

journeys

FOCUS 2001

**The literary magazine of Spelman
College**

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the Most High, Pinnacle of Creativity, Source of True Art

Editor's Note

dis hea' is dedicated to our aviary mamas/
gravity sways from side to side/ newtown lied/
cuz we *all* got wings deep INside/ *so* fLY

"the pen's move/ meant that..."

libations

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On Note-Taking and..

"ancestors walk through moist

syllables/ of speech divine"

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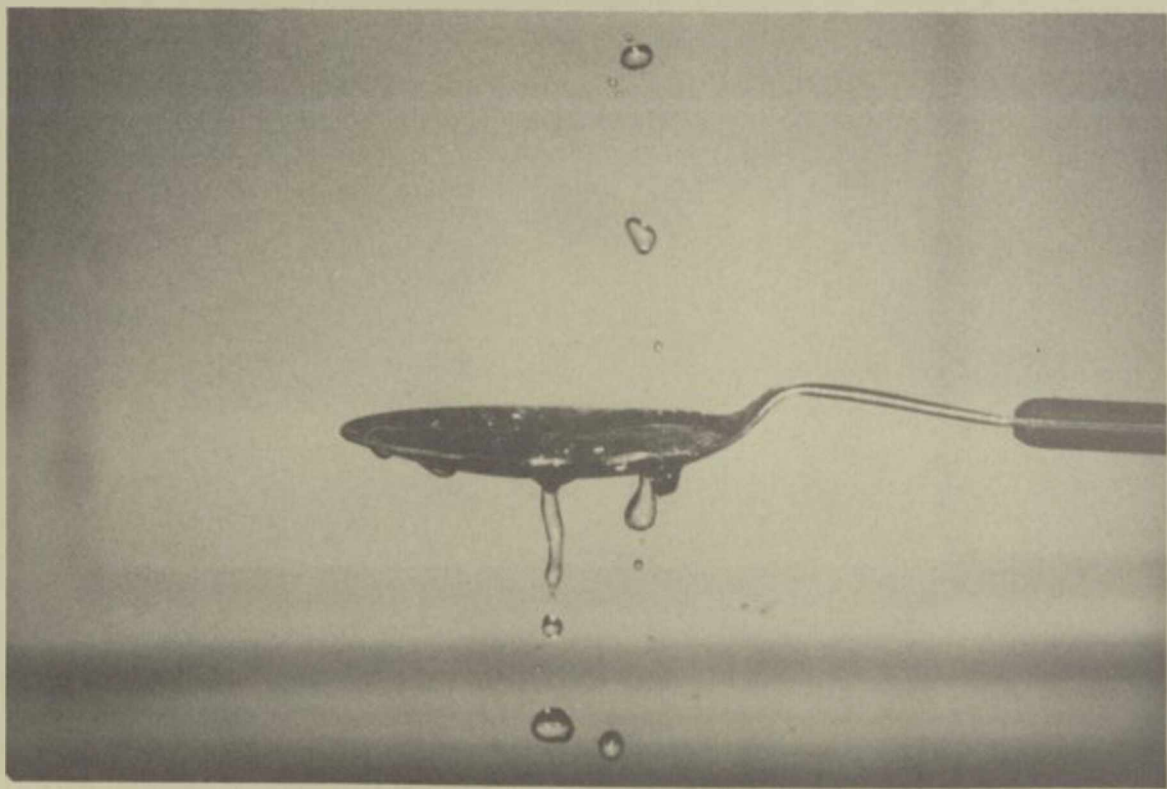
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first valley

*“the pen’s
move/ meant
that...”*



libations

...quench caterpillar thirst
creating
butterflies that
crack open irth
wit tongue/
crushing
idols
talk/
the pen's move/
meant that ancestors
walk through moist syllables
of speech divine
freeing Up/
seeing
up/ ward to the
Most Sublime

monsoon metaphorical
utterance
melding wit
rhyme/thic/k
beats
crawling things
become
winged things
performing liberated
feats

leak ing
a natural melanin brew

straight out the bean
creating
linguistic rivers
Counter
to main
stream

air born scribes
Un lynching
[uncuffing]
dehydrated letters
hanging from/ cherubim
trees
the resurrected
giving thanks
water
falling to their knees

cypher seeds
being planted
in
sol-stice earth
a
uni
verse
all
insurrection
is breaking water
giving birth...

-ruha benjamin osha

journal entries

april 29, 1998

Words need to feel right on my tongue, in my mouth. I need to taste them. It came to me this morning. I know what I have to do now to free this breath locked inside my chest. I must work my body into a heat and rhythm so strong that my breath has no choice but escape. The merry-go-round will catapult this shut air into the universe. I must get this Haitian music, [can't find Yanvalu anywhere] so I can really go. I mustn't deny myself access to the keys of salvation. Dance. Writing. Why wait...

april 30, 1998

The rain brought this on. I want someone to open me up, gently. I am a trembling flower. Or a delicate box of fine hand-made papers, raw silks and embroidered ribbons. Each frail thing removed and given its own place to reside, revealing a single bead of opal, onyx or pearl.

May those hands use the most intentional fingers. Perhaps the hands should be my won.

Later same day:

People on the train look in my face like they want something from me. They want me to tell them who I am. They're just like the folks on the porch at the corner store waiting for Zora's Janie to come by- hungry to have a story to trade and revise. Rest assured that if you don't give 'em something they'll make one up for you. They must shout, "Give us something to fill up our numb spaces... a little entertainment, something curios please!" So I give them something back when they stare like they do. My eyes tell the story of spirit that is boundless. They see light when they look at me and it surprises them, perhaps pleasantly, like rain when sun is shining.

-lylah c. salahuddin

“Third Eye Blind”

Intellectually stimulating,
Culturally aware,
Down the dark hallway of abstractness,
Alertly, I stare!
Willing to take a dare,
Forsake childhood peanut butter and jelly safe cares...

Free, fully I fling myself into this!
Determined to hit and not miss!
Shooting, instinctively, my bow and arrow.
Anchor point, strong as a fist!
FEEL THIS!!!

Truly, my pen misplaced...
Due dates for poems erased...
What a student of life's disgrace!
Turn back the hands of my silent clock face.

Pursuing a dream.
Put “this” message in the bottle that flows down your
bloodstream.
Feel me as it glides down your spine.
Imagine what I mean.
Pierce your third eye blind.

-shana c. williams

On Note-Taking

I write them because in their passing they walk down the corridors of my mind and glide their hands along the walls, leaving smears of understanding. They weeeeeeeeeee down my arms and drip from my fingers, fading to the page- distilled.

-LCS

Retort to a Man Commenting Publicly On a Woman's Lack of Brassiere

I see that your sense of appropriate conversation is as at ease as my breasts... but it should not be so comfortable. Words of such low intention should stop short, caught in your throat like daggers.

-LCS

Teaching a Man to Love

I want only a shadow of the thing that you propose.

Please, put it away. Bury your groping hands and thrusting member deep in the Earth so that they might return learned and well-advised, knowing how to touch me. Featherstroke my shy, hermit thighs and watch them open to your fingers clad in silk and sand and the spirit of hand-pressed papers. Open the folds... every petal of this ever-blooming flower and speak to me...

*I have lusted long and lazy like a lonely lizard
lakeside listening to lingering laps.
I want to learn to love you.*

Lord have mercy.

-lylah c. salahuddin

second valley

*“ancestors
walk through moist
syllables/ of
speech divine”*



Egungun

Somewhere in me
Rituals are buried and are resurrected
The *chekere* spins ridges of my heart into fury
And the smudge stick's fumes are directed against
unseen planes
And the *guaganco* pulses right along with my brain
As it uncovers the rhythmic intricacies of blood
Because genetically we've all got to manifest
destiny
And we will not know ourselves unless we listen
To the whispers of the *egungun*
The circle of life inevitable like every day at noon
The circle of life illuminating their words like the
glare of the moon
And all their portents will come to pass soon
Like Last week I saw *Oshun* quick and transient
In that moment when I sweetly explained to this
shortie
That I require undivided attention
And he lamented and relented

And yesterday at RDA and Lee stoplight
I vented to *Eleggua* about the spiral spiritual
staircase that is my life
And He said it is not yet meant to decipher
And went into hysterics
I took it in stride; the etheric ones give more insight
than we can sometimes actualize
Our lives are like dice or cowrie shells thrown on
an *estera*
And spirits come back and forth over sidelines

And provide guidelines that we're too behind to
look for
And provide esoterics coded in our DNA's core
And if we knew more,
We'd stand on the shoulders of giants
Instead of shrinking behind technology
And selling our folklore to modern science
My culture, my cultures
Are rich like soil by West African shores
And profound like the Sphinx's etchings and
contours
And sweet like Cuban *pinas*
Coveted by barefoot *ninas* in Guantanamo
Vibrant like days catching quahogs at the Mashpee
pond
As Slow Turtle tells a story-

It's time to repent and recognize
The ancestral resource inside
Never dies
And never will hide its glory
Predecessors lives that we don't know we know
A forgotten song we must learn again to sing
A shout piercing air like silence is its foe
A collective roar that trembles and rings
Somewhere deep and hidden are these things
Like a primordial baseline drawn out soothing and
slow
Like unconscious memory tumbling walls of
Jericho

-tara sabre collier

ABOUT NOLA:

Traveling to New Orleans on Interstate
10, about thirty miles outside the city,
one is folded into humidity. The air,
more water than oxygen, drapes
eyelids and hair, slows one's blood-
beating to a jazz funeral dirge.
Sensibilities entranced by river deep
bordellos of touch, tasting, body
waves and aural copulation.

Any kink in the brain is undone here.
There is no will, no objection to feign
in this full-bodied river-woman town.

-lylah c. salahuddin

Parajo

PARAJO, PARAJO, Where are you going?
Flying and soaring amongst the clouds, I call as
the wind

I have documented your many journeys and your
changes

I always saw your beauty, as they [the forces]
were noticing it, too

I watched as they snatched you from your
ancestral land, and took you across the calm blue
waters.

I watched as they placed you on islands, off the
coasts, and the mainlands, too.

I watched as many things were done to you
They plucked your beautiful feathers until you
were naked and broken in your cage
But, I could not interfere

You lost your way, you lost your voice
Unable were you to cry to those PARAJOS back
home

You were separated
But all the while, I knew you were there

PARAJO, PARAJO, Where are you going?
Flying and soaring amongst the clouds, I call as
the wind

You pushed, pushed, and pushed until the lock
weakened from the struggle and hung, creating
an opening for you to escape.

You emerged battered, unsure of what this
foreign land held, yet with your inner strength
you pursued.

The hard rains, insistent showers did not stop
you, nor should they stop you now.

PARAJO, I, the wind, call to remind you of your
promise,

A promise to those sacrificed, a promise to those
unborn.

I, the wind, attest to your strength, when you do
not know it is there

FOR I SEE YOU, I SEE YOU

No, you are not weak as they claim, you have a
power like no other.

But now you are flying toward mirages, thinking
they are the truth

Remember your path, PARAJO

Remember your path

Spread your wings and fly to your destiny,

The clouds open for you

I CALL AGAIN, AS THE WIND,

PARAJO. PARAJO

WHERE ARE YOU GOING?

-folashade alao

Anticipation

As I sit staring at cooling deserts,
My heart grows anxious.
Time sashays, strolling along her business,
Paying no mind to me, or the trouble
brewing.

Fire has commanded water and air to be
still
Today calm would not arrive
Air smiles knowing the joke is on Ms. Fire
Water sits

Seas draining
Mountains falling
Time moving
I stand still

-jai meachem

Breathe Deep and Exhale

Breathe deep and exhale
The feelings that flow within you
Let the rhythm of your ancestors enter your soul
Breathe deep and exhale
The emotions and frustrations that bind us to our
past
Feel the relief of being free from the chains that
held you captive
Breathe deep and exhale
The physical burdens that raised our cultural
awareness
Break the boundaries that took so long to put up
Breathe deep and exhale
The essence of your life's mysteries
Take the stereotypes others place upon you and
throw them away
Breathe deep and exhale
The woman hood that has been passed down to you
Enhance your mother's teachings and pass them on

Breathe deep and exhale
The passion of your innermost desires
Open your mouth, life up your hands, and rejoice

-shauna m. watkins

third valley

*“crawling things
become...”*



Untitled

I was never a virgin
I didn't know
"I need to use the phone," he said
I hate him
I pretend to be sleep
I never said no
He enters me.
I didn't know
It hurts
I hate him
"never let any one touch you here or here"
I never said no
Mommy said Once, Once, Once
I didn't know
Be a big girl!
I hate him
All big girls do this...
I never said no
Taste it!
I didn't know

My innocence was stripped,
I hate him
Stolen from my womb.
I never said no
A Child
I didn't know
A child
I hate him
A Child
But
I never said no

-jai meachem

The Café

I look closely and intently at the glass
staring, hoping I don't let anything slip or pass
For many moments I have been sitting in this space
In this position watching the cars outside race
Time is ticking slowly, slowly, slowly
My eyelashes flutter, kissing my face with hopes of
closing but they don't
They can't
They must remain open, focused and aware as I
continue to stare

My mind is racing to thoughts of yesterday, and the
day before, and many days long passed
I see images of angels and devils who have crossed
my path

And then, and then I see him
With caramel-coated skin, glistening brown eyes, short
'fro, and a beard
No, no it's a goatee that graciously covers his oval-
shaped face.

He is not a tall man, but one of average stature
And he stands there motionless, like a doll with his
hands held down
I don't have many memories of him, although I wish I
did

BUT TIME WAS NOT ON OUR SIDE

Beep, Beep, Honk, Honk The cars keep moving

So many times I wanted for him to hold me when I
cried, or laughed, or did something meriting congrats
But he didn't, he couldn't
Too many oceans separated us
Our worlds were worlds apart

AND TIME WAS NOT ON OUR SIDE

When she arrived here, her eyes our eyes stared at
him with such love
He smiled back. He squeezed this life that he had
helped create
Beep, Beep, Honk, Honk The cars keep moving

BUT TIME WAS NOT ON OUR SIDE

The baby became a toddler, the toddler a child, the
child a teen, the teen a woman
The beautiful bouncing baby that he left so long ago
was now a woman
Mature and strong, ready to face the world without him
FOR TIME TOGETHER WAS NOT ON OUR SIDE

-folashade alao

AM I MY BROTHER'S KEEPER?

Am I my brother's keeper?
The stairs I climb appear to be steeper,
Than the shallow world around me,
Although in a crowd,
I am lonely.
Can you conceive my mild insanity?
Surface thoughts of profanity,
Leave my mind in a whirl of haze.
In this sheer misery a phase?
Or to last forever?
I endeavor,
To sink in deeper and deeper.
I ask myself,
Am I my brother's keeper?

Am I my brother's keeper?
At night,
I fight.
Inner conflict torments me,
Tossing my outer shell relentlessly,
From side to side
I have no one in which I can confide,
Compressed and ready to explode;
The heavy load that weighs me down daily,
Yet to the outside world,
I soldier on gaily,
Spurred on by the meaning of life,
Which I find to be a false reality,
In the face of infinity,
The father,
The son and the holy trinity.

I ask you,
Am I my brother's keeper??

Am I my brother's keeper?
My teary eyes used to fill to the brim,
As I remembered the lies,
That passed through my ears,
Reinforcing the fears I had of pain and sorrow.
Fears no longer present today,
But maybe tomorrow.
So called sincerity is all a show,
For the weak.
I speak,
The truth for all to hear.
For I fear not evil,
The act of kill
Emotion is all in the mind,
And if you search hard enough,
You will find the answers,
So answer me this.
Am I my brother's keeper??

AM I my brother's keeper?
Must my mother be a weeper,
When I'm six feet under?
In the midnight thunder,
Will I truly be at one?
Tell me?
When what's done has been done,
Will I get to meet my maker?
Rather sooner than later,
Sit on the left hand side
With no more reason to hide

Away.
Will I be able to stay,
Where nothingness takes precedence?
In solitary confinement,
Make my alignment with the supreme?
My dream,
And one and only chance to redeem.
I ask myself again,
Am I my brother's keeper?

-zara jones

read me slowly

Professionally diagnosed
With an imbalance of chemicals
Simply cured with same
Making up
For ten years passed
Of mental abyss
Emotionally black bottomless
Pitfalls into the deep, dark
Whole weeks of sleep
Filled eyes of tears
Wondering why
Because I don't know Usually in
solitude
I want to
Turn over from sleep to death
I'm tired of heaving
Expelling the demon that is food
Destroying my stomach lining
Enamel disintegrating
On my molars and wisdom teeth
It was hurt without reason
And now what was once the object
Of hide and go seek
Is now the subject
Of show and tell

-aja kellie riddick

A COLLEGE JOURNEY

For one
who constantly dreams big,
whom some said would never make it in life,
who saw an extraordinary woman on
television,
who spoke her language of a transformed
country,
who later met her and her sister; both
graduates of Spelman College.

For one
born and raised in Kenya
who thought college was for the privileged,
who baked and sold cakes for an airline ticket,
for whom a community raised \$5,000 in twenty
minutes,
come fall 1998 was a Spelman Colleges
student.

For one
whom INS wrongfully accused of fraud,
whom in thirty days INS would have deported,
with the quick thinking of her Auntie,
and a hard working lawyer obtained student
status
whose freshman and sophomore years came
and went.

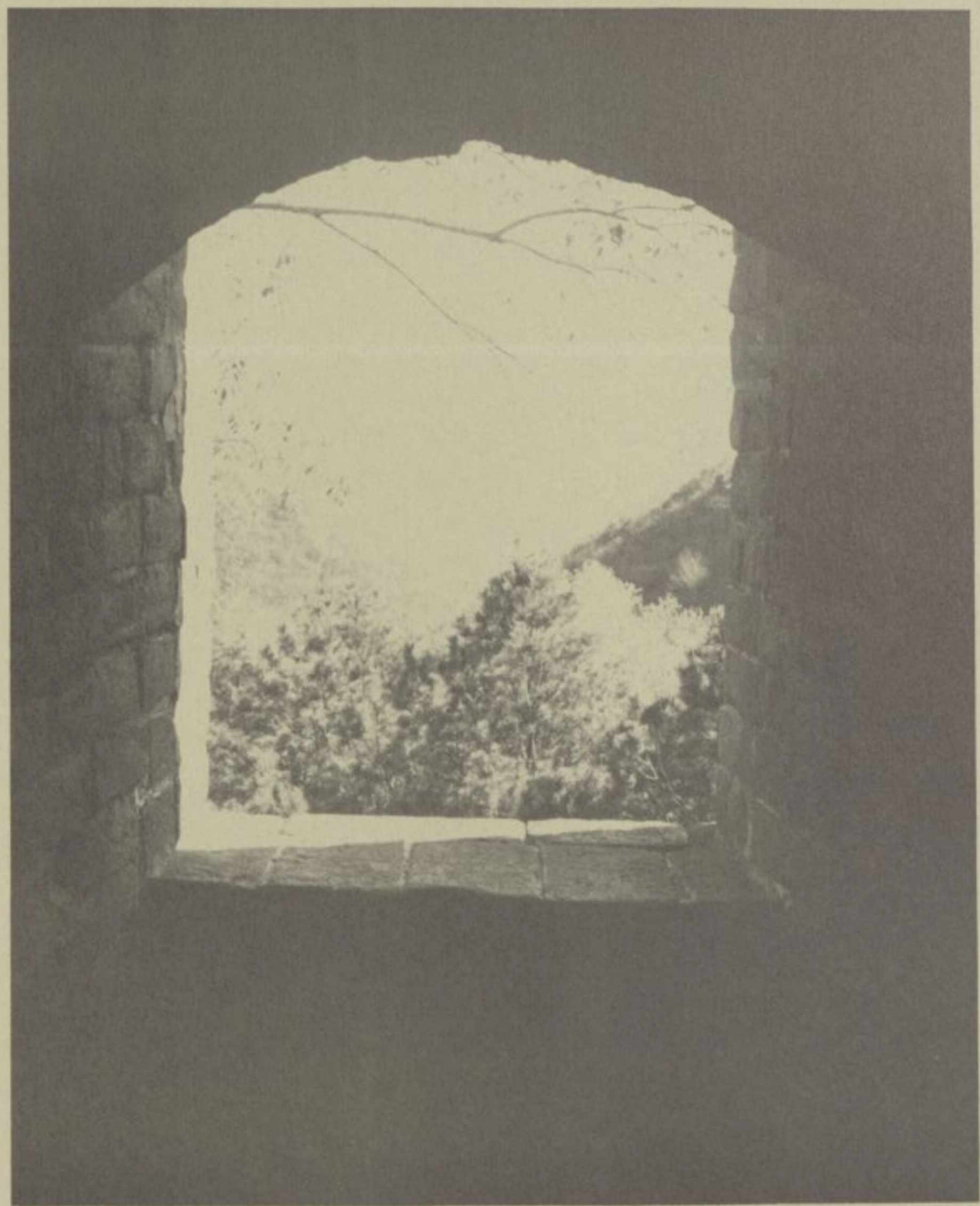
For one

who after two years from home visited her
family,
whom every semester come registration time
is sent away,
lack of money has become a familiar way,
discouraged and frustrated goes back to the
house,
whom some now have proven that she will
never make it.

For one
who almost gave up dreaming big,
whose community encourages to push on,
the money has shown up at the ninth hour,
who begins classes late,
is now a junior.

For one
whom this narration is a true testament,
who knows that dreaming, working hard and
patience pays,
whose college journey is right on track,
even with some tears at times,
will graduate in 2002.

-wambui ngugi



fourth valley

*"...wing-ed things/
performing
liberated feats*



Progress

just
over
hell
not
near
earth
the
truth
arrives

reality
over
zest
even
love
lies

money
even
acts
concerned
hell
eventually
melts

-jai meachem

The Pilgrim

Today I walked down familiar pathways,
Wearing battered shoes and reminiscent
smile.

Autumn's Sunday seemed that much
brighter,
Walking passed a gray-crossed cemetery
Filled with fuzzy memories,
Not easily recalled to mind-
Not wholly forgotten.

Up ahead a bench provided rest,
A shedding Oak primitive shade,
The fountain behind it promised *Life*,
A place to rest my restless head.
Alas, my weary feet trudges past it,
Towards the settling west.

Towards the sun's dying embers
And- unfamiliar darkness!

No sanctuary in sight.

No place to call a haven.

A wanderer, wondering without legitimate
Place.

Traveling upon familiar pathways,
Barely touching Heaven,
Barely touching God.

-tanangachi mfuni



#48

purple
sunshine
grow auburn dandelions
on big green lawns
on that side of
moreland

porcupines slide
quickly
down
fire escapes running
from blue men
on our side
of moreland

the number forty-eight
glides
down a single road
emitting smut
on one end
"clean natural gas"
on the other

Tata stands

on the wrong side
of the road coins jiggling in her
sweaty palm
her back facing south
crav *ing* purple rays
'thief them if she must'
to take back to
porcupines
in flight

-ruha benjamin osha

A Letter to my Love Child

Dear daughter,

I thought I might write you this letter so that you could learn some key lessons for your journey throughout life. Before I begin I want you to understand that you are and have been connected to the most important events that have ever occurred in my life. And when I write, "having you" I am just not speaking about the labor either. In fact, "having you" commences from the time you chose to inhabit me.

Regarding the lessons, first and foremost, I want you to know that no one, *not even mama, can and should live your life for you.* Therefore, do not let other people's experiences infringe or supplant your own. Thinking about this enfolds a smile upon my face for; I remember what my pregnancy was like. I had spoken to a number of women who had told me miserable accounts of their own pregnancies. Their maladies went from swollen feet, to severe tiredness, hot sweats, and cravings. Their best advice was that I should probably pray for the months to go quickly. Now, let me tell you, I haven't forgotten about the morning sickness, throwing up almost anywhere and everywhere (including my car), but carrying you was the sweetest experience of my life. I vividly remember reading and telling you stories from my in laws to Ntozake Shange's *Sassafras, Cypress and Indigo*. I remember how your father used to rub and chant to you beside heartfelt melodies. I remember when you revealed yourself, having the ancestors speak for you, in my dreams. Yes, carrying you was when I sincerely understood the joy of being a woman. I would have never experienced that if I had listened

and internalized everyone else's experience. I had to listen to my own heartbeat and throw it up on the universe and just be. Now, Mirembe this brings me to my second lesson: *trust and believe in yourself.* When people saw that I was pregnant (and believe me it took a while as a matter of fact no one even believed I was really pregnant until I was damn well into my seventh month!!!) they immediately asked what hospital I was going to have you in. Now I had already gathered my own information and your father and I decided that it would be best to have you in our home. Now here is something that you need to know about your mother – she can be blank when she wants to be! I told everyone (short of the mail woman) that I intended to have you at home. This was a terrible mistake. Your baba and I had to ascertain the hard way that if you don't do things as most people do, ridicule would be the least of your problems. People told me that I was crazy. Doctors told me it was impossible, "women need anesthesia, they can't do it by themselves." I am risking both my own and my child's well being. Well, here is something else you should know about your mama: she is stubborn, stubborn like Kilimanjaro itself. See what everybody didn't know was that I had made up my mind. I knew our people back home in Ghana and Uganda had been having their babies for centuries and that many across the world were still doing it today. So when those contractions began, I told your baba, ate my dinner, had baba call the mid-wife,

and got myself all snugly in bed. Five hours later (6:02 a.m. to be exact) you were born, I was crying some serious tears of joy, and baba was cheeing away (if you look at the pictures you can still see every tooth in his mouth). So you see, you have to live life for you, you have to take the time to understand and embrace yourself for that is the only avenue to happiness.

No short cuts are viable, no, they won't do! Possibly now you can understand what I am feeling when I say you are the most powerful and glorious event to happen in my life. You consecrated my womanhood. It is because of you that baba and I really know love.

-abena agyeman for mirembe



"Scenes from Jamaica"

I think of Jamaica and the things I miss. After a heavy rain, clouds of fog circled the lush green Mona hills...I miss the ackee trees near Irvine Hall. They decorated the curb of the road when ripe. There were plentiful mango trees behind the dance studio. One cool afternoon a security guard picked some and offered them to me. A few of my floormates and I discovered a tamarind tree near the chapel. We saw white egrets nestle in the tree and joked about tamarind being a good laxative.

Some nights I was faint from starving. I did not know how to cook when I arrived at the university; I only knew how to boil water. I lived off of spaghetti and Kraft Macaroni and Cheese and I ran out of groceries fast. Thank goodness for my D Block friends who gave me nourishing food of fried jacks with combeef and fish with rice when I thought I would have to eat plain pasta another night. From that struggling time, I watched others cook and I eventually learned how to cook and flavor foods with tomatoes, onions, and garlic powder.

I remember the long nights of rushing to the library to get a book or two to check out overnight from the RBC (Reserved Book Collection). My class readings were organized on my bed in order of priority. As I finished each assignment, I put the books on my shelf as a way of checking them off my list. My floormates never saw me on nights like those, unless I was taking a midnight break to make Ovaltine-my study drink.

On selected nights my floormates and I planned to go to a fete (party) on campus. The party would not be vibesy until 1 or 1:30 a.m. so I would take a nap, wake

up at midnight, shower, dress and go. At first I was unaccustomed to the dancehall and soca music, so I came alive when the DJ played hip-hop and rap music. Eventually, I learned to wine to Square One and do the "Jerry Springer" to Beenie Man. I partied all night (or morning) as I brushed away the guys who wanted to wine up and did not have the vibes. It was a good time to release, sweat, laugh, and lyme (socialize).

I miss the cold scrambled eggs and crisp fried dumplings I sometimes bought for breakfast from the cafeteria. I miss the sweet fresh taste of the box orange juice that was sometimes partially frozen. I do not miss however, when the cashier ran out of change and gave me a sweetie(candy) instead of my J\$2.00. What can I buy with a sweetie?

A smile comes to my face when I remember the cat calls from Jamaican men as I went to class or the grocery. They would whisper or call out in passing, "eh, natural hair," "dainty miss," or "natural beauty." Never being vulgar or insistent, they would speak out and then continue about their business. It was a simple form of male expression.

I used to call my granduncle and godparents once a week. They lived in Kingston and I wanted to keep in touch during my exchange experience. Using my Worldtalk card, I called them on one of the six hall phones on Sunday nights.(There were

about 300 people on my hall, most of whom did not have their own cell phone.) I miss my granduncle's chimney voice that turned frightful when he relayed all the news reports of increased crime in Kingston. I tried to ease his worries, but talking positive can only do so much when people are entrenched in a violent reality. So for a change of scene, I then called my godfather to say hi. We chatted for a second, neither side knowing much of what to say.

I miss Jamaica and the journey of self-discovery and the part of my cultural identity that I missed for so long. Jamaica is truly a part of my heritage and my life experiences. Now I can understand the social and economic issues of my father's country. I can appreciate the dialect, the attitudes, the customs. Jamaica is a land of beauty as well as a land of pain. But with the good one must acknowledge the bad. Jamaica...land I love and hold dear.

-dionne griffiths

Poem for Grama

A soft scented creme fragrance
Blows through the top ventilation
Of my door.

"What is that smell?" I asked myself.
Ah, it is the scent of my grandmother.
She just strolled by my door
To say hello and remind me
That I'm still in her heart.
My grandmother's spirit watches over
me
As I study in her home country of
Jamaica.

- dionne griffiths

journey east

I arrived at Spelman in August of 1997 with suitcases of clothes and a heart of formless hopes. Although I had wanted to take a year off between high school and college, I found myself caught up in the momentum independence and adulthood, seeking freedom in the system of higher learning.

By the time the final section of my sophomore year appeared, I was living on the edge of exhaustion and abandonment, experiencing an emotional breakdown while unknowingly preparing for a spiritual breakthrough. After spending two years caught up in the rapture of term papers and tests, empowerment and destruction, self-exploration and abandonment, tears and depression, I decided it was time for a change.

Although my best friend had been so brave to diligently carry me through the storm alone, I needed a different experience to help me work through the remains, so that I could put myself back together. I moved home to Seattle and into my mother's house in search of what I had lost and left behind.

After working for eight months, I had developed enough currency and courage to travel around the world alone. Mapping out the next three months of my life would take tenacious planning, consistent development of faith and the willingness to trust the Most High's guidance and protection. I left for Thailand, Nepal, India and France on February 22, 2000. Thirteen months and thousands of miles later, I am back at Spelman to tell my story.

I worked hard and learned strongly. I now remember the world as the place of infinite possibilities. Somewhere between Seattle, Katmandu, Bombay and Paris, I came home to myself. What a wonderful journey it's been and for that I am so eternally grateful.

The following are excerpts from the journal that I e-mailed friends and family while on the road:

Sun., April 9, 2000- Katmandu, Nepal

There is so much left to explore in this vastly diverse country. The capital offers anything you can find in Seattle, Atlanta, New York, on small scale... smog, traffic, pollution, tourist ghettos... with a Nepalese twist... bicycle driven rickshaws, cows, goats, chickens and dogs roaming the streets together, Hindu and Buddhist shrines and temples placed everywhere throughout the city.

I love being in a country where history and tradition run rich and deep... Where clothing and jewelry are symbolic and have been connected to one's people for centuries... Where culture is not a trend picked up in fashion magazines, donated by celebrities or "created" by Madonna...

Yesterday my guide and I went to Pashupatinath, a small town outside of Katmandu. I witnessed three cremations on cement blocks on the river. Concurrently, a man was getting his beard shaved, a woman was dancing at a Hindu party and hundreds of monkeys were running around everywhere. While there I took a picture with two *sadhus* [Hindu holy men] whose faces were painted gold, red and white. Their hair fell down to their ankles in long beautiful locks and one of them threw his hair onto my lap during the picture resulting in one wide, amusing grin from me.

We also visited Swayambhu, a temple perched on a hill outside of Katmandu. Tantric Buddhists consider the 2,000 year old Stupa the chief

"power point" in the Katmandu Valley and one chronicle says that a solitary act of worship here carries 13 billion times more power than one done anywhere else. There were lines of colorful prayer flags flapping in the wind creating a beautiful melodic rainbow for everyone nearby.

Monday, April 17, 2000- Agra, India

Life at the Sharma household is relaxing and interesting, providing conversations on everything from how all women should have long hair and from their opinions of themselves by what everyone thinks of them [You know I had something to say about that!], to marriage, money, education, philosophy and astrology. The line between being disrespectful and assertive is a bit fuzzy in new lands, but I'm working on it.

Travelling alone has taught me how to make sure that my needs are taken care of. I cannot afford to be shy about asking for what I need and want. I am the only one here to pick up the pieces and life is short [not to mention my time in India], to get caught up in being embarrassed to say 'No' and 'I need'. My first night in Agra, my *didī* [big sister] Vatsala called me a womanchild. A child for how much time I've been on this earth, a woman for how I've chosen to spend it. This trip just might make a womanwoman out of me.

Tomorrow I will wake at 4:45 a.m. to see the Taj at sunrise. It should be beautiful.

Tuesday, April 25, 2000- Bombay, India

The day before yesterday, my intuition told me to pick "ELLE India" at the station to read during the 16 hour train ride from Rajasthan to Bombay. I dived in and was able to put a lot in perspective about my goals and plans for the future. When I realized that "ELLE" India's central office was in Bombay, I

decided to contact the Senior Editor and see about setting up a meeting with her. Although I do not have resume, writing samples or business cards, I can tell her about the book I co-authored and published and my experience as a make-up artist, fashion stylist and journalist.

The afternoon rolled around and I called her secretary and after a brief interview [*Name?* Devki; *Occupation?* Fashion Stylist/ Journalist; *Why would you like to speak with her?* I am in town for a few days and I wanted to touch base with her before I left], she said she would speak to Superna and asked me to call back in an hour. When I spoke with her again, she asked me if I would be available tomorrow at noon. YIPPEEE!! I mean...Errrrr.. "That would be wonderful. Thank you. I'll see you tomorrow." I figured that if I don't use my power and freedom of choice, who will?

Sat., April 29, 2000- Bombay, India

My meeting with the ELLE India yesterday went wonderfully. Today at 5:00pm, I met with Reetika Nijhawan. She didn't seem to mind and asked me what I was looking for in terms of a position with Elle. After presenting my ideas and listening to hers, she offered me a free-lance position where I can write articles of any length about whatever subject pleases me... [Excuse ME?! Did you just say what I though you said?!]

Sat., May 6, 2000- Goa, India



I just arrived in Goa, the small state in the middle of India's east coast. Famous for its white sand beaches and mesmeric sunsets, Goa has been deemed one of India's ultimate vacation spots. This evening I will stay in Palolem, a beautiful small village an hour south of Marago, the city where my train from Bombay stopped.

After a little inner dialogue, I agreed to pay a motorcycle taxi driver Rs130 for my city errands and a ride to Palolem. Our 40 km [approx. 88 miles] motorcycle ride through the country was absolutely amazing. Goa is a lush and diverse state full of dense forests and the country was absolutely amazing. Goa is a lush and diverse state full of dense forests, prosperous farms, enormous palm trees, white sands and tranquil green waters. As we sped through microscopic villages engulfed in thick trees, all I could see were acres and acres of green. Suddenly a florescent turquoise bluejay zipped past us, breaking up the landscape. A few moments later we passed 15 bright red flowers jumping out of the edge of the forest.

One hour later we arrived at Cocohuts, a small cluster of huts built in coconut trees. My hut is a 45 second walk from the beach and after putting away and organizing my things, I set out to eat and discover what this place has to offer. Although Goa is by no means known as somewhere to go if you are interested in escaping other travelers, Palolem is one of its most remote beaches.

I fall asleep every night to the sound of the ocean and wake to roosters welcoming the morning sun. This trip has never simply been about seeing the Taj Mahal, visiting temples and museums, eating great food and making new friends [although I did meet nirvana or studying with an inspiring guru]. Coming to India has been about shedding illusions, discovering a new reality, reconnecting with my true spirit and strengthening my relationship to the Most High. While traveling in India has gutted a

lot of physical, social and cultural illusions, the time has come for me to concentrate on the spiritual side of things. In a place of peace and tranquility, surrounded by nature and stillness, I will begin this work in Palolem.

-lerin alta donahue, *devki*

untitled

*We only see bits
and pieces of people.
Fragmented images.*

*We are more than
the halves we show
to the world or the
world allows us to
represent. We are
spirits who know
no boundaries of man*

made design. WE ARE COMPLETE.

*As I get in touch with my spirit I
understand my wholeness and the
circular aspects of my existence.*

folashade alao

Jaded Little Flower

*Jaded Beauty!
You are not beauty jaded
You are the flower that grows not
from soft, fertile, soil
But from the non-nurturing,
unfertile ground of a world that
seeks to uproot
You before you reach maturity.
And still you are our little African
flower of hope.
Since they give you nothing
but concrete,
Root yourself in solid ground
and grow.
Jaded Beauty, not beauty jaded.*

-aliyyah salam

