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Poems

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The Coming Together Of My People

There must be a coming together of my
people,

not just a holding of hands, but
a using of hands to build strong
institutions.

There must be a loving together of my
people,

not just a physical love where
we share our bodies, but a spiritual
love where we lay bare our souls.

There must be a real trusting of one
another

between my people
so that we will respect each other
as sister and brother.

There must be a caring for each other
by my people,

Where we will be on hand when needed
and share when there is little in
the till.

There must be a rebuilding of the
family among
my people

Where the home is the first school for
the lessons of life,

Where Ma is the Queen and Pa is the
King,

and sisters and brothers look
out for each other.

Yes, there must be an awareness of the
past

for my people

Learning all about Africa our native land
So we'll know who we are and insure
our own destiny.

There must be a praying together
of my people

So we'll have strength for the struggle
and hope in the future.

For when there is that coming together,
and

that building together and
the loving each other, trusting,
caring and praying together
then we can truly celebrate the
FREEDOM OF OUR PEOPLE.

Annetta Elam Capdeville
Washington, D. C.

Contradictions

I'm to the point where I cannot
stand another contradiction

Be black is in the breeze
but I speak nice and friendly
and your stare is cold enough to freeze
my warm good mornings

I'm to the point where I cannot
stand another contradiction

Be black is in the air
but on the bus downtown not one
brother would stand and share
his seat with the Black grandmother
pass her better days

I'm to the point of bitter tears

Be black is in the conversations
until it really counts
and today it counts the most
but too many souls ignore the suffering
in southern africa

And I'm to the point of bitter tears

Be black blasts through the radio
but history is made when a listener
wins a 10,000 dollar car
history could have been made
when that jive-ass radio station
was willing to stand up and be real black
and give 10,000 dollars to the NAACP

I'm to the point where I cannot
stand another contradiction

Be black is in the air
but a brother rationalized his blackness
under the rug
and went out and had his hair (brain)
fried

I'm to the point of bitter tears

Be black is in the air
but black people are singing
"you mind your business and
i'll mind mine."

And when they come to knock down
your
door—just don't disturb my peace

I'm to the point where. . . .

Joseph A. Hawkins, Jr.
Washington, D. C.

Genesis

We stand on the threshold
 Of what was merely an expectation
 Feeling its oncoming force
 Fling us into seeming inevitability
 Long sought
 Now welcomed
 Only to find ourselves trembling
 With thoughts of anxiety.

Marcus G. Wood
 Baltimore, Md.

Ebony Father

Dark deep ridges streaming from the
 snow
 Dark deep ridges of past despair,
 Each with its own tale of struggle
 Ridges!
 Carved with years of tears,
 broken dreams . . . unfulfilled promises!
 Ridges!
 All drawn together,
 Creating a portrait of quiescent strength.
 Peace will come—closing the ridges for
 the final journey.

c.m.j.sr.
 Washington, D. C.

Lineage

I cannot trace the seed
 That bore me
 Nor patch my Grandmother's
 Words into a
 Quilt bearing images
 Of my beginnings
 I only have the eyes
 The lips
 The songs
 Revealing my origins
 My fingers scratch at
 Memories
 Pack them deep in the brain
 Where they'll sleep
 In the peace of my blood

Sherman Shelton, Jr.
 Mebane, N.C.

Her in Affirmation Stay

the veins of earth
 lead to her like spines
 and i am straight to the target
 rising and falling you are gravity
 in the oxygen of my blood
 a newest noise loud as lust
 spreading ripples of the underwater of
 this woman
 so rare psychic powers are language
 and life
 i praise you black woman
 if you want you could draw
 all of the sun's energy into you
 you need to inhale
 and if you do here i come
 our voices stand up
 a disc
 rising and swirling and shooting
 spurts forming a single sun sigh
 and you fill the scent of music
 and i drink in the glory of your painted
 toes
 and seek refuge in the wide-screen of
 your lips
 you are wiser than the nocturnal owl
 in the far and near of my tongue
 and if you don't mind
 i am speaking in your womb
 if you want fish could live in your palms
 people could see in darkness
 the internal folds of earth
 could reveal the morality of clay and
 water
 and if they asked me if you could do all
 these things
 i would say she could show you how
 a turtle pees
 i praise you black woman
 in language and in life
 i am affirming in the world
 the panoramic passing of your resistance
 and liberation

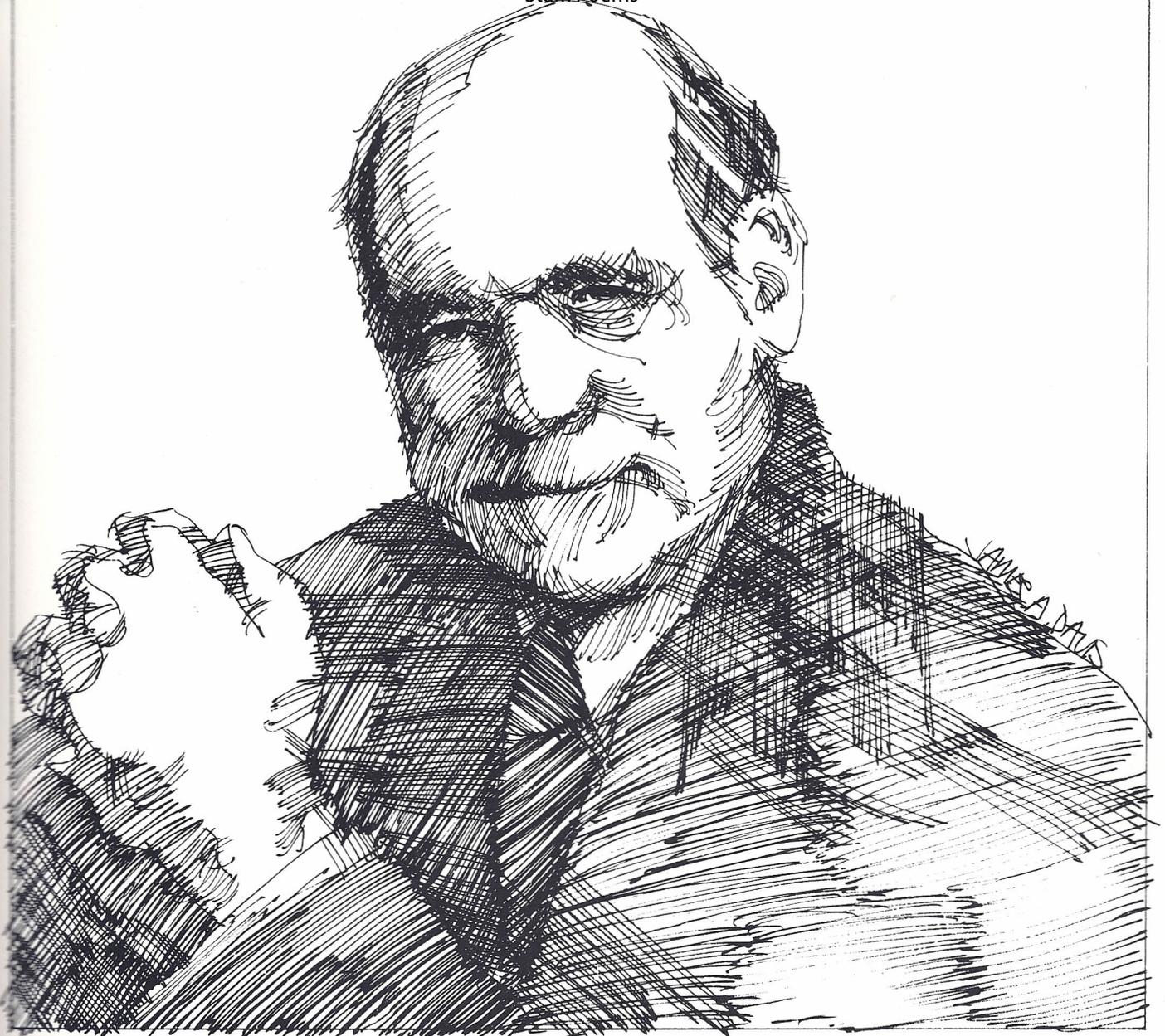
the sistrums of your bosoms giggling
 loud in my ears
 the figure of Isis naked outlined by
 the window
 golden black sprayed by a peeking moon
 the fortress of your thighs
 closes this poem in language and life
 i am enclosed in the air
 of praise and stay.
 Rob Penny

Til We Are Free

Black Man,
 I am lesson
 learn me
 I am dream
 grow inside me
 I am fulfillment
 drink of me
 till we are one
 till we are free eternally
 Take my hand understand
 Drink of me
 till we are free
 till we are free

Nora Agnes Martin

Editor's note: The last two poems were reprinted, by permission, from two volumes of anthology of poetry and prose edited by Frances J. Barnes—“LOVE—From Black Men to Black Women” (1976), and “LOVE—From Black Women to Black men” (1977), with introduction by Ruby Dee. Both books were published by the Exposition Press, Inc., 900 South Oyster Bay Road, Hicksville, N.Y. 11801.



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The Mordecai Wyatt Johnson Memorial Fund was established by Howard University in recognition of the significant contributions made by the late Dr. Mordecai W. Johnson to the development of the university during his long tenure as president— from 1926 to 1960.

The Fund's main objectives are:

- To serve as a lasting manifestation of the deep appreciation in which the Mordecai Wyatt Johnson legacy at Howard University is held.
- To provide an unrestricted source of scholarship aid to Mordecai Wyatt Johnson Scholars.

- To provide at least one scholarship in each school or college at Howard University.
- To provide an unrestricted fund to support an annual Mordecai Wyatt Johnson lecture program.
- To raise at least \$1 million.

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