





Internationally acclaimed Sonia Sanchez shares her works with educators and community BY MICHELLE HITE ('88)

FURIOUS FLOWER POWER

The JMU Furious Flower Poetry Center presented “Continuous Fire: A Seminar on the Poetry of Sonia Sanchez” June 19-25. Nearly 30 educators — college professors and high-school teachers — shared in workshops and discussions led by internationally renowned poet Sonia Sanchez and African American poetry experts. Other speakers included Executive Director of the Furious Flower Poetry Center and JMU English Professor Joanne Gabbin, Visiting English Professor Hilary Holladay and guest scholars John Bracey, Akasha Hull, Joyce Ann Joyce, Nzadi Keita, Haki Madhubuti, Brenda Greene and Jacqueline Wood.

‘Sonia was at the top of her game.’

— NIKKI GIOVANNI
poet, scholar, educator

Sanchez followed up the weeklong seminar with a public reading of her works and a book signing in the Festival Conference and Student Center. Poet Nikki Giovanni, who introduced

Sanchez, said that the retrospective reading was one of the best that she had heard Sanchez give; in her words, “Sonia was at the top of her game.”

Sanchez is known as one of the most important writers of the Black Arts Movement. The activist also earned the Robert Frost Medal for distinguished lifetime service to American poetry and the Langston Hughes Poetry award. Her 16 books include *Homecoming*, *We a BaddDDD People*, *Homegirls and Handgrenades*, *Wounded in the House of a Friend*, and her most recent collection, *Morning Haiku*. Sanchez’s accolades include a National Endowment for the Arts Award, the American Book Award, the Peace and Freedom Award from the Women International League for Peace and Freedom, and a PEW Fellowship in the Arts. She retired as the Laura Carnell Professor of English and Women’s Studies at Temple University.

“Sonia Sanchez is known for blending elements of musicality such as blues and jazz into traditional poetic forms,” says Joanne Gabbin. “This seminar is only the second living legacy seminar that Furious Flower has offered to educators. Teachers will teach what they know and what inspires them, and Sonia Sanchez is a tremendous source of inspiration. ❧

* Learn more at www.jmu.edu/furiousflower.

Celebrating after Sonia Sanchez’s poetry reading are (l-r) Patricia Biela, Rachele Jones, Sanchez, noted poet and professor Nikki Giovanni, LaShone Croom-McPherson and Danielle Hall. (Behind Jones is Joanne Gabbin, executive director of the Furious Flower Poetry Center.)

