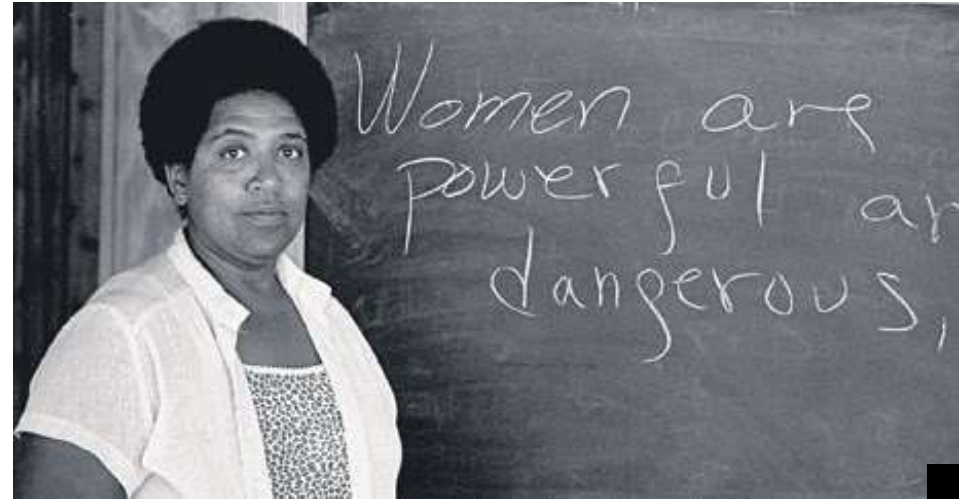


**CARING FOR  
MYSELF IS NOT  
SELF-INDULGENCE,  
IT IS SELF-  
PRESERVATION  
AND THAT IS  
AN ACT OF  
POLITICAL  
WARFARE.**

**AUDRE LORDE**



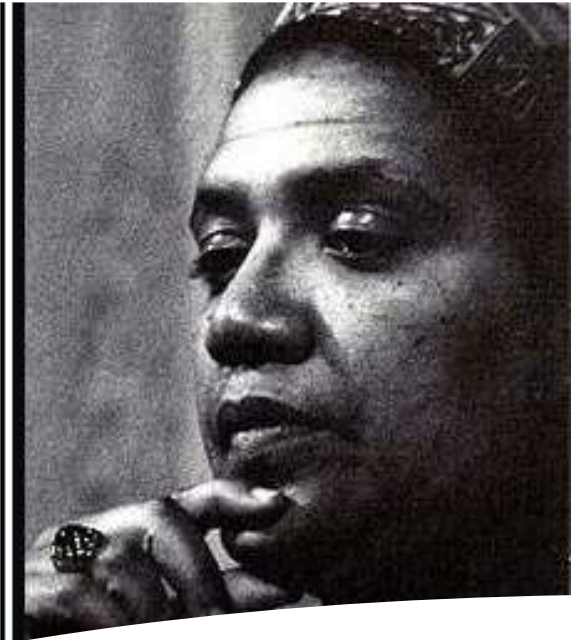
By Christiana  
AFN 124

# Audre Lorde

Spring 2021  
Prof. Remi Alapo

**"black, lesbian, mother, warrior, poet"**





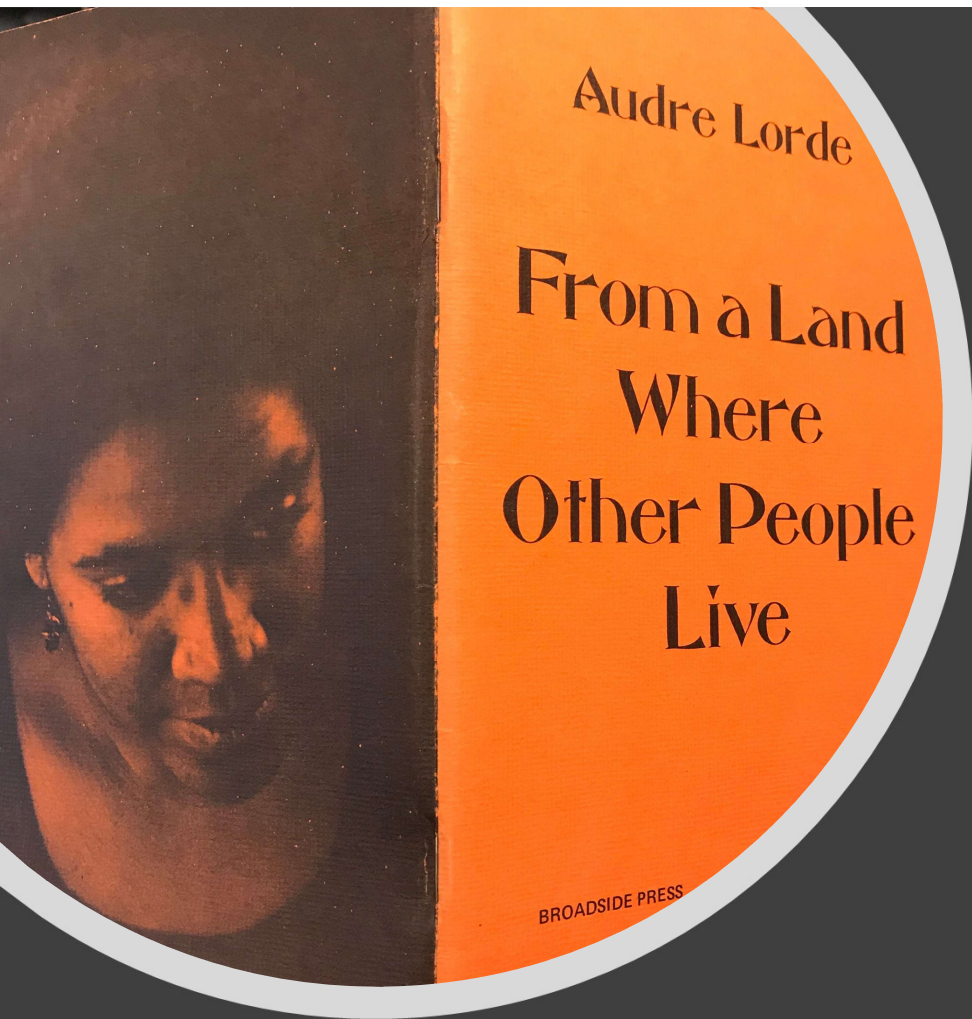
The master's tools will never dismantle the  
master's house.

(Audre Lorde)

Audre Lorde was a native New Yorker her parents were West Indian immigrants, specifically from Grenada. Audre Lorde was not only a black woman, but she was also a lesbian during her years on this earth 1934-1992 was NOT easy to say the least, but that did not stop her from using her voice to speak on important matters in society. She was an activist for injustices of racism, sexism, classism, and homophobia.



Her successes started when she in high school being the first black person to attend Hunter HS, a school for gifted girls as well as having her first publish poem in *Seventeen* magazine! After high school she attended Hunter college and received her Bachelor's Degree and later her Masters in Library Science from Columbia University.



Audre Lorde lived her truth in a society that feared differences, she grew to be a champion of the civil rights and women's movements. She has made long last contributions in the subjects of feminist theory, critical race studies and queer theory. She stressed that gender oppression was no different than oppressive systems like racism, classism and homophobia.

Lorde was nominated for the National Book Award for *From a Land Where Other People Live*

# A poem from Lorde's book *From a Land Where Other People Live*

## For Each of You

Be who you are and will be  
learn to cherish  
that boisterous Black Angel that drives you  
up one day and down another  
protecting the place where your power rises  
running like hot blood  
from the same source  
as your pain.

When you are hungry  
learn to eat  
whatever sustains you  
until morning  
but do not be misled by details  
simply because you live them.

Do not let your head deny  
your hands  
any memory of what passes through them  
nor your eyes  
nor your heart  
everything can be used  
except what is wasteful  
(you will need  
to remember this when you are accused of destruction.)  
Even when they are dangerous  
examine the heart of those machines you hate  
before you discard them  
and never mourn the lack of their power  
lest you be condemned  
to relive them.

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If you do not learn to hate  
you will never be lonely  
enough  
to love easily  
nor will you always be brave  
although it does not grow any easier  
Do not pretend to convenient beliefs  
even when they are righteous  
you will never be able to defend your city  
while shouting.

Remember our sun  
is not the most noteworthy star  
only the nearest.

Respect whatever pain you bring back  
from your dreaming  
but do not look for new gods  
in the sea  
nor in any part of a rainbow  
Each time you love  
love as deeply  
as if it were  
forever  
only nothing is  
eternal.

Speak proudly to your children  
where ever you may find them  
tell them  
you are the offspring of slaves  
and your mother was  
a princess  
in darkness.

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After reading that one piece you can already see the impact her words had.

That last line "*... you are the offspring of a slaves and your mother was a princess in the darkness*" is extremely powerful, I believe to make sure that people, especially African American/black people in America do not forget slavery but instead remember it and know that didn't define them because inside they were who they truly are and nothing will stop them from that now, or ever again.





Lorde's work *New York Head Shop and Museum* (1974), *Coal* (1976), and *The Black Unicorn* (1978) all included powerful poems of protest. *"I have a duty to speak the truth as I see it and to share not just my triumphs, not just the things that felt good, but the pain, the intense, often unmitigating pain."* Lorde once stated. A great example of her work is her poem called *Power* which is a poem about a police officer who shot and killed a 10-year-old Black child, she discussed her feelings when she heard the news the officers, like so many others that we see even today, had been acquitted. *"A kind of fury rose up in me; the sky turned red. I felt so sick. I felt as if I would drive this car into a wall, into the next person I saw. So, I pulled over. I took out my journal just to air some of my fury, to get it out of my fingertips. Those expressed feelings are that poem."*

# Power by Audre Lorde

## Power Audre Lorde

The difference between poetry and rhetoric  
is being  
ready to kill  
yourself  
instead of your children.  
I am trapped on a desert of raw gunshot wounds  
and a dead child dragging his shattered black  
face off the edge of my sleep  
blood from his punctured cheeks and shoulders  
churns at the imagined taste while  
my mouth splits into dry lips  
without loyalty or reason  
thirsting for the wetness of his blood  
as it sinks into the whiteness  
of the desert where I am lost  
without imagery or magic  
trying to make power out of hatred and destruction  
trying to heal my dying son with kisses  
only the sun will bleach his bones quicker.  
The policeman who shot down a 10-year-old in Queens  
stood over the boy with his cop shoes in childish blood  
and a voice said "Die you little motherfucker" and  
there are tapes to prove that. At his trial  
this policeman and in his own defense  
"I didn't notice the size or nothing else  
only the color." and  
there are tapes to prove that, too.  
Today that 37-year-old white man with 13 years of police forcing  
has been set free  
by 11 white men who said they were satisfied  
justice had been done  
and one black woman who said  
"They convinced me" meaning  
they had dragged her 4'10" black woman's frame  
over the hot coals of four centuries of white male approval  
until she let go the first real power she ever had  
and lined her own womb with cement  
to make a graveyard for our children.  
I have not been able to touch the destruction within me.  
But unless I learn to use  
the difference between poetry and rhetoric  
my power too will run corrupt as poisonous mold  
or lie limp and useless as an unconnected wire  
and one day I will take my teenaged plug  
and connect it to the nearest socket  
raping an 85-year-old white woman  
who is somebody's mother  
and as I beat her senseless and set a torch to her bed  
a greek chorus will be singing in ¾ time  
"Poor thing. She never hurt a soul. What beasts they are."





It is undeniable to say that Audre Lorde was a Black woman in history we should hear of MORE often than we have. She is an amazing role model for woman of both color as well as a part of the LGBTQ community. She was never scared of holding her tongue and being exactly who she was which from a Caribbean family was far from acceptable, but that did not stop her.

In 1981 Lorde, Carrié Moraga and Barbara Smith (also writers) founded Kitchen Table: Woman of Color Press which was dedicated to encouraging the writings of black feminists. She also created the Sisterhood in Support of Sister in South Africa and was an active black voice for these women for the rest of her life. She believed differences in race or class should serve as a "*Reason for Celebration and Growth.*"

“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



Lorde was diagnosed with breast cancer in 1978 and chronicled her struggles in her collection *The Cancer Journals* which later won the Gay Caucus Book of the Year award in 1981. Her other prose volumes include *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name* (1982), *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (1984), and *A Burst of Light* (1988), which won a National Book Award. She received a fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts in 1981.

In 1984 Lorde was diagnosed with liver cancer, in St. Croix where she was living at the time she died, she took the name Gamba Adisa in an African naming ceremony before her death which means Warrior: She Who Makes Her Meaning Known. Lorde passed away in 1992 at the age of 58 but her work will forever remain powerful and relevant. Her words will go on for generations.

- <https://alp.org/about/audre>
- <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/audre-lorde>
- <https://publishingtriangle.org/awards/audre-lorde-lesbian-poetry/>
- <https://www.nbcnews.com/feature/nbc-out/pride-50-audre-lorde-activist-author-n1007551>
- <https://poets.org/poet/audre-lorde>