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The Cancer Journals: Special Edition



Synopsis

Literary Nonfiction. Memoir. African American Studies. LGBT Studies. Moving between journal entry, memoir, and exposition, Audre Lorde fuses the personal and political as she reflects on her experience coping with breast cancer and a radical mastectomy. Includes photos and tributes to Lorde written after her death in 1992. "Grief, terror, courage, the passion for survival and for more than survival, are here in the searchings of a great poet." "Adrienne Rich" "This book teaches me that with one breast or none, I am still me." "Alice Walker

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I cried through most of this book. Not out of pity for what Audre was going through, but simply because I have seldom seen anyone face such a crisis with such nobility and strength. On some level I think we all fear breast cancer. This book took the terror out of it for me and made me feel that if I were to end up with cancer that I would somehow come through it okay. Audre demonstrates that no matter how bad things get there is something to be learned and gained by the experience. She is a very inspiring and admirable woman. She deals with the issue from both a practical, political, intellectual standpoint as well as an emotional one. I would recommend this book for anyone who has, or knows anyone with cancer, and for anyone who simply gets overwhelmed by the thought of someday getting breast cancer. She took on a tough and painful subject with the sensitivity and style of the poet she was, and gave us some wisdom to live by.

I'm a student nurse and bought this book for a class I'm taking. It was an amazing read! I may not have agreed with all of her points considering the medical advances that have been made and changes that have occurred since the original was published, maybe in part due to Audre. It's a very candid take on living with cancer through the eyes of the cancer "warrior." It is a definite must read for anyone in the medical profession since she brings up several events that stood out concerning her nurses and doctors. She was a black, lesbian, feminist, poet, warrior and she really brought a lot of thought provoking topics into my life.

For those familiar with Lorde's work this is definitely a must read. She chronicles her battles with cancer and her body. Lorde even finds a way of theorizing about the way women's bodies, in particular women's breast and hair, are made into the "containers" of femininity in American culture such that to lose them, women are made to feel inadequate.

I think this is an important book for breast cancer survivors to read. It has made me think about a lot of things regarding my recovering. However, I can't help but feel...how? Inferior? Shallow? Like a wimp? I can't even think of a word for it...for choosing to wear a prosthesis and for looking forward to my reconstruction. As if somehow, if I was a better woman or I was a better feminist or a braver survivor I could say, "Forget it!" and walk around the world proudly showing off my one-breasted-ness under my t-shirt. This book is important because it's made me think hard about my post-cancer decisions. However, in the long run, I don't believe Lorde's opinions, experiences, and observations will be helpful for my continued survival. If you have chosen to wear a prosthesis or to get reconstruction, don't look to this book for affirmation, you will just get judgement, although Lorde opines that it is not her *intent* to judge. I also think this book needs to be read in context of the time it was written. Breast cancer care has come a long way in the last 20 years. Lorde's belief that chemotherapy and radiation are in themselves carcinogenic may be true in the most extreme situation, in the most narrow sense, but nowadays the benefits by far outweigh the risks. Thousands upon thousands of survivors are around to attest to that. Sadly, maybe I'm not feminist enough or woman enough to risk my life in order to make the personal political, to prove a point. In reading "The Cancer Journals", I found that Audre Lorde was. And even though it wasn't all doom and gloom, and despite her joyful exultation of the loving women that cared for her, at the end of the book I found it all a little too sad.

Amazing. Simply amazing. Everyone should read it, and especially those affected by cancer.

Considering that 1 in 8 women will have breast cancer in their lifetime, chances are good that you or someone very close to you will have breast cancer. So just read the book already. And check out what I'm doing to continue her empowering work: flattopperpride.org

Lorde's book will be of interest to those battling breast cancer and feminists, but also to anyone wanting to learn from a difficult experience. Lorde teaches us how to speak out against the injustices done women, what it's like to survive in a hostile, male-chauvinist universe. Although the book is sad the wisdom it contains readily makes up for its difficult content. Lorde's struggle is successful because she manages to rise above the difficulties caused by breast cancer--being one-breasted, for example--and overcome them. Her book is visionary.

Audre Lorde gives a good idea of exactly what she's feeling in her journals, even down to the negative aspects of her disease that some would more than likely keep to themselves. I appreciate her frankness and willingness to open up to other women thinking the same things. The thoughts bounced around a bit but overall I appreciate her putting her journey into words.

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