

Audre Lorde, 58, A Poet, Memoirist And Lecturer, Dies

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Audre Lorde, a black feminist writer who became the poet laureate of New York State in 1991, died on Tuesday at her home on St. Croix. She was 58 years old.

She died of liver cancer, said a friend, Blanche Cook.

Ms. Lorde had had cancer for 14 years and in 1980 wrote "The Cancer Journals," which traced the first stages of her disease.

From the publication of her first book in 1968, Ms. Lorde's 17 volumes of poetry, essays and autobiography reflected her hatred of racial and sexual prejudice. Among them are "Cables to Rage" (1970); "Coal" (1976); "Zami: A New Spelling of My Name" (1983), and, most recently, "Undersong: Chosen Poems Old and New," which was recently published by W. W. Norton.

A collection of essays, "A Burst of Light," won an American Book Award in 1989. Her 1973 collection, "From a Land Where Other People Live," was nominated for a National Book Award. Active Politically and Academically

Ms. Lorde, who also used her adopted African name, Gamba Adisa, was born in Manhattan and graduated from Hunter College and the Columbia University School of Library Science. She became an English professor at Hunter and lectured widely throughout the United States, Europe and Africa. She was active in many literary and political organizations and a founding member of Women of Color Press and Sisterhood in Support of Sisters in South Africa.

She was an outspoken lesbian and served on the board of the Feminist Press in New York City and often gave readings of her works at Judith's Room, a feminist bookstore in Greenwich Village.

Among her honors were the Walt Whitman Citation of Merit in 1991, making her the poet laureate of New York; the Manhattan Borough President's Award for Excellence in the Arts in 1988, and honorary doctorates from Hunter, Oberlin and Haverford Colleges.

Her marriage to Edwin Rollins ended in divorce.

She is survived by her companion, Gloria I. Joseph of St. Croix; a son, Jonathan Rollins, and a daughter, Elizabeth Lorde-Rollins, both of New York City, and four sisters, Helen Lorde, Phyllis Blackwell and Marjorie and Mavis Jones.

Photo: Audre Lorde (David Jennings, 1991)

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