

## Poet Discusses "the Dream and Diversity"

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World-renowned poet and activist Nikki Giovanni captured even the most distant ear assembled for the Martin Luther King Jr. Week for Peace Convocation on Wednesday (Jan. 19) that was hosted in part by Tulane University.



Poet and activist Nikki Giovanni, the author of 13 books and a professor of English at Virginia Tech, speaks to a large crowd at the Martin Luther King Jr. Week for Peace Convocation sponsored by Tulane, Xavier, Dillard and Loyola universities. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

Following brief presentations by the presidents of each of the four universities collaborating on the [MLK Week for Peace](#) events, Giovanni switched the tone for the evening with her talk titled, "Human by the Grace of God: The Dream and Diversity."

Speaking in an emphatic tone similar to how a college professor might address her class, [Giovanni](#) addressed topics ranging from the influence of today's pundits and politicians to black experiences before, during and after the height of slavery in America. Her objective was clear. She wanted to share her life experiences with students and empower them with the ability to leave behind racist ideas often passed down through generations.

“Sometimes people discount the black experience because it's true that anyone could have worked the fields,” said Giovanni. “The difference here is that not everyone could have gone through and come out of slavery with their sanity.”

Carolyn Barber-Pierre, assistant vice president of student affairs in the [Office of Multicultural Affairs](#) at Tulane and member of the MLK Week for Peace planning committee, says that celebrating King's birthday remains relevant today.

“After 25 years there is still a lot to be done,” says Barber-Pierre. “We are a community still plagued with divisions like race and political affiliation and we have to continue working at eliminating those social ills.”

Ruby Bridges, known for being the first to integrate an all-white school in New Orleans at the age of six, was at the convocation to accept the Lifetime Achievement Award in the Roussel Hall Auditorium at Loyola University.

The convocation was part of a week-long calendar of events jointly sponsored by Tulane, Xavier, Dillard and Loyola universities.