

Poem about My Rights

BY JUNE JORDAN

Even tonight and I need to take a walk and clear
my head about this poem about why I can't
go out without changing my clothes my shoes
my body posture my gender identity my age
my status as a woman alone in the evening/
alone on the streets/alone not being the point/
the point being that I can't do what I want
to do with my own body because I am the wrong
sex the wrong age the wrong skin and
suppose it was not here in the city but down on the beach/
or far into the woods and I wanted to go
there by myself thinking about God/or thinking
about children or thinking about the world/all of it
disclosed by the stars and the silence:
I could not go and I could not think and I could not
stay there
alone
as I need to be
alone because I can't do what I want to do with my own
body and
who in the hell set things up
like this
and in France they say if the guy penetrates
but does not ejaculate then he did not rape me
and if after stabbing him if after screams if
after begging the bastard and if even after smashing
a hammer to his head if even after that if he
and his buddies fuck me after that
then I consented and there was
no rape because finally you understand finally
they fucked me over because I was wrong I was
wrong again to be me being me where I was/wrong
to be who I am
which is exactly like South Africa
penetrating into Namibia penetrating into

Angola and does that mean I mean how do you know if Pretoria ejaculates what will the evidence look like the proof of the monster jackboot ejaculation on Blackland and if

after Namibia and if after Angola and if after Zimbabwe and if after all of my kinsmen and women resist even to self-immolation of the villages and if after that we lose nevertheless what will the big boys say will they claim my consent:

Do You Follow Me: We are the wrong people of the wrong skin on the wrong continent and what in the hell is everybody being reasonable about and according to the *Times* this week

back in 1966 the C.I.A. decided that they had this problem and the problem was a man named Nkrumah so they killed him and before that it was Patrice Lumumba and before that it was my father on the campus of my Ivy League school and my father afraid to walk into the cafeteria because he said he was wrong the wrong age the wrong skin the wrong gender identity and he was paying my tuition and before that

it was my father saying I was wrong saying that I should have been a boy because he wanted one/a boy and that I should have been lighter skinned and that I should have had straighter hair and that I should not be so boy crazy but instead I should just be one/a boy and before that

it was my mother pleading plastic surgery for my nose and braces for my teeth and telling me to let the books loose to let them loose in other words

I am very familiar with the problems of the C.I.A. and the problems of South Africa and the problems of Exxon Corporation and the problems of white America in general and the problems of the teachers and the preachers and the F.B.I. and the social workers and my particular Mom and Dad/I am very

familiar with the problems because the problems
turn out to be
me

I am the history of rape

I am the history of the rejection of who I am

I am the history of the terrorized incarceration of
myself

I am the history of battery assault and limitless
armies against whatever I want to do with my mind
and my body and my soul and

whether it's about walking out at night

or whether it's about the love that I feel or

whether it's about the sanctity of my vagina or
the sanctity of my national boundaries

or the sanctity of my leaders or the sanctity
of each and every desire

that I know from my personal and idiosyncratic
and indisputably single and singular heart

I have been raped

be-

cause I have been wrong the wrong sex the wrong age

the wrong skin the wrong nose the wrong hair the

wrong need the wrong dream the wrong geographic

the wrong sartorial I

I have been the meaning of rape

I have been the problem everyone seeks to

eliminate by forced

penetration with or without the evidence of slime and/

but let this be unmistakable this poem

is not consent I do not consent

to my mother to my father to the teachers to

the F.B.I. to South Africa to Bedford-Stuy

to Park Avenue to American Airlines to the hardon

idlers on the corners to the sneaky creeps in

cars

I am not wrong: Wrong is not my name

My name is my own my own my own

and I can't tell you who the hell set things up like this

but I can tell you that from now on my resistance
my simple and daily and nightly self-determination
may very well cost you your life