1990 I Am Your Sister Conference fundraising letter by Angela Bowen

Angela Bowen
Celebrating Audre Lorde and her work

October 5-8, 1990
Boston, MA

Dear Friends:

Do you know of Audre Lorde? Have you been moved by the scope and depth of her work, and wished that you could let her know how much you appreciate her contributions? Maybe you’ve wished for an event celebrating her that also used her work to forge connections between us.

If you were arranging such an event, and especially if you were in consultation with Audre herself, you’d have poetry and fiction, music, international food, dancing; you’d have women of all colors, class backgrounds, ages, ethnicities and sexualities, disabled women, indigenous women from this and other countries, and white women committed to anti-racist work. You’d commit to 50% of conference participants being women who are Black, of color or impoverished. You’d have a youth track, including adolescent children of lesbians and gay men, lesbian and gay youth, and youth activists; and you’d have a track for pro-feminist men. You’d bring us together to share what we have learned from Audre’s work about using our difference as a source of strength and power to create ongoing strategies for change. You’d plan it so that women in the community, those in the academy, and those who “work both sides of the street” could exchange, share, interpret and use one another’s experiences to advance our efforts toward freedom.

Sharing with you this desire, a multi-racial group, with Audre’s support, is working on a conference: “I AM YOUR SISTER: Forging Global Connections Across Differences,” to take place Oct. 5-8, 1990 in Boston. Although time is short, we’re shaping an event worthy of Lorde and her work, and beneficial to our future.

Workshops and cultural events are based on Audre’s 13 books of poetry and prose. In “Eye to Eye,” self-defined communities will explore their own angers, vulnerability and power; “From a Land Where Other People Live” will have indigenous women from different continents teach us how to look at life from their standpoint. A quilt commissioned from a Black women’s collective will be raffled to begin a fund for an annual Audre Lorde Writing Sabbatical for a community-based Black lesbian.

You, of course, know that this celebratory conference will take a large amount of money. We have always relied on each other to support our own causes, so we’re counting on you, our community, to support this project as generously as you can. We who have used Audre’s words for enlightenment, for comfort, for courage, know how important a place she fills in our hearts and minds. We who are activists, feminists, lesbians, mothers, educators know how important her presence is in our lives. And all of us who share her vision know that we need to support this event financially, regardless of whether we attend.
Which brings us to the final point. The challenge of the next decade is to put to practical use some of what we have learned in this century. For 25 years, Lorde’s has been one of the strangest voices pointing the way. The groundwork is laid; the time has come to build. Women, working togetherness consciously across differences, will fulfill the promise -- and have a glorious time in the process. We began in February, and we’re on a swift ride to October. We need your dollars now because the expenses have already begun. We’ll appreciate any contribution from $1,000 to $1.00. We have much to do, a short time in which to do it, and a strong commitment to bring women, regardless of income, from the far reaches of the globe.

Help us provide the space to bring together people who are willing to take seriously the challenge to forge a vision of an inclusive politics toward which we all can move. And as you send your money, send your positive energy, your love, your faith that our collective visions, Audre’s and ours, will become a reality.

Forward to Freedom,

The core committee:
Jacqui Alexander, Angela Bowen, Jinny Chalmers, Becky Johnson, Mauri Mollan, Stephanie Poggi, Kate Rushin, Karen Schneiderman, Laura Zimmerman.

P.S. Please make check payable to: I AM YOUR SISTER, and mail to: P.O. Box 269, Astor Station, Boston, MA 02123. For tax deductions, make payable to Boston Women’s Health Book Collective with memo note: Sister Conference. Please indicate if we may recognize your contribution by printing your name on a sponsor list in the celebration program.

My God! What a great letter. How could anyone refuse you?

XXX Melanie Mabry

The University of Iowa
WOMEN’S RESOURCE AND ACTION CENTER
130 N. Madison Street
Iowa City, IA 52242

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Iowa City, Iowa 52240

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5760 EAST ELIDA STREET
TUCSON AZ 85712
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