

Save the Date:
September 17
4:30 p.m.

Lecture Title:
Dying by Ignorance,
Living by Words and
Creating by Grace

Acclaimed poet Nikki Giovanni shares her eloquent words of wisdom, spanning the civil rights movement, politics, love, art and more. Discussing the ideals of equality in her dramatic oratory, she shares the experiences and thoughtful poetry that embody her activism and legacy of passion for the arts within the framework of current events and news cycles.

NIKKI GIOVANNI

Distinguished Professor of English, Virginia Tech

Author Poet Essayist Professor



Nikki Giovanni, one of the most widely read American poets, prides herself on being “a Black American, a daughter, a mother (and) a professor of English.”

Heavily inspired by black activists and artists, she has explored issues of race, gender, sexuality and the African-American family — while always insisting on presenting the truth as she sees it — throughout her writing career.

Giovanni’s writings on race, gender and hate-motivated violence have received numerous honors and awards. Her autobiography, *Gemini*, was a finalist for the National Book Award, an annual recognition that celebrates the best of American literature. Also, she is an NAACP Image Award recipient for *Love Poems*, written in memory of rapper and actor Tupac Shakur; *Blues: For All the Changes*, an assortment of poems about nature and her battle with cancer; and *Quilting the Black-Eyed Pea*, which addressed the need for African Americans to pursue space travel. More recently, her children’s picture book *Rosa*, about the civil rights legend Rosa Parks, became a Caldecott Honors Book. *Rosa* also reached #3 on the *New York Times* Best-Seller List.

The recipient of some 25 honorary degrees, Giovanni has been named Woman of the Year by *Mademoiselle Magazine*, *Ladies Home Journal* and *Ebony Magazine*. She was tapped for the Ohio Women’s Hall of Fame and named an Outstanding Woman of Tennessee. Giovanni has also received Governor’s Awards from Tennessee and Virginia, was the first recipient of the Rosa L. Parks Woman of Courage Award and has also been awarded the Langston Hughes Medal for poetry.

A University Distinguished Professor at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, Va., Giovanni was on the faculty during the tragic campus shooting in 2007. In response, she composed the poems *Blacksburg Under Siege* and *We Are Virginia Tech*, and read passages at the memorial service the day after the tragedy.

“Giovanni ... remains a brilliant societal observer. She has an intrinsic ability to blend wit with ideology and past reflections with present-day revelations — all with her keen sense of humor.”

CIVIL RIGHTS

With the 50th anniversary of Martin Luther King Jr.’s death, Giovanni reflected on her 1968 and later writings on King and the Civil Rights movement in this [The Atlantic](#) article.

In her 2011 [lecture at Arizona State](#) she explores themes of solidarity and oppression by highlighting the power of the individual to make a difference.

AWARD-WINNING WRITINGS

In her [distinguished faculty lecture at Virginia Tech](#), Giovanni explored her relationship with Rosa Parks and how it is expressed in her children’s book, *Rosa*.

Her latest is entitled, [A Good Cry: What We Learn from Tears and Laughter](#).

A full list of her publications can be found under the poetry and children’s poetry sections of [her website](#).

TEACHING

Giovanni offers important insights about how to approach writing and her own inspirations in this [TedX talk](#).

She is also well known for her poem delivered at the end of the [Virginia Tech Convocation](#) after the mass shooting in 2007.