



Film and culture festival honors modern heroine

The Audre Lorde film and cultural festival payed homage to the lesbian, black, female activist.

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A two-day Audre Lorde film and cultural festival kick started this week to honor the 20th anniversary of the influential female poet and activist's death.

The first screening of the event, 'A Litany for Survival: The Life and Work of Audre Lorde,' was held Thursday night in Caldwell.

Andrea Mensch, professor of English and one of the coordinators of the festival, sees 'A Litany for Survival' as a great introduction to who Lorde was.

"If people don't know much about Audre Lorde, and want to find out more about her, this film is a great way to start," Mensch said.

The documentary itself interwove Lorde's personal struggles, such as finding her voice in her poetry and battling cancer, with the political climate of the 20th century. Even facing the stereotypes associated with a lesbian black woman, she was an icon of strength and fearlessness.

"It's what this woman was all about, why she had this huge following – not just in America but in Europe, in Africa – internationally, why she was such an inspiration to people," Mensch said. "People pay attention in Germany, in Africa, to this African American poet that probably not many N.C. State students even know."

Though Lorde was tremendously powerful in the Afro-German movement during the 1980s, she taught and inspired in other roles as well.

"She was a well-known lesbian activist," Mensch said. "She was also a mother, and one of the things that Lorde does is she really gets us to question those various boundaries."

A brief reception and another screening, as part of the festival, followed 'A Litany for Survival.'

This film, 'The Edge of Each Other's Battles: The Vision of Audre Lorde,' focused on how the liberation of women, as well

as the gay and lesbian community, surged from the character and words of Lorde.

“It’s about that connection between the personal and the political again; our own private experiences and how we can use poetry as a means of survival in a difficult world but, more than that, provide hope and energy,” Mensch said.

Helga Braunbeck, assistant dean for interdisciplinary studies, also helped organize and orchestrate funding for the event.

“From my perspective, I was impressed with how this event was truly interdisciplinary, crossing boundaries between German studies, film studies, English literature, Women’s and Gender studies, and African-American studies, and also international studies and diversity issues,” Braunbeck said.

After the viewing of ‘A Litany for Survival,’ there was a Q&A with Dagmar Schultz and Ika Hügel-Marshall.

“They were personal friends of Audre Lorde’s, so they knew her well,” Mensch said.

On Friday, March 23, Hügel-Marshall will be doing a reading from her book as part of the festival, at 3 p.m. in Caldwell G107.

Her book, *Invisible Woman*, is centered on growing up black in Germany.

“Communication was a really important thing for Audre. This is how I wrote my book because she encouraged me to write my story,” Hugel-Marshall said, translated from German to English by Schultz.

‘Audre Lorde – The Berlin Years 1984-1992,’ the festival’s final film, will follow Hugel-Marshall’s reading at 4 p.m. in the same location.

The film, directed by Schultz, was accepted into the renowned Berlin Film Festival this year.

“Our intention was to show Audre not only onstage but offstage,” Schultz said. “She was open to have exchanges with people who were different from her.”

