

# THE Center for Children's & Young Adult Literature

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The University of Tennessee ■ Knoxville, Tennessee

## Nikki Giovanni Returns to Knoxville for Book Launch

World-renowned poet, writer, commentator, activist, and educator Nikki Giovanni returns to Knoxville on Tuesday, March 27, at the Tennessee Theatre to launch her new book, *On My Journey Now: Looking at African-American History through the Spirituals*. The Center is very grateful to Candlewick Press, Giovanni's publisher, for their help in bringing this event to Knoxville.

Born in Knoxville, Yolande Cornelia "Nikki" Giovanni Jr. has written more than two dozen books, including volumes of poetry, illustrated children's books, and three essay collections. Her first book, *Black Feeling, Black Talk* (1968), includes the poem "Knoxville, Tennessee," which affectionately describes the joys of summer spent with family in Knoxville. The poem was later adapted into a picture book for children beautifully illustrated by Larry Johnson.

Over the past thirty years, Giovanni's outspokenness, in both her writing and in person, has brought the eyes of the world upon her. One of America's most widely read poets, she prides herself on being "a Black American, a daughter, a mother, a professor of English." Giovanni remains as determined and committed as ever to the



**Nikki Giovanni**  
**7 p.m., Tuesday, March 27**  
**Tennessee Theatre**

fight for civil rights and equality. Always insisting on presenting the truth as she sees it, she has maintained a prominent place as a strong voice of the Black community.

Giovanni is the recipient of twenty-one honorary doctorates and a host of awards, including "Woman of the Year" awards from three different magazines, *Ebony* in 1970, *Mademoiselle* in 1971, and *Ladies' Home Journal* in 1971, as well as Governors' Awards in the Arts from both Tennessee and Virginia. Since 1987, she has taught writing and literature at Virginia Tech, where she is a University Distinguished Professor. In 2005, Nikki Giovanni was selected by Oprah Winfrey as a member of an elite group of African-American women who have strongly inspired American culture, the arts,

and Winfrey herself as leaders, or "legends" in their time.

In Giovanni's latest book, *On My Journey Now: Looking at African-American History through the Spirituals*, she tells the story of Africans in America through the glorious words of spirituals. Giovanni paints compelling portraits of the lives of her ancestors through familiar songs such as "Go Down, Moses" and personal favorites such as "Ain't Got Time to Die," celebrating a people who overcame enslavement and found a way to survive, to worship, and to build.

Giovanni will speak about the book at the Tennessee Theatre on Tuesday, March 27 at 7 p.m. The University of Tennessee's Love United Gospel Choir, performing spirituals from the book, will accompany her. A book signing will immediately follow the program. Books will be available for purchase from Carpe Librum Booksellers.

**The program is free and open to the public, and school groups are welcome. Free parking is available in the State Street garage.**



...the story  
of Africans  
in America  
through the  
glorious words  
of spirituals...

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# Center Partner Hosts African American Children's Literature Conference

The Children's Defense Fund's Langston Hughes Library at the former Alex Haley Farm in Clinton, Tennessee will host a Children's Literature Roundtable on April 20-22, 2007. The theme of the Roundtable is "African American Cultural History in Literature for Children and Young Adults."

The Roundtable will focus on the inclusion of African American cultural history in quality literature selections for children and young adults. The goal of the Roundtable is to generate interest in outstanding literature where African American children appear as protagonists or as heroes. Authors, illustrators, educators participating in the conference include: **Dr. Rudine Sims Bishop**, Professor of Education at Ohio State University; **Patricia and Frederick McKissack**, husband-and-wife writing team of nearly 100 published biographies and African American history books; poet and artist **Tony Medina**, author and illustrator of *Love to Langston*; **Mrs. Effie Lee Morris**, past Coordinator of Children's Services for the San Francisco Public Library and chair of the Coretta Scott King Award Task Force; **Danny Simmons**, painter, poet, and co-founder of the Def Poetry Jam; and **Jacqueline Woodson**, recipient of the 2006 Margaret A. Edwards for lifetime achievement in young people's literature. The Roundtable will provide attendees opportunities to meet and interact with award-winning authors, illustrators, and educators in a comfortable, intimate setting.

Visit [www.childrensdefense.org](http://www.childrensdefense.org) for registration information.

*The former Alex Haley Farm, now owned by the Children's Defense Fund, includes the Langston Hughes Library, designed by Maya Lin, designer of the virtual wall at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.*



Among the authors and illustrators participating in the conference are Patricia and Frederick McKissack, Jacqueline Woodson, and Tony Medina.



*"From one Harlem poet to another, Love to Langston is a tribute to one of America's most talented and beloved poets, Langston Hughes. Written in the art form Hughes cherished most, this biography in verse captures glimpses of the poet's world through his voice as author-poet Tony Medina imagines it."*

Amazon.com review

## Center Brings Tomie dePaola to Summer Reading Festival

It has been 24 years since Tomie dePaola's last visit to Knoxville when he presented at the University of Tennessee for a conference on International Children's Literature. He returns to Knoxville to be the star presenter at the Knox County Public Library's Third Annual Children's Festival of Reading on Saturday, June 2 in the World's Fair Park. The Festival is the kick-off celebration for the Knox County Public Library Summer Reading Club, which provides over 150 programs throughout the summer and offers rewards for reaching reading goals. The Center for Children's and Young Adult Literature, in cooperation with the Dollywood Foundation and Penguin Putnam Books for Young Readers, is sponsoring dePaola's appearance, as well as the Meet the Authors tent where he will join local and regional writers to talk with children and their families. The public is also invited to attend a presentation by dePaola beginning at 7 p.m. Friday, June 1, at the University Center auditorium.

Tomie dePaola's life is devoted to art and stories as an author, illustrator, and storyteller. Growing up in Meridian, Connecticut, Tomie developed a love for books at an early age from his mother who loved books and read to Tomie every day. At the age of four, Tomie told anyone who would listen that he wanted to write stories and draw pictures for books, and to sing and tap dance on the stage when he grew up. Tomie studied art at the Pratt Institute in New York City. Several years after graduating from Pratt, Tomie was hired to illustrate

a children's science book about sound. Forty years and two hundred books later, Tomie dePaola is one of the most beloved and honored creators of children's books in the world. Among his many honors are a 1976 Caldecott Honor Award for the Italian folktale, *Strega Nona* and a 2000 Newbery Honor Award for the autobiographical *26 Fairmont Avenue*.

Tomie's appearances at the university and at the festival are free and open to the public. Books will be available for purchase at both events and signings will follow the presentations. To learn more about dePaola and his work, visit his web site at [Tomie.com](http://Tomie.com). Further information about the reading festival can be found at [www.knoxlib.org](http://www.knoxlib.org).



*"... Then comes the moment when I have to sit down and write the story. I always make sure I know my characters and exactly how they 'speak'... Meanwhile, I have been doing sketches of the various characters, especially if they are new characters (I know exactly what Strega Nona looks like so I don't have to sketch her)."*

from Tomie.com

**Tomie**

**7 p.m., Friday, June 1**  
**University Center Auditorium**  
**UT Campus**

**Saturday, June 2**  
**Children's Festival of Reading**  
**World's Fair Park**

DE PAOLA

THE Center for Children's &  
Young Adult Literature  
652 John C. Hodges Library  
The University of Tennessee  
Knoxville, TN 37996-1000

*The Center for Children's & Young Adult Literature is a collaborative effort of the University of Tennessee Libraries, the School of Information Sciences, the College of Education, Health & Human Sciences, and local schools and libraries.*

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Adult Literature***

**T**he Center for Children's and Young Adult Literature celebrates and promotes literature in the lives of children and young adults through outreach to current and future teachers, librarians, parents, and other caregivers. Please consider making a gift to help support the Center's programming and special projects. To make a gift, make your check payable to The University of Tennessee Libraries, designated for the Center for Children's and Young Adult Literature.

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