

before a woman becomes grown
 if she's black and poor
 she learns that the world
 is cold ready to rape you
 of everything
 if a blackgirlchild wants to ever
 become free she has to really
 struggle like we did
 shouts of hatred
 and screams of amerikan misunderstanding
 prison can make you look back on a lifetime
 of bitterness...
 handed-down clothes
 cold winter nights
 for whites only,
 colored served here
 etc.
 memories only other black women could understand
 fully
 of trying to be what ain't
 of trying to see what's not
 of trying to rid ourselves of what never was
 of men crying
 of children dying
 of abortions-justbecause...
 memories that harsh and cruel of alley ways
 where people live
 of "police" who not only attack with weapons
 but with words (which you cannot combat)
 if you're black and poor and female
 like my mama
 like me and my sisters

ericka huggins
 niantic prison 1970

*the oldness of new things
 fascinate me like a new
 feeling about love about people
 snow, highways that
 sparkle at night, talk,
 laughter . . .
 that old longing for freedom
 that this place constantly
 renews—it all makes
 me know that humankind
 has longed to be free ever forever
 since its break from the
 whole*

*maybe the longing for
 freedom will soon make
 others homesick for our
 natural state in/with
 earth, air, fire, water
 not dead
 but living—
 not asking for freedom—
 but free—*

—Ericka Huggins

I wake in middle-of-the-night terror
 next to the warm sleeping body of my lover
 yet alone in the conviction that I am in a prison cell
 shut away, suddenly, from all that makes my life.
 I sense the great weight of the prison
 pressing down on the little box of room I lie in
 alone forgotten.
 How often do women awake
 in the prison of marriage,
 of solitary motherhood
 alone and forgotten
 of exhaustion from meaningless work,
 of self-despising learned early,
 of advancing age
 alone and forgotten.
 How many women lie awake at this moment
 struggling as I do against despair,
 knowing the morning will crush us once again
 under the futility of our lives.
 And how short a step it is
 for us—to the more obvious imprisonment
 of bars and concrete
 where our sisters lie
 alone forgotten.