

Audre Lourde

Nominated by Nina Khamsy, M.Sc. Social Anthropology candidate



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Audre Lorde (1934-1992) was an African American poet and essayist who used to define herself as a 'black, lesbian, mother, warrior, poet'. Her works intertwine the personal and the political and are situated within the context of women's, gay and lesbian, and black civil rights movements in the United States and beyond. She inspired generations of feminist intellectuals and activists through her poetry, autobiography, essays, and political action. Her poems and prose also largely deal with an exploration of black female identity. Her feminist writing style has contributed to the development of the concept of 'intersectionality'. This concept is today widely used in anthropology and critical theories to describe the ways in which oppressive institutions and practices such as racism, sexism, homophobia, classism, etc., are interconnected and cannot be examined separately from one another. Thus, her works have been influential across disciplinary borders.

Audre Lorde also initiated and built a robust set of archives about Afro-German history, politics and culture, introducing the new area of 'Black-German studies'. She encouraged generations of Afro-German women writers. She also forged coalitions with women in other parts of Europe, the Caribbean, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and Africa. Thirty years after her passing, these connections remain largely unexplored. Referring to non-intersectional feminism in the United States, the following quote from Lorde represents her ground-breaking perspective: "Those of us who stand outside the circle of this society's definition of acceptable women; those of us who have been forged in the crucibles of difference – those of us who are poor, who are lesbians, who are Black, who are older – know that survival is not an academic skill. It is learning how to take our differences and make them strengths. For the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house. They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change. And this fact is only threatening to those women who still define the master's house as their only source of support." From Audre Lorde, "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House," in *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (Freedom, CA: Crossing Press, 1984), 112.



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