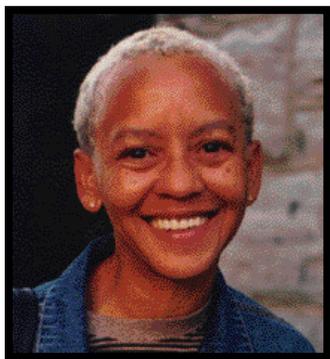


Praying with Nikki Giovanni

March 24-29, 2014

Selected Poems and Devotional Guide

by Peggy Greer Walker



Monday March 24th

Nikki-Rosa

childhood remembrances are always a drag
if you're Black
you always remember things like living in
Woodlawn
with no inside toilet
and if you become famous or something
they never talk about how happy you were to
have
your mother
all to yourself and
how good the water felt when you got your bath
from one of those
big tubs that folk in Chicago barbecue in
and somehow when you talk about home
it never gets across how much you
understood their feelings
as the whole family attended meetings about
Hollydale
and even though you remember
your biographers never understand
your father's pain as he sells his stock
and another dream goes
And though you're poor it isn't poverty that
concerns you
and though they fought a lot
it isn't your father's drinking that makes any
difference
but only that everybody is together and you

and your sister have happy birthdays and very
good Christmases
and I really hope no white person ever has
cause to write about me
because they never understand
Black love is Black wealth and they'll
probably talk about my hard childhood
and never understand that
all the while I was quite happy

Why do you think "Black love" is "Black wealth"?

Have you ever felt sorry for an African American,
and if so have you ever asked yourself why? How
does this poem speak to that issue?

Why do the sentiments of this poem resonate with
so many people? How does this poem resonate with
you?

Tuesday March 25th

Ego Trippin

I was born in the Congo
I walked to the fertile crescent and built the
Sphinx
I designed a pyramid so tough that a star
that glows every one hundred years falls into
the center giving divine perfect light
I am bad.

I sat on the throne
drinking nectar with Allah
I got hot and sent an ice age to Europe
to cool my thirst.
My oldest daughter is Nefertiti
the tears from my birth pains created the Nile
I am a beautiful woman

I gazed on a forest and burned out the
Sahara Desert
With a packet of goat's meat
and a change of clothes -
I crossed it in two hours
I am a gazelle so swift -
so swift - you can't catch me

For a birthday present when he was three
I gave my son Hannibal an elephant -
He gave me Rome for Mother's Day
My strength flows ever on

Wednesday March 26th

Cotton Candy on a Rainy Day

My son Noah built new/ark and
I stood proudly at the helm
as we sailed on a soft summer day
I turned myself into myself –
and was Jesus!
men intone my loving name

All praises - All praises
I am the one who would save

I sowed diamonds in my backyard
My bowels deliver uranium
the filings from my fingernails
are semi-precious jewels
On a trip north I caught a cold and blew my
nose
giving oil to the Arab world
I am so hip - even my errors are correct
I sailed east to reach west - and had to round
off the
earth as I went
The hair from my head thinned and gold was
laid
across three continents

I am so perfect, so divine, so ethereal, so
surreal
I cannot be comprehended
except by my permission

I mean ... I ... can fly
like a bird in the sky ...

Don't look now
I'm fading away
Into the gray of my mornings
Or the blues of every night

Is it that my nails
keep breaking
Or maybe the corn
on my second little piggy
Things keep popping out
on my face or of my life

It seems no matter how
I try I become more difficult
to hold
I am not an easy woman
to want

They have asked
the psychiatrists . . . psychologists . . .
politicians and social workers
What this decade will be
known for

There is no doubt . . . it is
loneliness

This poem was written in the 1970s—how does it reflect the spirit of that decade?

Why do you think the woman in this poem says she is not any easy woman to want?

This poem speaks of loneliness. How do you relate to this poem, and how does loneliness affect your relationship with God?

How do you feel about the implied vanity of this poem?

Why would Nikki Giovanni begin a book of poetry for children with this poem?

Why does the author end the poem with the statement: "I...can fly...like a bird in the sky"?
How does this poem speak to you about freedom?

The author connects turning inward to becoming Christ-like. What is your reaction?



Thursday March 27th

This Poem

This poem is a worried poem...not rude but with a certain cryptic attitude perhaps a certain roguish charm...a savoir faire that wants to trouble the waters...it is on time though it broods...This poem has a lot of questions and practically no answers...This poem wonders why

Sometimes this poem is very sad...it thinks about young Tupac Shakur...there was trauma to the hands the death report showed...as if that wonderful young man though he could swat bullets...like Clinton thought he could dodge Starr...like a topless dancer in a motorized wheelchair thought she could do the shimmy

This worried poem thinks cancer is like a bad neighbor...not loud...but messy...like the unchanging news when your son is dead...when your father is dead...when your dreams are dying...like Michael Jordan's father or Bill Cosby's son...just plain bad blues...when the news won't change...This poem wants to be the seed planted in stone...growing and climbing...no matter the lack of fertile soil and clean water...thriving no matter the black-on-black crime...the white-on-white crime...the white-on-black...no matter the news reports that never change...never give the Black man his due...nor praise the Black woman...just the same old news...which cannot change...when your neighbor is like cancer...eating away...eating away

This poem wants to be a conductor...on the new underground railroad...wants to be the north star...leading the way...wants to be the moss on the northern side of the tree...a bit of a surprise...something soft in the night...This poem understands we cannot put a floor on poverty until we are willing to put a ceiling on wealth...if they are willing for us to define profits for business we will accept their definitions of freedom for humans

This poem wants to sing...jazz me baby, I'm blue...sometimes this poem points out Duke Ellington's "A Train" is to jazz what the "Star Spangled Banner" is to politics...an anthem we salute because of the power it represents...this

poem remains curious: if Billie Holiday dies without children or husband why are her records still so expensive...but this poem know the answer though we have to whisper it

This poem is new...like Athena slipping from Zeus's head...fully grown...all ready...able...anxious to play in Pandora's Box...laughing at the rest of us...struggling to survive...to thrive...to live a decent life...This poem admires the birds...the last dinosaurs on earth...and cries for the lions who are dying of tuberculosis

This poem dreams of sheets dried in the sun...pillows fluffed to their feathery height...quilts sewn by hand in intricate patterns...this poem dreams of home...while wishing it could step on the moon...or rocket to the sun...this poem is determined...to fight on

What phrases stand out to you most as you read this poem?

How does this poem's 3rd stanza compare to the parable of the sower (Matt 13:1-23)?

Friday March 28th

In the Spirit of Martin

This is a sacred poem...blood has been shed to consecrate it...wash your hands...remove your shoes...bow your head...*I...I...I Have a Dream*

That was a magical time...Hi Ho Silver Away...Oh Cisco/Oh Pancho...Here I Come To Save The Day...I want the World to see what they did to my boy...No No No I'm not going to move...*If we are Wrong...then the Constitution of the United States is Wrong*... Montgomery... Birmingham...Selma... Four little Girls... Constant Threats...Constant Harassment... Constant Fear...SCLC...Ralph and Martin... Father Knows Best...Leave It To Beaver...ED SULLIVAN...How Long...Not Long

But what...Mr. Thoreau said to Mr. Emerson...are you doing out?

This is a Letter from Birmingham City Jail...This is a eulogy for Albany...This is a water hose for Anniston...This is a Thank You to Diane Nash...This is a flag for James

Farmer...This is a How Can I Make It Without You to Ella Baker...This is for the red clay of Georgia that yielded black men of courage...black men of vision...black men of hope...bent over cotton...or sweet potatoes...or pool tables and baseball diamonds...playing for a chance to live free and breathe easy and have enough money to take care of the folks they love...*This is Why We Can't Wait*

That swirling Mississippi wind...the Alabama pine...that Tennessee dust defiling the clothes the women washed...those hot winds...the lemonade couldn't cool...that let the women know...we too must overcome...this is for Fannie Lou Hamer...Jo Ann Robinson ... Septima Clark...Daisy Bates...All the women who said Baby Baby Baby I know you didn't mean to lose your job...I know you didn't mean to hit me...

I know the Lord is going to make a way...I know I'm *Leaning On The Everlasting Arms*

How much pressure...does the Earth exert on carbon...to make a diamond...How long does the soil push against the flesh...molding...molding...molding the moan that becomes a cry that bursts forth crystalline... unbreakable... priceless...incomparable Martin...*I Made My Vow To The Lord That I Never Would Turn Back*...How much pressure do the sins of the world press against the heart of a man who becomes the voice of his people...He should have had a tattoo, you know...**Freedom Now**...or something like that...should have braided his hair...carried his pool cue in a mahogany case...wafted that wonderful laugh over a plate of skillet fried chicken...drop biscuits...dandelion greens on the side

This is a sacred poem...open your arms...turn your palms up...feel the Spirit of Greatness... and be redeemed

How did Martin Luther King shoulder the burden of being a voice for his people?

What does this poem say about redemption?

Saturday March 29th

The Song of Feet

It is appropriate that I sing
The song of the feet

The weight of the body
And what the body chooses to bear
Fall on me

I trampled the American wilderness
Forged frontier trails
Outran the mob in Tulsa
Got caught in Philadelphia

And am still unrepaired

I soldiered on in Korea
Jungled through Vietnam
Sweated out Desert Storm
Caved my way through Afghanistan
Tunneled the World Trade Center

And on the worst day of my life
Walked behind JFK
Shouldered MLK
Stood embracing Sister Betty

I wriggle my toes
In the sands of time
Trusting the touch that controls my motion
Basking in the warmth of the embrace
Day's end offers with warm salty water.

It is appropriate I sing
The praise of the feet

I am a Black woman.

How do the cultural references in this poem underscore the importance of feet?

Recall Jesus washing the feet of his disciples as you read this poem. How is humility shown by Jesus, and how is humility portrayed in this poem?

Why would it be appropriate to sing the praise of feet?