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Press Release:

For Immediate Release SpiritHouse Inc www.SpiritHouse-nc.org 919-697-8090 March 1, 2018

SpiritHouse inc begins year four of The Harm Free Zone Book Study and Documentary series with Black Feminist, writer, Scholar & activist Audre Lorde

"When I dare to be powerful, to use my strength in the service of my vision, then it becomes less and less important whether I am afraid." — Audre Lorde

Spirithouse Inc is pleased to kick off Women's History Month by announcing our first book study of 2018. First published in 1984, "Sister Outsider" by Audre Lorde, is a series of essays and speeches that challenges readers to examine the impacts of racism, sexism, ageism, class and homophobia on Black women. Now, more than thirty years later, in the time of the #MeToo and #TimesUp movements, we are witnessing brave women speaking up about gendered violence, sexual violence, criminalization, income inequity, reproductive justice. Yet, these movements, similar to women's movements of the past, often eliminate the impact of racialized oppression from these critical conversations. This deliberate erasure of Black women's issues contributes to a further marginalization of our most vulnerable population.

Lorde speaks to this in her essay "Eye to Eye Black Women, Hatred and Anger" when she states, "We are Black Women born into a society of entrenched loathing and contempt for whatever is Black and female. We are strong and enduring. We are also deeply scarred." For the past three years SpiritHouse has led local communities through a deep examination of the impacts of racism and systemic oppression, through incarceration, disinvestment and serial displacement, on the Black community. Our series has grown from a city-wide book study, with sixteen local churches and organizations, to a Southern regional book study of over fifty organizations. This year we are excited to continue expanding by inviting some of our national partners to join us in this unique experience. We hope that you will join this groundbreaking movement too.

Timeline and next steps March 1-31, 2018

Get your book, establish your study group, join us on social media as we share poetry and other writings by Lorde and other Black women writers and activists. https://www.facebook.com/TheHarmFreeZoneBookStudy

April 1- May 31, 2018 - Receive your Harm Free Zone Book Study "Sister Outsider" Toolkits to begin study group readings, discussions and activities.

For more information and to sign on to this book study please contact Tia Hall at Tia@spiritHouse-nc.org

Welcome:

"When we view living in the european mode only as a problem to be solved, we rely solely upon our ideas to make us free, for these were what the white fathers told us were precious.

But as we come more into touch with our own ancient non-european consciousness of living as a situation to be experienced and interacted with, we learn more and more to cherish our feelings, and to respect those hidden sources of our power from where true knowledge and, therefore, lasting action comes." - Audre Lorde - Poetry is not a Luxury

The work to identify, understand, and heal from the traumas of supremacy and oppression is long, challenging and at times unknowable. Nevertheless it is work that must be done if we are ever going to create a world in which we want and deserve to live. The SpiritHouse Tribe, is full of immense joy and gratitude that you have decided to enter into this healing journey with us. All of us no matter our race, gender, age, ability or sexual orientation have absorbed, ingested and been conditioned by the stories that the "white fathers told us were precious." This conditioning has been passed on through our families for generations, and it now lives deep within our bones. More than theory, recent studies in epigenetics have proven that trauma is, indeed, passed down through our DNA. This trauma has had major impacts on the lives and on the lives of oppressed people of color across the globe.

We have chosen to examine the impacts of racism sexism, ageism and heterosexism through the lens of Audre Lorde's "Sister Outsider," because her writings challenge us all to move through our anger and fear and to recognize the differences that will make us stronger. We hope that this toolkit will help you discover new ways to be in community with each other, and that it will serve as a guide to help you tap into and talk about what you feel and what we must heal for our liberation.

Rather than move through this book linearly, we have grouped the readings into 4 sections. You are welcome to follow our suggestions, or to split the book up in whatever ways make the most sense for you and your group. In each section, we have shared passages from different parts of the book. You are welcomed to use these passages or others of your choosing as prompts for discussions and story circle sharing. We have also shared suggestions of healing teas, music and poems that will help you explore what is ancient, and hidden and what has survived.

Study Group Considerations:

- Get people involved and talking about the book.
- Share The SpiritHouse Press Release explaining 'WHY' the Harm Free Zone Book Study
- Inform people about the <u>Facebook</u> and <u>SpiritHouse pages</u> for updates
- Determine the size capacity for your study group
- Determine the frequency for meeting from April to May. (We recommend a minimum of four meetings)
- Determine the length of time for each meeting and time of day.
- People get hungry. Consider including snacks or potlucks around your gatherings.
- Send out reminders a week in advance of each meeting
- Check-in with fellow readers about securing a copy of the book. Remember the book is available for free on Hoopladigital.com You only need to have a library card from a North American public library
- Have pens and blank paper available.
- Consider having someone besides the facilitator take notes for each gathering
- Have a sign in sheet with contact information at every gathering
- Be mindful of an even exchange so that everyone has access to speak. Utilize the step up/ step up policy. If someone is speaking too much, invite them to step up and listen more. And conversely others, who might be quite involved as listeners, ask them to step up as speakers.
- Be mindful of your group's needs. Do you need translators? Is your meeting space accessible to everyone?
- Consider asking members to take turns in your group to summarize the assigned reading. We have heard this helps when not all participants are able to complete the reading.
- Set the 'intention' at the beginning of each gathering.

Suggested Reading Sections and Schedule:

Section 1 - The Question of Power vs Strength (April 1st - April 14th)

- 1. Forward & Introduction (pages 8-12)
- 2. The Transformation of Silence into Language and action (pages 40 44)
- 3. Eye to Eye: Black Women, Hatred and Anger (pages 145 175)
- 4. The Uses of Anger: Women Responding to Racism (pages 124 133)
- 5. Poetry is not a Luxury (pages 36 39)

Section 2 - The Question of Race (April 15th - April 28th)

- 1. The Master's Tool Will Never Dismantle the Master's House (pages 110-113)
- 2. Age, Race, Class and Sex: Women redefining Difference (pages 114 123)
- 3. An open Letter to Mary Daly (pages 66 73)
- 4. An Interview: Audre Lorde and Adrienne Rich (pages 81 109)

Section 3 - The Question of Gender/Sex (April 29th - May 12th)

- 1. Uses of the Erotic (pages 53 59)
- 2. Sexism: An American Disease in Blackface (pages 60-65)
- 3. Manchild: A Black Lesbian Feminist Response (pages 72 80)
- 4. Scratching the Surface: Some Notes on Barriers to Women and Loving (pages 45 52)

Section 4 - The Global Experience (May 13th - May 26th)

- 1. Learning from the 60s (pages 134 144)
- 2. Grenada Revisited: An Interim Report (pages 176 189)
- 3. Notes from trip to Russia (pages 13 35)

The Story Circle Practice:

Story circles are a process developed by John O'Neal, a former civil rights activist with the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and founder of the Free Southern Theater.

The practice of telling personal stories is a way to build connections with one another, and discover how and why viewpoints of the world vary.

The Process:

- 1. All participants sit in a circle.
- 2. A story prompt is given.
- 3. Each participant has 2 min to tell their story.
- 4. While each person speaks, there is to be no "cross-talk" or interruption.
- 5. Should the participant complete their story before the 2 minutes ends, the circle will remain silent affording the speaker their full two minutes.
- 6. After all the participants have shared, each person then has 1 minute and 30 seconds to end the discussion with "snapshots" which are opportunities to provide feedback, explaining what story-parts they remembered most.

*As you engage these sections, our suggestion is that you share reflections on the reading using the passages provided as a prompt.

The Question of Power vs. Strength:

Suggested Reading Schedule April 1st - April 14th

- A. Welcome (snacks and centering)
 - a. Centering / make room for possibilities (breathing, music, poetry, movement)
 - b. Tea Chamomile A mild, relaxing tea with a delicate flavor, it contains oils that relax the smooth muscles in the stomach. Three cups daily will ease indigestion, irritable bowel problems, and colitis. Choose 100% pure chamomile flowers with a strong, fresh apple aroma. Use 1 tablespoon of flowers per cup of boiling water. Take for 2 months or more for chronic problems.
- B. Story Circle: Passages
 - a. Forward page 9
 - b. The Transformation of Silence page 41
 - c. Eye to Eye: Black Women, Hatred and Anger page 146, 150
 - d. The Uses of Anger: Women Responding to Racism -page 132
 - e. Poetry is not a Luxury page 38, 39
- C. Closing:
- a. Gratitude for the courage involved in participating and sharing oneself D. Resources:
 - a. SONG
 - i. "Breathe" Lalah Hathaway https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kzNyGzXo-To
 - ii. "I am light" India Arie https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OL-gxfx2QtY
 - iii. "She" Laura Mvula https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3J7DbO56QOI
 - b. **POEM**
 - i. Power by Audre Lorde

Forward

Page- 9 - "The white western patriarchal ordering of things requires that we believe there is an inherent conflict between what we feel and what we think- between poetry and theory. We are easier to control when one or part of ourselves is split from one another, fragmented, off balance. There are other configurations, however, other ways of experiencing the world, though they are often difficult to name. We can sense them and seek their articulation."

The Transformation of Silence

Page 41 - "What are the words you do not yet have? What are the tyrannies you swallow day by day and attempt to make your own, until you will sicken and die of them, still in silence?

Eye to Eye: Black Women, Hatred and Anger

Page 146 - "As children we absorb that hatred, passed it through ourselves, and for the most part we still live our lives outside of the recognition of what that hatred really is and how it functions. Echoes of it return as cruelty and anger in our dealings with each other. For each of us bears the face that hatred seeks, and we have each learned to be at home with cruelty because we have survived so much of it within our own lives."

Page 150 - Survival is the greatest gift of love. Sometimes for Black mothers it is the only gift possible, and tenderness gets lost. My mother bore me into life as if etching and angry message into marble."

The Uses of Anger: Women Responding to Racism

Page 132 -"To turn aside from the anger of Black women with excuses or the pretexts of intimidation is to award no one power - it is merely another way of preserving racial blindness, the power of unaddressed privilege, unbreached, intact. Guilt is only another form of objectification. Oppressed people are always being asked to stretch a little more, to bridge the gap between blindness and humanity. Black women are expected to use our anger only in the service of other people's salvation or learning. But that time is over. My anger has meant pain to me but it has also meant survival, and before I give it up I'm going to be sure that there is something at least as powerful to replace it on the road to clarity."

Poetry is not a luxury

Page 38 - "The white fathers told us: I think, therefore I am. The Black mothers within each of us - the poet- whispers in our dreams: I feel, therefore I can be free. Poetry coins the language to express and charter this revolutionary demand, the implementation of that freedom."

Page 39 - "For within living structures defined by profit, by linear power, by institutional dehumanization, our feelings were not meant to survive. Kept around as unavoidable adjuncts or pleasant pastimes, feelings were expected to kneel to thought as women were expected to kneel to men."

Power

By: Audre Lorde

Published In: The Collected Poems of Audre Lorde

https://soundcloud.com/nia-wilson-10/audre-lorde-power

The difference between poetry and rhetoric Is being ready to kill yourself Instead of your children

I am trapped on a desert of raw gunshot wounds And a dead child dragging his shattered black face off the edge of my sleep Blood from his punctured cheeks and shoulders Is the only liquid for miles And my stomach Churns at the imagined taste while My mouth splits into dry lips Without loyalty or reason Thirsting for the wetness of his blood As it sinks into the whiteness Of the desert where I am lost Without imagery or magic Trying to make power out of hatred and destruction Trying to heal my dying son with kisses Only the sun will bleach his bones quicker

A policeman who shot down a ten year old in queens
Stood over the boy with his cop shoes in childish blood
And a voice said "Die you little motherfucker" and
There are tapes to prove it. At his trial
The policeman said in his own defense
"I didn't notice the size nor nothing else
Only the color." And
There are tapes to prove that, too

Today that 37 year old white man
With 13 years of police forcing
Was set free
By eleven white men who said they were satisfied
Justice had been done
And one Black Woman who said
"They convinced me" meaning
They had dragged her 4'10" black Woman's frame
over the hot coals

of four centuries of white male approval until she let go The first real power she ever had And lined her own womb with cement To make a graveyard for our children

I have not been able to touch
The destruction within me.
But unless I learn to use
The difference between poetry and rhetoric
My power will run corrupt as poisonous mold
Or lie limp and useless as unconnected wire
And one day I will take my teenaged plug
And connect it to the nearest socket
raping an 85 year old white woman
who is somebody's mother
and as I beat her senseless and set a torch to her bed
a Greek chorus will sing in 3/4 time
"Poor thing, she never hurt a soul. What beasts they are.



The Question of Race:

Suggested Reading Schedule April 15th - April 28th

- A. Welcome (snacks and centering)
 - a. Centering / make room for possibilities (breathing, music, poetry, movement)
 - b. Tea: Holy Basil (Tulsi) Holy basil benefits include an ability to keep hormone levels balanced. By drinking tulsi tea, or adding tulsi to your meals, you help calm your system and keep your body running smoothly.
- B. Story Circle: Passages
 - a. The Master's Tool Will Never Dismantle the Master's House pages 112and 113
 - b. Age, Race, Class and Sex: Women redefining Difference pages 114 and 123
 - c. An open letter to Mary Daly page 69
 - d. An Interview: Audre Lorde and Adrienne Rich page 93
- C. Closing
- a. Gratitude for the courage involved in participating and sharing oneself D. Resources:
 - a. SONGS
 - i. "Shine" Blitz the Ambassador https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5gheiegmG5Q
 - ii. "Breathing Underwater" Emeli Sande https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ye-3d2QCz2o
 - iii. "Black Is" The Last Poets https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EpLQbhg1Wys
 - iv. "Burning in Birmingham" Amy Leon https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QTxcCZ5przo
 - b. Poem
 - i. A Litany for Survival Audre Lorde

The Master's Tool Will Never Dismantle the Master's House

Page 112 - "Those of us who stand outside the circle of this society's definition of acceptable women those of us who have been forged in the crucibles of difference those of us who are poor who are lesbians who are black who are older know that survival is not an academic skill. It is learning how to stand alone unpopular and sometimes reviled and how to make common cause with those others identified as outside the structures in order to Define and seek a world in which we can all flourish. It is learning how to take our differences and make them strengths. For the Master's tools will never dismantle the Master's house. They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change. And this fact is only threatening to those women who still Define the Master's house as the only source of support."

Page 113 - "women of today are still being called upon to stretch across the gap of male ignorance and to educate men as to our existence and our needs. This is an old and primary tool of all oppressors to keep the oppressed occupied with a master's concerned. Now we hear that it is a task of women of color to educate white women in the face of tremendous resistance as to our existence our differences our relative roles in our joint survival. This is a diversion of energies and a tragic repetition of racist patriarchal thought."

Age, Race, Class and Sex: Women redefining Difference

Page 114 - "for in order to survive those of ask for whom oppression is as American as apple pie have always had to be Watchers to become familiar with the language and manners of the oppressor even sometimes adopting them for some illusion of protection."

Page 123 - "As Paulo Freire shows so well in The Pedagogy of the Oppressed, the true focus of revolutionary change is never merely the oppressive situations which we seek to escape, but that piece of the oppressor which is planted deep within each of us, and which knows only the oppressors' tactics, the oppressors' relationship."

An open Letter to Mary Daly

Page 69 - "When patriarchy dismisses us it encourages our murders. When radical lesbian feminist theory dismisses us, it encourages its own demise."

An Interview: Audre Lorde and Adrienne Rich

Page 93 - "I have always had the sense of Armageddon... the sense of living on the edge of chaos. Not just personally, but on the world level. That we were dying, that we were killing our world- that sense had always been with me. That whatever I was doing, whatever we were doing that was creative and right, functioned to hold us from going over the edge. That this was the most we could do while we constructed some sane future."

A Litany for Survival

By: Audre Lorde

Published In: The Black Unicorn

https://soundcloud.com/nia-wilson-10/audre-lorde-a-litany-for-survival

For those of us who live at the shoreline

Standing upon the constant edges of decision

Crucial and alone

For those of us who cannot indulge the

The passing dreams of choice

Who love in doorways coming and going

In the hours between dawns

Looking inward and outward

At once before and after

Seeking a now that can breed

futures

Like bread in our children's mouths

So their dreams will not reflect the death of ours

For those of us who were imprinted with fear

Like a faint line in the center of our foreheads

Learning to be afraid with our mother's milk

For by this weapon

This illusion of some safety to be found

The heavy-footed hoped to silence us

For all of us

This instant and this triumph

We were never meant to survive.

And when the sun rises we are afraid

It might not remain

When the sun sets we are afraid

it might not rise in the morning

When our stomachs are full we are afraid

of indigestion

When our stomachs are empty we are afraid

We may never eat again

When we are loved we are afraid

Love will vanish

When we are alone we are afraid

Love will never return

And when we speak we are afraid

Our words will not be heard nor welcomed

But when we are silent we are still afraid

So it is better to speak

Remembering

We were never meant to survive

The Question of Gender/ Sex:

Suggested Reading Schedule April 29th - May 12th

- A. Welcome (snacks and centering)
 - a. Centering / make room for possibilities (breathing, music, poetry, movement)
 - b. Tea: Passionflower The flower, vine, and leaves contain substances that have proven, gentle sedating qualities. Recommended by herbalists as a top treatment for insomnia, it's especially helpful when sleep is disturbed by anxiety.
- B. Story Circle Passages
 - a. Uses of the Erotic pages 54 and 56
 - b. Sexism: An American Disease in Blackface pages 62 and 63
 - c. Manchild: A Black Lesbian Feminist Response pages 74 and 76
 - d. Scratching the Surface: Some Notes on Barriers to Women and Loving page 48

C. Closing

- a. Gratitude for the courage involved in participating and sharing oneself
- D. Resources:
 - a. SONGS
 - i. "Chasing" Amy Leon https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HjWmk0TkVWQ
 - ii. "River" Leon Bridges
 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Hegd4xNfRo
 - iii. "Black Love" Gabriel Teodros & SoulChef ft. Sarah MK https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jr5vRaQWJdE
 - iv. "Four Women" Lisa Simone, Dianne Reeves, Lizz Wright, Angélique Kidjo https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7R Qk1AN5S4
 - b. Poem
 - i. There are No Honest Poems About Dead Women by Audre Lorde

Uses of the erotic

Page 54 - "For the erotic is not a question only of what we do; it is a question of how acutely and fully we can feel in the doing. Once we know the extent to which we are capable of feeling that sense of satisfaction and completion we can then observe which of our various life endeavors bring us closer to that fullness."

Page 56 - "The dichotomy between the spiritual and the political is also false, resulting from an incomplete attention to our erotic knowledge. For the bridge which connects them is formed by the erotic - the sensual - those physical, emotional, and psychic expressions of what is deepest and strongest and richest within each of us, being shared: the passions of love in its deepest meaning."

Sexism: An American Disease in Blackface

Page 62 - "In this country, Black women traditionally have had compassion for everybody except ourselves. We have cared for whites because we had to for pay or survival; we have cared for our children and our fathers and our brothers and our lovers. History and popular culture, as well as personal lives are full of tales of Black women who had "compassion for misguided black men." Our scarred, broken, battered, and dead daughters and sisters are a mute testament to that reality."

Page 63 - "It is not the destiny of Black america to repeat white america's mistakes. But we will, if we mistake the trappings of success in a sick society for the signs of a meaningful life. If Black men continue to define "femininity" instead of their own desires, and to do it in archaic european terms, they restrict our access to each other's energies. Freedom and future for Black does not mean absorbing the dominant white male disease of sexism."

Manchild: A Black Lesbian Feminist Response

Page 74 - "Men who are afraid to feel must keep women around to do their feeling for them while dismissing us for the same supposedly "inferior" capacity to feel deeply. But in this way also, men deny themselves their own essential humanity, becoming trapped in dependency and fear."

Page 76 - "It is as hard for our children to believe that we are not omnipotent as it is for us to know it, as parents. Bt that knowledge is necessary as the first step in the reassessment of power as something other than might, age, priviledge or the lack of fear."

Scratching the surface: Some Notes on Barriers to Women and Loving

Page 48 - "The tactic of encouraging horizontal hostility to be cloud more pressing issues of oppression is by no means new, nor limited to relations between men and women... It is the structure at the top which desires changelessness and which profits from these apparently endless kitchen wars."

There are No Honest Poems About Dead Women

By: Audre Lorde

Published In: Our Dead Behind Us

 $\underline{https://soundcloud.com/nia-wilson-10/audre-lorde-there-are-no-honest-poems-about-dead-women}$

What do we want from each other After we have told Our stories to be healed do we want mossy quiet stealing over scars do we want the powerful unfrightening sisters who will make the pain go away mother's voice in the hallway you've done it right the first darling time you will never need to do it again.

Thunder grumbles on the horizon I buy time with another story a pale blister of air cadences of dead flesh obscure the vowels

The Global Experience:

Suggested Reading Schedule May 13th - May 26th

- A. Welcome (snacks and centering)
 - a. Centering / make room for possibilities (breathing, music, poetry, movement)
 - b. Tea: Peppermint This aromatic tea works well to reduce stress and relieves you from anxiety. The menthol contained in peppermint is a natural muscle relaxant. Because of the relaxing effect of peppermint tea and its lack of caffeine, it makes a wonderful tea to drink before going to bed.
- B. Story Circle Passages
 - a. Learning from the 60s pages 134 and 135
 - b. Grenada Revisited: An Interim Report pages 181 and 184
 - c. Notes from Russia page 28
- C. Closing:
 - a. Gratitude for the courage involved in participating and sharing oneself
- D. Resources
 - a. Songs
 - i. "Someday We'll All Be Free" Donny Hathaway https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S043B5fKXSM
 - ii. "Libation" Ursula Rucker https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lTZ9WtG3cJs
 - iii. "We are the People Darker than Blue" Curtis Mayfield https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tm8lcTTDp0o
 - b. Poem
 - i. A Song for Many Movements by Audre Lorde

Learning from the 60s

Page 134 - "There are no new ideas, just new ways of giving those ideas we cherish breath and power in our own living"

Page 135 - One of the most basic Black survival skills is the ability to change, to metabolize experience, good or ill, into something that is useful, lasting, effective. Four hundred years of survival as an endangered species has taught most of us that if we intend to live, we better become fast learners."

Grenada Revisited: An Interim Report

Page 181 - "White America has been well-schooled in the acceptance of Black destruction."

Page 184 - "But which one of us as Black American has ever taken the time to examine this threat of socialism for any reality nearly as destructive as racism is within our lives?"

Notes from trip to Russia

Page 28 - The peoples of the Soviet Union, in many respects impress me as people who cannot yet afford to be honest. When they can be they will either blossom into a marvel or sink into decay. What gets me about the United States is that it pretends to be honest and therefore has so little room to move towards hope. I think that in America there are certain kinds of problems and in Russia there are certain kinds of problems, but basically, when you find people who start from a position where human beings are at the core, as opposed to a position where profit is at the core, the solutions can be very different."

A Song for Many Movements

By: Audre Lorde

Published In: The Black Unicorn

https://soundcloud.com/nia-wilson-10/audre-lorde-a-song-for-many-movements

No one wants to die on the way caught between ghosts of whiteness and the real water none of us wanted to leave our bones on the way to salvation three planets to the left a century of light years ago our spices are separate and particular but our skins sing in contemporary keys at a quarter to eight mean time we were telling the same stories over and over

Broken down gods survive in the crevasses and mudpots of every beleaguered city where it is obvious there are too many bodies to cart to the ovens or gallows and our uses have become more important than our silence after the fall too many empty cases of blood to bury or burn there will be no body left to listen and our labor has become more important than our silence

Our labor has become more important than our silence

CELEBRATE YOUR ACCOMPLISHMENT

Convening Durham- May t/b/d

Gather for community event where you share activities, collages, pictures and poems with fellow readers in the Harm Free Zone Book Study.

Remember to Dance and Laugh.

Continue to envision the world you and your community discover new ways to be in community with each other as we move to heal for our liberation.

Please document your event and share it with us Email photos to mailto: Tia@spirithouse-nc.org





