



News Release

February 2, 2009
[Nancy Livingston](#)
Public Relations
651-779-3222
Fax 651-779-3470

[Century College](#)
3300 Century Avenue North
White Bear Lake, MN 55110

Poet Nikki Giovanni Charms Century College Audience

At the end of a talk last week by nationally-known poet Nikki Giovanni, a member of the packed Century College audience stood up and announced, "I am a 57-year-old woman and your works have lifted me and been medicinal to me. You are more than a poet. You are an angel on earth."

Giovanni, 65, whose barbed social-justice observations often sound less than angelic, was taken aback by the over-the-top compliment. She thanked the woman, and turned her attention to the long line of adoring audience members seeking autographs and hugs. "I like being old," Giovanni said.

Invited to speak at Century as a Martin Luther King guest lecturer, Giovanni read her poetry, danced a little, dished out her decidedly leftist political views and all-in-all enjoyed herself as she skipped from one subject to another.

Giovanni began her talk by re-telling the story of Rosa Parks, the black woman who became a symbol of the civil rights movement in 1955 after she refused to give up her seat in the "neutral section" of a public bus in Montgomery, Alabama. Giovanni quoted from her Caldecott-Award winning book "Rosa," which is used in many schools across the country.

The Rosa Parks incident led to the Montgomery bus boycott, and Giovanni noted that 26-year-old Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was the inspirational leader of this nonviolent movement. “He knew he was not going to die of old age,” said Giovanni. “He knew he was putting his life on the line for the good of humanity.”

Giovanni then shifted topics to talk about TV shows she has loved (Deal or No Deal – “virtually mindless”) and hated (Father Knows Best – “three losers.”). She then began reading her love poems, including “So Enchanted with You,” which is published in her latest book *Bicycles* published by HarperCollins:

I like

Boiled turnips

Boiled potatoes

Boiled rutabagas

With butter

And sea salt

But not every day

I like

Fried Virginia flounder

Fried sand dabs

Fried smelts

But usually only on Friday nights

I want

Drop biscuits

Miniature Park House rolls

Extra thin white bread

While I uncharacteristically

Make a sandwich

I like

Garlic straight off the vine

Anchovies anytime

And good red wines

'cause I'm too old

To drink cheap

I like to pound and grill my veal

I rub my beef

In a special chili mixture

I really don't eat

Anyone else's ground meat

In other words:

I'm Normal

So this is the question:

Why am I so enchanted with you

Giovanni said despite the failings of “our pitiful species,” she is a big fan of the future. “I stay current,” she said. “It is important for writers to go out and see people. I would like to be here in 200 or 300 years to see how it all shakes out.”



Photo: Poet Nikki Giovanni at Century College