

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Asheville, NC

Serving the Southern Appalachian Gay/Lesbian Community

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Asheville Gay and Lesbian
Information Line:
253-2971
A project of the Asheville Gay and Lesbian
Community Council
Gay and Lesbian Youth Hotline:
1-800-347-TEEN
Thurs.-Sun. 7 p.m.-12 a.m.

To report anti-gay/HIV+
discrimination/violence:
Asheville-Buncombe Community Relations Council:
253-1656 / 252-4713
U.S. Department of Justice toll-free:
1-800-347-HATE

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Lesbian Poet Audre Lorde Dies of Cancer



Audre Lorde

photo by JEB

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by Aras van Hertum

Audre Lorde, an acclaimed Lesbian author who became a prominent figure in the national Gay rights struggle and helped shape the Gay people of color movement, died on Tuesday, November 17, at her home in Christiansted on St. Croix in the U.S. Virgin Islands. She died of metastasized breast cancer, according to her close friend Barbara Smith, publisher of Kitchen Table Press.

Lorde, the author of 13 books of poetry and essays, was named poet laureate of New York State last year. She published her first collection of poems, *Cables to Rage*, in 1968, and went on to publish eight other books of poetry, including *The Black Unicorn*, *Our Dead Behind Us*, and *From A Land Where Other People Live*, which was nominated for a National Book Award. A tenth collection, *The Marvelous Arithmetics of Distance*, is forthcoming.

Her acclaimed semiautobiographical novel *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name*, filled with images of Lorde's youth in Harlem, reflected upon her life as a black Lesbian in a white and male-dominated society. She also published several collections of essays, including *Sister Outsider* (1984).

During the 14 years that followed her diagnosis with cancer in 1978, Lorde became a role model for Lesbians fighting breast cancer. She explored her struggle with cancer in *The Cancer Journals* (1980) and in the essay "A Burst of Light," which is part of the 1988 collection of the same name.

Lorde traveled to Germany and Switzerland to find treatment for her cancer and also relied on homeopathic and holistic treatment. She underwent chemotherapy for liver cancer last year and reported feeling better. However, her health deteriorated again this year.

In appointing her to a two-year term as New York's third state poet, and awarding her its Walt Whitman Citation of Merit for Poets, the New York State Writers' Institute described Lorde as "a poet of passion and purpose, a voice of eloquent courage and unflinching honesty."

"Her bold, lucid style is a triumph of openness and control." The Institute also quoted these lines from her poem "Coal":

Love is a word, another kind of open.
As the diamond come into
a knot of flame
I am Black because I come
from the earth's inside
now take my word for jewel
in the open light.

New York Gov. Mario Cuomo bestowed the honor on her at a ceremony in November, 1991. Lorde announced she was accepting the award on behalf of "all the poets of the oppressed, disenfranchised, and silenced peoples within this state."

She often introduced herself as a "black, Lesbian, feminist, warrior, poet, mother." Through her writing, she championed the rights of women, racial and ethnic minorities, gays, and others whom she saw as suffering oppression.

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Television Flash

"In the Life," a public television series for the lesbian and gay community, will begin airing in North Carolina on Sunday, January 3, at 11:30 p.m. According to a WUNC spokesperson, two episodes will run back-to-back.