



My House

Nikki Giovanni

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Enter the world of Nikki Giovanni. Writing of mothers and their children, of childhood memories, of black leaders and black Africa, the poems in *My House* marked a new dimension in tone and philosophy for Nikki Giovanni when they first appeared at the beginning of her extraordinary career. Emotional and autobiographical, Nikki Giovanni personalizes the political--like no one else--and brings her house in all its complexity and glory to our own backyards. At once tough-minded and playful and with such famous classics as "My House" and "Winter Poem," this reissue of Nikki Giovanni's 1972 collection will once again intoxicate those who have always loved her poems--and those who are just getting to know her work.

As a witness to three generations, Nikki Giovanni has perceptively and poetically recorded her observations of both the outside world and the gentle yet enigmatic territory of the self. When her poems first emerged from the Black Rights Movement in the late 1960s, she immediately became a celebrated and controversial poet of the era. Written in one of the most commanding voices to grace America's political and poetic landscape at the end of the twentieth century, Nikki Giovanni's poems embody the fearless passion and spirited wit for which she is beloved and revered.

Nikki Giovanni is one of the most influential black writers writing today. This, her second book of poetry, marked a new dimension in tone and philosophy--personal and autobiographical rather than political; it is also lively, loving, witty, and occasionally tough-minded. Divided into two sections, the poems center around "her" house--the rooms inside as well as outside. She writes of mothers and their children, of childhood memories, of black leaders and black Africa. This is an important book by a black woman written in and of the '70s. "Nikki Giovanni has . . . become one of the most potent voices of our time. Her message is universal and the rhythm and language of her poetry can be compared favorably with that of the finest poets of the past. She is a beautiful and complete human being with a genius for describing the human condition."

Minneapolis Tribune

"Talent is light, but mature talent is a beacon and Nikki Giovanni has, by her own words, joined that small band of talented people who try to show us all the way to go home." *Los Angeles Times*

My House Details

Date : Published March 1st 1974 by Harper Perennial (first published 1972)

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Author : Nikki Giovanni

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Cara Byrne says

Giovanni's work has always intrigued me - and this collection is no exception. It's skillfully written and full of passionate, funny, dark, biting poems that linger. She does a nice job navigating between the interiors and exteriors of her "house." The first section, titled "The Rooms Inside" are filled with poems about memory, family, vulnerability and love, while "The Poems Outside" engage in thematic readings of political movements, celebrity, government, and internationalism. My favorites lean towards the first section, including "Untitled," "Poem for Nina," and "Mothers." I'm also interested in the accompanying illustrations, of which are not signed nor attributed to a particular artist.

Cynthia says

My mother gave me this book when I was in college and I loved loved loved it. Where has my copy gone?

Monica says

Nikki Giovanni's "My House" is a delectable collection of poems. In "My House" Giovanni breaks from her earlier more political verse and moves toward a confessional poem form that sees the universality in the personal. Her voice is vibrant - especially in 'Conversation' and my favorite 'Just a New York Poem.' The reader feels Giovanni gaining conviction in her own work as the authority of knowing through experiencing resonates on each page. Her poems, short and relatable, conjure up specific images. Giovanni's political stances and passion for social justice are evident throughout the collection, but in this book it seems Giovanni recognizes there is a layer of truth deeper and more compelling than debating policy might bring to the surface. She focuses on love.

Bryana Grimsley says

My House is a cute little poem. It was beautiful. She captures your attention like unlike some poetry. Her words spread across the page like heaven. The simplicity of the poem is what allowed for you to expand your imagination and view the true complexity of the diction.

There isn't much I can say about this poem other than the fact that it is a must read. It takes you into another world and allows to see into a form of writing and a different voice than most poets. Nikki has such a great way of winding her simple words together.

It was great and I am glad I took the time to read this.

Cyndi says

Superb and profound. Soulful and longing. Beautiful and rich. Ms Giovanni is a poet for the ages whose voice is informed by race, gender, culture, education and love. Her words stir my soul and never fail to move me.

Melki says

Nikki Giovanni's work proves that poetry can be more than just pretty words. Quite a few of the poems in this book offer fiery and tart social and political commentary.

From Atrocities:

*at a moment when agnew could define hard and soft
drugs on the basis of his daughter's involvement
with them*

I can't think of many other poets who write about receiving visits from the F.B.I.

Some of these poems, I loved. Some of them left me scratching my head.
Some of them, I loved only parts.

From When I Die:

*but i do hope someone tells my son
his mother liked little old ladies with
their blue dresses and hats and gloves that sitting
by the window
to watch the dawn come up is valid that smiling at an old
man
and petting a dog don't detract from manhood*

A good and simple lesson, don't you think?

Rogene Carter says

A perfect, succinct representation of Giovanni's inimitable style and depth amidst her simple and thought-provoking prose.

Bonnie says

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I blame my two-star review on the fact that I'm not nearly sophisticated enough to fully understand and appreciate poetry. I don't *get* it half the time; although, I have read some poetry books and adored them so

who knows what my problem was with this one.

I picked this up from my library after seeing it on the banned/challenged book list so of course I had to see what it was all about. There were some sections that I liked, but then there were some where she'd be talking about kissing and hugging and then she'd go off on a tangent and be talking about cooking pork chops. Again, maybe I just don't understand poetry enough to appreciate it.

Overall though, my favorite one was:

'The World is not a Pleasant Place to Be'

*The world is not a pleasant place
To be without
Someone to hold and be held by*

*A river would stop
Its flow if only
A stream were there
To receive it*

*An ocean would never laugh
If clouds weren't there
To kiss her tears*

*The world is not
A pleasant place to be without
Someone.*

Brendan says

Rating: Soft 4.

Foreword by Ida Lewis, friend and sometimes editor. Themes include being black in America, individualism, family, and celebrity. The poems are divided into two sections: *The Rooms Inside* and *The Rooms Outside*. Most of (if not all) the pieces were written between 1970 and 1972. She went a bit off the deep end in "Atrocities", but on the whole I found this collection to be more inclusive than *The Women and the Men*.

Favorites:

"Mixed Media" - art on her wall

"[Untitled]" - after the love

"Poem" - older black women

"We" - She nailed the format on this one.

*an ocean would never laugh
if clouds weren't there
to kiss her tears*

- "The World Is Not a Pleasant Place to Be"

*and my windows might be dirty
but it's my house
and if I can't see out sometimes
they can't see in either*
- "My House"

Robert T. says

I read these poems every few months. They make me feel human, safe, loved, real.

Vee says

I'm vaguely familiar with the author's name but never read her work. Now I have to correct that mistake. I'm saving "A Certain Peace" and "Poem - for Nina" to reread and enjoy occasionally.

Note to self: I like to read poetry quietly and slowly in order to digest it properly. I can read novels during my commute on public transportation but not poetry.

Tarosa says

Nikki Giovanni is my first favorite poet. She gets it and she's not pretentious about it. She is 100% badass and I love her forever.

Abby says

Got to see Nikki Giovanni speak (star power!!) at my school in 2010. In case you can't tell from her poetry, she's a strong personality. Three years later, this book happened along at the right time for me to love it: the minuscule detail of the inside rooms, and the tendency to laugh at things that aren't funny, which I appreciate. Although maybe, looking at the 60s from a distance, I feel just a little too safe.

Phoebe says

Nikki Giovanni's poetry always delights me. It's fun, dangerous, smart, quick, and speaks to black experience as well as to the human experience. If you're not a black woman of American birth, you can get a taste of what's it like through Nikki's Giovanni's eyes. You might like it. You might want to stay a while.

Lexi Morasquezo says

I found that *My House*, by Nikki Giovanni, was a very insightful book. Her words cut deep, with every stanza, and her tones were humorous and serious at the same time. Nikki's experiences, and stories hold so much emotion, I was almost overwhelmed, almost. The emotion and conflict of her words were inspiring, and saddening, full of happiness all at the same time. I enjoyed this book very much because it gave me a full on look at someone else's experiences and memories. Every description she gives showed itself in my mind clearly.

Nikki Giovanni's poems in this book are wonderful and full of emotion and experience. Everything captures the attention, and keeps you wanting to read more. I recommend this book for every poet, and poetry lover. And for those who thrive off of emotion, I also recommend this book for.
