**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)