1999

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WHAT DID IT ALL MEAN?

Michele Cammers Goodwin†

Did Brown really mean
That you were meant
To be
In separate and unequal lecture halls
Within,
Yet
Without?

Did Brown really mean,
That new classifications could be
Used to push you out?

Justifying your exclusion
At the cost of an education
At the risk of your ignorance
At the pain of generations lost?
Worst than ever imagined?

Did Brown mean
That from negro you would awake,
And a new label to take?
Unwarned,
Trampled by acronyms and codes
Signifying your inadequacies,
Incompetence, inherent ignorance to unfold

Were not these what the battles were all about?
Transforming their narrow minds,
To do without
The vile hatred, and assumptions of superiority

Was this not what the children marched for?
Jailed, chained, and incarcerated for?
That equal opportunity,
Meant an equal hand?

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† Anna Julia Cooper Post-Doctoral Scholar and Assistant Dean for Institutional and Community Initiatives, BA University of Wisconsin; J.D. Boston College; LLM University of Wisconsin May 2000.
But perhaps, what was all left out,
Indeed forgotten about
As they scribbled their last lines,
About the negroes' self esteem and potential minds

Was that children need, what law cannot compel
Love and care to do well,
But that in this no legislature nor judge can produce
Through use of pen or abuse,
But from hearts, born open by desire