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Adrienne Rich: The Passing of a Lesbian Icon

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Adrienne Rich was a mother, a lesbian, and one of our country's foremost poets and writers. Today comes the news that she has died at the age of 82.

It is strange that she has passed just when I have been rediscovering her works. I read many of her writings years ago, but have been revisiting them in the past several weeks as part of my new job with a diversity literacy project.

Here is one of my favorite quotes of hers, from "Invisibility in Academe" (1984), in *Blood, Bread, and Poetry* (1986). The sentiment behind it is what has driven much of my own writing about LGBT inclusion in schools and society, although I have not been able to put it quite so well:

> When those who have power to name and to socially construct reality choose not to see you or hear you, whether you are dark-skinned, old, disabled, female, or speak with a different accent or dialect than theirs, when someone with the authority of a teacher, say, describes the world and you are not in it, there is a moment of psychic disequilibrium, as if you looked in to a mirror and saw nothing. Yet you know you exist and others like you, that this is a game with mirrors. It takes some strength of soul—and not just individual strength, but collective understanding—to resist this void, this nonbeing, into which you are thrust, and to stand up, demanding to be seen and heard.

Thank you for demanding to be heard, Adrienne. You have helped make it easier for others to hear us.