

Topic Page: [Giovanni, Nikki \(Yolande Cornelia\) \(1943 - \)](#)

Summary Article: **Nikki Giovanni (1943--)**

From *African American Almanac*

Poet



Nikki Giovanni, was born Yolande Cornelia Giovanni on June 7, 1943, in Knoxville, Tennessee. She went on to study at Fisk University earning a B.A. in 1967 and spent a year at the University of Pennsylvania School of Social Work. Her first book of poetry, *Black Feeling, Black Talk*, published in the mid-1960s, was followed by *Black Judgment* in 1968. These two were combined as *Black Feeling, Black Talk, Black Judgment* in 1970.

By 1974 her poems were found in many black literature anthologies, and she had also become a media personality through her television appearances, where she read her poetry. Many of her poems were put to soul or gospel music accompaniment. One such recording is *Truth Is on Its Way*.

Giovanni is a prolific author, having written *Recreation; Spin a Soft Black Song; Night Comes Softly: Anthology of Black Female Voices; My House; Gemini: An Extended Autobiographical Statement; Ego Tripping and Other Poems for Young People; A Dialogue* (with James Baldwin); and *A Poetic Equation: Conversations Between Nikki Giovanni and Margaret Walker*. Her other works include *The Women and the Men: Poems* (1975); *Cotton Candy on a Rainy Day* (1978); *Vacation Time* (1980), a collection of poems for children that was dedicated to her son, Tommy; *Those Who Ride the Night Winds* (1984); *Sacred Cows ... and Other Edibles* (1988), *Quilting the Black-Eyed Pea; Poems and Not-Quite Poems* (2002), and *Acolytes* (2007). As a lung cancer survivor Giovanni contributed to the anthology *Breaking Silences* (2005).

Giovanni has numerous honorary degrees and awards, which include the Outstanding Women of Tennessee Award in 1985, the Langston Hughes Award for Distinguished Contributions to Arts and Letters in 1996, and the NAACP Image Award for Literature 1998.

Since 1987 Giovanni has been a professor of English at Virginia Tech, in Blacksburg, Virginia. She is a distinguished university professor and the Gloria D. Smith Professor of Black Studies.

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Nikki Giovanni (1943--). (2012). In L. Bracks, *African American almanac : 400 years of triumph, courage and excellence* . Canton, MI: Visible Ink Press. Retrieved from https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/giovanni_nikki_yolande_cornelia_1943



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"Nikki Giovanni (1943--)." *African American Almanac*, Lean'tin Bracks, Visible Ink Press, 1st edition, 2012. *Credo Reference*, https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/giovanni_nikki_yolande_cornelia_1943. Accessed 14 Nov. 2019.