

Audre Lorde

Poet, writer, critic, educator (1934-1992)

Born Audrey Geraldine Lorde on February 18, 1934 in New York City, to Caribbean immigrants, Audre Lorde would eventually become one of the most prolific writers of her generation. From her mother she learned her love of words and found poetry to be the most effective method of expressing her emotions.

After graduating from high school, Audre attended Hunter College and then later Columbia University where she received a Masters. While working as a librarian in Mount Vernon Public Library she married Edward Ashley Rollins; the couple divorced eight years later. Together they had two children, Elizabeth and Jonathan.

In 1968, she received a National Endowment for the Arts grant and became a teacher at Tougaloo College. During her time at Tougaloo many significant events took place in the country and in Audre's personal life, thus affirming

her belief in the importance of immediate action. Unlike many of her contemporaries, Audre's poems focused on personal relationships set within a global context.

Though Audre faced many challenges in her life as the result of her sexual orientation, race, and gender, one of her most challenging ordeals was her 14-year battle with cancer, which she documented in "The Cancer Journals" and "A Burst of Light." Audre proudly stood in defiance of societal standards that claimed she should hide that she had breast cancer. On November 17, 1992 Audre Lorde died in St. Croix, Virgin Islands. The Audre Lorde Project began in 1994 and is centered in New York City.

Some thoughts from Audre Lorde:

"When I dare to be powerful – to use my strength in the service of my vision, then it becomes less and less important whether I am afraid."

- Audre Lorde

"Our visions begin with our desires."

- Audre Lorde, in Claudia Tate, ed., *Black Women Writers at Work* (1983)

"Anger is loaded with information and energy."

- Audre Lorde, "The Uses of Anger" (1981), *Sister Outsider* (1984)

"Some women wait for something/ to change and nothing/ does change/ and so they change/ themselves."

- Audre Lorde, "Stations," *Our Dead Behind Us* (1986)

"The sharing of joy, whether physical, emotional, psychic or intellectual, forms a bridge between the sharers which can be the basis for understanding much of what is not shared between them, and lessens the threat of their difference."

- Audre Lorde, *Uses of the Erotic* (1978)

“Our feelings are our most genuine paths to knowledge.”

- Audre Lorde, in Claudia Tate, ed., *Black Women Writers at Work* (1983)

“Revolution is not a one time event.”

- Audre Lorde, “Learning from the 60’s,” *Sister Outsider* (1984)

“I am a reflection of my mother’s hidden poetry as well as of her hidden angers.”

- Audre Lorde, *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name* (1982)

“It is not the destiny of Black America to repeat white America’s mistakes. But we will, if we mistake the trappings of success in a sick society for the signs of a meaningful life.”

- Audre Lorde, in Mari E. Evans, ed., *Black Women Writers (1950-1980)* (1984)

“I have no creative use for guilt, yours or my own. Guilt is only another way of avoiding informed action, of buying time out of the pressing need to make clear choices, out of the approaching storm that can feed the earth as well as bend the trees.”

- Audre Lorde, “The Uses of Anger” (1981), *Sister Outsider* (1984)

Audre Lorde’s works include:

Zami: A New Spelling of My Name
A Burst of Light
Sister Outsider

Audre Lorde

“Black lesbian, mother, warrior, poet”
(1934-1992)



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