



FOCUS
2003

FOCUS 2003

OUR VOICES
OUR ART
OUR LYRICS
OUR VISION

Editor-in-chief

ARIELE ELISE LE GRAND

FOCUS 2003

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EDITORIAL BOARD

Nicole Creecy & Christine Tejada

VISIONS.....

(OVER ART: (Submitted Anonymously)

Roy-Yen Chin, "Untitled" (Acrylic on Canvas 18x24) Pg. 24

THANK YOU.....

Donna Akiba Harper

Arturo Lindsay

Opal Moore

Anne B. Warner

FOR YOUR INSPIRATION, KNOWLEDGE AND ENCOURAGEMENT

to all the fierce talent that went into

FOCUS 2003

*this magazine is a manifestation of your incredible
energy*

A SPECIAL THANKS TO AUTOMATED PRINT FOR MATERIALIZING SO MANY WISHES

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VOICES

No Lye

Speaking of one many's revolution
You saw me sportin' and uncombed protest
And laughed at me
I saw you with a white girl
On your back
And then you on her
And me – you accuse
I am too angry
My hair is too big
My mouth is too loud
And I am too proud
To shroud my locks –
They need to breathe,
But If I feel like braids, OR curled
My hair, and unspoken store to the world
Fragments of freedom, of pain, burnt cars, fear of rain
My chemical love swirled down the drain
No Lye, this twisted seductive dance on my head
Is a shout in the dark
A homage to the dead
How blindly I tread
A leader too often led
Astray by the promise of a straight swing
No nappy is never the thing
And if you are afraid of what I bring, then say so
Do no try and blame it on my afro

- Janeen Bryant

What if the condom broke?

22 hours 12 minutes and 2 seconds ago
maybe my view would have been different

22 hours 12 minutes and 2 seconds ago
maybe I would have smiled at the mother to be sitting next to me

Its My Turn

Palms sweating, Pulse raising, Period Missing
QUIET
Where is he?

22 hours 12 minutes and 2 seconds ago
I wanted 4 kids
3 boys and 1 girl

22 hours 12 minutes and 2 seconds ago
I embraced my sexuality and wanted you in the way of a woman

22 hours 12 minutes and 2 seconds ago
I was a queen, a shortie-luv, a baby girl

22 hours 12 minutes and 2 seconds from now
I'll be a statistic.

-Jai Rozell

Treasures

Roses are red
Your eye is black and blue
He though he'd make it better with a flower or two
A box of assorted candy
For knocking you around to prove he was manly
A thousand hugs and kisses
For nearly killing the Mrs.
Some rocks and things...some shiny things
A pair of earrings and a necklace to go with your ring
That time he came home from work and beat you 'cause of stress
You forgave him when he got you that expensive new blue dress
Six or seven pairs of stiletto heels
For all those night she showed you how hurt feels
You open up a closet and look in your jewelry box
And see all those trophies you traded for hard knocks
But what do you get for the fear you feel on a daily basis
How many black and blues before you stop saving faces?
And telling tall tales of aggressive walls and stairs
And the trouble you have avoiding them
How can you smile that quite smile when you find no joy with him?
You say you still love him and he'll always have your heart.
I say take it back from him and give him martial arts.
Take back your dying soul hiding your shadow of doubt.
You doubt that you can live without him in your life
You doubt that you can be a woman without staying as his wife.
But how will you even stay human when he beats you like a beast?
If you can't fight him, leave the man at least.
Remember who you are and who you intend to be.
Leave the dog and don't be fooled by the man he pretends to be.

- Mwikali Muindi

Strollin'

I wote this poem
one day when I was feeling fine.
Sundress, fresh pedicure, open toe shoes.
Walking, strollin', feelin'
the breeze as it eases
through the parts
between my zig-zag cornrows.
Body swayin', hips movin'
from side to side.
The wind sneaks up my
dress, just in time to
cool my thighs.
Sunglasses
tilted slightly,
so that I could peep this fine,
tall, chocolate brother
walking my way.
Locks, long, and flowin'.
I could climb those locks
and end up in his mind;
search through his thoughts.
Reality hits, I step back into
myself. As he passes, I softly
speak, he winks, I smile,
we both laugh at our
childlike approach.

-Nicole Creecy

Stream of Consciousness

nothing makes me feel better than being in the arms of my mother, aunts, grandmothers and sisters. i feel empowered by their diversity, strength and resistance to patriarchal oppression. we are tall, short, big, small, loud, shy, light and dark. we cross the spectrum that is womanhood. we laugh and cry, cook and go to work. we are limitless. why doesn't the media show this? why don't i see myself and my sisters and mothers on the television screen or in magazines? why don't the brothers who we want to love see our total selves as women on the screen? i want the world to know who i am so that i may be celebrated! rather than degraded....my mind stretches further than the television screen can show in 30 minutes. i am more than Ashanti, halle berry, whoopi goldberg, or lil' kim. show me! show us, the quiet corner called spelman college that, in the huge realm of mass media, where black women are internationally known for being sexual objects, no one even notices. over here, can you hear us? we are singing a song that gets louder and louder every year, raising awareness among women, delivering the message, engaging in dialogue. do you need glasses? here, take mine...see what i am reading: audre lorde, bell hooks, sonia sanchez and more. you can't stop us, but you don't notice us as we are. stop poisoning my children's minds. they are precious. they are me. we are all connected. when you call her a bitch, you are calling me one too. sisters, we must unite and do something LOUD. you are more than just a sexual toy. take a seat in the director's chair, compose an ad for the new line of jeans your sister just started, stand behind that mic...pick up a pen. do it for your grandmothers and great-grandmothers who were raped and beaten. do it because you can. don't wait. we don't have time. they keep calling me bitches and hoes. babies are having babies. i can't distinguish between a rap video and porn...babies are being raped in South Africa. we don't have time. no one else will do it. pick up your tools and get to work. we've got to make a change. be creative. show the world who owe truly are...

- Jessica McKnight

Nostalgia

We talked about you yesterday,
my friends and me,
sitting in a park
in the white neighborhood
you took me to swing
on our first date.

I saw the very swing
you watched me
swing on.

I remember...

Don't worry
I have never mentioned,
though now it comes to mind,
the cul-de-sac
we shared
our first kiss.
we danced away
in the cold night air.

Yes, every time,
I go to Jack N' the Box,
I sigh and remark
how I so hate
combo number 16
because it is your favorite
meal—the ham and egg sandwich—
you always got fries instead of hash
browns—
I think.

I talk I think

I remember
how you once cared for me
how you now don't

how I wish you would again
how I hate myself for saying so.

I recall the
"Don't forget to smile"
at the end
of your letters,
the smile you once had for me.
I look
at the letters you wrote
almost thirty-two—yes, I counted—
some of your words bring me to tears;
not because
they are so beautiful
or so sweet, but because they are
from you to me.

Seems pretty crazy,
I know
the hurt I feel
when I see your face,
the pang in my heart
when the phone rings
and its not you.

I don't comprehend why
I miss you so—
but, I do—
not because of the way
you made me feel
or because of who you could be,
it was because
you were you
and let me be me.

-Ehimwenma Iyamu

Lifetime Lullaby

The song that will replay in my head over and over as I yearn to find sweet rest,
Is the song about how of all the days that I've lived, this one I have lived best.
At the end of this day when my head is resting on my pillow and I gaze at the city lights;
The tune that will caress and care for me will spare me of all the sleepless nights.
The nights when the sin on my back wrestled the innocence on my face.
Those nights where my mind, my thoughts and dreams is where Lucifer could find his
place.
When it's all said and done and my eyes are hypnotized by the neon moonlit glow.
The ballad that will escort me to my slumber is one that I hope my babygirl will never
know.
She'll probably never know the relief that I'll feel in my lifetime lullaby,
Full of the repentance, remorse and regret of days already passed by.

- Ashli Lyn Wilson

Georgia trees sing songs
our grandfathers used to sing
before they were hung.

- S. Sherrie Tartt

An Hour With Tara Roberts
By: Christine Tejada

I was only ten minutes late after getting lost in a maze of one-way streets in downtown Atlanta. Waiting for me at the Luckie Street Café was Tara Roberts, founder and publisher of Fierce Magazine, a new, thinking woman's magazine scheduled to appear on newsstands nationwide in May of this year. She was finishing a cup of tea and a cookie that she jokingly claimed she's going to need to walk forty blocks to work off. I've met Tara a few times before, at Spelman functions hosted by the Women's Center or the English club, where she has come to talk about her magazine and the ideas that she is trying to get out into the mainstream. I always enjoy hearing Tara speak. Her positive attitude is absolutely infectious and inspiring, and it's rare to find someone who is like this and probably doesn't know it. In the hour that I spent with Tara, I learned where Fierce came from, looked at politics in the media, and got an insight into why I can't stop watching reality television.

Fierce defines itself as

"The collective sisterhood that honors women and their global efforts. The space for self-love, authentic self-expression, creativity and succulence. Pages brimming with organic, intuitive and non-linear ideas and theories. The stand that all women everywhere fearlessly reclaim their authentic, bold, audacious selves, and lead the charge in transforming and healing the planet."
(www.fiercemag.com)

Tara does not want Fierce to be just a magazine. She hopes that it will take on more, perhaps branch off into other forms of media and influence a generation of women to see themselves as whole and complete. The idea for Fierce has been in motion for over a decade. As a teenager, Tara knew that she wanted to put out a magazine, but it took her a while to determine the direction of her work. As an undergraduate at Mt. Holyoke, Tara entertained the idea of making a publication for women that would challenge what was out there, but Tara would have to crawl before she could walk. In graduate school at NYU, her thesis was a mini-magazine that became the basis of the idea for Fierce. While working on this, she met many others who felt the same way about the representation of women in magazines. After reading an article in Vogue, she became further committed to creating Fierce. "They were talking about different body types. There was 'average', 'tall', 'short', 'voluptuous'... maybe they even threw in 'curvy' or perhaps that fell into 'voluptuous.' I thought, 'I don't see myself represented in any of these images and furthermore, I don't want to look like any of these models!'" She decided then that it was time, really time, for a change.

Roberts has been working on Fierce full time since 2000. She hopes this magazine will make a change. Rather than having ideas spread nationally and perhaps globally, Tara wants to create a 'fierce community.' When I asked her what she meant by that, she replied, "A world where all women are whole, complete and not trying to 'fix' themselves." She was referring to the ways in which many popular women's magazines today advertise how to get better cleavage, a tighter ass, and a killer personality to win over members of the opposite sex. Roberts feels that there needs to be more "expressing,

not suppressing" of the range of feelings and emotions that we all have as women. "In a way, I feel that women's power has been given away and it needs to be reclaimed," she said. Her tone throughout our conversation was a mixture of excitement and lament that made perfect sense. On the one hand, she's excited by the possibility of making such changes, and on the other, she's sad that these changes need to be made; nevertheless, she remains positive all the while, stating, "I believe that if women's true qualities were expressed, the world would definitely be a better place. I mean, we make up more than half the population! This whole war with Iraq... might not even be an issue."

I asked Tara if she felt that she was a "fierce" individual. She thought for a moment, then decided that she was "fierce" in certain areas, but developing in others. "I'm still working on being bold. Things like this interview are helping me with that," she commented. This surprised me given that I see Tara as a bold person. She left a comfortable editorial position at Essence and moved back to Atlanta to explore the development of Fierce. Now she has created a new magazine that seeks to empower and change the lives of those it reaches.

Although she's realizing her dream, she's still a normal person though. Roberts is slightly ashamed that she watches shows like High School Reunion. "It's like watching a train wreck," she says. "Or like crack. You say, 'Oh I'll just have a little try,' and then you think you're not hooked until you find yourself flipping through the channels wondering what those fools are up to now." But, like the rest of America, she can't stop watching, and American Idol is one of her favorites. Roberts even managed to convince her mother, Spelman's own Ms. Lulu Roberts, to root for Justin Guarini every Tuesday and Wednesday this summer. Reality TV, unfortunately, is not all fun and games in her eyes. "It's sad," Tara said. "There is about to be a massive war in the world, and people are probably more concerned with who's getting voted off, or what antics are going on in the house. It's wrong."

She cites the 2000 presidential election as the example of American apathy and I think that many people agree with her. Roberts felt that individual votes had no impact on the outcome of the election. "When Bush decided that he was going to be president, I felt like my vote was worthless. And now it seems as if there is nothing I can do. It's to the point where I would rather watch something entertaining, regardless of how stupid, rather than think about the war. And I know that I'm not alone in this sentiment."

We also discussed other political issues facing America today, particularly those pertinent to blacks and women. Roberts was clearly conflicted. "The political agendas that are set for Blacks and for women are just not progressive enough. Advancement is not really improvement unless it actually brings people up. Having a black faces in higher positions doesn't change anything if the same people are pushing the buttons." Her conclusion was that the only blacks and women that are able to advance in society are those that uphold the socio-political ideals of the white male hegemony. She hopes that with the advent of Fierce, women will be able to further question and perhaps develop new ways in which to challenge the status quo.

We eagerly await the first issue of Fierce and wish Tara the best of luck.

Untitled

I can hear the voices of my ancestors calling me as I sleep...
"wake up young child, you are destined to be great."
I come from a lineage of
African royalty, Kings and Queens,
who ruled empires, built the Sphinx,
created civilizations.
Still I hear them say,
"wake up young child, you are destined to be great."
The voices come from so far,
so wide, yet they are loud
and clear. Harriet says,
"walk on little sister,
though the way may not be clear."
Phyllis hollers, "pick up that pen and write."
Medgar whispers, "don't make my life be in vain."
Emmitt screams, "look hard, look really hard."
Martin tells me, "help someone else along the way."
Malcolm insists, "become greatness by any means necessary."
Bob sings, "None but ourselves can free our minds."
My grandmother lulls me saying, "Live love."
My mother repeats, "you are responsible for your own happiness."
I can hear these voices over and over again
in my head, they encourage me, love me,
these voices are in fact me.
How do I know that I can be destined to be great?
Because greatness runs through
my veins, move my Spirit,
greatness surrounds me.
They were and I will be...
Greatness!!

-Nicole Creecy

Desperation

...And we were dancing
Despite the heat
Gliding
And drifting
And melting into one another
First at the hands
Then at this hips
Gazing intensely into one another's...lips
Desperation
Perspiration
Sweet like honey
Binding us together
For hours
Never stopping
Because it would break lovers' intuitions
Their predictions
About how this night would end
Not to mention their hearts
Dancing to a beat
That teases our eardrums
And licks at the heels of our feet
Then me
On tippy toes
(so we can see eye to eye)
Anticipating
Nothing but more of the same
Trying desperately
To reach the sky
Cuz in a moment we'll be levitating
Patiently waiting for the sky to fall
Because *nothing even matters at all...*

- Nicole Epps

Alien

**To be the other
the alien, the foreigner, the outsider, the
peculiar
is to be alone,
a misfit, a no-fit, a social faux pas.
makes you feel less than human
the other
not inclusive, on the periphery, additional
you struggle to maintain the you within
that no one takes time to see
and seeing, would not understand
and not understanding, would not appreciate
difference...
that makes you, you and not just a
replica of them.
continue on, burn and shine from within.
maintain your identity
that threatens to be lost in this
sea of belonging.**

-Raquel Richardson

Mother Murderer

You can call me mother murderer but it won't hurt me at all.
These times I'm trying to rise and it seems that all I can do is fall.
You can call me mother murderer cause the child in my belly I had to abort.
Yeah, call me your names but what would you do if you had three that you couldn't support?

I murder the dreams of my daughter,
Be real! She ain't going nowhere.
A salon? No! Right on that front porch is the place for her to do hair.
A chalk outline is left in the place where those sons of mine's wishes were.
He ain't got no money for me but can afford to marry her?
Mother Murderer can be my name.
Because I'm their own mother and I kill their dreams.
They try to abandon me,
Or at least that's the way it seems.

Sirens sing my kids to sleep as the pusher man whispers lullabies
I don't try to kill the hopes of my kids,
I just don't want to hear their cries.
Cries because they didn't amount and do all they wanted to.
Cries because they're lost in this world.
Cries because they don't feel true.

You call me mother murderer but can you walk in my shoes?
Can you do my dance or sing my song?
Can you even bear to cry my blues?
The blues I've had torn into blacks because they stay in my mind for so long

Everyday I look at my baby girl and I know that she thinks I'm not lovin' her.
But no one will understand my sorrows.
And I will remain mother murderer.

- Ashli Lyn Wilson

Slumber Party Secrets

Gathered in a circle 4 women to be sit and discuss life:
Boys-College-Music-Tampons or Pads- and oh yeah,

Their first time..

Mimi speaks about the homecoming dance
being under the bleachers
how it hurt so bad she make him take it out

I think of him pretending to come to use the phone...

Tamia blushes, recalling being scrunched up
in the back of her boyfriend's pinto
Jodeci's Forever My Lady was on the radio
but she made him turn it off

scared she would be jinxed into getting pregnant

I'm remembering him touching me saying it would be alright

Joy sits with her mouth hanging
eyes held wide with anticipation
of what would be next

embarrassed to what to know

but loudly proclaims I Am A Virgin

cause my daddy said that the preacher said, that the bible said, uh bla bla bla

I sit thinking no one told me anything...

It's my turn

I'm not sure what to say, so I sit.

I think of all the times he came, when mommy was away
the times I spent the night with his sister or just went to play
the times mommy was at church, a meeting, or work

I can't remember the first,

all I can remember is how it hurt

Everyone is staring, waiting for me to go

"Jai how was your first time?"

I simply reply: I don't know.

- Jai Rozell

#3

When I die don't waste money on a casket
And forget about the flowers too,
They'll just get thrown away in the morning
After they're touched by the morning dew.

There's no need to spend money on programs
My friends and family know the life story
No need for a drawn out eulogy
Cause my life was a special ceremony.

Just burn me in a brick oven
And put my ashes in a cookie tin
Then spread them over a bridge at the lake
So I may always whisper through the wind.

Take the money you just saved
And sponsor a large feast
Let all those who will, attend
To break bread and share meat.

Let all who want have their words to say
Sing a song, make a toast
But just make sure to burn a tree
That I'd appreciate the most.

- S. Sherrie Tartt

Untitled

Standing in the midst of a littered street
There is a woman clasping a picture of her breast
It shows a man and a woman and a child
Laughing in a carefree way that we forgot how to do.
Is this how the rest of the world feels?

The picture shakes as the woman trembles.
She is crying ugly tears;
This is our new face.
Salute soldier—
To newfound beauty
That was here all along.
The kind of beauty found in people
Who have forgotten to care about themselves.

Strength in numbers they proclaim
But numbers are lost
And they aren't coming home.
It's okay to cry.
Daddy's missing
Baby Boy will never know him
What's Georgey Porgy to do?

A man is working throughout the night;
Beads of pain gathering on his brow.
Those are your brothers
Under the stone and ash—
That is who we are fighting for
Because a woman crying in the street
Isn't so uncommon anymore.
I don't want to go to war no more more more

Three colors are more beautiful than ever before
And we can see them in your eyes.
But a colored alert does not equal safety
CNN is our campfire
But it's not so cozy.

We are crying too violently to produce a noise
Eerie silence
Broken first by sirens piercing the air with reality
Then by our cries of injustice

This is how the rest of the world feels

And it had been such a beautiful day

Our skies have been corrupted by angry smoke

Now we are angry

Mother and fathers will be found in pieces

The say "God bless you"

What has he been doing all these years?

Wipe your tears

Tell your mother you love her.

Tomorrow there will be rain.

- Nicole Epps

Coconuts

I want my skin to smell of coconuts
And shine like vaseline
I want my breath to breeze on sunshine days
And cool our shuttered fling
I want you here not and till the dawn
Exploring midnight things
And when the dawn opens on red eye
I'll ask you what we mean

You say you like the mango
Dripping honeyed-dew
You say you like the taste,
My sweet, and I like me with you
I want my breath to comfort you
And warm your supple wings
I want your breath to comfort me
To sooth your gentle sting
We are each others long cool drink
While exploring midnight things
And when the sunlight hits the sand
I'll as you what we mean
You like the crush the flow of aqua
Clear against your skin
On the beach I am your water
Play with me again
And if I am overripe
And bursting at your touch
Pluck me quick and bit me slow
I miss you a bit too much.

- Janeen Bryant

Three Amazing Accounts of Feminine Survival

1.

the orchid garden

Slow, and dull, it rolled around my tummy in the place where hunger should've been. It felt like almost the same place, the raw and vacant cavity of my hunger spot. But the new sensation was definitely not vacant, as it filled me with a pain so dull and so thick that I felt like I was drowning from the inside out. I pushed eight fingers against the naked peach flesh of my abdomen and turned onto my side. My thumbs were too nervous to cooperate; they bent away from my body, rigid like two shotguns ready to protect me from any more demon invasions. The sheets were hot. I could feel thick droplets collecting in the valleys of flesh between my thighs, pressed together as I connected all the parts of my body into a circle. It was hotter this way, but in any other position I felt defenseless. Each and every toe curled under, elbows tucked in, eight fingers desperately trying to soothe, chin snug, set back in layers of pudge. A smooth curve from the top of my neck to the bottom of my spine, like a crescent moon in season. Hunger scrapes at the deepest, pinkest insides, tearing at rosy abdomen walls, which surrender their color. It makes each breath cold on the way down—frigid and lonely in the center. I knew it wasn't hunger. My breaths squeezed through water-filled balloons. I ached with an abysmal ripeness.

I was overflowing.

Rolling my body out of bed, tummy first, I followed the rippling sensation to the toilet. I suddenly had the strong urge to empty myself. I sat; the ache subsided, nothing. The cold, ceramic seat brought some faith back to my thighs, and I spread my legs just far enough apart, so that I could see between them. I felt the pressure of something liquid well up at the bottom of my tummy like a tear and then spill. Thick, violet tears, dropping out of me. I watched, awed. The rusty, crimson fluid fell first in long drops, then poured in the bowl water like a string of syrup. When it slid down through the water, it curved, swirled and disappeared, like tinted underwater cigarette smoke. I was astounded. I wanted to sit on the now warm toilet seat until morning. I wanted to collect the sliding black fuchsia in a bottle. I just watched. Cautiously, I offered two fingers to the thinning stream, and then brought them to my face. Sour sweet. Smells like a sweaty, rotting, garden of purple orchids. Rotting—but not dead.

There is a sound outside the bathroom door, but I'm too entranced by my body's new eruption to notice. It's the cat. She nudges the door and lets herself in. I offer her my stained fingers and she sniffs at my new smell and rubs her cat body against the edge of the broken cabinet door beneath the sink. Her toasted, yellow fur is falling out all over the rug. A little embarrassed, I pull my underwear up around my knees, and then I lean over and call her name. She doesn't come to me. "Sesameeee..." I whisper to her as loud as I can without making an actual voice, "something is *happening* to me!"

-Ariele Elise Le Grand

2.
beached

One day my vagina opened swallowed a whale. It was extraordinary to say the least. A little awful to say more. I always wondered how a vagina expands so to allow a baby to pass through those very delicate, very sore, and supposedly incredibly elastic walls. I couldn't think of it. When I tried to, my body became twisted, it became frightened. I couldn't begin to understand the depths that lay there. "I must be bottomless" I thought, "and completely elastic". A baby would be bigger than the whale I had stuck inside of me.

At least I was ready; the ocean wet my thighs and I saw it approaching- very damp and determined. I leaned back, took control of my hips, and lifted myself out of the sheets of fluid that had soon reached my waist. It rushed through me, over me. I was drenched in a wild, warm sea. I had to hang on, so that I wouldn't wash away. Maybe that was the mistake, maybe I should've let myself go right there and been over with it. But I threw my head back instead, and squeezed my eyes shut so tight that all the blood there, and everywhere else in my body, rushed down to my vagina. I groaned at my predicament, and found that all I could do was scream and smile about the whole thing. A flailing, red-ribbon kind of scream. A bottomless, hip-shaking kind of scream.

But that was all right before the whale entered. I can't say it swam, it sort of... plunged. I waited for it to wash away on the same ocean it arrived on. But it didn't move, for a few moments, it just laid there. Beached. My vagina was like a dead shore all of a sudden. I didn't know what happened. I guess I thought about it too much. I had never had a whale inside of me before.

-Ariele Elise Le Grand

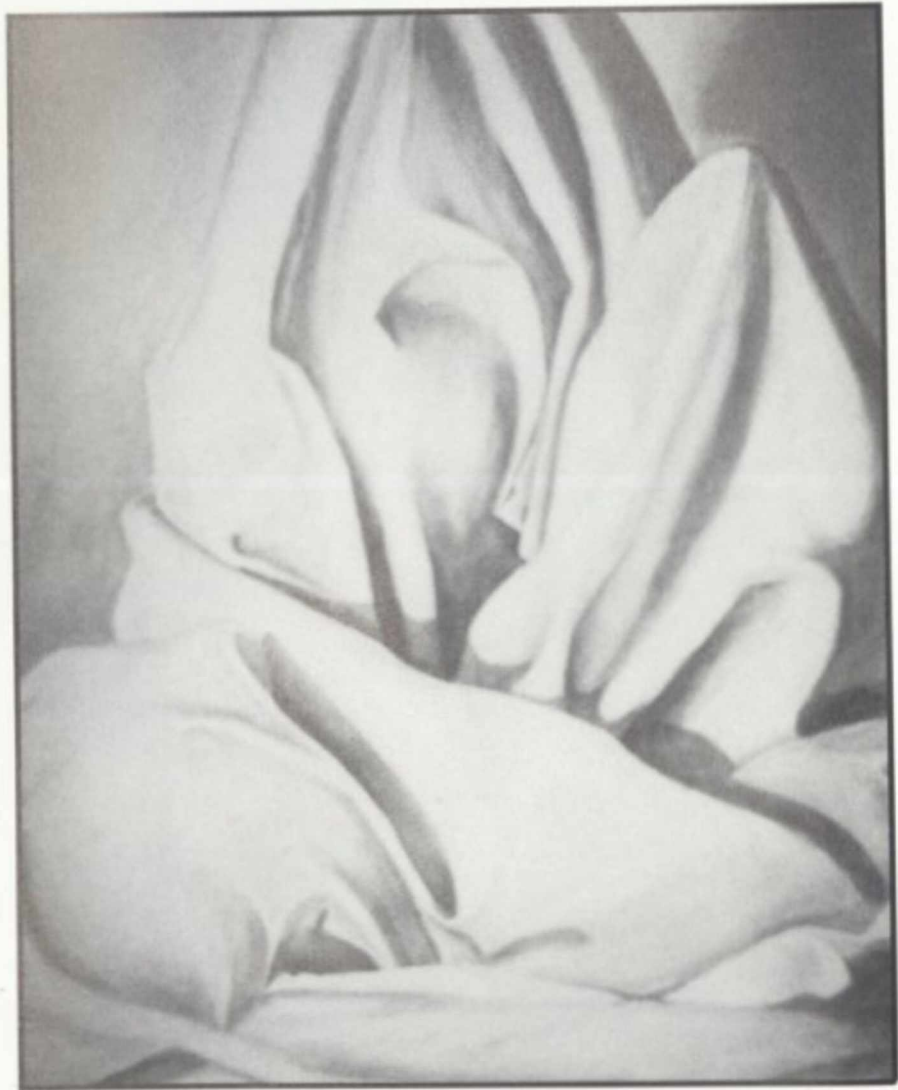
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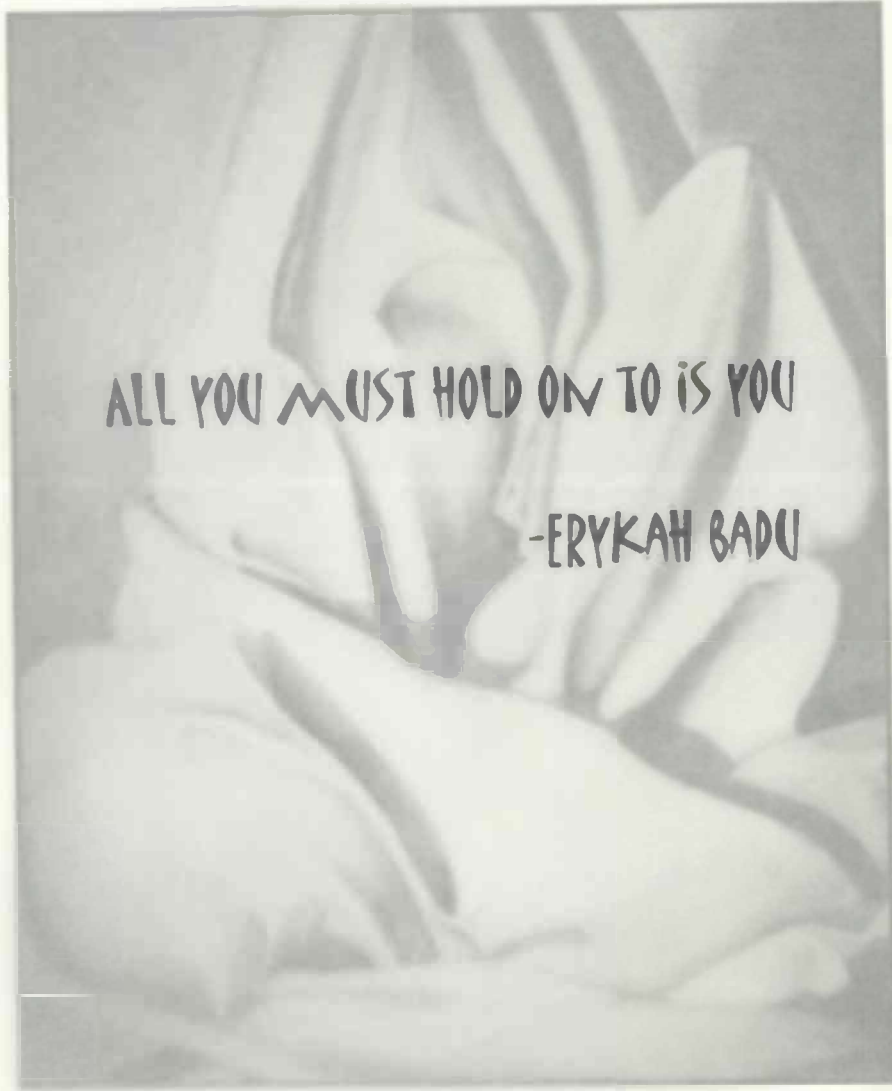
what i promised

i could feel baby's head against my inside. i could imagine the loosened, tiny fingers, once greedy for my life, for my vine, now limp and yellow. for eight months, i cradled, i fed, i sang, i flowed in and out of rooms, heavy with stretched flesh, beating, bleeding baby. covered you with white sheets, scarves for dresses. lay us down to sleep, on a naked mattress. i could at least call it my own. and i couldn't rock us both, so i put my arms over my ears instead. hoped that baby would never hear the thrashing. i didn't want your first words to be curses. i promised that i would keep you on my lap, watch every hot stream of milk soothe your fresh tongue. fresh cries. who knew he could give life and take it away. i promised i would set you on the fat of my hip and run you to the woods. never cut the vine, so we would always be connected. i wanted to take you to the grass. i wanted the air around you to be silent. then i felt baby, in every part of me. you were the unearthly rage in my hands, fingers sweaty on the metal. i had to do it. i had one more promise, that i would never let you know—you had his eyes. his nose. anything. i had to keep one. lost you both. can't say i feel anything now. except sorry. i drag my body to the concrete, feel my nipples cold and hard on the surface. wrap my own, limp and yellow fingers around the bars. my round belly, now deflated, feels you gone. heavier than before.

i can't cry. my hands, they won't make fists. nothing to fight for, or against. i don't care about heaven. i wanted to be a mother.

-Ariele Elise Le Grand





ALL YOU MUST HOLD ON TO IS YOU

-ERYKAH BADU