous people what that might be. It feels good, compersion itself.

If you're in the position of hearing your partner talk about someone else they love. There's just more space for being happy for the other person. It makes you just feel more confident about yourself and about your relationship.

**Again, it takes time and work to get there.**

## **The work is in the everyday things.**

Which I think is the case with any relationship. Sometimes you can just get jealous about the tiniest things, you know?

So the work is, “Okay, what is that about? Is there something I’m feeling insecure about in our relationship? In myself and our connection?”

Sometimes that involves having a conversation with your partner and sometimes it doesn’t. Sometimes actually it’s just like, “Oh, this is an old thought pattern that I have that’s just poppin’ back up.”

I came across this exercise recently. If you have a negative thought that plagues you, like, “Oh, I’m such an idiot” or some phrase you always say to yourself, physically write it down. When you have that thought, actually cross it out and write something that’s the antithesis. I feel like there’s a version of that that has to happen with polyamory. Of constantly crossing out things that that are actually coming from a place of insecurity. Or just fear.

## **It's a lot of conversation.**

When you do talk to your partner or partners, it's so much talking, mostly about boundaries. It's a constantly continuing exploration of boundaries. It feels good.

It feels really good! I'm committed in those relationships to continually, and in a raw way, exploring how we are feeling. How are you feeling, how am I feeling, how are you feeling about my feelings and vice versa, you know?

There's so many feelings. I'm committed to showing up and being honest with my feelings, being honest when I really, really don't want to, or just have a really hard time saying whatever it is that's in my heart. Having those conversations. Pushing through it. Being open to continually redefine definitions of what our love looks like. Continually committing to look at it and work with it and be in relation with each other. Show up. I can rely on it and that feels good- that solid backing of, "This person is always going to have my back." And that is just really nice.

I was in monogamous relationships in my '20s and was also kind of a people pleaser. I wanted to give them what they wanted and be what they wanted and so I was just really, really focused on them.

I did get kind of taken away, carried away. I was just doing whatever they wanted me to do. It's so weird, I still don't really know how I even got in that situation. Because it's so different than how I am as a person.

Now that I've been out of that for a handful of years, the pain and the processing of all of that is helped by polyamory. It helps me feel more in control. It makes me feel like I'm more of an active participant in the relationship. I know my own boundaries more and I know that I would advocate for myself more if I found myself in similar situations of power dynamics being off. I just don't feel like I'm ever going to get in a situation like that again.

After those pretty damaging relationships, I was like, "I am into dating, but I am not into monogamy." I was afraid of it, honestly. I lost myself in those

relationships. I came out of that and was like, "Alright, I'm setting this boundary. I'm no longer going to be anyone's everything. I'm here to be my everything for me." Before I was letting myself just be taken away by these manipulative relationships that I found myself in. **Polyamory is a continuing tool of empowerment for myself.**

I remember when people found out I was bisexual the question was always, "Well, who do you think you're gonna end up with? A man or a woman?" It was never like, "Oh, you could have both," you know? I never really imagined it in some ways. For me personally, it does feel almost like a part of who I am. Because I never really thought about it at all, but that's just like how I was. And so I guess I just always assumed I would just be with one person at some point, you know, and maybe I would just change. I don't know, I never really thought about actually living a polyamorous lifestyle.

I never envisioned it. I never saw any models of that. Honestly, like I can't think of any positive role models of that at all during that time.



Maybe Three's Company? I don't know. I think that was the closest. I mean, I started the gay-straight alliance at my high school, so that tells you where I am in the chain of progression of things. We were just starting to advocate for gay kids. And like, poly, wasn't even a conversation, really. I never really thought about my future...

**When I tell you I'm living my dream, like, I am living my dream.** I have this super babe girlfriend who loves the shit out of me, and I have this man that wants to marry me, and I'm just like, "Wow! And everybody knows about it, and everybody's cool with it. What?!" I feel like I'm living a dream that I never even let myself have because I didn't know that it was possible.

**Christine S.**

Floyd, VA

# Resources

## **THE DC CENTER**

Polyamory Group Discussion  
every third Thursday via Zoom  
[thedccenter.org](http://thedccenter.org) | 202.682.2245

## **DC PUBLIC LIBRARY**

Books, Audio Books  
[dclibrary.org](http://dclibrary.org) | 202.727.0321 (MLK Branch)

## **BMOREPOLY**

DC/MD/VA social events,  
workshops and hangs  
[BMorePoly.org](http://BMorePoly.org)

## **BLACK AND POLY DMV**

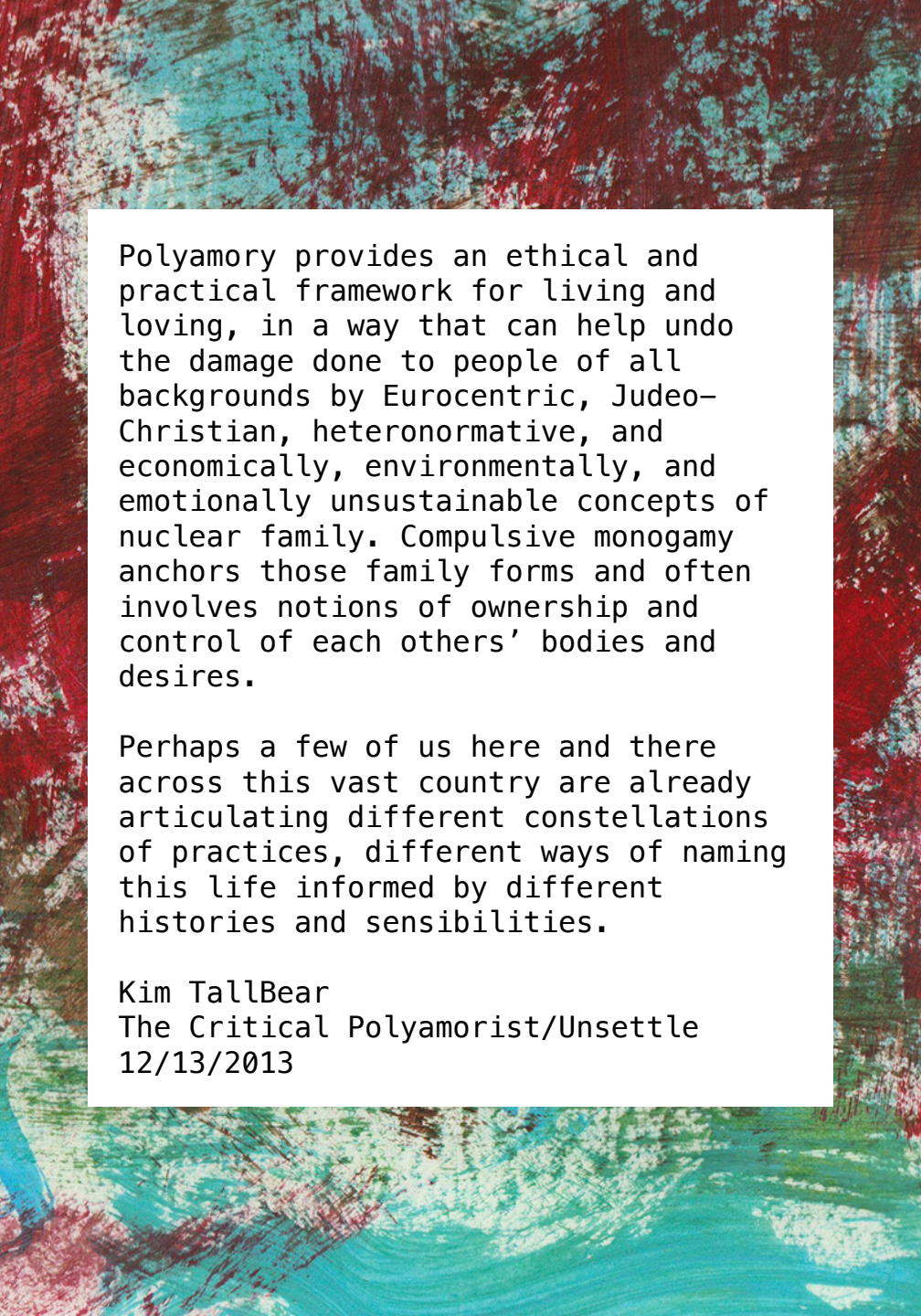
DC/MD/VA social events,  
workshops and hangs  
[Meetup.com/Black-Poly-DMV](https://www.meetup.com/Black-Poly-DMV)

## Activity!

How many different ways can you group the forms below? Sort and re-sort them into as many combinations as you can.



Hint: There are AT LEAST 8 ways to group the forms.



Polyamory provides an ethical and practical framework for living and loving, in a way that can help undo the damage done to people of all backgrounds by Eurocentric, Judeo-Christian, heteronormative, and economically, environmentally, and emotionally unsustainable concepts of nuclear family. Compulsive monogamy anchors those family forms and often involves notions of ownership and control of each others' bodies and desires.

Perhaps a few of us here and there across this vast country are already articulating different constellations of practices, different ways of naming this life informed by different histories and sensibilities.

Kim TallBear  
The Critical Polyamorist/Unsettle  
12/13/2013

# Journal

feel free to use this space to reflect, daydream, jot, or ponder on what you've read so far in this zine — (or even experiment with the exercise mentioned in the interview!)

ex. 1: ~~I'm such an idiot~~

There are some things I know a lot about

ex. 2: ~~That person is so much more attractive than me~~

I have special and unique things to offer in my relationships, which attract others towards me

You could  
also use this  
page for doodles,  
grocery lists, love  
letters, or even  
math problems!

RELATIONSHAPES is an oral history fanzine created on stolen land, the unceded territory of Nacotchtank (Anacostan) and Piscataway peoples. Lovingly made by and for the queer, polyamorous, and gender nonconforming communities (and their friends and families) using handpainted paper, computer magic, and community encouragement.

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