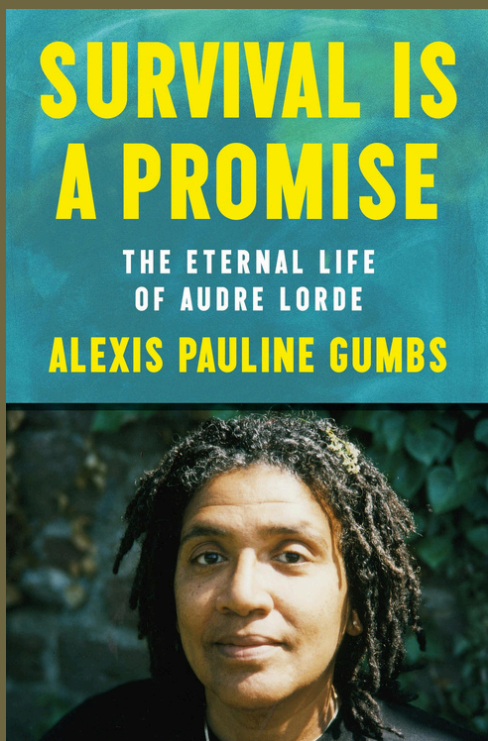


BKLYN BOOK CLUB KIT

SURVIVAL IS A PROMISE

ALEXIS PAULINE GUMBS



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BOOK PRIZE FINALIST

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BOOK SYNOPSIS

A bold, innovative biography that offers a new understanding of the life, work, and enduring impact of Audre Lorde.

We remember Audre Lorde as an iconic writer, a quotable teacher whose words and face grace t-shirts, nonprofit annual reports, and campus diversity center walls. But even those who are inspired by Lorde's teachings on "the creative power of difference" may be missing something fundamental about her life and work, and what they can mean for us today.

Lorde's understanding of survival was not simply about getting through to the other side of oppression or being resilient in the face of cancer. It was about the total stakes of what it means to be in relationship with a planet in transformation. Possibly the focus on Lorde's quotable essays, to the neglect of her complex poems, has led us to ignore her deep engagement with the natural world, the planetary dynamics of geology, meteorology, and biology. For her, ecological images are not simply metaphors but rather literal guides to how to be of earth on earth, and how to survive—to live the ethics that a Black feminist lesbian warrior poetics demands.

In *Survival Is a Promise*, Alexis Pauline Gumbs, the first researcher to explore the full depths of Lorde's manuscript archives, illuminates the eternal life of Lorde. Her life and work become more than a sound bite; they become a cosmic force, teaching us the grand contingency of life together on earth.

AUTHOR BIO: ALEXIS PAULINE GUMBS

Alexis Pauline Gumbs is the author of several works of poetry and of *Undrowned: Black Feminist Lessons from Marine Animals*, which won a Whiting Writers' Award in 2022. In 2023, she won a Windham Campbell Prize for her poetry. She lives in Durham, North Carolina.



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LEARN MORE ABOUT ALEXIS PAULINE GUMBS AT [ALEXISPAULINE.COM](https://alexispauline.com).

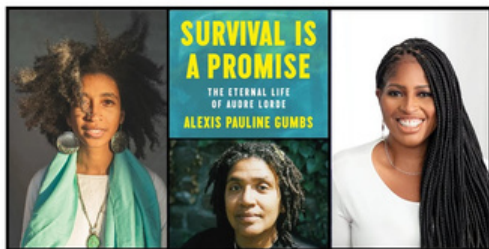
SEE GUMBS IN THE MEDIA

Check out these selections featuring writer Alexis Pauline Gumbs, from insightful interviews to detailed reviews to in-conversations.



- **AUTOSTRADDLE – A New Biography Transforms Our Understanding of Audre Lorde and the Genre Itself**
- **BECOMING THE PEOPLE PODCAST – *Survival Is a Promise* with Alexis Pauline Gumbs**
- **CHARIS CIRCLE – *Survival Is a Promise: The Eternal Life of Audre Lorde*—Alexis Pauline Gumbs and Carlin Rushing**
- **THE NATION – Audre Lorde Has More to Tell Us Than a Handful of Quotes**
- **ROOSEVELT HOUSE PUBLIC POLICY INSTITUTE AT HUNTER COLLEGE – Alexis Pauline Gumbs - *Survival Is a Promise: The Eternal Life of Audre Lorde***

Alexis Pauline Gumbs & Mecca Jamilah Sullivan



ROOSEVELT HOUSE
PUBLIC POLICY INSTITUTE
AT HUNTER COLLEGE

HUNTER
The City University of New York

Alexis Pauline Gumbs discusses her book at the Roosevelt House Public Policy Institute at Hunter College. Click image to watch.

BOOK CLUB DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

WARNING: DISCUSSION QUESTIONS INCLUDE SPOILERS!

- ① **In her review of *Survival Is a Promise* for *The Atlantic*, Danielle Amir Jackson writes that the book “[expands] the limits of what a biography can be and hold and feel like.” In what ways did Gumbs’ unique biographical approach and style influence your understanding of Audre Lorde’s life? Did you feel her approach was an effective way to tell Lorde’s story?**
- ② **Throughout the book, Gumbs emphasizes Lorde’s belief in the power of poetry as a force for social change and community. Do you agree that poetry possesses this sort of power?**
- ③ **Stella Bolaki, co-editor of Audre Lorde’s *Transnational Legacies*, writes the following about *Survival Is a Promise*: “I dare you to read it and not recognise that Lorde’s story is inseparable from the story of all life, even yours.” Throughout your reading, what experiences in your own life did the book call to mind? Did you observe any meaningful parallels between Lorde’s life and your own?**

THESE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS WERE CREATED BY THE PUBLISHER FSG AND ARE NOT AFFILIATED WITH BROOKLYN PUBLIC LIBRARY.

BOOK CLUB DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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④

How does Gumbs's portrayal of Audre Lorde's concept of "survival" contrast with your own idea and understanding of what that word signifies? How was Lorde's idea of survival reflected in her philosophical approaches toward community and ecology?

⑤

What aspects of *Survival Is a Promise* most resonated with you and stayed in your mind after your reading? Did reading about Lorde's life and legacy inspire you to consider your larger role and responsibilities in a changing world?

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BONUS CONTENT

Explore **The Audre Lorde Project** in Brooklyn (85 South Oxford Street, Brooklyn, NY, 11217–1607).

The Audre Lorde Project is a Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Two Spirit, Trans and Gender Non Conforming People of Color center for community organizing, focusing on the New York City area. Through mobilization, education and capacity-building, we work for community wellness and progressive social and economic justice. Committed to struggling across differences, we seek to responsibly reflect, represent and serve our various communities.

Check out their upcoming events or sign up to volunteer:
alp.org.

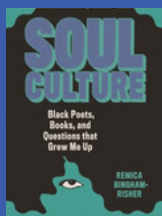
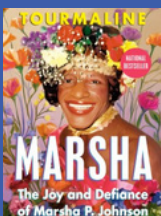
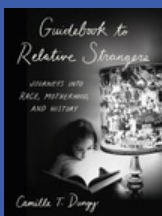


Photo Credit: The Audre Lorde Project

BKLYN BOOKMATCH READALIKES

Did you enjoy *Survival Is a Promise: The Eternal Life of Audre Lorde*? Want to read something similar? Check out these readalike titles below.

- *The Selected Works of Audre Lorde* by Audre Lorde
- *Guidebook to Relative Strangers: Journeys Into Race, Motherhood, and History* by Camille T. Dungy
- *Marsha: The Joy and Defiance of Marsha P. Johnson* by Tourmaline
- *Manifesto: On Never Giving Up* by Bernadine Evaristo
- *Soul Culture: Black Poets, Books, and Questions That Grew Me Up* by Remica Bingham-Risher



YOU CAN ACCESS THE LIST AND PLACE HOLDS ON THESE TITLES IN MULTIPLE FORMATS THROUGH THE BPL CATALOG: [DISCOVER.BKLYNLIBRARY.ORG](https://discover.bklynlibrary.org)



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