

Contributors



As the mother of toddler twins, our deputy editor, **CLAIRE McINTOSH**, is a master multitasker. But even she admits that sometimes she feels as if she's being pulled every which way, like the women she gives credit to in "Balancing Acts" (page 180). "We try to see how many plates we can spin at once. I'm constantly having an inner dialogue with myself to remain singular in my purpose, whatever it may be at the moment," she says. Finding a balance isn't easy, but McIntosh hopes that after sisters read this story, they'll take time to "make a space for grace."

When *ESSENCE* needed someone to get today's hottest celebrities to talk about their moms, no one was more ready for the job than **REGINA R. ROBERTSON**.

In "Mother Love" (page 190), we see a different side of Mr. Kanye West. "The Kanye we see onstage is nothing like the man he is in his mother's presence. You can tell he loves her, fiercely," says Robertson, who credits her own mom, Valerie (below), for encouraging her to always follow her heart. Robertson has written for *O, The Oprah Magazine* and is working on her first book project.



Newsweek writer **ALLISON SAMUELS** sat down with our cover chameleon, Jada Pinkett Smith, for a heart-to-heart about life (page 150). As if being a busy mom, the wife of superfine Will Smith



and a Hollywood actress weren't enough, Jada is seriously establishing herself among headbangers with her rock-metal band, Wicked Wisdom. "She has a confidence onstage that's amazing," says Samuels. "She's able to blow off steam and get angry there because it's a place where people expect you to do that."



High-profile portrait photographer **TIMOTHY GREENFIELD-SANDERS**

focused his lens on some of today's most strikingly elegant women, including singer CeCe Winans (above), in "The Bold and the Beautiful" (page 154). Having worked professionally for more than 25 years, he's shot at least five thousand people. So what's his secret? "Understand your subjects and help them overcome their insecurities," he says. Look for his latest book of portraits, *Face to Face* (Skira), and his new DVD from HBO, *Thinking XXX*, in stores now. □