

# The Berlin Years 1984 to 1992

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We have to fight for the "other" poet activist Audre Lorde (1934-1992) would say. Whether of color or a minority, to her, a person of any race was no less affected by the racial prejudice perpetrated on others. "One oppression does not justify another" she said.

From scholar and filmmaker Dagmar Schultz, comes, *Audre Lorde - The Berlin Years 1984 to 1992*, a documentary about Lorde's years living in Berlin mentoring fellow feminists, attending speaking engagements, and performing readings on behalf of the John F. Kennedy Institute for North American Studies at the Freedom University, Berlin where Kennedy gave the "I am a Berliner" speech in 1963. There, Lorde co-founded the Afro-German movement. After accepting Schultz's invitation to teach, Lorde and Schultz became close collaborators during Lorde's assignment. The film compiles previously unpublished personal material including archival footage to revive Lorde's memory since *A Litany for Survival* (1995) was acquired by Third World News Reels and remains difficult to acquire for personal viewing. I hope that Schultz will find a wider distribution channel should Lorde's name be remembered by millennials.

Lorde's Afro-Caribbean roots in Grenada were a highly political aspect of her life and work growing up in Harlem, Manhattan's amalgam of Caribbean immigrants and blacks from the southern United States. Lorde ranks feminist author Bell Hooks and activist and speaker Angela Davis. Yet Lorde made radical claims, she said she was not a philosopher, but a poet. Her messages were of racial reconciliation. Lorde is known for accusing other feminists of chronically excluding women of color in the second wave. The trifecta of minority statuses she carried - black, women, and bisexual - allowed her to speak defiantly and problematize all races including whites who were equally oppressed, but by their privilege.

Audre Lorde was known for inventing Biomythography, a literary style combining myth, biography, and history, brought race and ethnicity into feminism where it was largely represented in the mainstream by white women, notably Gloria Steinem and Betty Friedan (*The Feminine Mystique*). In many panels and speeches, Lorde strung together political mantras directed at racial minorities - "Lorde-isms" - such as "Your silence will not protect you."

The self-proclaimed "black, lesbian, mother, warrior, poet" was afflicted yet affirmed by her breast cancer and mastectomy in her *Cancer Journals*, seminal work for Lorde. She lived through her 1977 diagnosis to her death in 1992.

Fellow writer and admirer, Schultz, directed and produced the bookishly titled *Audre Lorde - The Berlin Years 1984 to 1992* (trailer featured below). These years are somewhat lost in the public's memory of Lorde, but the impact of that period on her legacy and the good it did for her health, are remembered in this documentary.

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