



# FOCUS

# FOCUS MAGAZINE 1980

## A LOOK AT THE DECADES: REVIEW OF THE SEVENTIES PROJECTION OF THE EIGHTIES

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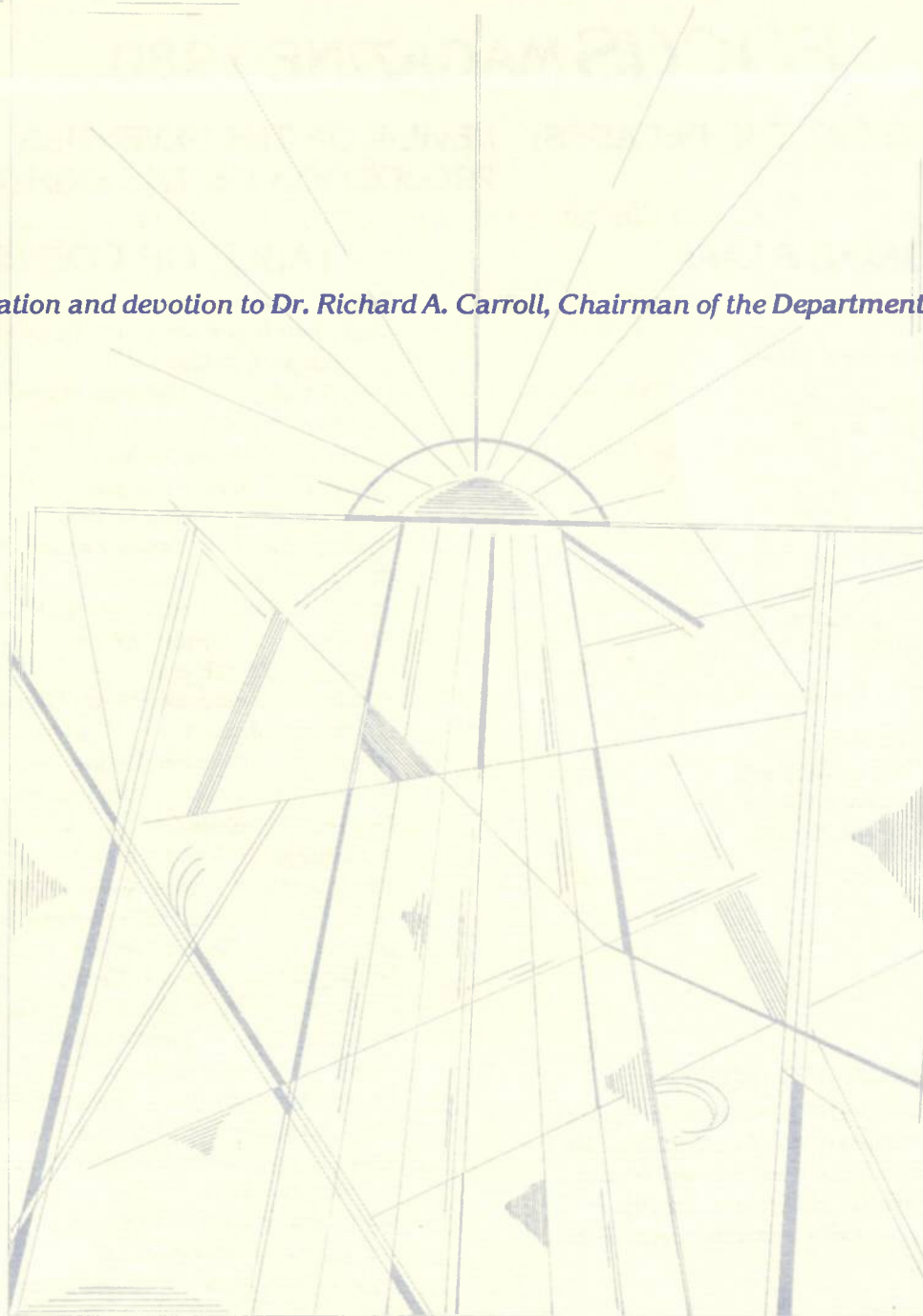
*We are the black women of yesterday, today and tomorrow. We are extensions of ourselves ... our lives ... our writings ... our spaces ... our times ... US. We create, debate, and relate, so this is a tribute to ourselves, from ourselves. And who deserves it more?*

Michelle Denise Dacus  
FOCUS Editor, 1980

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*In dedication and devotion to Dr. Richard A. Carroll, Chairman of the Department of English.*



## *The Intelligent Black Woman's Dilemma*

I am not pleasing to him.  
I do not have fair skin and a round buttocks.  
I do not resemble the young nymph of his fantasies.  
I can think without him.  
My mind is superior to anything he has ever been faced with.  
I am a threat to his ego.  
He feels that my gift to him must be physical.  
I am of little use to his intellectual being.  
He wants me to be someone less than I am.  
I must condescend to his stereotypical image of a woman — something less than even he; subordinate to him.  
And he must be in a position to use me however he so desires.  
I must never think that I might hold the answers to some of the questions he may hold.  
And I dare not prove or show myself intellectually equal to him.  
My salary and position must not exceed his.  
I must accept him at face value and never ask him to improve himself intellectually, financially, spiritually —  
We can reach no compromise.  
And he cannot accept me for what I am, who I am, and what I am striving to become.  
And yet,  
When there is found, a handful  
Who have bettered themselves;  
Who are secure enough with their positions, salaries,  
Intellectual hungers,  
A woman who is on his level —

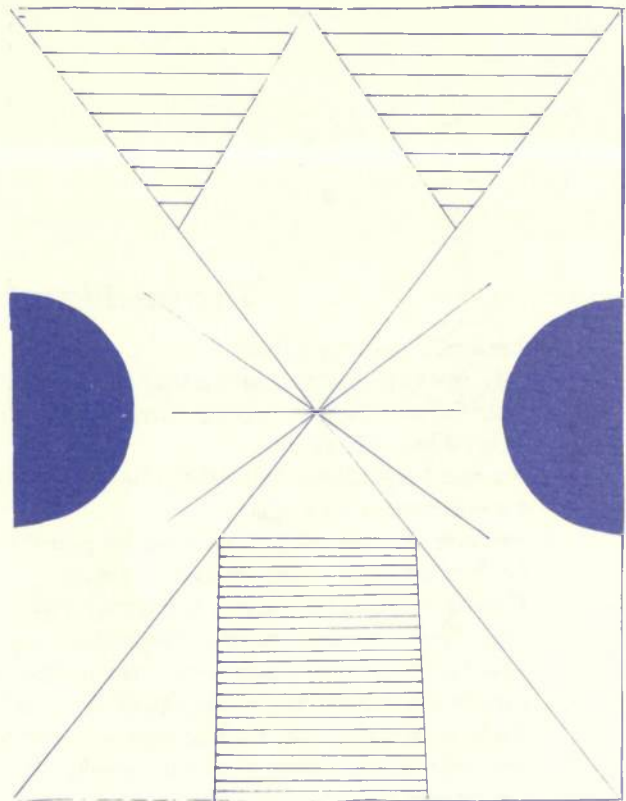
HE FINDS A WHITE WOMAN OR USES ANOTHER BLACK ONE WHO WILL LET HIM BECAUSE EVERYONE  
KNOWS THAT THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS AN INTELLIGENT BLACK WOMAN  
AND I AM A FIGMENT OF MY OWN IMAGINATION.

— Tonya McMillan

## *Your Shadow*

I saw you yesterday  
but you didn't see me  
I watched every move you made  
and you didn't even know it  
from the time you stepped  
out the door and the  
sun started to shine on you  
I was with you  
I was your shadow.

— LaRonda Morris



## *Don't Look Back*

It isn't very simple though we try hard to forget,  
The past and all its glories; we can't dismiss them yet.  
Those beautiful times are gone, but we still cling to —  
The memories of the things that made our gray skies blue.  
It's so hard to accept, because things were just right.  
We'd watch the sun rise in the morn, and gaze at the stars at night.  
We've gained a deeper hurt, trying to relive the past,  
And lost a bright tomorrow, hoping those memories would last.  
Pretty soon we'll realize, the past is forever gone,  
But the hurt within our hearts will painfully linger on.  
Let go and don't look back; leave the past in its place.  
For if we don't, we will find that the truth is hard to face.

— Phyllis McLaughlin

## *Death*

Greet me not with  
tears or pain  
or sadness  
or gloom.

Greet me with  
a smile of joy  
for peace has arrived  
so soon.

Mourn not for my body  
Weep not for my soul  
For I have joined  
my Father  
my Maker  
my eternity has unfolded.

If you must mourn  
mourn at birth  
but not at death  
For I have escaped  
the troubles of the world  
God has called his child home.

Rejoice

Celebrate

Pray

For death is a part of life.

— Maxine D. Lawson

## *Death*

Death can only conquer the body,  
For the soul lives forever.

— Maxine D. Lawson

***Uncreation***  
***(The Mother's Confession)***

As God created man and woman  
man and woman created you  
for with the union of two cells  
you were conceived

Only a tiny speck, a human egg  
warm and safe within my womb

The mysterious power by which you,  
that tiny fertilized egg, divided  
and developed into billions of cells  
fulfilling their own place and destiny

Month after month you grew  
causing me great discomfort  
the blending of movement and  
growth made in the image of  
the divine

Yet, i grow weak mentally and  
physically as you inside me  
turn with your daily growth

i try not to think of you  
as you again move to reassure me  
of your presence

Your child ..... my child  
wanted ..... unwanted

i to decide what will come to be  
unborn child.....my child unborn

you the unborn  
never to be born

— Teresa A. Gilliam

## *We Are Loved*

When i thought of babies before  
i thought of something almost transparent  
on display somewhere in a porcelain egg  
perhaps wrapped in a blanket

But i had never screamed before  
nor felt my body convulse in that final tremble  
like some monstrous engine  
choking to churn out life

And now i offer to you  
this bloody thing to love  
coiled in itself like a fist  
you should hold it by the nape of its neck  
like a rat found in some basement corner

Ah, but we made this thing  
and we worked with the tools we were given  
he never dropped from heaven this thing  
nor did it take shape in the sweet breath of God  
paining at your insides as he pained at mine

As if God once screamed like that and  
then stared at the ragged edges of the universe

for we are loved

— Teresa A. Gilliam



## Off The Wall

I have put away my thoughts for the last time  
My feelings only come "a dime a dozen" —  
it's about time you knew it  
I refuse to let your sarcasm reside  
in the empty walls of my heart  
You have reneged for the very last time  
Your costly mistakes will be put upon the shelf  
for someone else to read about.

— Cathy Henry

## Trying To Defy A Rose

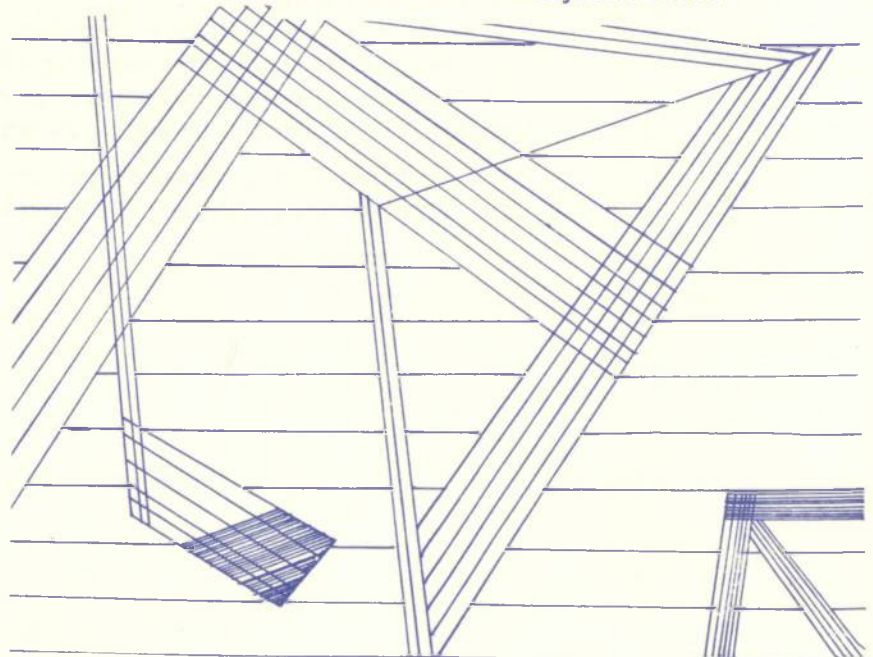
Have you ever seen the like?  
A rose that has been tarred and feathered.  
The bush which has been plucked from  
its parent earth;  
And then its stem fractured and snatched  
from its true nurturing place;  
Its thorns torn and shaken from the skin;  
The beautiful petals gone pale and limp  
with heat and lack of care;  
Its natural colors turned to motley by  
experiments in genetic mixing;  
All thrown to a new ground, covered with Black,  
pitch Black tar and stumped with feathers;  
A rose is still a rose, but  
HAVE YOU EVER SEEN THE LIKE?

— Darlene Y. Morris

## The Blues

Silver linings,  
Girls are crying,  
Hundred dollar bills,  
Welfare checks,  
Banquet tables,  
People are starving,  
Rich are buying,  
Poor are sighing,  
Women are receiving,  
Men are beating,  
Doctors are treating,  
Someone is seeing  
that  
life  
ain't  
no  
picnic.

— Ojetta Pearson



B. Van Linn

## Crazy

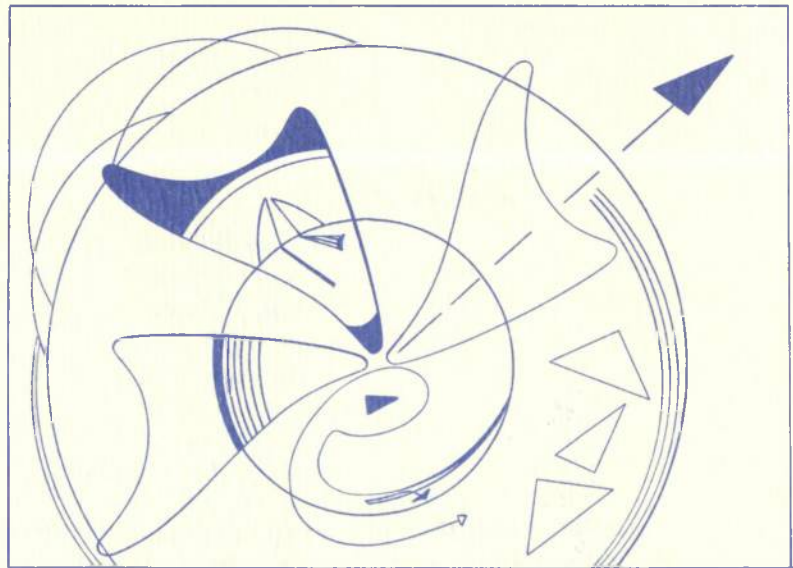
have you ever thought you were going crazy/ the pressures of life's ups and downs/ are enough to make anyone crazy/ have you ever felt lost and afraid/ you do not know which way to turn/ you are confused/ there is no one to turn to/ you look back/ you think back/ must keep going/ moving forward/ forward/ never backward/ forward/ can not stop/ must be strong/ must fight/ must conquer/ or be conquered as they slowly take over your mind/ they want to be in control/ who are they/ you do not know/ you can not see them but they want control/ they imprison you within their invisible walls/ like the one who flew over the cuckoo's nest/ you try to escape but each time you only fail again and again/ like the caged bird of Dunbar's beating its wings incessantly against the bars/ beating/ beating/ until the blood runs thick from your body/ then your soul/ the last remnant of sanity/ you try to seek help/ again you scream the primal scream/ now merely a deaf scream/ it does no good/ they will not let go/ they have taken your soul/ they have put it away/ cataloged it/ serialized it/ copyrighted and patented it/ it is theirs/ nothing you can do about it/ you need to explain/ to everyone else/ what is happening to you/ but there is no one to listen/ to feel/ they do not see you/ you are Ellison's Invisible Man/ then that day comes/ you just can not hold on any longer/ life begins to escape your nervous fingertips/ slipping/ slipping into darkness/ no body/ no soul/ dissected/ they fumble with your brain as if it were rubber/ malforming/ you can not cry for there are no tears/ no people/ places/ things/ no nouns/ pronouns/ no self/ no sanity/ only incessant laughter/ and you do not know/ for there is no knowing/ no feeling/ you have done it/ you have finally gone/ crazy

— Stacy Head

@#\*?ÇÈ  
("SYMBOLS")

I'd like to write a poem  
about ###  
Since I've learned to count;  
about %%%  
Since I, too, am a statistic;  
about ???  
Because I need some answers;  
about +++  
Because I have a few;  
about ===  
Because nothing is equal;  
about ---  
To add some variety;  
about !!!  
To raise some eyebrows;  
about ,,,  
To make you pause;  
And about ...  
To make you stop.  
For whatever reasons,  
I'd like to write a poem  
About @#\*%Ç\$!+/=  
And maybe I have.

— Michelle Denise Dacus



### *On Being Observant*

Have you ever watched an ugly person and though you watched an ugly person you wondered if the ugly person watched you,

As you watched the ugly person you wondered if the ugly person who watched you ever realized that he was indeed an ugly person,

The ugly person who watched you probably had you wondering even more as you continued to watch the ugly person how he felt whenever he saw his own ugly reflection,

Well, you must admit that every time you see an ugly person and you watch an ugly person and you watch to see if the ugly person is watching you, you begin to wonder how that ugly person feels each time he sees his ugly reflection. Does the ugly person really think he is an ugly person or is it you who is being watched by an ugly person that is really ugly.

— Darlene Y. Morris

## *The King*

I don't suppose you'll ever miss me,  
But, you see, my whole world is built around you.  
(It was my choice, that's where I wanted it built.)  
I ache for you, I swear.  
Every nerve of my being is  
Tied in with your existence.  
Sometimes at night I cry,  
And get angry with myself  
For being foolish,  
And I cry,  
And I plot and scheme,  
And get angry with myself  
For being foolish,  
And I cry.  
And I wonder  
"What did the man ever really give you?  
What spell did he cast?"  
And out of desperation and frustration,  
And from lack of a more suitable answer —  
I cry.  
And I feel so hopeless and helpless,  
Because no matter who wants me,  
I still want you.  
And it doesn't make sense to me —  
So I cry.  
But today something came over me.  
It obsessed me.  
It took absolute control of me.  
And it felt good, for once,  
To feel something besides wanting you.  
And this feeling hung over me  
And told me  
That you were no longer

A part of the problem,  
Nor any part of the solution.  
And I felt a powerful sense of relief.  
But I was skeptical.  
And the feeling persuaded me  
That talking against you was pointless,  
Pretending disconcern was useless,  
Begging you to stay was senseless,  
But loving you in spite of it all was selfless.  
And I glowed.  
So, at this point, I feel no pain.  
I feel no regrets.  
There are no arguments  
Going on within myself.  
I am at peace.  
And it is all because I know  
That I have given all of myself that I could spare,  
And then some.  
And miraculously I had enough left over  
To salvage myself.  
And it is all too clear to me  
That I, instead of you,  
Deserve your place on the pedestal.  
I earned it while it was merely given to you.  
(But it was my choice, I thought I wanted you to have it.)  
And you are foolish to even dream  
That a greater love will ever come around again  
In your lifetime,  
Because it won't.  
But you must have enjoyed it while you had it,  
And I will die and be named a martyr.  
Because it suddenly dawned on me,  
"Why should I mourn for your loss?"

— Michelle Denise Dacus

## *Promises, Promises*

Promises

To me  
Are much like a child's perception of  
What a promise should be;  
Living Gospel  
Spoken Truth.

But, You have broken too many of your Promises

Promises made in too much of a haste

To be seriously considered

Promises made in too much sincerity

To be believed as truths

Promises made in moments of tenderness

Too tender to be forgotten

Promises that touch the heart

Much like a snowflake

That disintegrates

Once it touches the ground,

Like a raindrop

That has shape and form

Until

It

Becomes as one

With all the other fallen raindrops

Promises

To me

Are much like a child's perception of

What a promise should be;

Living Gospel

Spoken Truth.

— Regina R. Goins

## *A Thought*

Love isn't

so Beautiful.

Sure, it has its

Moments;

But why is

So much time

Spent

In Tears?

Adrienne E. Pack

## *Friends*

i call u  
my friend  
cause u  
have the  
incredible power  
of making me  
feel as if  
somebody is  
on my side  
all the time  
no matter what  
the situation might  
be u are always  
there to listen &  
understand my  
feelings & are  
willin to help.  
knowing someone  
like that  
like u  
brings a little  
more sunshine  
into my life  
cause i know  
some people who  
never had friends  
& it seems a  
little sad  
that they can't  
feel for a person  
the way i feel  
for u.

Valerie Peete



## *Time Bomb*

like time  
I am rhythmic  
spilling measured beats, spaced beats  
into my spot on earth.  
like time  
I move fast  
when times are good/night as a day ends  
breathe fresh on a new morning/light  
as a second  
I can be for you as precious a  
moment/minute  
in an hour I can become a friend  
like time I move on always like a clock  
always  
like a mood always  
like a day in a week/in a month/in a year  
breathing subtle like a year  
loving with time like a decade  
I am  
like time  
I am rhythmic  
but within/spontaneous ... some  
time(s).

— Leslie A. Reese

## *Sunshine*

He left me the other morning,  
I was feeling rather blue,  
And that Sunshine was shinin' thru  
MY window.

He left ME, the other morning,  
So I was feeling rather down,  
And that Sunshine kept followin' me round.  
Well, I pulled down my shades ...  
I closed my door; I even patched up the cracks  
in my walls and my floor.  
I dusted my hands, but to my disbelief —  
from that blazin' Sunshine, I found no relief!

Something was wrong, it was all so unclear!  
I thought when he left me my life would disappear.  
See when he left me, I was hurt real bad.  
Didn't that Sun know that man was ALL I had?

I walked around trying to figure it out ...  
Then I passed by a mirror, and I stood there in awe!  
You know the answer dawned upon me and it was really quite small.  
I realized that man wasn't my life, but he was like a  
flower to give my life spice.

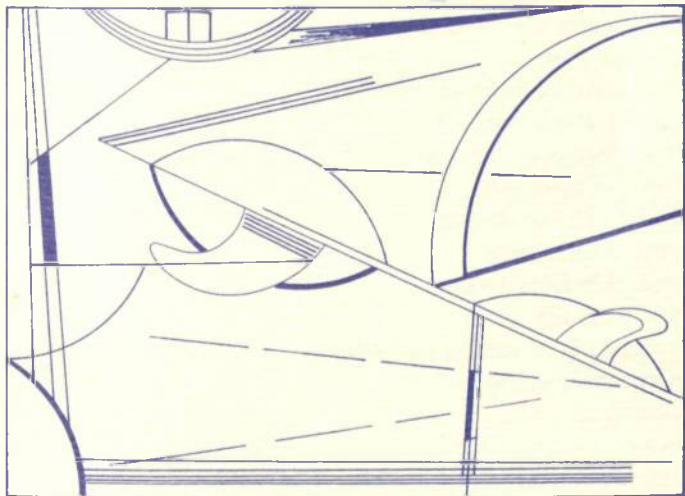
Well, I pulled up my shades ...  
I opened my door (I kept the patches in the cracks in the floor).  
The Sunshine poured in and strengthened me more,  
And I stood a little taller than I had stood before.  
I realized the Sun is in Me, and I have the power to  
be what I want to be.  
I'm ready to go out and face a new day ...  
With its ups and downs and ifs and mayes.  
With that Sun shining on and leading me through —  
Honey, there ain't no kinda troubles that can keep  
Me blue!

— Angela Cumberlander

## *Untitled*

My life revolves around one man.  
I please him before  
I please myself.  
I honor him before  
I honor myself.  
I love him more than  
I love myself.  
My life revolves around one man ...  
My life revolves around the son of God.

— Maxine D. Lawson



## *Uncertainty*

Not knowing which way to go  
Not knowing which road to take  
Not knowing that it may lead to  
the right place  
Not knowing that it may be a dead end  
Not knowing that it soon may stop  
Not knowing if it may lead to  
another road  
Not knowing that it may bring  
you back to the same road.  
Not knowing anything  
Just too afraid of trying to find out.

— Brenda Breaux

## *Question*

Life is not an answer,  
But a question,  
    The question being not  
Can you?  
    But  
Will you?  
Because it is a known fact  
    That  
Will can,  
    While  
Can sometimes won't.  
Life is a question.  
    The question being not  
Have you?  
    But  
Are you?  
Because it stands to reason  
    That  
Have has,  
    While  
Are is.  
    Life is a question.

— Michelle Denise Dacus



## *Running Late*

icy air bouncing off stone.  
creeping steadily through.  
rat infested  
rattling cans.

icy air creeping.  
deadly winds bouncing off brick stone.

alone,  
creeping, hiding, steadily  
through  
rats,  
garbage,  
stink.

lone girl  
running late.  
be back by 12.  
its damn near 2.

creeping through,  
steadily through  
rats,  
cans,  
garbage.

sudden awareness.  
she ain't creeping through alone.

sudden fright when huge hands grab.  
when large hard metallike flesh penetrates  
a dry unopen passageway.

Pain. Pain. Pain.  
PAIN.

rats,  
cans,  
slime,  
spit,  
shit.

lone girl  
running.

crying,  
bleeding,  
running.  
running late.  
be back by 12.  
its damn near day.

— Deirdre L. Clawson

## *Violation*

She felt the blood gushing  
oozing  
running  
and then just dripping  
trickling down her leg  
ever so slowly  
Waiting to drench her ankles  
Everywhere she looked  
she saw them  
They were all looking at her  
Staring at her naked body  
their white eyes filled with lust  
And she screamed  
yelling cries of despair  
cries of loneliness  
cries of helplessness  
ever so loudly  
And they kept staring and staring  
each time coming  
closer and  
closer  
And the blood  
circled around her ankles  
and dripped onto the floor  
and they kept coming and  
coming  
closer and  
closer  
Her breasts palpitated  
the blood trickled  
And she screamed  
the blood trickled  
And she screamed  
the men came closer  
And she screamed  
The blood trickled  
And she screamed

— Valerie Peete

## *Sometimes We Fail*

No need of worrying  
about what you have lost  
face every failure and strive  
                  to pay the cost  
Never grieve before you fail  
and/or even after you have  
Strive forward  
one day at a time  
and always keep the faith  
                  never fret or become  
                  discontent  
With what you have lost  
                  you can't deny  
                  that losing is hard to do  
But remember to strive  
and you will always get more than just by

— Teresa A. Gilliam

## *Only A Woman*

Don't blame me  
When the coffee is too strong  
And the toast is burnt.  
I'm only a woman.  
Lord knows I'm not perfect.  
Don't blame me  
When you can't tie your tie  
And you're late for work.  
I'm only a woman.  
I can't be in two places at one time.  
Don't blame me  
When dinner isn't ready when you come home  
And I'm not in a good mood when you are.  
I'm only a woman  
And we have our bad days, too.

— Adrienne E. Pack

## *And I Keep Coming Back For More*

And I keep coming back for more ...  
To see if I can stuff my pride  
a little deeper in my pockets  
like discarded tissues.  
To see if the knife's as sharp as a razor  
And if the blade cuts and twists deeply  
In the wound,  
Like it did before;  
Yes, the wound I'm talking about  
is a Heart.

I keep coming back for more  
To see  
If love hurt  
Like  
It  
Did  
Before.

I must be an incurable romantic,  
Because you see,  
I L-O-V-E to be in L-O-V-E  
And obviously,  
I L-O-V-E to be in H-U-R-T,

Because I keep coming back for more,  
Just to see,  
If love hurt  
Like  
It  
Did  
Before.

And ... I feel  
The pain in my heart  
And ... see the hurt  
In my eyes.

I touch  
The blood  
Of my cuts  
And ... Wipe it away,  
With the pride  
And tissues,  
Stuffed  
Deeply  
In my pockets.

And I Keep Coming Back For More.

— Regina R. Goins

## *You ... Make It All Worthwhile*

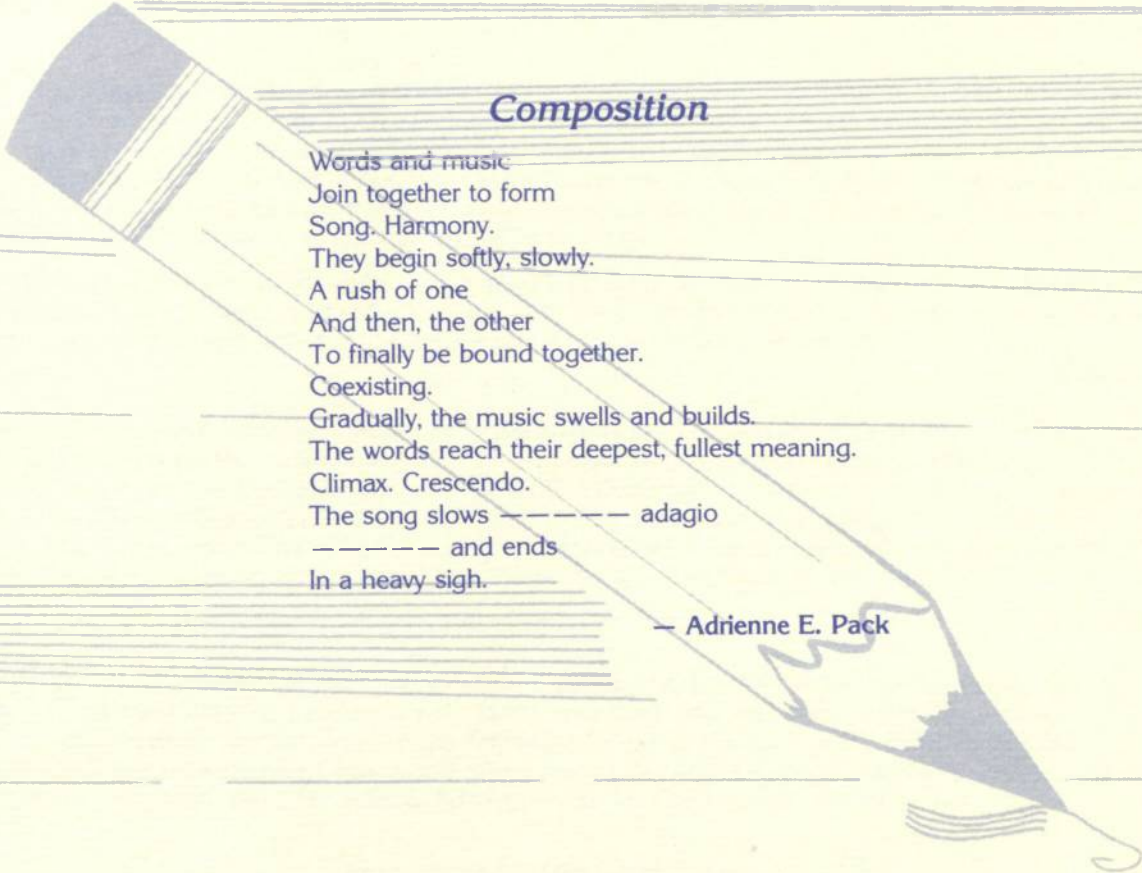
One night I thought of you and  
of the energy that your  
love possesses  
and the thought of your  
love made me smile  
in my night of contentment  
I glowed like the sun rising  
in the morning  
no one knew why — but  
I was thinking of you  
It matters not that I am  
without you hours in a day  
your presence is felt  
and your love seeps  
within me and ... you  
still make me happy  
Sometimes I cry ... for my  
world  
seems to crumble and  
fall apart  
Yet I yearn for the  
strength of your love  
which holds my world  
together  
As my tears begin to flow  
You come and dry them  
For as long as I have known  
you  
and ... you still make me  
happy  
you ... make it all  
worthwhile

— LaRonda Morris

## *Love Distribution*

check it out  
i am them type  
of colored people  
that needs to be  
loved and needs to  
be needed and  
when i give love  
i need for it  
to be returned  
quickly so i  
can keep on regenerating  
my love and feelings  
towards you  
for you  
but i can't give  
nothing  
if you can't give  
nothing  
cause nothing is  
nothing  
but once given  
it is something  
and a beautiful something  
at that  
so think of that  
and  
think of me and  
give a little  
so i can give  
a little  
cause our giving  
has the potential of  
making music

— Valerie Peete



## *Composition*

Words and music  
Join together to form  
Song. Harmony.  
They begin softly, slowly.  
A rush of one  
And then, the other  
To finally be bound together.  
Coexisting.  
Gradually, the music swells and builds.  
The words reach their deepest, fullest meaning.  
Climax. Crescendo.  
The song slows ----- adagio  
----- and ends  
In a heavy sigh.

— Adrienne E. Pack

## JUDGES

**Ms. Judith Allen Myrick**, a 1964 graduate of Spelman College (major Drama, minor English) worked for the Young Women's Christian Association as Youth Program Director (2½ years), Drama Specialist for the City of Atlanta (5 years) and taught Introduction to the Theatre at Spelman. Graduated from Florida State University in 1979 with a Masters of Fine Arts in Theatre and a concentration in Playwriting. Currently a member of the Southern Collective of African-American Writers, American Film Institute, Black Performing Arts Coalition and Board of Trustees of the Neighborhood Art Center. She lives in Atlanta with her two daughters.

*I'm not interested in a steady diet of the "let's see how far out we can make it" style. I'm much more interested in reality.... As African-Americans we have problems that have had generations to fester, and an explosion is in our future unless we do get some answers."*

— Judith Allen

**Ms. Patricia Bates** received her B.A. degree from Spelman College in 1976 in English/Mass Communications. Ms. Bates received an M.A. degree in Film Production and Mass Communications from Emerson University in 1978. She has worked with News and Public Affairs with Channel 11, taught Scriptwriting and Film Production at the Communication Center of Atlanta. Ms. Bates is the Producer-Director and Writer of "Celebrate: The Church Alive," a 27-minute documentary which won an award this year from the Black Filmmakers Hall of Fame, Inc., in Oakland, California (1980 award in Documentary Filmmaking).

*In judging the poems, I looked for style and I looked for a bit of provocation. That is, I especially liked those that caused me to think beyond the obvious interpretation, those that stimulated questions about their connotations. I was not disappointed, as I found many of these to be very innovative.*

— Patricia Bates

**Ms. Alice Walker** was born in Georgia and attended Spelman and Sarah Lawrence Colleges. She has received many awards for her work. Her book of poems *Revolutionary Petunias* was nominated for a National Book Award. Some of her novels include the acclaimed *The Third Life of Grange Copeland* and *Meridian*. Her new book of poems is *Good Night, Willie Lee, I'll See You In The Morning*. Her essays have appeared in the *New York Times Magazine*, *Ms.*, *Aphra*, *Harper's* and *Freedomways* to name a few. She has taught literature and writing at Jackson State, Tougaloo, Wellesley, U Mass, and Yale. Presently, she is working on her third novel.

*I look for a lesson to be learned by black women in poetry that I judge.*

— Alice Walker

**Mr. Herman "Kofi" Bailey** received his Bachelor of Art degree from Alabama State University, B.F.A. from University of Southern California, Los Angeles. Mr. Bailey has done foreign study in France, Ghana, Guyana, Nigeria, Mexico and Switzerland. He has taught Art and Art History at Florida A&M University, Tallahassee; Clark College, Atlanta, Georgia; Winneba Training College, Winneba, Ghana; Mourtier Elementary School, Mourtier, Switzerland. He has been a court room artist for Miller & Miller Law Firm in Los Angeles, California.

## JUDGES' DECISIONS

### TOP THREE WINNERS

*Time Bomb* by Leslie Reese

*The Intelligent Black Woman's Dilemma*  
by Tonya McMillan

*Composition* by Adrienne Pack

### HONORABLE MENTIONS

*A Thought* by Adrienne Pack

*We Are Loved* by Teresa Gilliam

*Violation* by Valerie Peete

*The King* by Michelle Denise Dacus