

## **No Place like Home**

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**Abstract:** This article describes the connection between love and one's "home". It is this love and a strong sense of place or connection to one's home that ushers in the need for sustainability

**Keywords:** Love, sustainability, home, place

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“Love is a most splendid thing.  
It feels you up in a rich and wholesome way,  
Enveloping you in a serenity that comforts your heart  
And blankets your mind with a soothing peace.  
It can start like a tiny cocoon nestled deep in your belly,  
Building and growing with each interaction  
Until butterflies emerge, soft and fluttery,  
Mimicking the quickness of your heartbeat.  
Love is intoxicating, a nectar from the sweetest fruit.  
It fills your senses with a deep aroma,  
Penetrating every pore, glistening on your very skin.  
You drink of this elixir with fervent and inextinguishable thirst  
And lull away on its sensual power.  
Love binds you in a tightening grip  
And in it you feel so safe and secure.  
It wraps you gently, releasing a sigh of pleasure.  
It softly kisses your forehead and you know you are protected.  
No embrace is too hard that you pull away,  
Wishing for freedom or gasping for air.  
No, you savor its embrace,  
Resting deep and peaceful in its gentle hold.  
Love is so many wonderful things,  
Unimaginable in size, immeasurable in wealth,  
A precious gem given freely.  
Thank you for this wonderful gift,  
A most splendid, beautiful thing  
That is you”

- Tameria M. Warren

What can elicit this kind of love? Does it come from our first crushes or those lovers who have stolen our hearts? Is it the emotional feeling that parents get when they reflect upon their children? Is it the deep sense of pride and connection we experience when thinking about “home”? What could stir up such a response, one that exposes an individual to the world in such an open and vulnerable way?

I won't disclose the origins of this poem, but I will share that its meaning transcends more than one experience. Particularly as I continue on this journey of research and reflection in my academic studies, the attributes of love expressed in this poem *do* relate to my home. And not the house I currently occupy- that would be my personal sanctuary away from the demands of work and other obligations. No, my “home” is that place on my right hand that, when pointed out using my left index finger, sits in the meaty flesh below my thumb and above my wrist. The mere fact I have this personal frame of reference lends to how I can physically hold my “heart” (aka, hometown) in my hand.



That special place for me is the city of Detroit, located in the southeastern corner of the state of Michigan (hence the hand reference!). Sometimes my feelings about my hometown are indescribable- it is a mixture of the love/hate relationship often seen with siblings and that undeniable love that is transferred from parent to child. Sometimes the experiences are good, yet sometimes you feel like throwing your hands up in exasperation! For me, my sense of place is so strong and consuming, any anger fades into doe-eyed love and a desire to seek out solutions rather than confrontation. I challenge the negative perceptions and grimy imagery with a reality I have witnessed- residents, both old and new, working to piece together a reputation fractured by historical challenges, racial tensions, economic downturns, and political strife. What ensues is a beautifully reconstructed mosaic of dreams, hopes, renewal, revitalization, and growth. And leading the charge is a growing community of residents, activists, entrepreneurs, and young visionaries, all working towards growing environmental and sustainable efforts within the city. It is as if the Motor City is being run on alternative fuel technology!

This is my personal love affair, but I am sure that many other people feel just as passionate about their hometowns, native countries, or current places of residence. Whether it is a deep connection to the land itself or the history that connects one to their ancestors, people all across this world have a uniquely personal affinity to their “homes”. And with that love usually comes a desire to see it flourish in a way that is beneficial for the citizens and prosperous for its

economy. I suspect they want their communities to be vibrant with thriving businesses, suitable housing, effective schools, and areas accessible to nature- parks, beaches, walking trails, ancestral grounds, or even yards where their children can run outdoors and play. What is more, I believe these are the desires held by people of all cultures and demographics. From westernized countries of the Global North to those developing countries in the Global South, we all want the best for the lands we inhabit or the homes we moved away from.

We want our governments to enact laws and policies that protect our lands from destructive practices. We want businesses to provide economic opportunities without destroying the beauty of nature surrounding us or depleting resources for future needs and generations. We want to fight for the rights of populations indigenous to certain environments and communities and neighborhoods. We want all of these things because regardless of our backgrounds and statuses, the lands means something to us. And it does not matter if the land is urban or rural, poor or prosperous, culturally homogenous or a rich racial brew. When it holds a special place in our hearts, we only want the best for it. I know that is what I want for mine's.

My poem tells the story of not just how I feel about my hometown, but what it gives in return to me. It is a place of familiarity, a safe haven from the world around me. It reminds me of who I am and the struggles and joyous occasions that have shaped my life. At every turn, I can see the land that makes the city what it is. The tree-lined streets we rode our bikes along. The cool breeze of the Detroit River that separated us from our "southern" Canadian neighbor. The many forms of precipitation that marked the four seasons. It has been a source of life that is unexplainable, but very much understandable if the same sentiment is felt by others about their own cities or hometowns.

This journey towards sustainability education has given me an opportunity to reflect on the concept of "place" and what it means to different people. For me, it evokes love and I can only imagine (or hope) that others feel just as strongly because it lights a catalyst to strive for sustainable changes across the world. Detroit has been one of my first loves and I hope as I grow as an individual and broaden my studies in sustainability, I can strengthen the relationship we have forged. And hopefully that love can continue to mature and blossom into a gift that can be shared with others. Maybe a gift of community engagement, maybe a gift of economic development. Whatever it is, I give it freely because love is the gift that keeps on giving.