**Four by Nikki Giovanni**

# Beautiful Black Men  by Nikki Giovanni

(With compliments and apologies to all not mentioned by name)

i wanta say just gotta say something
bout those beautiful beautiful beautiful outasight
black men
with they afros
walking down the street
is the same ol danger
but a brand new pleasure

sitting on stoops, in bars, going to offices
running numbers, watching for their whores
preaching in churches, driving their hogs
walking their dogs, winking at me
in their fire red, lime green, burnt orange
royal blue tight tight pants that hug
what i like to hug

jerry butler, wilson pickett, the impressions
temptations, mighty mighty sly
don't have to do anything but walk
on stage
and i scream and stamp and shout
see new breed men in breed alls
dashiki suits with shirts that match
the lining that compliments the ties
that smile at the sandals
where dirty toes peek at me
and i scream and stamp and shout
for more beautiful beautiful beautiful
black men with outasight afros

**Balances
 by Nikki Giovanni**

In life
one is always
balancing

like we juggle our mothers
against our fathers

or one teacher
against another
(only to balance our grade average)

3 grains of salt
to one ounce truth

our sweet black essence
or the funky honkies down the street

and lately i've begun wondering
if you're trying to tell me something

we used to talk all night
and do things alone together

and i've begun

(as a reaction to a feeling)
to balance
the pleasure of loneliness
against the pain
of loving you

**Walking Down Park**

BY [NIKKI GIOVANNI](https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/nikki-giovanni)

walking down park

amsterdam

or columbus do you ever stop

to think what it looked like

before it was an avenue

did you ever stop to think

what you walked

before you rode

subways to the stock

exchange (we can’t be on

the stock exchange

we are the stock

exchanged)

did you ever maybe wonder

what grass was like before

they rolled it

into a ball and called

it central park

where syphilitic dogs

and their two-legged tubercular

masters fertilize

the corners and side-walks

ever want to know what would happen

if your life could be fertilized

by a love thought

from a loved one

who loves you

ever look south

on a clear day and not see

time’s squares but see

tall Birch trees with sycamores

touching hands

and see gazelles running playfully

after the lions

ever hear the antelope bark

from the third floor apartment

ever, did you ever, sit down

and wonder about what freedom’s freedom

would bring

it’s so easy to be free

you start by loving yourself

then those who look like you

all else will come

naturally

ever wonder why

so much asphalt was laid

in so little space

probably so we would forget

the Iroquois, Algonquin

and Mohicans who could caress

the earth

ever think what Harlem would be

like if our herbs and roots and elephant ears

grew sending

a cacophony of sound to us

the parrot parroting black is beautiful black is beautiful

owls sending out whooooo’s making love ...

and me and you just sitting in the sun trying

to find a way to get a banana tree from one of the monkeys

koala bears in the trees laughing at our listlessness

ever think its possible

for us to be

happy

**The Laws of Motion**

BY [NIKKI GIOVANNI](https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/nikki-giovanni)

*(for Harlem Magic)*

The laws of science teach us a pound of gold weighs as

much as a pound of flour though if dropped from any

undetermined height in their natural state one would

reach bottom and one would fly away

Laws of motion tell us an inert object is more difficult to

propel than an object heading in the wrong direction is to

turn around. Motion being energy—inertia—apathy.

Apathy equals hostility. Hostility—violence. Violence

being energy is its own virtue. Laws of motion teach us

Black people are no less confused because of our

Blackness than we are diffused because of our

powerlessness. Man we are told is the only animal who

smiles with his lips. The eyes however are the mirror of

the soul

The problem with love is not what we feel but what we

wish we felt when we began to feel we should feel

something. Just as publicity is not production: seduction

is not seductive

If I could make a wish I’d wish for all the knowledge of all

the world. Black may be beautiful Professor Micheau

says but knowledge is power. Any desirable object is

bought and sold—any neglected object declines in value.

It is against man’s nature to be in either category

If white defines Black and good defines evil then men

define women or women scientifically speaking describe

men. If sweet is the opposite of sour and heat the

absence of cold then love is the contradiction of pain and

beauty is in the eye of the beheld

Sometimes I want to touch you and be touched in

return. But you think I’m grabbing and I think you’re

shirking and Mama always said to look out for men like

you

So I go to the streets with my lips painted red and my

eyes carefully shielded to seduce the world my reluctant

lover

And you go to your men slapping fives feeling good

posing as a man because you know as long as you sit

very very still the laws of motion will be in effect

“Walking…” (1970) and “Laws” (1970): *The Collected Poems of Nikki Giovanni* (2003)