

“Campus Racism 101”

Nikki Giovanni

Nikki Giovanni was born in 1943, in Knoxville Tennessee. Most well-known for her poetry, Giovanni was an influential part of the Black Arts Movement, which grew from and supported the US Civil Rights Movement. A prolific writer, she has won numerous awards and honors, including being named one of Oprah’s “Twenty-five Living Legends.” Here she addresses the issues of race and privilege as they play out on college campuses across the country.

Vocabulary...

ignorance (n)

seldom (adv)

attribute (v)

demeaning (v)

rarity (n)

predominantly (adv)

authoritative (adj)

credentials (n)

mentality (n)

prescribe (v)

discriminate (v)

cultivate (v)

articulation (n)

malice (n)

congregating (v)

Reading Questions...

1. According to Giovanni, what are the similarities between college and prison? What are the differences? What causes her to make this comparison?

2. Why does Giovanni not want her reader to mix obtaining an education with being a model for a cause (educating white people) while in college?

Discussion Questions...

1. Giovanni begins her essay by stating that ignorance is painful, and then gives some visual examples of the pain of ignorance. How do the examples that she states depict pain? Where do you see the pain of ignorance? How does ignorance cause real suffering?

2. “Campus Racism 101” is included in many introductory college textbooks, to be read by students of diverse racial, ethnic, and educational backgrounds. Though this essay’s intended audience is African-American students at predominantly white colleges, why might it be recommended to non-African American students, including white students? Why might this essay be recommended to African-American students and other students of color at a college?

Activities and Assignments...

1. Giovanni indirectly references the School-to-Prison Pipeline in her essay. Research what it is, how it works, and who is affected by it. Write a short essay explaining this phenomenon. Be sure to include your opinion on the subject.

2. Write an essay in which you state your reasons for being a college student at New York City College of Technology, then, similar to Giovanni, write a list of rules and their descriptions for your professors. What do you want your professors to understand about you and your colleagues as you carry out your first year at City Tech?



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