



# NOTABLE MINORITIES WHO CHANGED HISTORY

February 8, 2008

Featuring  
**Nikki Giovanni**

“We write because we believe the human spirit cannot be tamed and should not be trained.”

- A Nikki Giovanni Quote

### African American Artists



Augusta Savage (1892-1962)  
Sculptor



Aaron Douglas (1899-1979)  
Painter

### February Dates to Remember:

- 2 - Groundhog Day
- 2 - Imbolc (Wiccan)
- 3 - Tu b'Shvat or Tu B'Shvat (Jewish, Israel)
- 4 - Rosa Parks Birth Anniversary
- 5 - Mexico - Constitution Day
- 12 - Abraham Lincoln's Birthday
- 12 - Lantern Festival (Taiwan)
- 12 - NAACP Founded
- 14 - Valentine's Day
- 14 - Race Relations Day
- 17 - Brazil, Carnival
- 17 - League of United Latin Citizens (LULAC) Founded American
- 18 - Chinese Lunar New Year (China, Korea, Taiwan, Vietnam)
- 19 - Orthodox Lent Begins
- 19 - President's Day
- 20 - Mardi Gras (United States)
- 21 - Ash Wednesday (Protestant, Roman Catholic)
- 22 - George Washington's Birthday
- 24 - Flag Day (Mexico)

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Nikki Giovanni

### Yolanda Cornelia "Nikki" Giovanni (1943 - ) Poet, Author, Activist, & Educator

Nikki Giovanni was born on June 7, 1943 in Knoxville, TN. She grew up in Lincoln Heights, a suburb of Cincinnati, Ohio. In 1960, she attended Fisk University in Nashville, TN. She graduated with honors in 1967, earning a B. A. in history. She went on to attend the University of Pennsylvania and Columbia University in 1968. That same year she published her first book of poetry, *Black Feeling Black Talk*, and within the next year she published a second book, *Black Judgment*, that launched her career as a writer. She has one son, Thomas Watson Giovanni, who was born on August 31, 1969.

Many of Giovanni's books have received awards and honors. *Gemini*, her autobiography, was a finalist for the National Book Award. She was honored with NAACP Image Awards for *Love Poems*, *Blues: For All the Changes*, and *Quilting the Black-Eyed Pea*. *Blues: For All the Changes* reached # 4 on the Los Angeles Times Bestseller list. Recently, her children's picture book *Rosa*, about the civil rights legend Rosa Parks, became a Caldecott Honors Book, and Bryan Collier, the illustrator, was given the Coretta Scott King Award for best illustration. *Rosa* reached # 3 on The New York Times Bestseller list.

Giovanni has recorded several albums on which she reads her poetry with gospel music in the background. Her album *Truth is on Its Way* was a top 100 album and received the Best Spoken Word Album given by the National Association of Radio and Television Announcers. Her album, *Nikki Giovanni Poetry Collection*, was nominated for a Grammy Award.

Giovanni has been given around twenty-five honorary degrees. She has been named Woman of the Year by *Mademoiselle Magazine*, *The Ladies Home Journal*, and *Ebony Magazine*. Giovanni has been inducted into the Ohio Women's Hall of Fame, and she was named an Outstanding Woman of Tennessee. She has received Governor's awards from Tennessee and Virginia. She was the first recipient of the Rosa L. Parks Woman of Courage Award, and she has been awarded the Langston Hughes Medal for Poetry. Giovanni is an honorary member of the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, and she received Life Membership from the National Council of Negro Women. She was honored for her life and career by The History Makers and she has received the keys to more than two dozen cities.

In 1995, Giovanni was diagnosed with Lung Cancer. She had already lost her mother and sister to this very same disease. She had a lung removed and made a full recovery. She has been teaching writing and literature at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, VA since 1987. On August 21, 2007 *The Tennessean* reported that she would be returning to her alma mater as a distinguished visiting professor at Fisk University while maintaining her position at Virginia Tech.

In 2006 she was named one of Oprah's Twenty-Five Living Legends. Nikki Giovanni was the 2007 recipient of The Chicago Public Library Foundation's Carl Sandburg Literary Award for Lifetime Achievement.

(Sources: [www.wikipedia.com](http://www.wikipedia.com) & [www.nikki-giovanni.com](http://www.nikki-giovanni.com))

### Did You Know?

- A reception welcoming Dr. Janet Smith, Columbia State's fourth president, is scheduled for Monday, February 18 from 3pm - 6pm. The come-and-go affair will be held in the Jones Student Center on the Columbia campus.
- Columbia State's Phi Theta Kappa chapter will be hosting screenings of the movie "*Invisible Children: Black is for Sunday*," on Tuesday, February 19. The film will be shown in the Cherry Theatre at 11am, 12:30pm, and 2pm on the Columbia campus. The screenings are free and open to the public.
- The Nineteenth Annual African American Read-in will be held in the Ledbetter Auditorium on Monday, February 11, 2008 from 12:30pm - 1:50pm.
- Access & Diversity has set up a display in the Library lobby in celebration of Black History Month.