

Different Voices:

The Experiences of Women of Color at Barnard

Spring 1997

CONTRIBUTORS

ALUMNAE

| | |
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| <i>Maria Chale</i> | 1986 ----- |
| <i>Devaki Chandra</i> | 1986 ----- |
| <i>Barbara Clayton Clarke</i> | 1971 ----- |
| <i>Wanda Cole</i> | 1994 ----- |
| <i>Lauren Coleman</i> | 1986 ----- |
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| <i>Cristina Geigel</i> | 1991 ----- |
| <i>Tara Jefferson</i> | 1992 ----- |
| <i>Elaine Johnson James</i> | 1972 ----- |
| <i>Denise Jones</i> | 1976 ----- |
| <i>Vera Joseph</i> | 1932 ----- |
| <i>Arlene McCarthy</i> | 1982 ----- |
| <i>Daisy M. Otero</i> | 1985 ----- |
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STUDENTS

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Wanda Cole
Class of 1994

As a senior in high school, I knew that Barnard was the place for me. I first visited at Barnard on a November day during my Thanksgiving break senior year. Some students were busy and buzzing around campus, others were reading books in Ollie's restaurant, and some were talking with friends in McIntosh Center (which later became my home away from home). I remember thinking to myself: "these kids look like they are going places in life" and I knew at that moment that I wanted to be part of the Barnard tradition of women. After I was on campus and settled, Barnard again and again proved to be the best place for me. The professors, Deans, and my peers were constantly challenging me and exposing me to a different approach to life.

I became very active in Student Government and the Orientation program while at Barnard. At times student leadership was difficult and I felt unappreciated and isolated. But, in retrospect, I would do it over again if I had the opportunity. My time spent on student projects allowed me to interact with many different people which in my opinion was one of the most valuable aspects of my college experience. It is through relationships with people that you truly learn about life, the world, and most importantly yourself. There are many things that helped me succeed at Barnard: dedicated professors, the HEOP Office, administrators who became very dear to me and my friends. Barnard has a lot to offer to all its students, but most importantly, we students of color have a lot to offer to Barnard. Our contributions to the academic, social, and political life on campus keep Barnard moving forward. Looking back quickly I wish I was still there. Looking forward I am proud to be a part of a tradition of intelligent and strong Barnard Women.

Wanda Garcia
Class of 1995

“A Heritage of Strength”

As a child
My skin sweated screams:
I endured loneliness
In the house full of actors.
The facades reflected absurdities
In the Denial of “Español” —
In the Denial of Affection—
In the Denial of Voices...
All of this I withstood
Like my mother
A servant at age seven—
We grew up in different worlds
Yet we withstood the same reflections.
I found my voice
And screamed with ink.
Printed words reflected my existence;
Although,
At times,
The rain washed away
The necessary light
And I ran away with bottles
Underneath my coat

These bottles stripped away my barrier—
Left me cold and bare...
But I Always remembered
That my family
Has endured all these scars
And in the end
They become visible
And in the end
We survive.
In this city
I was shown to be ashamed
Of my bright Caribbean colors
The colors which pushed
My mother to dream

To dream to the edge of the “cespuscuario” (sunset)
Hope—she found in God
Hope—I inherited.
Sometimes dark moments invaded it
But
In the End
It survived
I survived
To tell stories
To all.
My ink will reflect—
No more facade will exist.

The ink will leave prints
For all to follow
The story line of our misfortunes and treasures,

Of our silent submissiveness
Which we endure and inherit strength from—
Strength which makes my passion
Create paper
Into scream, laughter, tear, hope...
With each sip I take
I go into the wonderful color of Van Gogh.

©11/26/94

Maya Palekar
Class of 1985

I know a lot of people say this, but I really can't believe that it's been ten years since I graduated from Barnard. I only know now how little I knew when I first began.

I entered Barnard as a shy teenager and I left as a slightly less shy adult. Everyday brought a new challenge, both academically and personally. Being an economics major, I was able to get some preparation for the scary business world I was going to enter. I also learned a little about the scary social world.

I think what I enjoyed most, however, were the simple things; my morning coffee at the then Chock Full o' Nuts; studying at the front lawn on a good day and walking around campus to gain perspective.

In general, I liked the security and comfort of being in the sheltered environment of Barnard. It was a very close knit group. What I liked even more, though, was that there was always a door open in that environment to give me the exposure to a large university.

I do, however, regret some things that I didn't fully take advantage of at Barnard. As I mentioned, I was a shy person, and that was a major obstacle I had to overcome. I went home almost every weekend to my parents' Westchester house and therefore didn't get to know my roommates as well as I could have. I know they were all nice people and I wish I'd been able to learn, grow and share in their fun too.

Reminiscing about my college days at Barnard makes me a little sad of "days gone by," but more importantly, I constantly draw strength from those days as well.

Daphne Bazile
Class of 1997

Watching the Raindrops Fall

I sit by the window
watching the raindrops fall
thinking about where and how I went wrong.

Searching and reaching
in order to find my heart a home,
a place where it's safe
from breakage and sorrow
where it can grow and blossom
and never grow old.

Yearning for a home,
I watch raindrops fall
my tears become raindrops
a storm raging within my soul.
Alone in love, without a heart nor a soul.

Alone in love and not in love,
without anything to call my own.

I sit by the window
watching the raindrops fall.

©1994

Ms. Zipper Gave Me Poems

Ms. Zipper Gave Me Poems.
Now I know there is beauty in
Permed coarse hair,
Full lips,
High cheekbones,
Different shades
Of pigmentation,
And the pleasant country side
Where my mother grew up.
©1997

Monique J. Burgess

Change and Resolution

The Earth -
Starts a new orbit
And still
Tilting twenty - three degrees
As
The Earthling -
Picks a new flower
And trying to stand
At ninety degrees
©1997

Monique J. Burgess

Marcela Acuria
Class of 1994

When I received the invitation to submit my contribution to the women of color compilation, I felt unworthy of the task. I'm not your average Barnard grad. I'm Hispanic. I grew up in the projects of Long Island City, Queens. I'm a product of the public school system. I've lived on my own since I was 17. I was a transfer student; I had to drop out of college not just once, but twice. I was a commuter for most of my stay at Barnard. (This was after Barnard became a dorm school, thus relegating commuters to their present status as second-class citizens). And to top all of this off, I had barely survived a marriage and divorce by the time I graduated. What do I have in common with any Barnard student? Even with students of color? Absolutely nada.

But I was wrong. I'm wrong because I'm the right person to tell you what it's like to be marginalized. Which is exactly what you are, because first, you're female and second, you're not white (whatever that is).

To be marginalized means that you are not part of the white, male center of society. You're not part of the "in" crowd. By nature of your gender, race, class, religion, sexual orientation or physical disability, you're relegated to the margins of society. You're the exception to the rule, and as such you're not in a position to make the rules. You—your background, beliefs, concerns, insights, strengths, needs and prejudices—are perceived by the powers-that-be as unfamiliar and thus curious or unimportant. You're ignored or exhibited, persecuted or patronized, constrained or condescendingly championed, probably misunderstood, perhaps feared and possibly hated. But you are always the "other".

You are part of the Barnard family now. But you are and always will be the adopted child in the family. As much as you are loved, protected and nurtured by Barnard—and, believe me, you are—there will always be something "special" about you. Until and unless the number of students of color increases significantly, this is and shall be the case. There's no use pretending otherwise.

Don't use your "otherness" as an excuse to isolate or withdraw yourself from the Barnard community. Barnard may be a very different, and even uncomfortable world, compared to your world. But Barnard is not the real world. The real world is still a man's world. A white man's world to be exact. It can be indifferent, discouraging and even cruel to women like you and me. You probably don't need me to tell you this. Either you already know or you'll find out soon enough. But I've experienced the real world. I know Barnard to be a sanctuary of tolerance,

opportunity, and inspiration. Here you will be shown kindness and respect. When you leave you will, as you well should, expect no less—though you may need to demand what was once your due.

The best advice I can give you is to allow Barnard to embrace you. This may sound odd, but I'm serious. In order to be embraced, you have to overcome your fears, let down your guard, and open your mind. Barnard may be a stranger to you, but it is deserving of your trust. Take the warmth and wisdom Barnard has to offer—they're sincere. And invaluable. Barnard is not just a name that looks good on your resume. It's a mark of distinction and achievement that you carry with you always. Hold it and yourself in high regard.

You have already achieved much by being here. You can achieve even more if you embrace Barnard back. Give back to the Barnard community—participate in class, join the clubs and organizations and, most importantly, make friends. The students at Barnard are a wonderful and often overlooked resource. They have much to offer you, and they have much to learn from you. I believe that what goes around comes around. If you shirk your responsibility to enrich your community with your valuable contribution, you risk the impoverishment of your own education. Not to mention your entire life.

Barnard will not erase your status as a marginalized person. If that is what you expect, expect to be disappointed. Though Barnard is not the key to equality, it is a tool of empowerment. Use it. Next to yourself—your strength, your smarts, your spirit—Barnard is your greatest resource.

Tara Jefferson
Class of 1992

UGLY WOMEN

Ugly women don't have doors held
for them.

Ugly women don't get smiles
from passing strangers.

Ugly women don't have the choice to
express choice.

Ugly women are hurt with
impunity.

Ugly women learn how to eat meals
with tears as water.

Ugly women should know better than
to sing the Blues,
'Cuz...

Ugly women get what ugly women least deserve
Ugliness.

©1994

I was never one to worry 'bout love,
'Cause I never thought it could happen.
I was gonna live my life
Floating on a breeze
Swinging my hips to the rhythm of the music
All night long,
Never getting too close
To the fire,
But simply tempting it with my own personal water.
Never feelin' anything but a good time,
And did I have a good time.
I was party central.
When I was done I would go home
Leaving them wondering how to get with me.
I lived the life that some only dreamed of.
Lovers throwing themselves and chasing after me.
I could have my cake and eat it too!
Never had to worry 'bout gettin' hurt
'Cause there weren't no feeling,
I wasn't gonna let that get in the way of my good time.
There's no attachment, no connection.
I just love 'em and leave 'em.
I was never one to worry 'bout love
'Cause I wasn't gonna let it happen.
I wasn't 'bout to get hurt.
But it happened.
The worst thing happen!
I fell in love.
This shit ain't suppose to happen
'Cause I wasn't gonna let it happen

But it did.
Now I can separate my heart from my head.
With every thought of love
I can't but help myself but feel.
And I wanna feel,
Despite what my mind tells me.

But I'm not about to get hurt.
I'm not gonna let myself feel
'Cause what's the purpose?
Some few moments of real passion,
Real feelings, No fear of being alone.
Are these worth having my heart,
The place I've hidden for so long.
Not letting anyone get too close.
Placing it on a mantel,
In a glass box with a sign
"You can look but you can't touch"
Love ain't worth taking down my
Prized possession and letting it get broken.
I was never one to worry 'bout love
'Cause it wasn't gonna happen.
But now, the glass box is getting dusty
But I can only look and not touch.

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Daphne Bazile

Devaki Chandra
Class of 1986

As an Indo-American, I was treated extremely well. I met for the first time other people from my ethnic background who satisfied a curiosity that I hadn't really known I'd had. The Career Services placement office made the greatest impression on me in how it helped students find their direction through semester internships and summer jobs. They helped me, for example, obtain a summer internship through the Financial Women's Association; nine years later, the ties I made from that position continue to help me pursue my direction.

The commitment of Barnard since graduation, however, has impressed me more than anything else. Examples of this commitment are the ease with which I've seen Career Services staff members reacquaint themselves with an alumna who has returned for advice, the time a counselor will spend with a job seeker to optimize that person's employment possibilities, and the formal groups that have been established to give alumnae long-term career support. It is fair to say that I have benefited even more from Barnard as an alumna than as a student.

Any young woman from my ethnic background could find a great deal in this Columbia environment. Its informality makes the learning process productive. The bond it has so far demonstrated to me has made that learning process that much more sincere. I see women helping each other at the inclusion of men.

Reishma Anissa Seupersad
Class of 1998

The spaces of my brain
have witnessed the passing of eons
A thousand waves of humanity
have cried out to me
And I have been ruler over
innumerable civilizations
that have come and gone
like the whispers of the wind
through my backyard.

Since the birth of the world mine eyes have beheld
the movements of creation
I have watched both men and beasts
live and die; suffer and thrive
in their dance of life
but I have not yet received
the revelation of truth.

So I will sit on my porch steps
and pray for the moment
when all will become clear to me
And there will be no reason left
for my wanderings and contemplation
And my forefathers and my children
will cease to be afraid
of what was and what is to be.

Then
and only then
can I truly say . . .
I HAVE LIVED.

©1995

Vera Joseph
(Mrs. Jerome S. Peterson)
Class of 1932

I entered Barnard in the Fall of 1928 (the time of the Great Depression) when the only other student of color at Barnard was Belle Tobias, Class of '31. Zora Neale Hurston had preceded us, but we heard little about her.

Since formal education beyond high school was outside my family's resources, I had not prepared for college in high school. But through the insistence and intervention of my teachers at George Washington High School, I spent another semester in high school to take the requisite courses for admission to Barnard. Through these teachers' recommendations also, I received scholarship aid from the college and with additional aid from a Black men's teachers' organization in Harlem I had enough money for my first year at Barnard.

On a trip to Jamaica where I was born, I saw a disfiguring skin disease called "yaws," which was especially common among women and children. This was the "call" to study medicine and return to the West Indies to "cure" them. When I entered Barnard I thought it would be impossible for me to go to medical school but 'just in case' I took pre-med courses with a major in Chemistry.

Imagine my dismay when at our first class meeting with Dean Gildersleeve we were told, "Young ladies, you are not here to be trained to become teachers, or doctors, or professionals. You are here to be educated." As I later discovered, she was so right! A liberal arts education establishes a foundation of knowledge that enriches all of life's other experiences, including providing a base for specialized and professional training and careers.

As a Freshman, I do not remember any incident or event that I can identify as discrimination or prejudice. Perhaps I was not sensitive to the issues and did not recognize them. I lived at home not far from the College and commuted daily, so developing a social life around the college was not a priority. Perhaps if I had not come from Harlem in New York City and had lived in a Barnard dormitory, my entire experience would have been different. I had many friends in my class and they remained life-long friends. But I also had friends from my community.

I was interested in international affairs, politics, labor and union organizations. I remember the excitement of hearing Norman Thomas speak and the thrill in the auditorium at Macmillan the evening Mary McLeod Bethune gave her famous speech and said, "I am Black and I am Beautiful." I worked as a volunteer at Community Service Society, and in Dr. Bullowa's Research Pneumonia Laboratory at Harlem Hospital.

Although a year ahead of me and a Botany Major, Belle Tobias and I were great friends and did many things together. One experience of racial prejudice that I can recall had to do with an invitation for Belle and me to spend an evening with Mrs. Annie Nathan Myers, trustee and benefactress of the college, at her home on Fifth Avenue (or it may have been Park Avenue) during my Sophomore year. To spare us the embarrassment and indignity of being ushered to the service elevator (which we would have refused to use), Mrs. Myers had arranged to have us escorted as 'proper guests' to her apartment.

I never looked for evidence of racial slights or discrimination, so if they occurred I may not have been aware of it. I was making great discoveries in my books and classes and was quite satisfied and happy with life at Barnard. It was not until my senior year when I discovered I was not being invited to join the Barnard Club in New York City after graduation that I recognized that I was being discriminated against, and resented it. But more important things than admission to a social club were happening in my life; I was going to medical school.

The head of the Chemistry Department was Marie Reimer, who also taught Inorganic Chemistry. My other teachers were Mrs. Rice for Organic Chemistry and Miss Keller for Qualitative, Quantitative, and Physical Chemistry. It was an outstanding department staffed by wonderful, brilliant women! I loved all my courses and I loved all these women. Miss Keller thought I should become a writer but when she realized my goal was really medicine, she used all her creativity to help me achieve it. The parents of my classmate and good friend, Euterpe Martin, came from Alsace Lorraine and Euterpe thought it would be a great idea if she were to study Petroleum Chemistry at the University of Strassbourg and I medicine. Supported by Miss Keller, Euterpe and I made great plans to study abroad.

I had applied to Cornell and Columbia Medical schools in the United States. I never received an acknowledgment of my application for Cornell, but in January 1932 I was admitted to Columbia's College of Physicians and Surgeons with a full scholarship of \$500. I regretted having to give up study at the University of Strassbourg with Euterpe, but I could not have been any happier. Encouragement from my professors and hard work had been rewarded. I had been elected to Phi Beta Kappa in my junior year. A good academic record opens doors!

Although I had taken courses in Music, Sociology, and Philosophy and used Columbia's summer school programs to take courses in Shakespeare and Milton with outstanding scholars, my education is woefully incomplete. I wish I had taken courses in Art, History, Religion, Economics and other subjects and I have been trying to make up these deficiencies whenever possible. I understand better, without denigrating the importance of career-oriented courses, Miss Gildersleeve's injunction "to educate oneself in college".

My advice to a First-Year student is to decide what you want to get out of your Barnard education and what you want Barnard to do for you. Focus on that. Don't be distracted. One has to work to achieve one's objective. Don't let disappointments get you down. Hold on to the larger picture. Enjoy your youth and the excitement of being in college and in New York City, but don't lose sight of your ultimate goal. Don't waste your talent or energy on anger, slights — imagined or real — that hurt, but use that energy and power to effectively bring about constructive changes. Don't be afraid to take a stand when you have a strong conviction and to defend your position. Debating a point educates everyone. Don't be ashamed to admit when you are wrong. Don't inflict pain on anyone — do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

A happy year to all of you, and my good wishes.

P.S. After the death of my husband, Jerome S. Peterson, P&S '31, in 1987, I established at P&S the Vera Joseph/Jerome S. Peterson Scholarship Fund for Minority students in recognition that P&S had made my medical education possible and wanting to give, to a small extent, aid similar to that I received to another minority student. I would like you to remember its existence.

Carlyne Moran
Class of 1995

Mechanic

His eyes revealed sorrow
every burning tear that
slid down his cheek
was full of anguish and desperation

The hard working hours
no pity they've had on him

His hair showed gray roots of worry

The bags under his eyes
evidence of sleepless nights

His uniform soiled,
stained with the marks
of hardships
weighed down by grease and oil
Kneeling, he crossed
in front of a truck
His tools in one hand
and his heart in the other.

©Spring 1992

Crystals Upon Pure White Sand

I can't see through,
Since the picture is faded away.
The sand began to fall,
Frozen with dirt, appear as hard clay.

The burning flame in the sky,
Shines brightly on the icing covered trees.
It snows once more,
Upon the unfinished picture of beautiful streets.

Most are too busy and unhappily complain,
About the long sheets trapping the wheels.
Its smooth surface covers the rough grounds
Of youth under the frightful heels.

I should stay near the fireplace
And take the window with a deep stare,
Under the eye of the full moon shining
On the crystals and the sand they wear.
©1997

Monique J. Burgess

Something Blue, Someone in White

She stands firm,
Beyond the trees and flowers

She hears no one,
Although she's among many

Winds will blow her way,
Because she sees a sign

The sun broke through the clouds,
It means future happiness

She was crying,
Holding his hands and some flowers

She walks away - throws the flowers -
Beyond the trees who were smiling.

©1997

Monique J. Burgess

Gretel Duckson-Noble

Class of 1983

In retrospect, Barnard was a great experience! I did not appreciate all that Barnard taught me until I graduated and found myself looking for work and applying to graduate school. I found that my experiences at Barnard (both positive and negative) gave me a well of strength from which to draw, even in the toughest of circumstances. Don't get me wrong. I often doubted my ability to compete effectively for my first out of college job and even for a master's program. After all, I had a liberal arts education! However, I believe that the confidence I gained at Barnard allowed me to move ahead despite some self-doubt.

It was at Barnard that I came to discover my love for cities and my fascination with cities and how they work. It was that fascination that led to my career choice as a city planner.

After leaving Barnard I worked with a community-based housing development corporation developing decent, affordable housing for poor families. After a year of working, I decided I needed more tools to continue in housing and applied to graduate school. I have to admit that out of high school, graduating from college was more than I could have ever expected of myself. But it seems that almost undiscernibly, Barnard gave me a real thirst for learning and the confidence in myself to believe that I could change living conditions for poor people in cities.

I have a Master of Arts in City and Regional Planning. I work with a city developing housing programs and putting together the financing for the construction of long-term, affordable housing. It is absolutely the most exciting and rewarding field I could have ever chosen. I don't believe that I would have chosen this field had I remained in my home state. New York and Barnard were a living laboratory for learning and observing urban life and had given me much to draw upon, even ten years out of Barnard.

Barnard was challenging and at times lonely. But if you can work through some of the difficult times and remember why you're at Barnard, the growth and perspective that the Barnard experience offers can enrich your life for years to come.

Julie Maffre
Class of 1998

La Trampa

Cierro los ojos
A La Merced del La Luz,
Que me acaricia del sol.
veo solo rojo,
La sangre de mi vida.
Y despues siento que me caigo
En un Hoyo sin fondo
Negro y silencioso.....
No hay nada que me sostenga,
Nada que me rescate,
La Luz me triacionó cuando
Me Hizo cerrar los ojos.

©1996

**My life has been amongst so many other things,
Difficult.**

**I carry the hopes and the dreams of all who have come before me.
I am the hope and the light in the eyes of those who were permitted only a bit of light
through the shadows of ignorance and oppression.**

I am the future.

Future hopes, future dreams, future accomplishments.

That's what they see.

But what is it that I see?

I see the past,

The struggle.

**I see the pain, the bruises, the callused hands and feet that worked in the fields raising the
sugar cane.**

**I see and feel the whip crashing upon my almond skin, making contact and quickly pulling
away with a piece of my soul and my pride.**

**I see the child, my child, the Creole, so fair, nothing like me, only like his father, a man call
master who penetrated me with force to fulfill his needs.**

**I see the years of oppression from economic super powers, who rape for riches and to
satisfy greed, leaving behind nothing but sorrow.**

**I see the back of the bus waiting for me with all the sweat, grime and heat that hate has
created.**

I see and hear the words of hate calling me dirty and AIDS carrier.

**I see the boat capsizing into the water, the deep blue water, cold and uninviting that
surrounds my little country, permitting no one to leave freely without death.**

I see the hungry children, new born babies deserted at the door steps of the Church.

Given to God because mothers cannot go on.

The hopes and the dreams of the past.

That is what they see.

This is what I am.

Yes, my life is Difficult.

I am woman

I am Black

I am American

But I am Haitian

Yes I am Difficult.

**As long as my people drown in the waters to escape the whips and chains of injustice of a
country filled with sweat, grime and heat that nations of economic power and people of
selfish needs have created, I will be Difficult.**

**As long as innocent babies die on the doorsteps of Churches because their parents have no
hope left nor spirit to give them, I will be Difficult.**

**As long as I am looked upon, not as a HUMAN BEING, but as an outcast,
and Until You See Me For Me and Not What You Want Me To Be,
I WILL BE DIFFICULT**

©1997
Daphne Bazile

Daisy M. Otero, M.D.
Class of 1985

I treasure my experience at Barnard. Even more so now, many years after I left. It was during my years at Barnard when I embraced my self-description as a woman of color, a Latina, a Puertorriqueña from New York City's Lower East Side. The community at Barnard is fertile ground where a woman can begin to reaffirm herself, broaden her mind and explore her possibilities. It is a women's college where all are welcome.

As a member of the various Latina women's organizations, especially SABOR, I was able to learn more about my heritage, as well as that of other Latin-American women. These groups also served as a source of information and support. At Barnard one is allowed to find her own niche. As a commuter I often felt we were a subculture of importance equal to as that of the "dorm culture"; an experience in which one could easily participate in short spurts while residing in one of the commuter rooms.

As I reflect back, my greatest obstacle was my initial fear of diving into this new and foreign world, and partaking of the offerings. I ate my first bagel at Barnard's orientation; and later learned to enjoy the lox. Once I realized I was able to expand my world while embracing who I was and where I was from, there was no stopping me.

My advice to the women now entering Barnard is to keep your eyes open, keep your ears alert, absorb everything it has to offer. It is truly a special place in the world, especially for women, women of all colors. Your academic accomplishments, social encounters, hardships, religious explorations and personal growth will all be a function of the people you meet and work with at Barnard: your peers, your professors, the administrators, President Futter, and yes, even the men across the street.

Enjoy.

Embrace.

Felicidades.

Tara Jefferson
Class of 1992

ALMOST

I was so close!
It flew by so quick that
I can still feel its sensation on my fingertips.
It is a maddening thing to have your glass shattered
just as your thirst would be quenched.

MADDENING...

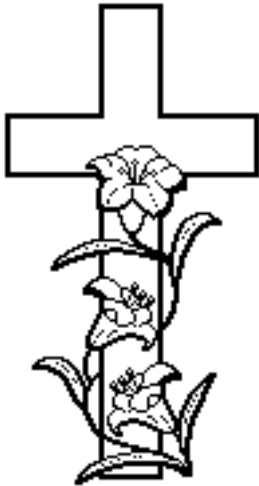
The only thing left to do is assuage my needs
With the freeze-dried leftovers of dreams
I keep tucked away for emergencies.
And hope dehydration doesn't damage my heart too much.

All animals must endure the lean season
In order to make it to seasonal abundance.
And my Lioness Heart and Spirit will endure
and be the first to enjoy Love's Bounty when it comes.

“forgive me Father for I have sinned”

I whispered all through childhood.
How DARE blame it on the
Almighty patriarchal voice.
On the healing fatherly healing hands.
In darkness
I repented;
In darkness
The secrets caressed me
To sleep in nightmares.
Adulthood protrudes
Along with the Ghost—
And I fear,
I fear being held tight
In bed
At night.
Again
I fear the betrayal—
The forced whispers of
“Forgive me father for I have sinned.”

Saskia '98 © 6/11/93



Martha (Marti) Anthony

Class of 1989

“Power is really just about ability. Having the power to do something simply means that you can do something. Deeply valuing and consciously manifesting one’s power influences one’s life and environment greatly and is a transformative orientation to life.” (“DOWNTOWN” Issue 317, p. 32).

Barnard is where I acquired and realized the power to make dreams a reality.

Today’s employers and graduate schools are looking for “well-rounded people” to be tomorrow’s leaders, and I came to college to be a doctor; the multidimensional, enriching experience at Barnard allows the aspiring physician to be a scholar of Spanish literature and culture, a poet, a scientific explorer, and everything she can be. The infectious enthusiasm, support, and dedication of the faculty of the college and HEOP staff assures that the annual generation of gifted, well-educated, and well-rounded young women of color will be ready to confront the challenges of a constantly changing world.

I majored in Spanish Literature and Culture since I had an affection for foreign-area studies and would have plenty of time in medical school for additional scientific endeavors. The task was formidable because I am not a native speaker and my writing skills required a good deal of harvesting. Through the pursuit of the major, I not only became proficient in the spoken language, but developed good writing skills as well.

Another priceless treasure I discovered at Barnard was the HEOP family, where friendship and altruism are always alive. Never was there a problem too small that it did not warrant a hug and sincere words of encouragement; never a problem too big to be insurmountable. Miraculously, they handle many problems every day with the same thoughtful love as if each problem were the only one, as if it were one of their own.

Barnard is a garden of growth, creativity, experience, development, and realization. It is a heaven where we can exert our power as women of color to influence our lives and environments; it is a transformative orientation to life, the ultimate pulpit to express our uniqueness while rejoicing in unity.

I applaud my successors on their achievement: “Great that they are now, the greatest is yet to be!”

*O Sister,
so much ahead!
I'd like to lighten
the load
to spare you the bad times,
to enjoy purely the good times.*

*But you, sister,
the one fair of face,
and so full of grace,
I behold
you so strong,
stronger maybe than I,
and all I have on you
are years and some experience
for I stood where you stand.*

*But O, Sister,
you possess talents so captivating*

*and knowledge I crave to share.
With pride I see you,
so vulnerable but resilient,
like me,
my equal, my peer,
yet somehow superior...*

Patricia Rojas
Class of 1997

Once in my misguided youth I wished that my days could not be interrupted by that dreadful thing called sleep. That awful thing that would cut into my wonderful playing hours. My mother always tried to disguise that horrid thing by calling it a “nap,” but that never fooled me. I knew the real truth about sleep. My mother used to tell me that “sleep is good for you,” and “you’ll have nice pretty dreams and when you get up you’ll be able to play”. Well those dreams sometimes turned into nightmares, and then I was to scared to play anyway. My mother never allowed me to stay up past eight o’clock until I was at least ten. And I knew she went to bed later then I did. It was not fair of her to have taken all that fun away from me. Adults always got to do what they wanted. It didn’t matter to them that they were losing sleep even if it was important. And I just knew that my mother had more fun after I had gone to sleep. She got to do grown-up stuff, she didn’t have to go to sleep until she wanted. She got to see those great television shows and movies that always came just after my eight o’clock bedtime.

Now I wish I could get that wonderful thing called sleep. I miss sleep. I curse those days which I know will interrupt that beautiful trance. Now, that I have gotten older I have discovered the truth, “Sleep is Good”. My mother was right. Naps are things to be cherished. Robert Fulgrum, the author of All I Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten, was right in his theory about naps. Sleep allows a person to rest after a long hard day. It lets one be his or her most creative without really trying. Dreams come when I sleep, they let me be anything I want to be. The only thing that would bother a person about sleep are nightmares. But because they are so infrequent to the average sleeper they should not be a hindrance to sleep. Sleep lets my body heal after some illness. It also allows me to re-energize after those trying tests that teachers are prone to give. Sleep lets me forget about my worries. Now that I can stay up late I wonder what all of the fuss was about. All it means is loss of sleep to me. Now the only reason I torment myself to that loss is when I am writing a paper or studying for a test. I have learned from the ignorance of my youth.

Sleep is a really good thing, is a wonderful way to pass the time.

©1995

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Your eyes are dark  
I had that shade once  
I know where you are.  
I know the labyrinth  
in which you live.  
The television is on.  
And you hear the cockroaches  
running around.

Or  
You hear nothing  
Nothing but  
Screams,  
Your sister's screams  
Your mother's muffled cry  
Your father's slap.  
Your eyes are dark  
I had that shade once.  
I too had an empty bottle  
in front of me  
But nothing  
Nothing  
but that face  
Which stares back at you  
in that fogged mirror  
Can take away the screams  
which follow you:  
Follow you  
into the streets  
into your room  
Into your veins...  
Your eyes are dark  
I had that shade once...

©12/30/93

Wanda Garcia

## *Chanasai Tiengtrakul*

### *Class of 1987*

I do not view my own experiences at Barnard from a point of view of a woman of color but simply as a woman “Experiences of Women of Color At Barnard.” But let me give it a try a any way. Let me start with a bio-data...

Born in Thailand, arrived in New York at the age of eleven, living in one of the poorest and dangerous areas, The Bronx, I commuted to Barnard daily because I could not afford to pay for on-campus housing. The commute had limited my access to the full range of social experiences offered by Barnard’s community. Spending an average of one and a half hour daily in the subway coming and going from home, however, did provide valuable reading time—that is, when I managed to get a seat.

If I was forced to say in one sentence what the most valuable gift my four years at Barnard had given me, personally, I would have to say “Barnard had begun in me a life long journey in which I look inward to discover who I really am and what I am really capable of.” I entered Barnard as a naive, unaware teenager, and graduated in 1987 as a career-minded, intellectually independent woman.

I was aware that I am a woman of color, and did try to join Asian Clubs and events, but I did not feel isolated. Most importantly, I did not think I experienced prejudice from the Barnard Community; I did not feel isolated or singled out as an Asian woman. I don’t know if I had been lucky, or if it was my personality that had brought the reactions people have towards me—I have a very strong personality, I tell people what I want and expect, I give the same level of commitment to friendships as I demanded of my friends. If people did not like me while I was at Barnard, I think it was due to who I am to them, and not my skin color.

Oh yes, the “journey.” I entered Barnard with aims of becoming a medical doctor; I was pre-med and Biology Major. Fortunately, I was forced, through Barnard’s liberal arts curriculum to explore other possibilities, other academic fields. I had to take courses in philosophy, mathematics, and anthropology. I fell in love with anthropology sitting in an introductory class of 200 people, learning about “the Other,” while keenly aware that we were also being “observed” by our Professor, Dr. Skinner. He used to let us know he did not appreciate it when someone was talking, all the way in the back row of a large auditorium, while he was lecturing. But, his admonitions were anthropologically descriptive—he was observant, he knew the details of what the person was wearing, who she was talking to, and what she was talking about!! It amazes me, even today, that he could take it all in when the person was sitting all the way back there, and give a coherent lecture at the same time—that is, until he thought it was too disruptive for his class. I was “hooked” on methodology! I began to learn how to think, critically, and I discovered that I liked learning— I didn’t feel forced any more, it was something I enjoyed. I think this “love” for learning and independent thinking is the greatest gift Barnard has given me. I grew up.

I became an anthropology minor, began to really enjoy reading philosophy as a hobby—my eyes were opened to the worlds besides biology and medicine, which, to be honest, I was getting uncomfortable with, spending my Friday afternoons in a lab full of animals and plants. I constantly felt like I was missing out on something important while trying to draw microorganisms on my slides. I wanted to spend my days with people.

I did apply to medical schools, mostly because my parents insisted—I was still living at home, remember? But by my junior year, I knew I wanted to go to graduate school, in cultural anthropology. I wanted to humbly follow the footsteps of Margaret Mead, also a Barnard graduate, who in the 1920’s had the courage to go to Samoa alone at the time when women

weren't "allowed" to do such things without protection from men. I wanted to go back to India, one of the major contributive sources of Thai culture, I wanted to find my roots—I wanted to find myself.

I was accepted to Brown University. Yes, for cultural anthropology, my parents still ask me today "why do you want to dig up dead people?" I smiled and did not bother to explain to them, again, that I hate dirt, and no I do not dig up anything. They were disappointed that I was not "my daughter the doctor," but they were proud that I was getting a doctorate. I was proud that I was strong enough to break away from the mold they had given me, and created a path for myself and my future.

The recent "journey," which had started at Barnard, had taken me to India where I have spent a year and a half alone in Varanasi, learning about the experiences of women in the context of their changing tradition, their recent access to education and employment and how these new opportunities have impacted on women's roles in family and society. I am now writing my dissertation and looking forward to my graduation within a few years. Yes, it has been a long journey since the days I stepped through the gate as a freshman at Barnard—and I hope this journey will never end.

My advice? Use all the available resources at Barnard, open your eyes to new intellectual possibilities. You might not end up where you first dreamed you would be, but you would have grown tremendously as a person. One more thing, **DON'T FORGET YOUR HEART**, it is who you are!

*Daphne Bazile*  
*Class of 1997*

**I Rise To The Top**

In a world without reason,

I rise to the top.

In a world of dishonesty, chaos and confusion,

I rise to the top.

In a world of hardship, racism and ignorance

I rise to the top.

In a world of lies,

I rise to the top.

In a world of competition, battle, cut throat expectations, jealousy and  
takeovers in every shape and form,

I rise to the top.

In a world based on an ideal that

***“All Men Are Created Equal”***

if you're rich, white and of course a man,

I rise to the top.

I am a Black Woman, strong beyond belief.

Capable of extraordinary accomplishments,  
succeeding, striving.

Doing as well as any man, if not **BETTER.**

Mother, Sister, Wife, Daughter, Friend

I rise heights of extraordinary beliefs

**BLACK WOMAN**

Carrying the weight of the world on my shoulders,

I Rise To The Top.

## **Black or White**

Black or White?  
Can U really tell?  
From the dark silhouettes  
(It is black with shades of whites)  
That create the shadows of our souls.  
Not even in light  
can different races be so clearly defined...  
From a FAR, we are all the same  
Just another John Doe  
with different color, hair, and frame.

-Ottomi

We ran in the grass  
We shuffled on the sand  
My smile turned from a facade  
To a REALITY.  
You nurtured me with compliments.  
In ninety degrees you showed me ice.  
I melted in front of your presence.  
My fractured arm healed  
And you were still in front of me.  
Persistent words followed me -  
You  
Molded happiness for me.  
You  
Penetrated into me enigmatic feelings  
You  
Were and are the climax of my life.  
©12/31/94

Wanda Garcia

## *Arlene McCarthy*

### *Class of 1982*

I have decided to submit this essay regarding my experience at Barnard between 1978 and 1982 for very selfish reasons. I avoided telling others about my experience at Barnard because I did not want to appear to be a “whiner.” But now I believe keeping silent about my experience was detrimental to me.

I always felt somehow inferior to my classmates at Barnard, not academically or financially (although I had some challenges in both those areas), but because I felt I lacked the strength and stamina to endure what was a very rigorous college experience. Attending Barnard during those years was frightening and painful. I was keenly aware of my vast differences from all of my classmates, and I am not talking about just race. I felt incredibly isolated, even from other women of color. But most importantly, there was no one I felt comfortable sharing my feelings of insecurity, fear, and isolation with and I was certain no one that I knew at Barnard would understand.

I was not a very likely student to apply to Barnard. Although I was regarded by my peers, my family and my teachers as “very bright,” I was never considered academically gifted. I had my talents, mostly the artistic kind, but more importantly I had an enthusiasm for learning and challenging myself that was unmatched by anyone I knew. Additionally, I set very high standards for myself. I wanted to read the most critically acclaimed writers, listen to the music of the most renowned composers, attend every culturally enriching program or performance I heard of. I knew I would be going away for college and I well understood that it might require me financing my own education. College represented for me the opportunity to learn and challenge myself in ways I had never been able to do at my mediocre public school in New Orleans. My love of the arts focused my attention on New York as an ideal location for my education, and Barnard, (Columbia was a single sex school at the time), seemed the logical choice to meet my high standards. I suspect that the only reason I was accepted at Barnard was because my arts education was second to none. Nevertheless, I planned to take full advantage of my opportunity at Barnard and when I entered college in August 1978, I really believe that it was my intent to stay forever. I hoped to be a published writer of novels and articles, but also a perpetual student.

I was not prepared for New York. Perhaps my insecurities would have lessened if someone had met me at LaGuardia Airport. I later learned that arranged meetings take place at other small colleges. But I began to doubt whether I was ready for the going away to college experience when the chaos and confusion of New York City started to get to me. I met a man from New Orleans who was a twenty-year transplant to New York. There was a mad rush for taxis once we debarked the plane and got our luggage, but he kindly looked after me by offering me his cab. When I finally arrived on campus, there were students to direct me to my room and hand me maps of campus and an itinerary of orientation events. My roommate, who was from Massachusetts, was there with her family and she was all unpacked and settled. Since I only had one trunk, my unpacking did not take long: fall and winter clothes, one set of linen for the bed, a clock/radio, and a scrapbook/photo album to remind me of home. It was a stark contrast compared to my roommate’s side of the room with posters and pictures, stuffed animals, pillows, knickknacks and the like. I envied her family and her relaxed, eagerness about our freshman experience. All that had escaped me. My anxiety and insecurity worsened as she began to introduce me to other freshman on our floor and as we attended orientation events. Everyone seemed to be from the Northeast. I was thrilled to meet a girl from Arizona and

another from Colorado. But even these girls were fortunate enough to have some relative or family friend in New York.

Perhaps I would not have felt like I needed someone I knew, if things were not so unfamiliar to me. I had never been exposed to so many ethnicities of people. In New Orleans, in the South, everything is white and black. I was intimidated by the number of Jews at Columbia and the fact that they were so cliquish. I got a quick education in Jewish culture, foods and tradition; primarily by observation. They all seemed to know one another. They only socialized with one another or so it seemed. They had their own appointed eating area and they seemed to segregate from the rest of us even in class where they seemed to dominate the discussion. I noticed this before I noticed that African-American students also seemed to segregate. Perhaps this is why I did not feel uncomfortable seeking out other African American students to with whom to socialize. But especially with other African Americans, I felt ostracized. It's a reality that because the South is slower and much more removed from the cosmopolitan East Coast, we learn much later what is happening in fashion and music and even current popular events and ideas. Although I was from a big city, I was humiliated because there was just so much I didn't know. This is where my insecurities set in and I believe they have shadowed most of my young adult life.

I entered Barnard a far more confident woman than I left it. My feelings of isolation and insecurity made me question myself academically. I was the most outspoken person in my high school but at Barnard I became as quiet and as meek as a mouse. Organizations like the debate team, which I joined in high school and excelled in, seemed too intimidating at Barnard. All the students seemed to be so much more self-assured than me. I was sure they were all brilliant and that I would not measure up. I worried whether extracurricular activities would affect my academic performance. I decided to keep a low profile. Worst of all I received no support from my advisors or instructors. Based on their lack of encouragement I never pursued my dream of going abroad my junior year. True, I probably never articulated my fears and anxieties to anyone but I was desperately unhappy. I gained a renewed appreciation for the warmth and friendliness that I took for granted at home. Socialization was probably my greatest deprivation.

A few things helped me to survive those years. Although I could not call home often, for financial reasons, my parents sent for me every Christmas and summer. Those vacations at home did a lot to rejuvenate me. I became a consummate letter writer and at least my grandfather became one too. And, ironically, New York City, itself. The city that alarmed me so when I arrived became accessible with all of its music, theatre, dance concerts, and museums. I balanced my course work by taking a lot of writing courses and courses in literature, music, art history, and drama. I graduated from Barnard with a 3.2 grade point average which pleased me since I was convinced that I did not measure up. My advisor was not sufficiently impressed enough to encourage me to go to graduate school so I worked for a year. Gradually, I began to gain more confidence in myself. I eventually went to law school; more so because I was tired of working for poverty wages than anything else. It is only recently, almost ten years out of law school, that I feel good about myself again. I remember the girl I was in high school; my high standards and my enthusiasm for learning. I take courses now for pure enjoyment and I speak out in class and my classmates find both me and my ideas interesting.

# *Stella Bretous*

## *Class of 1998*

### **Generations**

There's a piece of land in Africa where my ancestors once were  
born on  
crawled on  
ran on

There's a piece of land in Africa where my ancestors once  
laughed  
prayed  
sang

There's a piece of land in Africa where my ancestors once  
farmed  
ate from  
learned from

Africa was their home

they loved it

praised it

One day when my ancestors were sleeping  
they came

They took my ancestors and put them on ugly ships. They took  
my ancestors to an unknown land. On this land my ancestors were  
sold

brought  
separated

On this land my ancestors  
cried

worked  
were whipped

There was no more laughing  
praying

playing  
just crying

This land is American land  
Africa tears were shed on American  
soil. On this new land my ancestors  
warred

starved  
died

On this new land my ancestors  
prayed

cried...

... for the next generations.

This land my ancestors  
hated  
despised

My ancestors' generation died out and a new one is here. Their bodies  
may have disappeared in shame, but their spirits have not.

This new generation is my generation.

My generation will  
rise up  
build up  
overcome...

...what they did to my ancestors.

My generation will  
learn our past  
sing the present  
pray for the future

My generation will not be  
separated  
sold  
brought...

...Like they did to my ancestors.

My generation will not hurt others the way they hurt my  
ancestors. We are not scared. We learned how to love, those who  
can't love.

**We are the new and brave generation.**

©1995

*Lauren Coleman*  
*Class of 1986*

Lately, in fact maybe even too often, I reminisce about my four years at Barnard College, Columbia University. I miss the rich, late-night discussions with friends that tried to answer our questions about anything from the commonalities between guys to the commonalities between religious sects. I miss the carefree days whose only financial burden bore that of figuring out how to get my FAF in on time again the next year! And I miss, what was for me, a world in which I was seemingly unchallenged or in some way held back by my color.

My years at Barnard were so enjoyable for me that now I think that my worries, by comparison, were few. I always made certain that I maintained at least a B average, always keeping a watchful eye on my GPA. And if I was not thinking about academics, or the funkier new downtown club, I volunteered for panels, etc. held for incoming freshmen which even helped earn me a place as a Senior Marshall at graduation. The only really tough time I had at school was living my senior year in a nightmare suite situation!

I was one of two seniors (both of us Black) who shared the suite with four White freshmen. At first things were pleasant, but soon almost no regard was given for our privacy. And quiet evenings and clean bathrooms and kitchens were basically non-existent. We met with various dorm “officials” to discuss the problem, but still no respect ever seemed to be given. And a couple of times we couldn’t help but wonder, if even only in very brief whispers, if these girls possibly held less regard for us because of our skin color, even though we were seniors. Hell, other White seniors we knew didn’t seem to have a problem this horrible. Why us?

And now that I reflect upon that situation, I should have realized it was fitting for such an occurrence to happen in my last year before “entering society.” In fact, during the last few years, I have been forced to become keenly aware of race and how it affects my daily lifestyle. My suite-mates created a situation that challenged me, I think particularly as a woman of color. My regret is that at the time I was not stronger in analyzing the situation and voicing my exact concerns.

I still have to face similar situations now, particularly in a workplace that sometimes exhibits overt racism, but now I handle them with much greater skill and panache. So in closing, I remind readers that it is not nor will it ever be easy to be a Black woman in America, so to freshmen — especially — I say make the most of all your experiences at Barnard, examine them and use them to provide you with the strength you will need to face further situations after you finish your studies at this prestigious institution.

*Wanda Garcia*  
*Class of 1995*

The smell of sex  
Lingers  
And sweetly protrudes my nose  
My nose in turn  
Probes my memory —  
Like the big hand  
Ticking away  
Unavoidably  
Arousing the small one.

© 12/17/93

*Elizabeth Bishop*  
*Davis-Trussell, M.D.*  
*Class of 1941*

My experience at Barnard might seem to many of you sufficiently atypical, since my identity as a person of color is not immediately apparent. A moment's reflection will, however, suggest the particular kind of stress inherent in this situation, when the identity is well known to authorities and closer associates and is obvious from the living situation and personal history of the individual as well as from the specific concerns of that individual.

My situation at Barnard in 1938-41 was perhaps more like those of most students of color in the post-'60s era than like those of my own generation in that, for the most part, my personal relationships at the college were not automatically dictated by the dominant social attitudes of the period. Rather, they depended on individual attitudes and on attributes other than group membership per se. I was thus allowed the opportunity to explore for myself the human population in my environment, selecting and being selected by those whose "vibes" reverberated with mine. This was also true of my academic experience at Barnard. Since there were no subjects I "had" to be interested in, I was truly free to choose my intellectual and academic pursuits as well as my extra-curricular activities. Thus, my investment in academic effort was not diluted by extraneous factors.

It was specifically this freedom — to explore, to weigh, to choose — that marked my Barnard experience off from most of my previous academic and social experiences, and which gave me the sense that in the outside world as well as in my protected family and social circle it was possible to make my own choices — influenced inevitably, and in ways for which I am deeply thankful, by my identity as a woman of color, but not dictated, circumscribed or forsworn by that identity.

For this experience, I shall be forever grateful to Barnard.

If I have any advice for this group of Barnard students of color, it is to use the freedom here to explore, without fear of diluting loyalties or values. Those which are truly yours will be strengthened by having been chosen as well as received.

*Julie Maffre*  
*Class of 1998*

**Five Minutes**

The sun shone and  
I was walking cheerfully on the grass  
For 5 minutes.  
Suddenly it rained for 10 minutes.  
And some darkness befell  
During this time, I remembered  
My 5 minutes  
And was forced to:  
Smile  
Hope  
Laugh  
And try to:  
Succeed  
Express  
Produce  
And deal with the present situation.  
Later, I was glad it had rained  
In order to appreciate my 5 minutes.

©1995

I ran through many battlefields—  
Wounded many times  
By the stare and those haunting voices.  
My heart feels the phantom pain  
Every now and then—  
The universe of my mind sometimes succeeds  
In rescuing me  
Other times I stand right in front of my enemy—  
My childhood dementia—  
And it crawls and eats my skin  
As those screams  
Bombarded my universe  
As those sick caresses  
Frightened my army  
The army of little characters  
Running through the battlefield.  
© 1/1/95

**Wanda Garcia**

---

I precociously tease them  
I open my arms  
I say: "Here I am!"  
I devour their ears with shocking truth.  
Then I run away  
I run away  
Before they get me  
I trap them  
in a bottle of trust  
Then I run  
Before they shoot me down.  
I no longer  
Will let any body's hair  
Strangle me.  
I am no longer Daddy's frightened little girl  
No one will stain me again.  
© 1/2/95

**Wanda Garcia**

*Elaine Johnson James*  
*Class of 1972*

When I entered Barnard almost twenty-five years ago, I was sixteen years old, and like most freshmen at a residential college, I was experiencing total freedom for the first time. Regrettably, during my first few months (indeed, year) at Barnard, I spent far more time spreading my wings than attending to my studies. New York City was too big and too exciting to resist, even for a big city girl from Chicago. In any event, I failed to take full advantage of the incredibly rich academic opportunities at Barnard. I strongly urge incoming students to press hard on their studies, not because they are not gifted enough to get by with mediocre effort, but because Barnard has so much intellectual stimulation to offer. It is a veritable smorgasbord of academic, social, cultural and civil opportunity.

In retrospect, Barnard is the only environment (other than the birthing suite) in which I have been where womanhood is consistently celebrated. I have been blessed to attend other fine educational institutions and to meet a myriad of stellar women. Nevertheless, in forty-one years, I have yet to encounter any place like Barnard, where so many gifted women with such rich and diverse backgrounds are gathered and nurtured.

At Barnard, as in my parents' home, I learned that being female was not inconsistent with being intelligent, aggressive, accomplished, and well educated. I also learned that being intelligent, aggressive, accomplished, and well educated was not an impediment to having good, friendly, mutually-respectful relationships with men, provided that the men were self-assured enough to deal with gifted women. Furthermore, I learned that if a man lacked that self-assuredness, he would be a drain on my energy—a detriment rather than an asset. (Would that I had remembered those lessons [especially the latter one] consistently throughout the last twenty-five years. I could have avoided a lot of problems!) These lessons have served me in good stead, particularly at Harvard Law School, that great bastion of what then was one of the most male-dominated disciplines known to mankind, and later in life as I practiced law, first in a large “white shoe” firm in Philadelphia, then in West Palm Beach, Florida, which gives new meaning to the word “parochial”.

Today, I am a devoted Christian, a wife, a mother of two, and a practicing attorney. I cannot begin to recount how bountifully I have been blessed these forty-one years, but rest assured that I am grateful for all blessings, large and small. My life has changed tremendously since I entered Barnard in 1968; yet I continue to count having attended Barnard as one of the big blessings in my life. The rich investment Barnard made in me and the seeds that were planted there remain. I urge my “little” sisters to take advantage of the opportunity to celebrate their intelligence and their womanhood with other women of color and with majority women as well. There is no better place to do that than Barnard.

*Susan D. Clarke*  
*Class of 1996*

## **Dark-Skinned and Peasy-Headed**

Light and lighter-skinned

Alpine, honey, pecan, almond and toast

Anything but Charcoal; Black

Fair and good hair

Fashion after the dreams of yesterlife

Me, Just dark

No questions or qualms

Me, Black

like burnt molasses

bittersweet

overchurned by slaves in the masters fields

they apologize but its too late

have to get punished for that

Me, Peasy-headed

I reach my fingers deep into my roots

only to get them tangled into a web of resentment

thick like bur

each nap represents a burden carried

on the back of my ancestors: hard, tight and bent

no good hair like *they* say

should I give a shit anyway?

relax: a relief

I too can pass (at least for a month and a half)

maybe Cooley, Panamanian or Dominican?

but not Black

Me, resentful

“Get your nappy-headed ass in the house”

“Shut your stupid black ass up”

“Black bitch”

Words dark and sour like an under ripe tamarind ball

Eat it quick so that the taste’ll hurry out your mouth

But it lingers anyway, on your tongue

Mixed in your food, your speech

on your breath and in your bloodstream

Me, laying here

in still blackness

hands planted in my thicket of hair

as dense as the bushes my ancestors hid in

away from their masters

I too am trying to hide, unsuccessfully

away from myself.

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***Debbie Rivera***  
***Class of 1988***

I don't know how or why I knew it, but the first day I went to the Barnard campus I felt at home. Maybe because everyone looked as nonconformist as I. It was interesting to receive Francesca's letter asking me to think about my Barnard days. Why? Because they really do seem eons ago although, in reality, I graduated in 1988. In September of last year, at a time when many changes were going on in my life, I lost my "Seven Sisters Ring," the onyx college ring I wore with pride because it symbolized the hardships as well as the rewards I experienced in my Barnard days. The loss of that ring, like the memories of those days, are irreplaceable. College sheltered me from the realities of the life I had come from. To a major extent I was protected from the poverty and pain I grew up with. I only "felt different" during spring break and other times when my fellow classmates were taking vacations or shopping or doing things I could not afford to do, including accepting very interesting (though non-paying) internships — things that affect a career later on when others have credentials that still others cannot afford. Minor details such as not having an appropriate suit and shoes to wear for an interview are "career problems" that probably won't be addressed during your years at Barnard.

On a more positive note, other things I "picked up" at Barnard became an integral part of my character and will always stay with me. Some are as minor as eating habits. I come from a very Latin family. When their curvaceous daughter came home skinny during the holidays, they complained that I was turning anorexic. Believe me, I wasn't. I had just traded in good ol' Spanish food for yogurt, spring water and the salads that my classmates were eating. When I came to Barnard I was docile — but with a tiny voice always aching to yell out. Barnard brought that voice out. I learned to create change when unsatisfied and became more certain of who I was and what I wanted. As you might imagine, people (from boyfriends to waiters in restaurants) didn't appreciate this "new" side of me. However, it has proven to be extremely useful to me in business and personal situations.

I won't go into who I am, or what I have done since Barnard. I can only tell you that many positive as well as negative experiences await you upon your graduation. When you graduate, believe me, you will constantly be reminded that you are a woman of color, no matter how much you think you blend in because of your clothing, hair style, skin color, speech mannerisms or habits. If you decide to deny these reminders, you do so always at a price, and if you possess a conscience, that will be your reminder.

I want to thank the H.E.O.P. office and my friends at H.E.O.P. for being there for me all the times I needed encouragement or a smile. Most of all, I hope that all you Barnard women of color maintain your heads and always keep your feet on the ground no matter where life takes you.

*Carlyne Moran*  
*Class of 1995*

**For You**

A young generation  
you're  
starting to bloom  
in your own  
unique way.

A world of hardship  
you will face

But always remember  
that the sun will rise  
for you everyday  
to give you light  
to give you energy

And all the other flowers  
will surround you  
And you'll show the world  
That you're one  
among the beauties of nature.

©1992

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The passion that burns
in a fireplace
Gets more intense
as wood is added,
Yet teased in a sense
where the fire keeps
Growing and growing
without a chance
To reach a climax
a final eruption.

To feel the flesh
provokes a desire to taste,
To taste the flesh
desires more and more
so, I went there
between the steamy hills
And sucked the juices of a honey tree
Until the tree could
give no more
And then I
smiled at the horizon.

Julie Maffre '98

Barbara Clayton Clark
Class of 1971

My life as a student at Barnard College is one I will always treasure because it contributed in large part to who I am today. I entered Barnard as only one of the seventeen Black students then in the entire student population. I was a transfer student from Tennessee State University, an all Black school. I was in my mid-twenties since I had taken time out to get married. I was also a commuter, so I had several things to alienate me from the general body. I attended Barnard from 1969-71. What years those were!

The Anti-War movement, Hippie culture, drugs, the Women's Liberation movement, the unrest at Columbia University, the Black Panthers, Angela Davis — I'm not sure what stands out most.

I remember during one of the riots at Columbia that just before it started I threatened to start a race riot because a group of beefy looking male students had stretched themselves across the doors to the library and would not let anyone enter. I got in — just before the first rocks were thrown. We found our way out through darkness and underground tunnels.

I remember being one of the few Black students who was NOT in a special admission program and having everyone assume that I was and resenting the hell out of it. I took several foreign languages at Barnard and Columbia classes. I had an Irish woman for a professor of an Oriental language I was interested in learning. She was very prejudiced and I suffered quite a few humiliations before she finally got rid of me by giving me a grade I felt I did not deserve. As I left the classroom that last day holding back tears, another Black student was coming in. She questioned him and he answered her fluently in that language! I don't think she could get rid of him and it was so symbolic. Our civil rights as a people were still being established.

I had many good experiences with White professors too. I was in Kate Stimpson's class on Black literature. She was an excellent teacher and I was introduced to many areas of Black history that I had no prior knowledge of as well as areas of literature and authors that were new to me. The playwright Ntozake Shange (Paulette Williams) was in that class with me.

While most of the Black students at Barnard at that time were involved with the Black Panthers, SNCC or some other group, I pledged Alpha Kappa Alpha sorority, risking being called some choice names. Today many of those students that called me names are my sorors. (There were no sororities at Barnard and I went all the way to Brooklyn to pledge). I also

straightened my hair until 1971 when I had a very, very, very large Afro. I no longer have an Afro but I am still very active with AKA.

The day Jonathan Jackson tried to break his brother (George Jackson) out of jail in California, I was visiting a friend in a Columbia dorm room. The day Angela Davis was arrested, I was attending a lecture by Shirley Graham DuBois at Columbia. I remember when President Martha Peterson was sufficiently shocked to find men living in the then all female dorms at Barnard — so much so that a student named Linda (can't recall her last name) became a cause celebre on TV news.

I sadly remember one of the Black students from Chicago had borrowed some money from me and while on my way to her dorm room to collect I learned that she had died that day from a drug overdose.

I had a friend named Fred that became famous as a member of the singing group Sha Na Na. There was a Chock Full O' Nuts restaurant on the corner on Broadway. There were fewer buildings then on Barnard's campus.

Perhaps the most significant thing to happen to me at Barnard has more to do with being a woman than with being Black. I gained confidence and was validated as a person through my Barnard experience. I learned to speak up and to question things that are not right and to recognize the subtle inequalities between men and women which I am still resisting.

Do Barnard students still avoid standing on Jake? Are the traditions of Greek Games still upheld or have things changed? Thank you for this opportunity to reminisce.

Tara Jefferson
Class of 1992

ALONE

There is a place,
A warm-fuzzy place I go to.
Many try to lock this place away
Or try to fill it with inconsequential,
But I like the comforting sparseness
Which allows my thoughts to echo.

Some are even afraid of this place—
Thinking the dark holds soul-eating monsters.
But the dark is a warm hug to me,
and the monsters are my obedient pets.

I try to tell others not to shun this place,
It can be a shelter and a refuge.
I try to tell people to think of it as
A waystation between adventures
Or a place to rest a weary head when
The adventures are too many.

©1994

Lynn Walker
Class of 1967

It was almost twenty-six years ago that I walked for the first time through the big iron gate at Barnard College. I had begun my college education at Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee, but decided to transfer in my junior year after my family moved to New York. Barnard was very different from Fisk for reasons that would be obvious to most people who know something about both institutions. Fisk is a small, historically African American institution, located in a mid-sized town in a Southern State. Barnard is a predominantly White institution located in one of the nation's largest and most diverse northern cities. The faculty and student body at Fisk were predominantly African American; at Barnard there were few African Americans to be found. The historic role of Barnard was to provide a highly competitive environment for some of the nation's top students, many of whom were affluent and some of whom had been educated at top private schools. Fisk was coeducational; Barnard had only female students. Most Fisk students lived on campus; Barnard was largely a commuter institution.

I was quite intimidated by my new surroundings, I admit. The classes and teachers were much more demanding than I had previously experienced and the sense of community that pervaded Fisk was not so readily apparent at Barnard. Yet, as time wore on, I made my adjustment and now can look back upon my days at Barnard with great joy and appreciation. I learned a number of lessons at Barnard that have stood me in good stead for the challenges which life has presented to me. I would like to share just a few of those lessons.

First, I learned that if I struggled hard with my studies I could be a top student at Barnard or anywhere else. When I first came to Barnard from Fisk, I had a 3.95 cumulative average. My first semester at Barnard, I was devastated to have but a 2.3 average. I felt that I had worked so hard and that there must be something wrong with me. But I also felt that I could improve if I would work harder and longer and this I did. Others whom I saw around me who disappointed themselves by receiving low grades sometimes gave up studying so hard. They began to justify their failure to achieve by saying that they hadn't "booked" so they couldn't expect to receive high grades. This was very unfortunate, for these same students were really selling themselves short. They had just as much ability as any other student; it is just that they stopped trying. Hence they developed a self-perpetuating cycle of low achievement. Had they but continued to work harder, they would have been able to break that cycle. I did work harder and longer to improve my grades. By the end of my senior year, I was an honor student. So, speaking sister to sister, my message to you is this: Don't sell yourself short. You can do anything you set your mind to do if you are willing to apply yourself.

Second, I learned that African Americans and other racial groups have a lot more in common than they sometimes realize. Thus, although my special friends were African American, at Barnard, I began to enjoy studying with, listening to music with, talking to, and partying with students of different races. Since I had come from the segregated South, I viewed

my interactions with students of so many different types of backgrounds and experiences as an opportunity to learn about other cultures, life styles and experiences. I think that my experience at Barnard helped me to open up to the world of ideas, appreciate differences and broaden my own horizons and perspectives. This is what college should be all about—it is a time to have a wide-angle lens on life and knowledge; and to challenge oneself to grow and develop the skills and building blocks on which to live a fuller life. So the lesson I would share is to be open to all kinds of people, and all kinds of ideas.

Third, I think that college is a time to dream and to imagine. I learned at Barnard something about who I was and who I would likely be. I learned what I liked and also about some things that I didn't like. Mostly, I learned to deal with the uncertainty that life always presents and to adjust to it. I see a lot of young people today who talk with me about their discomfort with not knowing what major they should pursue, what job they should take, what man they should marry, where they should live, etc. Some of them have remarked, in asking me about my life and career, how clear-cut my path seems to have been. I laugh and tell them that nothing could be further from the truth. The only thing that is certain about life is uncertainty. Life is about making choices. Therefore, don't be discouraged by the uncertainty of life. And don't be overly concerned about making mistakes. If you make a mistake, all you will have demonstrated is that you're a human being, capable of making mistakes. In which case, you should learn from the mistake and move on. Being young is a time of being very sensitive, sometimes too sensitive to one's own failings. I have learned to be comfortable with myself and to forgive my own frailties when I make the wrong choices. Barnard helped me to confront my fear of failing by showing me that I could overcome my failings.

Fourth, I learned from Barnard that I was a very privileged person. I was attending a top educational institution, being challenged daily to develop my skills to their fullest potential, and preparing myself for a rich life of challenges and opportunities. While I cursed the hard work and its relentless nature, I should have been saying hanks for this chance that so many of our brothers and sisters will not have. By making me conscious of just how privileged I was, Barnard also helped me see that I had an obligation to a broad community to share and to serve.

This brings me to the last point in this short, somewhat rambling reflection on time spent at Barnard. When I was at Barnard, it was an era of social activism. The African American struggle for civil rights was vibrant and we had a sense of hope and optimism that we could overcome. I felt that my education at Barnard was the means through which I could channel the impulse to help this country live up to its democratic ideals and other African Americans achieve their full potential and rightful place in society. I wanted to be the best that I could be in terms of development of my mind and not wasting opportunities because I wanted to be as well-equipped as I could to work in the cause of social justice. I wanted to be able to write the King's English better than the King, speak better than the King, think better than the King, and live with more morality and purpose than the King. I later went on to law school and have pursued a career ever since in the area of civil rights law and policy. African American people are in deep trouble in this country. We need developed minds and strong leaders. We need people with the

resolve to serve. We need people who are willing to learn as much as they can and share as much as they can for the benefit of the nation and our community.

I was talking with my niece recently and she tentatively suggested to me that she might not go to college. I became enraged and told her that I would never be able to understand, given the state of the world's problems, how she could even consider passing up an opportunity to go to school. I rambled on with passion about how she would need all of her brain cells in order to live a good and productive life, given these problems and complexities. Later, when I calmed down, I told her that I was not proud of having lost my temper, but that I had lost it for a good reason. I told her that I loved her and I wanted her to have the best and happiest life that she could. She laughed and said that she was only "testing" me. Dear Sisters at Barnard, you may be tested, too. I hope that you will be able to say to some other person what I am trying unartfully to say to you. You are being trained at one of the nation's premiere institutions. Take advantage of every chance to grow that you have. Your talents, your vision, your energy, your creativity, your commitment are desperately needed. African-American people are strong, otherwise we would not have survived all that has befallen us. You are intelligent and loved and beautiful and are our hope. We look to you to carry the torch.

Daphne Bazile
Class of 1997

Without a Life Preserver

Without a life preserver...
I jumped in with both feet and didn't think twice
Blinded, without a life preserver
I followed you into a dark and shallow lagoon
and ended up in the deep end.
I've lost it and I can't get it back.
I loved you on purpose
without a life preserver...
I didn't think I needed one and yet I was able to get hurt again
and again and again...
Without protection,
over flowing emotions into your hands,
words, like lies blowing into my ears
running down my throat
suffocating me
until I couldn't breathe.
Drowning into a deep, dark lagoon
full of broken hearts and disappointments
I jumped in without a life preserver
I looked around and found you gone
along with my love, my heart, my soul and
my dreams—stolen
used against me
to push me deeper and deeper
into the cold, oh so cold water
of what I once called your love.
The truth came sooner so much sooner
than I could have ever dreamed.
Without a life preserver, I drowned into an abyss

black hole of a whirlpool,
twirling me around and around

Chaos

Confusion

Emotions rushing towards me
like the crashing waves against the shore.

I trusted you

I loved you

I gave you my heart and yet you could not appreciate
the beauty of my soul.

My life was for you, but without a life preserver

I drowned—because of you.

Now it's time to make my dreams come true.

Cherish my own soul.

I may never love another the way I loved you

but never will I go out

swimming

without a life preserver.

© 12/94

Blindly I walk the balance cord.
Once I lose my step
Everything paralyzes
And in a second
The world seems to crumble.
As I fall
Everything lands on me
And I sunder from the reflections of reality
And just for a moment
I am camouflaged
With my own images
And am cramped by lost perspective—
The black curtain gnaws at me
And I scratch my skin
Wanting to escape.
The nightmares swelter off
The somber thoughts leave
And I can see my off white walls again
And the Pygmalion on my wall
And the windows are open
And I listen to life's mesmerizing melody
Once again.
©1/12/95

Wanda Garcia

Jeanette Toomer

Class of 1979

“Holding Hands with Toni Morrison, A Living Memory”

One February evening in 1979, novelist Toni Morrison visited Barnard College campus and shared with us her literary vision. She talked about searching for the “naked power” of a word. She wanted the reader to feel intimate and safe inside the story: “I like to write in such a way that the reader is free to come in and I can sort of hold his hand as the two of us look at these things, these people.”

One Pulitzer Prize, one National Book Award, and — a first for an African American woman — one Nobel Prize for Literature, and thirteen years later, Morrison has held many hands in many countries and garnered international recognition.

To us she was a heroine. Her gripping stories held visceral impact and magnified the true history, hopes and often the pain of being Black and a woman in America.

As a young Black woman and student I was awed by her presence and exceptional talent. I had already devoured Song of Solomon and was deep into Sula. Morrison was a visionary storyteller and wordsmith unparalleled in the ability to give words power—a lyrical, moving power that transcended time and place. She inspired me beyond comparison. And there was no one of her style or caliber who had come before her.

This evocative writer had been invited by the newly-formed student-organized Black Heights literary magazine. This venture was the brainchild of Clarence Waldron, a Senior at Columbia College, who had recruited me and other Barnard students to submit articles for the first issue. I had eagerly volunteered to cover Morrison’s visit to the Barnard-Columbia community.

A communion with the reader — the spectator — the young — absorbed and rooted one evening many years ago. Morrison took the time and embraced us once in winter and again in spring.

I was inspired to write not just one student magazine article but over twenty-five articles published to date. As for Clarence Waldron, he is now an associate editor with the world-renowned Johnson Publishing Company in Chicago.

And Black Heights was published annually for many years to come after that inaugural issue in 1979.

For the millions of others outside the range of her gentle, strong speaking voice, her inviting manner and inspiring message there is an equitable medium available for all.

I’m not speaking of vicarious ways of learning about her through articles or movies. The best way to witness her enormous talent, visionary power and literary genius is by reading her books.

Holding hands with Toni Morrison is a singular experience.

Maria Chale
Class of 1986

**From The Barnard Oreo Cookie and Coconut Girl
Oreo Cookie and Coconut Girl Rainbow's Pot of Gold at Barnard**

A woman of color
With a voice of fire
I materialized my dreams
and didn't tire,
To put my best foot forward towards attaining my desire.

Purple — I was fickle at first but eventually, invigoration and determination,
persistence and perseverance paved the way,

Blue — my path of a knowledge seeker's deepest hue filled with continuous rebirth and
rejuvenation and the color that marks my spiritual end's salvation,

Green — my life's glowing blessed sheen,
filled with multifarious and multifaceted efforts and energies,

Yellow — for the gold within me and the flame that entwines and ensconced me,

Orange — for my invigorated and renewed flight towards a new level of
understanding,

Red — for the lifeline blood that sustained me and the love that embraced and held
me.

Friends

It hurts to see them move on.
It hurts to take another path;
When at the beginning
They began together,
The wide span of life.
They were one,
In one book.
Yet they were separate pages,
with different ideas,
Uniqueness shining through.
Then,
Suddenly
The author of life
Destroyed the book
And the pages
Floated in the wind
To two spaceless different worlds,
But they will always treasure
The book that brought them together,
For they are true friends.

©1991

Wanda Garcia

Sheila Abdus-Salaam
Class of 1974

I chose Barnard because it is an excellent women's school located in New York City. I attended a virtually all Black, Washington, D.C. High School in the late 1960's. When I arrived at Barnard in 1970, we were close to forty strong — exceeded in number only by the women who arrived the year before.

Those sisters had already blazed a radical trail. They had established a “Black floor” on seven Hewitt and Brooks to which I moved in the Spring of 1971, my second semester. The floor (which also housed Latinas and Asians), while not exactly heaven, was certainly a haven from the often hostile campus. Because we functioned as a family there and in BOSS (Barnard Organization of Soul Sisters) now BOBW, I received tremendous moral and spiritual support from my sisters.

From that base, much like the one my own blood family provided, I was able to meet the myriad challenges of Barnard/Columbia. I was inspired to excel academically, to demonstrate leadership on the floor, in BOSS and in Barnard's tripartite government. The friendships I made with women of color at Barnard have endured to this very day. We can count and have counted on each other for every imaginable personal and professional reason.

Being at Barnard also meant having the opportunity to live in New York City and explore all that the city has to offer. (Although I've remained in New York, I actually had more time as a college student to do this than I now have.) New York's rich diversity exists in very few other places in the world. I came to believe that if you can make it in New York, you can make it anywhere.

Current students should realize that they too have the double benefit of being at Barnard and living in New York. In order to take full advantage of what each has to offer, students of color should make a real effort to be informed of what's available. By that I mean, seek what you need to succeed. I have observed over the years that students of color tend to suffer in silence and are unaware of or fail to participate in programs such as internships with alumnae or the junior year abroad. We all need help sometime in our lives. Don't be afraid or embarrassed to reach out to administrators, faculty, and alumnae for guidance or concrete assistance. Many of us are receptive and are pleased to do what we can.

A. Daniels
Class of 1997

Memories of Stanley

I think now of Stanley...what he must be wondering.

Me so far away, and him unable to speak, unable to move.

He must wonder where I am. How and why I suddenly left.

He must dream of the better times when love flowed like water.

Each day I'd cater to him, I took care of his needs, fulfilled his every want... Now, now I'm gone. I think of him... alone. No one watching him, noticing him; no one loving him. I know he's dying, I can almost feel him slipping away. But I can't reach out to him... save him. He's too far away... and I... am almost gone.

Untitled

I'm afraid...I'm afraid of little men in white coats that tell you when to wakeup, what to think when your're awake, how to sleep, and what to dream. I'm afraid of beds without sheets and shoes without laces. I'm afraid of dingy gray cells with the ravings of mad men scribbled on the wall. I'm afraid of scribbling on the wall. I'm afraid of grime caked bars that draw ugly lines on the sun. I'm afraid of hidden cameras that watch me as I back away from vision in mirrors that aren't there. I'm afraid of police, called controlling agents, armed with jackets with too-long sleeves that wait for the signal from those cameras. But above all else in that place that I'm afraid of; above the sleeping, and the awaking, above the gray mattresses and the black floor, above the hulking guards and their spying friends, above the growing desire to see a world without bars that's bigger and better than two inches wide, above all else I'm afraid of being alone...forever in this dark dingy corner of my gray cell...waiting

@1995

Sandra Tharumalingam

Class of 1991

“Reality Check: Why are you at college?”

As Barnard alumna (Class '91), and a woman of color, it is imperative for me to say to all women at Barnard, not just those of color, first-years and seniors alike, and everyone in-between, (especially those of you who are double majors), that you have a wealth of resources at your fingertips by being at Barnard — so make use of it! Firstly, ask yourself why you're in college to begin with and secondly, why you're at Barnard. If your answers include learning, then please don't do what I did and waste the majority of four years missing out on some really valuable opportunities. Take advantage of the privileges Barnard provides you with because you won't always be so lucky.

I know that I sound like your parents, but over the course of the last two, almost three, years since I graduated, I can honestly say that I've begun to realize that Barnard is truly what you take from it, and you are what you make of it. That's what Barnard is there for: to help you learn, grow, discover yourself, and most importantly, acquire an education that will take you into the rest of your life.

Of the four years I had at Barnard, I spent the first two confused and the latter two of them as an English/Psychology double major, and I never once took a Women's Studies course, a Sociology course, or anything on popular culture; subjects that I had always assumed weren't contributing to my major's credit requirements. What a mistake! I am now pursuing an MPhil/PhD at the University of London, and what am I doing, on my own, without the help and knowledge of professors (other than my supervisor)? Teaching myself feminism and psychoanalysis as pertaining to early twentieth-century women's literature. All those women's studies electives...What a waste! I regret not making the most of my time at Barnard more than anything else during those four years simply due to a lack of focus during the first two years. Yes, of course I went on to do my Masters in English, and now I'm attempting more, but those four years in college are the key to so much more than just your first job or graduate school. Four years allow you to define yourself as an individual, as an adult, as an educated woman, and you need to take those four years and educate yourself as fully as you can, to wring every drop out of your experience at Barnard.

I can't stress how important it is for you to explore subjects that you think would never benefit you merely because they don't fulfill a distribution requirement or aren't contributing directly to your major or minor. You never know just how useful that one course on cultural anthropology could be later on, or that course on film...I am living proof of that. This does not mean you have to try and take every single course listed and never narrow your focus to your major, but do take a well-rounded course selection from your first semester onward. To all you first-years, seeing as you are now well into your second mester, spend some time thinking about your courses over the summer so that you won't be stressed and rushed into final course selections when filing for registration next autumn. It will help you decide on a major more easily. And don't wait until the end of your second year to decide on your major—I wasted a lot of time that way and had a hard time focusing myself.

From my own confused experience, I realize that you should start thinking seriously about your major (if you haven't already done so) in your first year, not somewhere in the middle of your second year. Trust me, it will be easier for you to maximize your use of all the other

courses you want to take instead of wasting your time sitting in on a course that “sort of” interests you but merely serves to fulfill a distribution requirement. You won’t pay attention, you won’t apply yourself, and worst of all, you won’t come away from the course having learned anything meaningful. I did that a few times my first two years and honestly regret it now, when I think of all the time I lost, when I could have been doing something more valuable and meaningful to me.

If all this sounds terribly pragmatic and boring to you believe me, it isn’t! From personal experience, and a confusing first two years, I say in all honesty, that it pays to plan your course selection very strategically and practically. It’s also to your advantage to focus yourself with your major as soon as you possibly can, so that you can get as much out of you required courses as well as benefit from your electives. If you determine what’s right for you without dabbling too much in the beginning, you’ll be able to concentrate on your major requirements sooner, and spread out your electives throughout your four years quite evenly.

When I realized that I wanted to take Art History my junior year, as a result of only just deciding on my major as double in English and Psychology, I had to double up on my Psychology and English courses in order to complete all my degree requirements for both subjects, and you guessed it — no time or space really for Art History! I already had to take another course to satisfy my quantitative reasoning requirement which I had also put off because I had dabbled the first two years away on courses that, without any focus, fulfilled little, if anything, for me.

In retrospect, I see a lot that I didn’t see then, and that’s why I write this for you, the women of Barnard, my sisters. We are all in this together, and if what I learned from my mistakes can help you have a better four years than I did, then I’ll feel that I’ve given just a little back and made your lives a little easier. I hope this helps you to focus yourselves sooner, if nothing else.

As much as I disliked my first two years at Barnard (and this is the truth), once I graduated in 1991, I found that Barnard had offered me so much that I hadn’t bothered to take advantage of. I hadn’t explored half as much as I could have, and I hadn’t truly enjoyed all that Barnard delivers as a highly academic institution. My studies since haven’t provided me with as much diversity or accessibility, and it is only now that I look back at what I had in front of me for four years — so much more than I took. Remember, it’s what you take from which Barnard offers, and what you make of it allows Barnard to give you the greatest gift it possibly can. And wouldn’t you like a gift that lasts the rest of your life?

Wanda Garcia
Class of 1995

i

PURPOSELY

Close my eyes

To faces that slam doors—

To eyes that berate me.

Fuck them all!

No longer childhood dreams will persist

To follow me

For that was all it was

Lies.

The tender statements were just lies

So they could feel important

But in the end

Their reflection is lucid.

Fuck them all!

I have the one that cares and accepts

All of me

That will never leave me waiting

The one who heals and caresses

All my scars...

I have ME!

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An Honest Plea

Brother can you spare a dime,
Please don't tell me you ain't got no time
To listen to me whine
In order to be able to dine
What do you know about time
Anyways. You think all I want is crime.
You don't know what's mine
the treasures that confine
My bosom and spine.
Do you think I'm worth a dime?
Your answer is useless cause you're not divine.
Only He cares that I am fine
Because he gave me the greatest gift – a Mind
And Soul – priceless treasures you may also have, except mine
Is sheltered by the vine
Of life, so brother you may keep your dime.
'Cause you ain't worth my precious time.

Julie Maffre '98

Chandra L. Williams
Class of 1990

If there's one thing I learned from my educational experiences, it's that the academic world needs us — women of color — as much as we need it. Whether we come from el barrio or the 'hood, suburban comfort or economic privilege, or anywhere in between, our very presence adds much-needed spice. We have different histories and different goals, some might even say to the extent that we have different realities. Yet we also have something in common with the larger academic community which we must not forget — a self-investment in the pursuit of knowledge and enrichment.

The fact that you've gone through the stressful college application process and are now enrolled at Barnard College makes your interest in acquiring knowledge a fact. Enrichment, however, is a different matter. With knowledge acquisition comes enrichment of the academic kind. But there's also an enrichment which is more personal and self-revealing in nature. This kind comes with keeping an open mind.

When you have an open mind, you're often surprised at what you find. You discover that trivial things such as certain types of music, as well as important things such as certain types of people aren't as bad as you once thought they were. You realize that getting a C in that class doesn't mean you're stupid or undeserving of a college education. It just means that you have to organize your time better or that perhaps that subject area isn't your thing. In other words, keeping an open mind awakens you to the possibility that you're not who you think you are.

One of my Barnard suitemates entered as a pre-med Freshman, exited with a BA in English, and is currently a law school graduate. Another friend, after having been discouraged since high school by all of her teachers, regained her determination her second year of college and went pre-med. I myself am now pursuing a PhD in an area, Linguistics, that I'd never even heard of as a young girl growing up in East New York. These are only examples of academic discovery.

During your college years you will definitely make personal discoveries of many kinds. The key to getting the most out of them (and your college education) is to always be receptive to what you are experiencing. An open mind will take you a long way on the road to personal enrichment and fulfillment. As my mother loves to say, everything — good and bad — happens for a reason. The reason may not be readily apparent, but there is always a reason why. An open and patient mind assures that you will never fail to eventually understand that reason why. And, therefore, you will never be lost.

O Sister,
so much ahead!
I'd like to lighten
the load
to spare you the bad times,
to enjoy purely the good times.

But you, sister,
the one fair of face,
and so full of grace,
I behold
you so strong,
stronger maybe than I,
and all I have on you
are years and some experience
for I stood where you stand.

But O, Sister,
you possess talents so captivating
and knowledge I crave to share.
With pride I see you,
so vulnerable but resilient,
like me,
my equal, my peer,
yet somehow superior...

-Unknown

Denise Jones
Class of 1976

I wasn't exactly a stranger to Manhattan when I stopped at 116th and Broadway to begin my college career. Still, it took me a month to ride the subway downtown alone. That minor triumph was the beginning of a journey that would lead to many more successes and some failures.

All in all, my experiences at Barnard were good. In fact, my days at Barnard will probably be some of the best of my life. I was fortunate to be a member of the Class of 1976. I have always felt that ours was the last class that felt an *emotional*, as well as intellectual, kindredness with the young, African American revolutionaries of the '60s. When I left campus for good on May 12, 1976, I felt change in the air. The '80s sentiment of "I am the greatest and I will have it all!" brushed passed me at the gates of 3001 Broadway. A new zeitgeist was being born, and the Barnard that I had lived for four years would have to change to meet the demands and needs of its entrants. Hey, the times are the times and will be!

Living through and understanding the high anxieties of the mid '70s, as an African-American and as a woman, helped forge the tenets by which I live. I probably could have availed myself more of Barnard's social and cultural diversities. However, my identity and lifestyle, and those of many other women of color at Barnard, held little room for integration outside the classroom. In hindsight, maintaining strict racial solidarity has resulted in me knowing few classmates of different ethnicities. I'm trying to catch up and it's hard.

In spite of, or because of, the insulation that was in vogue for people of color at the time, I still learned, grew, and had fun. In fact my life's most enduring friendships were cemented on the seventh floor of Brooks Hall, in the days when it was all Black.

For the young women of color entering the same gates on Broadway I say, don't expect to leave knowing everything, because you won't; maintain a sense of community with those inside and outside those gates; and have a blast... There are many challenges that will await you after your days at Barnard have faded into memories.

You Ain't Shit!

Black man, you ain't shit
If you think that the Black woman
Don't deserve your respect
After carrying, Carrying, Yes I said Carrying
Your Black ass for so many years.
Listen up, my brother.
The Black woman has been and is your strength.
Harriet Tubman, our Black Moses, Sojourner Truth,
Rosa Parks, Coretta Scott King, Maya Angelou, Alice Walker,
My Mother,
Your Mother!
Man!, You ain't shit
If you think by supporting our families
By ourselves
After so many of you have deserted us after
Your one night stand exposé
That we are angry, bitter and despise all Black Men
And that our sole purpose in life
Is to destroy your very being.
Then Man, You Ain't Shit!
If you think that by beating us,
Degrading us will help
Boost your Manness!
And after we have been there, supporting and helping you
During the rough times,
You deem to belittle us,
Demean Us
To satisfy your need for the American Dream
By crossing the color lines and
Hooking a White woman on your arm as a sign of
Success, Supremeness
Then man You Ain't Shit
If you think that I am going
To sit around,
While You sniff around.
I am a Black Woman
Nubian Princess
Queen of My Soul
Mother of the Earth
Giver Of Life
Bearer of Children.
Don't Justify Yourself Through Me
'Cause Unlike You, My Brother
I AM THE SHIT !!!

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Daphne Bazile

Linda Prado Amnawah
Class of 1976

I feel that my having gone to Barnard was good because I developed an inner strength that has guided me throughout my personal and professional life. I had to overcome many obstacles such as economic hardships, racial prejudice and academic challenges. The work at Barnard sometimes appeared to be overwhelming. Having to meet such challenges prepared me to meet the challenges in the New York City Public School system. I am very grateful to the HEOP program because I would never have been able to pay the tuition otherwise. I was a classroom teacher for nine years. I have been an educational evaluator for the last ten years and may soon be a Regional Monitor here in Queens. I look forward to being able to evaluate schools and insure that the Special Education students are receiving all of the services that they need. Barnard was certainly a good training ground—a truly memorable experience.

What I learned most in Barnard was that a person must have faith in their own abilities no matter what anybody else says or thinks. My advice to students is to believe in yourself. You are your own best ally. Do not let anyone or any circumstance keep you from pursuing your dream—"hang tough." That's an expression I learned from my own students. Thank you for asking me for an opinion.

Mixture of light
Mixture of color
Mixture of a psychofrenic
Produce us:
Passionate creatures
Crawling among the rocks;
Passionate creatures
Climbing to the pure air.
US
We who let ourselves swim
To wherever the inner winds allow
To carry us wherever
To be a production of
Matisse's Cycle of Life:
Redness penetrating our souls
As these red lips
Gently brush your flesh...
©11/26/94

Wanda Garcia

The sun laughed in delight
As we played in Neptune's immense world.
At last I twirled in freedom
Though I was in your arms
I was not crowded.
Later on I was crowded by you
You passed the line caring too much.
I felt out of breathe.
I left.
Useless quilt made my entire body heavy.
You arrived
I did not trust our reality.
©12/31

Wanda Garcia

Who Am I ?

I am woman

I am a bird of beauty

That flies and feeds others

Around the world

Who am I?

I know their tongues

I am the door of knowledge

That opens for everyone to enter

Take heed and Listen

Do not leave until you understand

Who am I?

I am alone as a fox in the woods

Caring for those dependent upon me

Who am I?

I am there when he is not there

I am a comet

Surrounded by stars

I know well everything above space

Who am I?

Nothing pulls me down

I am the serpent of art and discipline

Faithful to the sick and healthy

I serve you with my hands

And spare the life of a new minute

Who am I?

I am a teller of stories on a wall

Color is the words I speak

I am the wind of victory

I look straight ahead

My arms in the air
Who am I?

I am a messenger of feelings
I speak so much in so few words
I can hold you in my thoughts
I can keep you in my memory
Who am I?

There are only a few verses of me

I am beautifully and wisely made
Before I came there was one man
But after—a nation
I am woman

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Monique J. Burgess

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Please note that the organization formerly known as BOSS and BOBW is now BSBC, the Black Sisters of Barnard and Columbia.

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