

PAT PARKER

Pat Parker (1944–89), author of several books of poems and essays, was a founder of the Black Women's Revolutionary Council in 1980, and a medical coordinator at the Oakland Feminist Women's Health Center.

For the white person who wants to know how to be my friend

The first thing you do is to forget that i'm Black.
Second, you must never forget that i'm Black.

You should be able to dig Aretha,³
but don't play her every time i come over.
And if you decide to play Beethoven—don't tell me
his life story. They made us take music appreciation too.

Eat soul food if you like it, but don't expect me
to locate your restaurants
or cook it for you.

And if some Black person insults you,
mugs you, rapes your sister, rapes you,
rips your house or is just being an ass—
please, do not apologize to me
for wanting to do them bodily harm.
It makes me wonder if you're foolish.

And even if you really believe Blacks are better lovers than
whites—don't tell me. I start thinking of charging stud fees.

In other words—if you really want to be my friend—*don't*
make a labor of it. I'm lazy. Remember.

[1978]

3 Aretha Aretha Franklin, African American singer of blues and rock.



Topics for Critical Thinking and Writing

1. The first two lines are contradictory. What sense do you make out of them?
2. Explain lines 4–5.
3. What stereotypes of African Americans does Parker evoke in the last two stanzas? What is her point?
4. If you have ever been involved in an episode of the sort that Parker mentions in her second stanza, in an essay of 500 words narrate the experience and offer a reflection on it.