Audre Lorde Now: A Community Read-in for Our Survival

In honor of Black History Month and Women’s History Month, the Presidential Task Force on Racial Equity at Hunter College will sponsor an event series focusing on the work of Audre Lorde, who famously described herself as a Black lesbian feminist mother warrior poet.

A global icon of antiracism and feminism, art and activism, Lorde (1934-1992), was both an alumna and a Distinguished Professor of English at Hunter College.

“Audre Lorde Now” is a participatory event series in which members of the Hunter community will meet virtually to discuss a selection of poems and essays, mostly from Lorde’s canonical text, Sister Outsider, using them to reflect on our lives, our communities, our institution and our society. This series offers Lorde’s poetry and prose for our active use as we confront racism, form communities across our differences, and struggle against threats to our individual and collective health. The overarching theme of the series is “survival”, a cornerstone of Lorde’s philosophy. In view of the dual pandemics of Covid and anti-Black racism, survival is also the central preoccupation of our times.

The series will culminate in a celebratory event in which students perform Lorde’s poems and/or present their own original poems, videos or essays on the theme “Audre Lorde Now”, with cash prizes ($200, $100, $50 for the three best submissions).

The Hunter College Library has an electronic version of Sister Outsider; all other readings will be made freely available. For each session you attend, you are encouraged to read at least one poem and one essay (most are about five pages long) from the suggested works. To be considered for the competition, you must participate in at least one of the community read-ins on Lorde’s work. Information about how to attend the events and access the readings will be forthcoming.

May I never lose
that terror
that keeps me brave
From “Solstice,” Audre Lorde

Schedule of Events

Thursday Feb 18, 5:30 pm. Audre Lorde in Context
Film Screening: “A Litany for Survival: the Life and Work of Audre Lorde”

Tuesday Feb 23, 6pm. “To suppress any truth is to give it more power”: How can we overcome our fear of speaking up and out about racism--and other “isms”?

Read at least one poem and one essay below.
Poetry:
Power
A Litany for Survival
Afterimages
Coal

Prose:
The Transformation of Silence into Language and Action
Self-definition and poetry.
The Uses of Anger: Women Responding to Racism

**Wednesday March 10, 6pm**  “The master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house.”
How do we avoid the trap of “divide and rule”?

*Read at least one poem and one essay below.*

**Poetry:**
Who Said it Was Simple
To the Brown Menace or Poem to the Survival of Roaches
The Woman Thing

**Prose:**
The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House
Age, Race, Class and Sex: Women Redefining Difference
Learning from the 60s
Difference and Survival: An Address at Hunter College

**Tuesday March 23, 6pm**  “Caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation and that is an act of political warfare.” What are the everyday threats to our health and how do we affirm the value of our lives by practicing radical self-care?

*Read at least one poem and one essay below.*

**Poetry:**
New York City
To my Daughter the Junkie on a Train
Today is not the Day
For Each of You

**Prose:**
*A Burst of Light* (Pp 108-133)

**Friday April 9, 6pm.**  Closing Celebration
A student read-in of Lorde’s poetry and presentation of their own poetry, prose, artwork or video on the theme of “Audre Lorde Now”. Cash prizes for the best submissions.
For the read-in, recite a Lorde poem of your choice. In addition to the ones above, here are a few to consider:

To the Girl Who Lives in a Tree
From the House of Yemanya
Za Ki Tan Ke Parlay Lot
Movement Song
To the Poet Who Happens to be Black and the Black Poet Who Happens to be A Woman
Now that I am Forever With Child
Six O’clock News
Sahara
Sequelae
Sisters in Arms
Moving In
The Dozens
A Sewer plant grows in Harlem or I’m a Stranger Here Myself When does the Next Swan Leave