

William J. Harris: About Amiri Baraka

In 1934 Amiri Baraka (LeRoi Jones) was born in the industrial city of Newark, New Jersey. After attending Howard University in Washington, D. C., he served in the United States Air Force. In the late fifties he settled in New York's Greenwich Village where he was a central figure of that bohemian scene. He became nationally prominent in 1964, with the New York production of his Obie Award-winning play, *Dutchman*. After the death of Malcolm X he became a Black Nationalist, moving first to Harlem and then back home to Newark. In the mid-1970s, abandoning Cultural Nationalist, he became a Third World Marxist-Leninist. In 1999, after teaching for twenty years in the Department of Africana Studies at SUNY-Stony Brook, he retired. However, in retirement he is as active and productive as an artist and intellectual as he has ever been in his career. Currently he lives with his wife, the poet Amina Baraka, in Newark.

Adapted from the biography in *The LeRoi Jones/Amiri Baraka Reader*. Copyright © 1991 by William J. Harris

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