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Tuesday 21 June, 2005

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"A Night with Nikki Giovanni"

By:

June 03, 2005

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World renowned poet, writer and educator, Nikki Giovanni will be the spotlight the second time with the History Makers, "A Night with Nikki Giovanni" here in Atlanta, June 18, 2005 at Georgia Public Broadcasting.

Giovanni's name is one of the most recognized names in American literature today. She has written over two dozen book, including volumes of poetry, illustrated children's book and three collections of essays. She has taught writing and literature at Virginia Tech since 1987 and is currently a university-distinguished professor.

Giovanni was born in Knoxville, Tenn., but grew up in Cincinnati, Ohio. She graduated from Fisk University with honors with a degree in history.

"It's always been essential for Black Americans to tell our story," Giovanni said. "It makes History Makers important because we are a living voice. Things will be mentioned that no one else will know, but somebody can go back 100 years from now and locate the story."

History Makers is the largest African American video oral history archive, dedicated to recording and preserving the personal histories of well-known and unsung African Americans. Giovanni sees this second opportunity as an honor and a way

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to continue telling her story.

"There is never anytime that you will be finished. The only time you are finished telling your story is when you're no longer with us," Giovanni said. "So, I would do it now or hopefully five years from now or 10 years from now."

This storyteller whose work has influenced an infinite number of young people today is not afraid to say she is a fan of the hip-hop generation.

"I am very much enthralled with the young people," Giovanni said speaking of the hip-hop generation. "I think people are jealous of them because they are young, good looking and willing to live life on their own terms."

Giovanni, who is a big fan of Tupac Shakur and in his honor has a Thug Life tattoo, believes the hip-hop generation is what the slaves from Africa were dreaming of.

"This is what we dreamed of in 1819 when those captured Africans stepped off that boat into Jamestown. A lot of people thought this was a situation that was going to get worst," Giovanni explained. "But then they dreamed somebody like us to take control of their lives, and I think the hip-hop generation has fulfilled that dream. They have literally created something out of nothing."

As an educator, Giovanni believes it is the hip-hop generation that has altered the face of everything today.

"The hip-hop generation has changed everything. They have changed music, poetry, movies and now education," Giovanni said. "They are approaching it with their vision and it making other people have to look at other things and that's remarkable."

Giovanni has a deep love for reading, poetry and history. "I've always enjoyed writing. When I was in college I was like 'I may as well give it my best shot. If I can do this than I can, if I can't then I need to move on.' And it did work."

And work it did. Some of Giovanni's most recognized work includes, Kidnap Poem, Ego Tripping and Cotton Candy on a Rainy Day.

"Poetry is the steak," Giovanni explains. "It's a really wonderful piece of meat. You can do anything to it and its always nourishment."

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