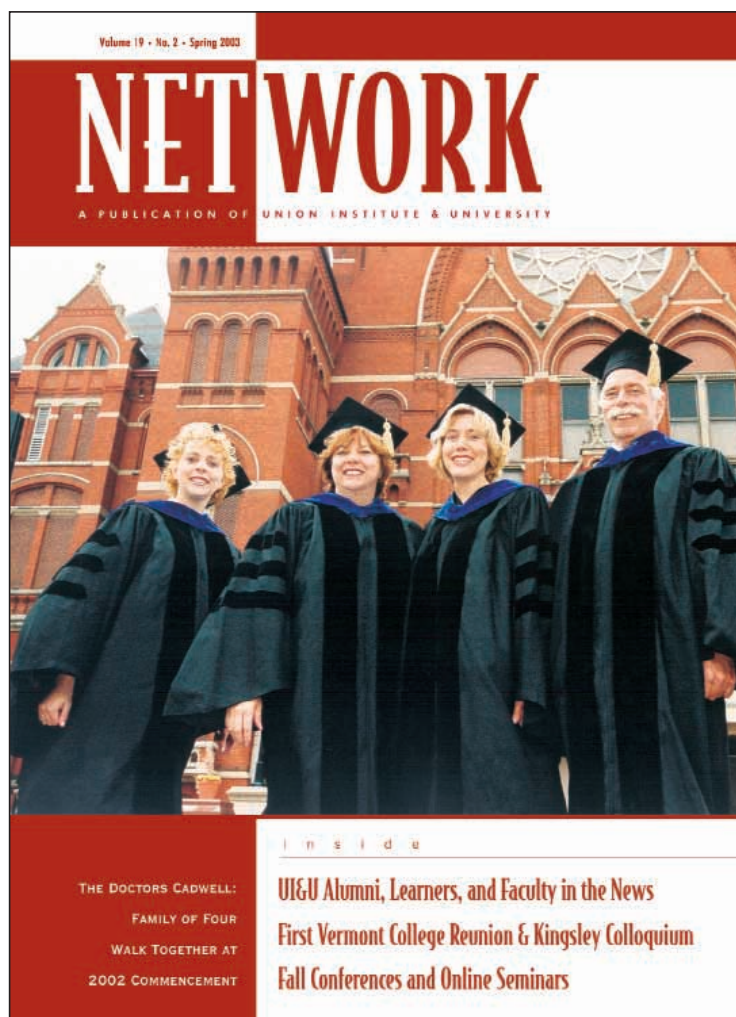


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Doctoral Alumna Brings Vision and Spirit of Feminist Icon Audre Lorde to Video



FROM WEB SITE: JENNIFERABOD.COM

Jennifer Abod

A decade after her death, poet Audre Lorde remains an international icon of feminism's second wave. Raised in Harlem by Caribbean parents, Lorde galvanized black women to participate in feminist organizations and catalyzed change in black arts, black liberation, women's liberation, black feminism, and lesbian and gay liberation. Lorde published 15 books of poetry and prose and was named New York state poet just before she lost her 14-year struggle with cancer in 1992.

Feminist media producer **Jennifer Abod**, Ph.D. 1994, who created an extensive *Audio Profile of Audre Lorde* in 1987, has produced a one-hour video, *The Edge of Each Other's Battles: The Vision of Audre Lorde*. Her film is garnering praise at universities, and film festivals, including the San Francisco Black Gay Lesbian Bisexual Transgender Film Festival, the Toronto Gay and Lesbian Film Festival, and the Women in the Director's Chair International Film and Video Festival in Chicago. Abod's distribution efforts are focused on universities, libraries, and community activist organizations.

Her motivation for *Edge* was two-fold. "I wanted to produce a tribute to Audre Lorde's contributions to the development of feminism, while communicating the joy, pain, passion, and creativity associated with the dynamic exchange of ideas within the feminist experience," she explains. Primary footage came from the four-day 1990 Boston conference, "I Am Your Sister: Forging Global Connections Across Differences," where 1,200 people from 23 countries examined Lorde's work, celebrated her life, and basked in her presence. The video interweaves conference footage of poetry, dance, and music, one interview between Lorde and her Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press co-founder, Barbara Smith, editor of *Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology*, and another with conference organizers/feminist scholars Jacqui Alexander and Angela Bowen.

It was Bowen, Abod's life partner, who in 1985 introduced Abod to Lorde, a self-identified "black, lesbian, feminist poet mother and warrior." Conversely, Abod paints her early self as a "young, middle-class, white, secular Jew" from Chicago who discovered feminism in 1969 and sang lead with the New Haven Women's Liberation Rock Band from 1970-1976. Abod was a host and producer of radio programs for nearly two decades in Boston, Philadelphia, and New Haven, where she spent four years as Connecticut's first woman to host a nightly commercial radio talk show.

"Audre Lorde fueled a deeper, stronger, more turbulent wave upon which my feminism continues to ride," Abod says. Before her death, Lorde viewed a rough-cut, video trailer. "Audre told me, 'It's beautiful, but don't forget to talk about the difficulties. Don't gloss over the differences,'" Abod recalls. "She insisted that we portray our struggles in creating the historic event, in order to learn from them. The overall message of the film, utilizing our differences, is also a central tenet of Audre Lorde's legacy."

Production stalled from 1992 to 1994 while Abod completed her UI&U doctorate, focusing on feminist studies and intercultural media education. "My doctoral program allowed me to explore the relationship between the theories of media literacy and women's studies," she says. "While it is important to critically analyze popular culture, we also must examine how feminism continually shapes the questions we bring to that analysis, and how that examination influences the production of media."

After earning her Ph.D., Abod spent four years as an assistant professor at Hofstra University, while finishing the video with technical support and expertise from Dyke TV in New York City. The video premiered at the 2000 National Women's Studies Association conference in Boston, a doubly fitting place, says Abod, because "the women of NWSA have been my scholarly community for years and the conference occurred there a decade ago. Moreover, Audre played a critical role in the development of women's studies and NWSA as well."

"*The Edge of Each Others Battles* is a tribute to Audre Lorde's legacy of politics, poetry, and passion," Abod says. "It's empowering for a younger generation to understand these historic challenges of the feminist movement. As Audre hoped, the video is not a sentimental retrospective, but a challenge to activism." For more information visit www.jenniferabod.com. —MARY BETH ORTH

EDITOR'S NOTE: UI&U Graduate College core faculty **Minnie Bruce Pratt**, Ph.D. will keynote the National Women's Studies Association Annual Conference, June 19-22 in New Orleans. Her address coincides with the launch of her new book of poetry, *The Dirt She Ate: New and Selected Poems (U of Pittsburgh Press)*. Also at the NWSA conference, **Jennifer Abod** will moderate the workshop, "Fighting Racism: White Feminist Stories."

Women's Studies Research Project

Many Union Institute & University and Vermont College learners and faculty have been instrumental in the field of women's studies since its early days, producing scholarship grounded in social relevance and real-world usefulness. Now, UI&U faculty women are gathering outcome data for graduates from across the university whose programs concentrated on women's studies and related areas, to determine the impact of their education on their choices and opportunities in their professional lives, academic pursuits, and personal interests. Research findings will be published and presented nationally and regionally. Please watch for a survey in your mail and for announcements at www.tui.edu.