

2000

i refuse

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i refuse

Cover Page Footnote

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First Prize
ANN STANLEY-BARRY

i refuse

i refuse to be molded into one entity.

i refuse to be your "girl"
your "wife"
your "woman"
i am my own person
a pre-existing individual in my own right.

i refuse to be owned or referred to as property
i belong to no man
no woman.

i refuse to be conditioned
i withhold the right to be free
free to shave my head and not my armpits
free to clean up the environment and not the house
free to support my people and not my derriere
free to be my ever constant changing self.

i refuse to be treated as an inferior
women hold up half the sky
our bodies cradle future generations
respect me.

i refuse to be unloving
the love i give is given freely
with no expectations of redemption
but i choose who i love.

i refuse to be unloved
i am worthy of love in all regards
and of the respect and trust that accompanies it
if i am unloved
i will continue my journey without you.

i refuse to be without you.
