
"Your silence will not protect you." - Audre Lorde

CELEBRATING WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH**REMEMBERING THE POET AUDRE LORDE****By Edwin Roman, Rainbow Alliance Advisor**

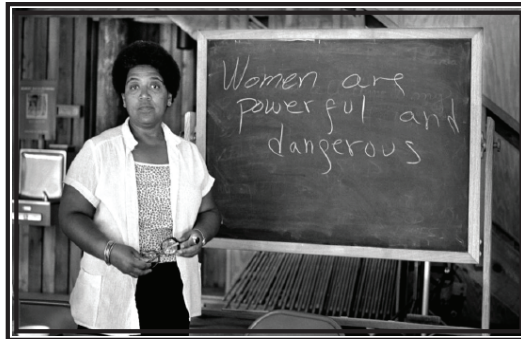
Audre Lorde dedicated her life and her creative energy to addressing the injustices of racism, sexism, classism, and homophobia. According to the Audre Lorde Project, she was a self-described "Black, Lesbian, mother, warrior, poet."

Lorde was born in New York City on February 18, 1934 to West Indian immigrant parents. She grew up in Manhattan and attended Catholic school. She loved to read poetry, often reciting entire poems to communicate with people. When she could no longer find poems that expressed her feelings, she started writing her own poetry. Her first poem to be published appeared in *Seventeen* magazine when she was still in high school. Of her poetic beginnings Lorde commented in *Black Women Writers*: "I used to speak in poetry. I would read poems, and I would memorize them. People would say, well what do you think, Audre. What happened to you yesterday? And I would recite a poem and somewhere in that poem would be a line or a feeling I would be sharing. In other words, I literally communicated through poetry. And when I couldn't find the poems to express the things I was feeling, that's what started me writing poetry, and that was when I was twelve or thirteen."

Lorde attended and graduated from Hunter College in 1959. In 1961, she received a master of library science degree from Columbia University and then worked as a librarian at the Mount Vernon Public Library until 1963. From 1966 to 1968 she worked as head librarian at Town School Library in New York City.

In 1968, Lorde received a National Endowment for the Arts grant and became poet-in-residence at Tougaloo College in Mississippi. Her first volume of poetry, *The First Cities*, was also published in 1968. *The First Cities* was an introspective book that focused on feelings and relationships. She had two children with her husband, Edward Rollins, a white, gay man, before they divorced in 1970. In 1972, Lorde met her long-time partner, Frances Clayton.

Lorde's second volume, *Cables to Rage* (1970) was published outside the United States. The poems focused on several themes that included the transience of human love, betrayal, and birth. In 1972 Lorde received a Creative Artists Public Service grant. A year later she published her third book of poetry, *From A Land Where Other People Live*. Nominated for a National Book Award, this volume portrayed the anger of injustice and oppression along with personal themes of tenderness and love for her children.



New York Head Shot and Museum, her most political work was published in 1974. The poems express her visions of life in New York City, intertwined with themes of what it is like to be a woman, a mother, and Black.

Coal, a compilation of her first two books, was published in 1976 by W. W. Norton, the first of her books to be released by a major publisher that brought her work to a broader audience.

Cancer led Lorde to publish her first prose collection, *The Cancer Journals*, which chronicled her illness and recovery. *The Cancer Journals* won the American Library Association Gay Caucus Book of the Year for 1981.

Lorde was professor of English at John Jay College from 1979-1981. From 1981-87 she was poet and professor of English at Hunter College where she was named Thomas Hunter Professor in 1987. Her poetry and prose have appeared in numerous periodicals and anthologies in the United States and abroad, and her work has been translated into seven foreign languages.

Lorde died of cancer at the age of 58 on November 17, 1992. In an African naming ceremony before her death, she took the name Gamba Adisa, which means "Warrior: She Who Makes Her Meaning Known."

**"Without community, there is no liberation."
- Audre Lorde**

AFTERIMAGES

Poem by Audre Lorde

Audre Lorde's "Afterimages" (from *The Collected Poems of Audre Lorde* [NY: W.W. Norton and Company, 2000]) is a complex poem that voices the trauma of one of the most brutal events during the Civil Rights struggle: the murder of Emmett Till.

Emmett Till was a 14-year old Black boy who was savagely beaten and killed in the Mississippi Delta in 1955 for allegedly whistling at a White woman named Carolyn Bryant. After kidnapping and brutally torturing Till, Bryant's husband, Roy Bryant, and his half brother, J.W. Milam, shot him in the head, tied a 74-pound cotton gin fan around his neck, and dumped his body into the Tallahatchie River. Roy Bryant and J.W. Milam were acquitted of murder by an all-white jury, which deliberated for less than an hour.

Determined to publicize the atrocity, Till's mother insisted on an open casket, and pictures of her son's mangled corpse flooded the media and shocked the nation.

I
However the image enters
its force remains within
my eyes
rockstrewn caves where dragonfish evolve
wild for life, relentless and acquisitive
learning to survive
where there is no food
my eyes are always hungry
and remembering
however the image enters
its force remains.
A white woman stands bereft and empty
a black boy hacked into a murderous lesson
recalled in me forever
like a lurch of earth on the edge of sleep
etched into my visions
food for dragonfish that learn
to live upon whatever they must eat
fused images beneath my pain.

II
The Pearl River floods through the streets of Jackson
A Mississippi summer televised.
Trapped houses kneel like sinners in the rain
a white woman climbs from her roof to a passing boat
her fingers tarry for a moment on the chimney
now awash
tearless and no longer young, she holds
a tattered baby's blanket in her arms.
In a flickering afterimage of the nightmare rain
a microphone
thrust up against her flat bewildered words
"we just come from the bank yestiddy
borrowing money to pay the income tax
now everything's gone. I never knew
it could be so hard."
Despair weighs down her voice like Pearl River mud
caked around the edges
her pale eyes scanning the camera for help or explanation
unanswered
she shifts her search across the watered street,
dry-eyed
"hard, but not this hard."
Two tow-headed children hurl themselves against her
hanging upon her coat like mirrors
until a man with ham-like hands pulls her aside
snarling "She ain't got nothing more to say!"
and that lie hangs in his mouth
like a shred of rotting meat.

III
I inherited Jackson, Mississippi.
For my majority it gave me Emmett Till
his 15 years puffed out like bruises
on plump boy-cheeks
his only Mississippi summer
whistling a 21 gun salute to Dixie
as a white girl passed him in the street
and he was baptized my son forever
in the midnight waters of the Pearl.

His broken body is the afterimage of my 21st year
when I walked through a northern summer
my eyes averted
from each corner's photographs
newspapers protest posters magazines
Police Story, Confidential, True



the avid insistence of detail
pretending insight or information
the length of gash across the dead boy's loins
his grieving mother's lamentation
the severed lips, how many burns
his gouged out eyes
sewed shut upon the screaming covers
louder than life
all over
the veiled warning, the secret relish
of a black child's mutilated body
fingered by street-corner eyes
bruise upon livid bruise
and wherever I looked that summer
I learned to be at home with children's blood
with savored violence
with pictures of black broken flesh
used, crumpled, and discarded
lying amid the sidewalk refuse
like a raped woman's face.

A black boy from Chicago
whistled on the streets of Jackson, Mississippi
testing what he'd been taught was a manly thing
to do
his teachers
ripped his eyes out his sex his tongue
and flung him to the Pearl weighted with stone

in the name of white womanhood
they took their aroused honor
back to Jackson
and celebrated in a whorehouse
the double ritual of white manhood
confirmed.

IV
"If earth and air and water do not judge them
who are
we to refuse a crust of bread?"

Emmett Till rides the crest of the Pearl, whistling
24 years his ghost lay like the shade of a raped woman
and a white girl has grown older in costly honor
(what did she pay to never know its price?)
now the Pearl River speaks its muddy judgment
and I can withhold my pity and my bread.

"Hard, but not this hard."
Her face is flat with resignation and despair
with ancient and familiar sorrows
a woman surveying her crumpled future
as the white girl besmirched by Emmett's whistle
never allowed her own tongue
without power or conclusion
unvoiced
she stands adrift in the ruins of her honor
and a man with an executioner's face
pulls her away.

Within my eyes
the flickering afterimages of a nightmare rain
a woman wrings her hands
beneath the weight of agonies remembered
I wade through summer ghosts
betrayed by vision
hers and my own
becoming dragonfish to survive
the horrors we are living
with tortured lungs
adapting to breathe blood.

A woman measures her life's damage
my eyes are caves, chunks of etched rock
tied to the ghost of a black boy
whistling
crying and frightened
her tow-headed children cluster
like little mirrors of despair
their father's hands upon them
and soundlessly
a woman begins to weep.

In the News...

The Human Rights campaign noted that in 2019 at least 26 transgender or gender non-conforming people were fatally shot or killed by other violent means. 91% of them were Black women. 81% of them were under the age of 30. 68% of them lived in the South.

Download and read *A National Epidemic: Fatal Anti-Transgender Violence in the United States in 2019* at <https://www.hrc.org/resources/a-national-epidemic-fatal-anti-trans-violence-in-the-united-states-in-2019>

On March 2, NBC News reported that lawmakers in Indonesia are pushing legislation that would force LGBTQ people into government-sanctioned rehabilitation centers to “cure” them of their sexual orientation or gender identity. The draft bill also claims that LGBTQ people are a “threat” to the nuclear family and likens homosexuality to incest and sadomasochism. According to activists, the government’s goal is to “create a moral panic” in Indonesia.

Read more at: https://www.nbcnews.com/feature/nbc-out/indonesia-proposes-bill-force-lgbtq-people-rehabilitation-n1146861?cid=sm_npd_nn_fb_ot&fbclid=IwAR2FR_nA091Hu4Utyd4BPs-ft5yISMQGx05kx-zYTXN6pdUbUXS-JIEfn75Q

On February 11, *The Huffington Post* reported that after 16 years in the NBA, Dwyane Wade is focused on his off-the-court role as the father of a transgender child.

Appearing on “The Ellen DeGeneres Show” Wade recalled the moment when his 12-year-old child came out to him as trans and said she wanted to be called Zaya and addressed by the pronouns “she” and “her.”

Read more at: https://www.huffpost.com/entry/dwyane-wade-transgender-child-ellen-degeneres-show_n_5e42cd-13c5b6f1f57f1928f0

The LGBTQI+ Resource Room had a robust schedule of events for the spring semester that included GAYpril, but because of the closures and cancellations due to the Coronavirus outbreak, we have decided not to list them.

Instead we are providing a list of resources.

OFFICIAL WEBSITES:

CUNY Coronavirus: <https://www.cuny.edu/coronavirus/>

Bronx Community College Coronavirus: <http://www.bcc.cuny.edu/covid-19/>

New York State Department of Health: <https://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/coronavirus/>

New York City Department of Health: <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/index.page>

MTA: <https://new.mta.info/>

RECOMMENDED MEDIA:

The New York Times has set up an on-line resource for all matters regarding Coronavirus. Please see more here: <https://www.nytimes.com/news-event/coronavirus>

PBS News Hour is the most cogent news broadcast during a crisis. Watch on-line here: <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/>

Also, follow them on Twitter at: <https://twitter.com/NewsHour>
As well as on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/newshour/>

ARTICLES OF INTEREST:

“8 Strategies for Getting the Most out of an Online Class.” Northeastern University Graduate Programs, March 5, 2019. <https://www.northeastern.edu/graduate/blog/tips-for-taking-online-classes/>.

“What Makes a Successful Online Learner?” What Makes a Successful Online Learner? | Minnesota State CAREERwise. Accessed March 15, 2020. <https://careerwise.minnstate.edu/education/successonline.html>.

“Netiquette Guide.” Netiquette Guide - CUNY School of Professional Studies - Acalog ACMS™. Accessed March 15, 2020. <http://catalog.sps.cuny.edu/content.php?catoid=2&navoid=205>.

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MISSION

The LGBTQI + Resource Room at Bronx Community College works to foster an inclusive, safe, and welcoming environment for students, faculty, and staff of all sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions. The LGBTQI + Resource Room aims to sustain visibility and a sense of community by providing education, programming, and support services on campus.

Weekly !

- MONDAYS

Pride Slice

A weekly discussion series focusing on different LGBTQI+ topics and concerns. Pizza is provided to all who attend, and students are invited to offer topic suggestions for ongoing programming. 12-2 p.m. in RBSC 301.



Music Mondays

On Facebook:
<https://www.facebook.com/lgbqti/>



- TUESDAYS

LGBTQI+ Support Group

Share. Express. Support. Let's come together to express thoughts, hopes, and feelings with other like minded people. 4-5 p.m. If you are interested please visit RBSC 301.



- THURSDAYS

BCC QueerLit Book Club

Provides an opportunity for students to read and discuss queer literature of various genres, inspiring their own creative works.

11a.m. -1 p.m. in RBSC 301.



- FRIDAYS

Rainbow Alliance Club

The Rainbow Alliance provides resources and extracurricular activities that address the needs of LGBTQI+ students as well as the greater campus community.

1-3 p.m. in RBSC 301.



The LGBTQI+ Resource Room is open five days a week 9a.m.-5p.m. except on Thursdays when it is open until 8p.m. and Fridays until 7p.m. when class is in session

Students, faculty and staff are always welcome to drop-in at the above mentioned days and times