

POEM

I am an Engineer who happens to be a woman who is Black

Stacie L. Gregory*

* PhD candidate, Engineering Education, Utah State University, slgregory@aggiemail.usu.edu

Engineering I loved it, but it did not love me **back**.
Is it because I am a woman or because I am **Black**?
These are traits, by which I am **defined**.
Labeled, placed in a box, I have been **confined**.
I need to escape, I am ready to **go**.
Who am I really? This I need to **know**.

My intellect, my own abilities, I am beginning to **doubt**.
To gain back self-worth, I must get **out**.
Others too, sad to **say**, will face this same dilemma, before graduation **day**.
Is this degree worth **it**? Am I the right **fit**?
They will ask, before they finally **quit**.

Give up on a dream, a path they **took**.
Discouraged from *persisting*, simply because of how they **look**.
Engineers we need more . . . *in the USA*; this we hear the privileged **say**;
as they push the "other" away.

What will it take to get more Americans to **innovate**?
Unconditional love? A little less **hate**?
Recognition and acceptance that we are all **great**. Giving everyone a chance to **participate**.
Recruitment and retention . . . buzz words administrators **speak**.
Yet their efforts are far too **weak**.

Inclusion, acceptance, and diversity **too**; but only for those who are most like **you**.
Deny who I am. Ashamed of who I was born to **be**?
Just to earn an engineering **degree** and to **be** doubted **daily**.
Even by those with less education than **me**.

Contribute to society & make a difference in this **life**; have kids, get married, and become a **wife**.
This is the choice many have **made**; to avoid heartache if they had **stayed**.
Stayed in a career, as an unwanted **guest**; even when they have given their **best**;
EXHAUSTED . . . so they decide to **rest**.

Why so few? Why do they *leave*? If I told you the truth, you would not *believe*.
 Yes, they had the ability to *achieve*. Yet, what they needed, they did not *receive*.
 The freedom to be authentic and *free*; a chance to exhibit their unique *creativity*.
 When all can agree that our differences make us *great*, this will give us the power to *innovate*.
 Develop novel things, not just *replicate*.

When everyone is allowed to join in the *game*;
appreciated for not being the *same*;
acknowledged as part of the *team* . . . *permitted* to live the American *dream*.
 If being an Engineer is a dream of *mine*; include me, allow my light to *shine*.

Recognizing my light will not cause yours to *diminish*;
 Instead it gives energy . . . helps you *replenish*.
 United, as one, working side by *side*; giving each other permission to excel with *pride*.
 My chosen profession, I am teaching it how to love me *back* . . .
 to accept me as an engineer who happens to be a woman, who is also *Black*.



A poster encouraging women to pursue technology studies at University of Valle, Cali, Colombia. It reads: "If it's not appropriate for women, it's not appropriate. Women and technology." c. 2000. [Some rights reserved](#).