

TO DINAH WASHINGTON

I have heard your voice floating, royal and real,
Across the dusky neighborhoods,
And the eyes of old men grow bright, remembering:
Children stop their play to listen,
Remembering-though they have never heard you before,
You are familiar to them:
Queen of the Blues, singing an eternal song.

In the scarred booths of Forty-Third street,
"Long Johns" suck in their bellies,
On the brass studded and leather of Elite-town,
Silk-suited Bucks raise their chins...

Wherever a man is without a warm woman,
Or a woman without her muscled man,
The eternal song is sung.

Some say you're sleeping,
But I say you're singing.

Unforgettable Queen

--Etheridge Knight *Poems From Prison*
Broadside Press, 1968

