

NJOKI N. WANE

Students At Risk

I can hear your low whispers
I have seen that silent gaze so many times
I can read your mind
What am I supposed to do?
Scream at the top of my voice to let the world know,
Know that I am a poor and marginalized student at risk?

I know the pressure is mounting for me to leave.
I do not want to leave
I want to make something out of myself
But I guess I have to leave because I have been failing all my courses
Why can't anyone see my bleeding heart?
My broken dreams? My dried up tears?
I thought the schools were for all of us
I thought there was something like, yes, like equal opportunity for all

Mrs. T sent me out of class the other day because I was sleeping during her history class
How could I tell her I slept because my history was excluded from her teaching and that my
years of waiting weighted heavily on me?
How could I tell her I was left out, absent from her examples, classroom textbooks, pictures,
and discussion?

Mr. C shouted at me for "disturbing" his math class.
Little did he know I was explaining to others the concepts in probability theory?
Mr. C has never acknowledged my good grades and even blames me for "copying" from
other students when it is all my work

I do not want to leave school
But I am forced to leave
Can't you see I want to make something out of myself?
I know I am getting tired, tired of my "silent screams"
My physical and emotional bruises hurt
I need help
I know there is someone out there who can help students at risk
Yes, I am talking to all of you
Yes, I am talking on behalf of all of us.
The students at risk.

Njoki N. Wane is interested in issues of development, indigeneous knowledges, and black feminisms. She teaches at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto in the Department of Sociology and Equity Studies in Education.