

## Blues: For All the Changes: New Poems

By Nikki Giovanni

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### Blues: For All the Changes: New Poems By Nikki Giovanni


Intimate, edgy, and unapologetic, *Blues: For All the Changes* bears the mark of Nikki Giovanni's unmistakable voice. In a career that has spanned three decades, Giovanni has created an indispensable body of work and earned a place among the nation's most celebrated and controversial poets; Gloria Naylor calls her "one of our national treasures." Now, in these fifty-two new poems, Giovanni brings the passion, fearless wit, and intensely personal self that have defined her life's work to a new front.

Invoking the fates and exalting the rhythm of the everyday, Giovanni writes with might and majesty. From the environment to our reliance on manners, from sex and politics to love among Black folk, *Blues* is a masterwork with poems for every soul and every mood: The poignant "Stealing Home" pays tribute to Jackie Robinson, while "Road Rage Blues" jams on time and space; Giovanni celebrates love's absolut power in "Train Rides" and laments life's transience in "Me and Mrs. Robin." With the tenderness that has made her one of our most accessible and beloved poets, Giovanni evokes a world that is not only just but also happy. Her powerful stand engages the world with a truth telling that is as eloquent as it is elegant.

Intimate, edgy, and unapologetic, *Blues For All the Changes* bears the mark of Nikki Giovanni's unmistakable voice. At once political and intensely personal, this long-awaited volume embodies the fearless passion and wit that have made Nikki Giovanni one of our most accessible poets; her audience defies all boundaries of race, class, age, and style.

From the poignant "Stealing Home," Ms. Giovanni's tribute to Jackie Robinson, to the defiant "Road Rage Blues," a jam on time and space, these fifty-one poems challenge the fates and invoke the precarious state of our environment, Giovanni's battle with illness, manners, and other topics seminal to one of our most compassionate, outspoken observers.

With a reverence for the power of language, *Blues For All the Changes* will once again enchant Nikki Giovanni's extensive following and inspire those who are newly discovering her work.

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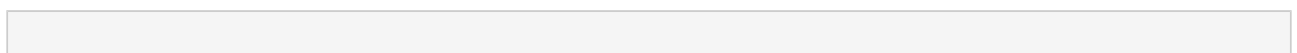
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## **Editorial Review**

From Library Journal

Social and/or political poetry often fails because it loses touch with humanity; it gets distracted by issues and forgets about the impact of things on people. Giovanni never loses sight of the people in her work. In poems built with broken lines and paragraphs of prose, she spars with the ills that confront us, but every struggle has a human face. Ask Roger Woody, of the Woody Pipe and Excavating Company, who is destroying the wonderful woodland adjacent to Giovanni's home and readying it for a new housing development. When a young basketball star is harassed for his youth and style ("Iverson"), she assumes the role of compassionate but stern sister. She is no less forthcoming with her opinions of the President and his woes. At times you wonder what makes these soapbox oratories poems. You will not find many familiar rhetorical devices here, but you will want to dance to the music, the rhythms and language, the sound and exacting energy of these poems which is more than enough. ALouis McKee, Painted Bride Arts Ctr., Philadelphia  
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From Kirkus Reviews

The much-published Giovanni has been amply rewarded for a career that's been spotty to say the least. Unlike fellow doggerelist Maya Angelou, Giovanni has no prose works of distinction her *Racism 101* (1994) hardly measures up to Angelou's moving memoirs. So her reputation rests largely with her poetry, which, given this latest volume, is a sad spectacle: a lazy collection of prose rants with lots of ellipses to disguise the scatter-brained thinking. Her litanies of racist episodes from history, her ghetto-thug affectations, and her Oprahesque bits of uplift are all tired rhetorical devices and rely on a vocabulary of pop journalism and advertising (No problem / No Sweat / Just Jazz). Things turn so embarrassingly strange here that Giovanni mentions five or so times her personal animus toward a real-estate developer in her hometown who threatens the view from her backyard. A typical stream-of-consciousness bit links Lena Horne, Billie Holiday, black holes in science, and Sally Hemmings. Another celebrates the author and other revolutionary poets for understanding the power of a poem, with asides on the Nation of Islam and dietary habits. Giovanni's political views become seriously discomfiting when her peroration on civil rights devolves into a chilling prescription for utopia. Elsewhere, she defends the presidential penis and offensively attacks anti-rap crusader C Delores Tucker . . . fuck her fuck her fuck her. Despite the infantile politics, Giovanni includes many short and light ditties, with their schoolgirl rhymes, that suggest her one strength: simple children's verse that jumps and jives. -- *Copyright ©1999, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.*

Review

"Nikki Giovanni's work has always been remarkable for energy, venturesomeness, direct honesty, and courage." Gwendolyn Brooks "Nikki Giovanni is as outspoken, prolific and energetic as ever." -- "The New York Times" "Nikki Giovanni is one of our national treasures. For decades she has offered her wit and wisdom, her bruising honesty and, above all, her unbounded love through...poems as a healing for herself, her community, and her country." -- Gloria Naylor "Giovanni's poetry heals and struts, mourns and celebrates with restorative wit." -- Lorene Carey "[Nikki Giovanni] is fiery yet tender, political but down-home, beautiful at heart, but not afraid to finger ugliness." -- New York "Daily News"

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**James Conner:**

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