

RELATIONSHIP GOALS:  
Black Love Story

Area Couple Shares Love For Each Other, Family, Community

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Black love is beautiful, it's multidimensional and it can be quite revolutionary. Celebration of Black love shouldn't be relegated to just Valentine's Day or Black History Month, it's a 365-days-a-year vibe, or in the case of 2024, 366.

The OBSERVER recently sat down with four area couples to talk about the power of Black love and modeling healthy relationships for their families and the wider community. This week, we feature area activists Teah Hairston and Keon Johnson, who have been together for six years.



A Higher Love

The moment Teah Hairston first laid eyes on Keon Johnson was caught on Facebook Live as the two were outside Golden 1 Center protesting the death of an unarmed Black man killed by Sacramento police officers. The crowd had blocked the arena, barring Kings fans from entering, effectively shutting it down.

"I was at the bullhorn and I was talking my talk," Johnson says of addressing the assembled crowd.

That was March 22, 2018, and Hairston admits to being instantly captivated.

"I started recording in his direction," Hairston recalls. "He started looking directly at me and pointing at me. In that moment, it was a moment; just that whole experience of what our city was feeling, what our people specifically were feeling, what we were feeling and where we were at in our lives. It was just the energy all over him that was magnetic."

The pull was there, but Hairston and Johnson didn't actually speak until "randomly" running into each other two weeks later at the African Market Place. Located inside the Florin Square complex in South Sacramento, the African Market Place provides opportunities to support Black business, Black art and culture. Hairston remembers Johnson giving her a tour of the building and showing her a mural that covers a wall behind what is now the Sojourner Truth African Heritage Museum. To this day, the



While dedicating themselves to their community, Teah Hairston and Keon Johnson also have carved out time for a relationship built on respecting one another and protecting each other's peace. **Louis Bryant III, OBSERVER**

museum has a special place in their hearts.

The two learned they had mutual friends, shared a lot of similarities and even had birthdays a few days apart.

Talking about Johnson brings an automatic smile to Hairston's face. The feeling is mutual.

"I rock with her," he says. "I trust her and I love her. When

you're a conscious-minded individual, I think that has a lot to do with everything. In terms of who we are, the 'Black' is at the forefront. It's love, but it's the urgency to be there for 'us' and for ourselves.

"She's one of the truest people I know, one of the smartest people I know. She's very intelligent. She's down. She's down like a MF in a real way

and she's worthy. Whatever I have to offer, she's worthy of it all," Johnson continues.

He doesn't hesitate in giving her praise.

"It's necessary," he said. "When you find your 'person,' when you find the truth in love, it's important that you honor that, that you hold it close."

And he calls her the smart one.

Building Together

Both Hairston and Johnson are active in the community. She is the founder of Be Love Holistic, an organization that hosts transformative workshops and activities centered on Black women's health and well-being. He reaches out to, and speaks up for, young people as a poet mentor educator with Sacramento Area Youth Speaks and as a gang violence specialist with Black Child Legacy-Meadowview.

They're also parents in a

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** This is the second of four articles highlighting local Black couples and their love stories. For bonus content on those featured in "Relationship Goals," visit [SacObserver.com](http://SacObserver.com) for special video presentations by OBSERVER Visuals Editor Louis Bryant III

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# Social



## ON BLACK LOVE

“IT WAS THE STRENGTH AND THE CONVICTION OF WHAT WE WERE DOING, WHAT WE STAND FOR, WHAT WE’RE GROUNDED IN, WHO WE BELIEVE IN. WE BELIEVE IN BLACK PEOPLE. WE BELIEVE IN BLACK LIBERATION AND IN THAT MOMENT, I SAW ALL OF THAT.”

**Teah Hairston** on meeting Keon Johnson, her partner of nearly six years.

Keon Johnson and Teah Hairston will celebrate six years of dating in March. They stand inside the Sojourner Truth African Heritage Museum, which was erected near the spot inside Florin Square, where they first began to get to know each other. **Louis Bryant III, OBSERVER**

# Social



Keon Johnson and Teah Hairston pose in front of an artistic depiction of their son Daelan outside the Sojourner Truth African Heritage Museum. The mural also features the likeness of Stephon Clark, a young father who was killed by Sacramento police in March 2018. The couple met protesting his death. **Louis Bryant III, OBSERVER**

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blended family with children – Ijahnde, JahRuah, Daelan, Ijah, and Jah'Sun – ranging from ages 2 to 19. Finding time for themselves is key. Hairston being a big advocate for self care helps.

“That’s priority,” Johnson says, admitting that he has had to work on that aspect.

“He has become so much more mindful and considerate and thoughtful,” Hairston says. “He’s like a go, go, go, go, go kind of person and I used to be, so I understand it, but now I’m in a place where I’m like, ‘Nah, I got too many kids to be going, going, going all the time.’”

Seeing her man grow and evolve makes her happy and they’re both committed to teaching their children about healthy relationships.

“Our kids get grossed out by us all the time be-

cause he’s always kissing on me and I’m laying on him,” she says.

The outward display of affection happens so often that the kids get jealous.

“We demonstrate love,” Hairston says. “We’ve tried to make sure that they understand ‘That’s your brother, that’s your sister, those are the closest things to you, protect them, defend them and love them.’”

“This really is about being mindful and instilling in them, living what you want them to see,” Johnson adds.

Today, they’re leading, and loving, by example, but Hairston and Johnson have different experiences when it comes to seeing examples of Black love during their own formative years.

“I didn’t have a whole bunch of those,” she says. “My parents were divorced. ... My dad remarried a white woman. I love her, but that wasn’t an example for me. Most of my friends, their parents were either

divorced or separated, so I didn’t really have that. What I saw was on TV and it never really seemed real to me anyways, so my example of Black love has been experiencing healthy Black love with him.”

“I’ve witnessed it. I’ve seen it myself,” Johnson says. “I’ve had friends whose parents have been married for a while. I’ve seen those examples. I have loved ones and couples that I adore. There was a spell in which I started to witness even those relationships of my peers that were long lasting. I started watching those things crumble. That fuels me to keep what we have going even more.”

While there doesn’t seem to be any pressure to “put a ring on it,” Johnson says marriage is coming.

“It excites me,” Hairston says of a future together. “We have so many things we want to do and so many places we want to go. There’s so many things we want to show our children.”