

Nikky Finney sings poetry of history, remembrance

By Yezmin Villarreal
STAFF WRITER

"I am a poet because I know land, I know space," said poet Nikky Finney. "Land, space, and seeing the end of mountains remind you of the sensory nature of the world."

The Greenleaf Review and the English Department hosted Finney, a professor of creative writing at the University of Kentucky, for a reading on Sept. 28.

Finney grew up along the rice-growing coast of South Carolina. Her father was a civil-rights lawyer, and her mother was an elementary school teacher. Both were deeply involved in the struggle for social justice and civil rights in the South.

"It's important when you begin to write to ask yourself, 'what kind of writer will I be?'" said Finney, who was told many times as a young writer to stay away from political subjects.

For Finney, it was important to be honest on the page, even if that meant writing both personal and political poems. She recalled a Quaker saying that gave her the liberty and courage to be honest as a writer: let your life speak.

Finney also described the importance of mentorships in her development as a writer. Writers Toni Cade Bambara and Nikki Giovanni gave Finney the sense that writers are people who help in the community while mentoring her. Finney shared with the audience a story told by

Bambara, who was asked by a man waiting at a bus stop, "Are you that writer lady from Indiana?"

Bambara thought the man wanted an autograph but instead the man asked her if she could help him fill out his application for a house since she was a writer. She invited him to visit her writing workshop where she helped him fill out the application that eventually led to him owning a home.

Finney read from three of her collections, "Rice," "The World is Round," and her most recent work, "Head Off & Split." Poems in "Head Off & Split" navigate the narratives

of the political and the personal. The collection focuses on Hurricane Katrina, the narratives of civil rights leaders, love, and family traditions.

"It is indeed rare to encounter a poet who commands an audience with not only her words, but her voice," Paul McCullough '11 said.

For a writer who said, "I never thought I would be a poet, I never thought I would be a writer," Finney demonstrated an absolute command over language in her poems. For example, in her poem "Left," from "Head Off & Split," Finney puts us in the center of Hurricane Katrina where a survivor held a misspelled sign reading, "please help pleas."

In "Left," Finney shows us that "the people are dark but not broken. Starving, abandoned, dehydrated, brown and cumulous, but not broken..."

"Finney's reading was stunning," said Dana Professor of English Carolyn Beard Whitlow, who is also a poet. "'Left' is a mantra of remembrance about the atrocity of Hurricane Katrina. That poem is a haunting reminder of what should never be forgotten. Stunning."

Finney said that as a beginning writer she wrote "things I wanted to remain beyond me." She quoted Nobel Prize-winning poet Czeslaw Milosz who describes writing as a place where "you write to save something." Finney put the same question to the audience: "What would you write to save?"



Poet Nikky Finney evokes emotion as she performs her poetry at a reading hosted by the English Department and the Greenleaf Review. Finney teaches creative writing at the University of Kentucky.

Beyond "Green and Beyond"

This campus was made for walking, and that's just what we'll do

By Casey Horgan
STAFF WRITER

I used to dread awkward street crossings. You know, the kind where you have to loiter at the edge of a busy intersection, toing the sidewalk and trying to look nonchalant as you wait for the lights to change and the "walk" sign to appear? I always feel like people are watching me from their cars.

The walk from one side of the street to the other seems to stretch on to eternity. Why does it feel like a walk of shame? People should be rolling down their windows to applaud me for my environmentally-friendly activity.

I certainly pat myself on my back, thank you very much. I no longer cross intersections awkwardly. I hold my head up high and strut across that walkway (which is preferable since you can see oncoming cars much more easily in this fashion — just a tip).

I'm saving money and the environment by walking. And at Guilford, I'm not giving up much for these benefits.

According to WalkScore.com, a

website that evaluates the walkability and access to transportation to various areas, Guilford College is considered "very walkable." Our area has a walkability score of 80 percent.

The Walk Score algorithm awards points based on the distance to shops and services. Guilford's score of 80 percent means that most errands can be accomplished on foot. There are enough amenities within reasonable walking distance for an individual not to have to rely on a car.

"Like many people, I don't have a car, so I like that Quaker Village, Harris Teeter, and other places are within walking distance," said junior Taylor Seitz.

There are 16 restaurants located

less than half a mile from our campus — if you count Starbucks as a restaurant, as WalkScore does.

Can we pause for a moment

Thursday? One. Dollar. Tacos. It astounds me that this isn't included in a Guilford information tour.

Harris Teeter, too, is a 10-minute walk from any dorm on campus, and as I master the art of street crossing, I'm shortening the time by almost half.

There are banks, coffee shops, book stores, bars, clubs, movie theaters, parks, and nearly anything else a college student might want, all within five miles of Guilford.

If you have a bike, the world opens up even more, so driving becomes almost unnecessary.

Greensboro's bike lanes and side streets can get you almost anywhere you want to go, without riding in heavy traffic.

Another advantage: according to health experts, biking five miles burns around 200 calories, depending on your speed. A brisk three-mile walk, which would take just over an hour, burns 400 calories. So if you're going carless, it helps the environment and your health.

"I like that we have a relatively pedestrian-friendly campus," Seitz said. "Being able to walk on the trails in the woods is one of my favorite things about Guilford."

Associate Professor of Political Science Kyle Dell is an avid supporter of going car-less.

"From the back of my door to my campus office is about a twelve-minute bike ride, (and it is) my favorite way to get to campus," said Dell. "The most car-intensive part of (my) life revolves around the driving (my wife and I) do for the soccer games and practices for my son and daughter."

Since most of us don't have children on a soccer team, I think we'll be fine stashing our car keys in a drawer and pulling on a pair of sneakers or a bike helmet. We will be saving the environment, our budget, and our waistlines all in one swoop. What's not to love?

