Race, Rage, and Radiance:
Bronco-Bucking the Clouds
Nikky Finney’s Four Collections of Poetry

A Talk by Jan Nordby Gretlund, Senior Lecturer at the Center for American Studies, University of Southern Denmark

Nikky Finney learned, early on, that “writing pretty” does not a poet make. A poet has to take risks. When Finney decided to walk away from graduate school, she undertook “to create unknown literary worlds of her own.” She also decided to take the risk of writing topical and even political poetry.

As her National Book Award winning collection _Head Off and Split_ and the three volumes that preceded it make clear, Finney’s advice to us is: be yourself, know yourself. The poet celebrates “the will of the human heart to speak its own mind.” She demonstrates that politics, history, and human emotions are often expressed better in a poem than in any other medium.

4:00 PM Wednesday, 5 November, 2014 LeConte 310