

Nikki Giovanni

Very different in style is the poetry of black activist Nikki Giovanni, who asked in her 1968 lyric "The True Import of Present Dialogue: Black vs. Negro,"

*Can you poison
Can you stab-a-jew
Can you kill huh?*

Giovanni urged her readers,

*Learn to kill niggers
Learn to be Black men*

As the critic Houston Baker recognized, Giovanni's "unabashed advocacy of murderous militancy as a proper black response to white oppression brought her instant fame." She published three books of poetry that sold widely among black audiences: Black Feeling (1967); Black Judgment (1968), which included "My Poem"; and Re:Creation (1970).

MY POEM

*i am 25 years old
black female poet
wrote a poem asking*

~~nigger can you kill~~
if they kill me
it won't stop
the revolution

i have been robbed
it looked like they knew
that i was to be hit
they took my tv
my two rings
my piece of african print
and my two guns
if they take my life
it won't stop
the revolution

my phone is tapped
my mail is opened
they've caused me to turn
on all my old friends
and all my new lovers
if i hate all black
people
and all negroes
it won't stop
the revolution

i'm afraid to tell
my roommate where i'm going
and scared to tell
people if i'm coming
if i sit here
for the rest
of my life
it won't stop
the revolution

if i never write
another poem
or short story
if i flunk out

of grad school
if my car is reclaimed
and my record player
won't play
and if i never see
a peaceful day
or do a meaningful
black thing
it won't stop
the revolution
the revolution
is in the streets
and if i stay on
the 5th floor

it will go on
if i never do
anything
it will go on
