

With No Immediate Cause

every 3 minutes a woman is beaten

every five minutes a

woman is raped/every ten minutes

a lil girl is molested

yet i rode the subway today

i sat next to an old man who

may have beaten his old wife

3 minutes ago or 3 days/30 years ago

he might have sodomized his

daughter but i sat there

cuz the young men on the train

might beat some young women

later in the day or tomorrow

i might not shut my door fast

every 3 minutes it happens

some woman's innocence

rushes to her cheeks/pours from her mouth

like the betsy wetsy dolls have been torn

apart/their mouths

menses red & split/every

three minutes a shoulder

is jammed through plaster and the oven door/

chairs push thru the rib cage/hot water or

boiling sperm decorate her body

i rode the subway today

& bought a paper from a

man who might

have held his old lady onto

a hot pressing iron/i don't know

maybe he catches lil girls in the

park & rips open their behinds

with steel rods/i can't decide

what he might have done i only

know every 3 minutes

every 5 minutes every 10 minutes/so

i bought the paper

looking for the announcement

the discovery/of the dismembered

woman's body/the

victims have not all been

identified/today they are

naked and dead/refuse to
testify/one girl out of 10's not
coherent/i took the coffee
& spit it up/i found an
announcement/not the woman's
bloated body in the river/floating
not the child bleeding in the
59th street corridor/not the baby
broken on the floor/
there is some concern
that alleged battered women
might start to murder their
husbands & lovers with no
immediate cause"

i spit up i vomit i am screaming
we all have immediate cause
every 3 minutes
every 5 minutes
every 10 minutes
every day
women's bodies are found
in alleys & bedrooms/at the top of the stairs
before i ride the subway/buy a paper/drink
coffee/i must know/
have you hurt a woman today
did you beat a woman today
throw a child across a room
are the lil girl's panties
in yr pocket

did you hurt a woman today
i have to ask these obscene questions
the authorities require me to
establish
immediate cause
every three minutes
every five minutes
every ten minutes
every day.

Ntozake Shange