

R.I.P. Jayne Cortez

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[Jayne Cortez](#), the poet, activist and independent publisher passed in New York City today. Cortez's picturesque poems challenged imperialism, sexism, racism and homophobia with the with rhythms and moxie of jazz. In the '60s she was involved in the Civil Rights Movement via SNCC and organized writing workshops in her native California. She established Bola Press in 1972 and began publishing the first of ten eventual titles. Her musical output started in 1974 with her band The Firespitters and the *Celebrations and Solitudes* debut album. A ten-year marriage to avant jazz pioneer Ornette Coleman produced her son Denardo, who has worked as a drummer in both of his parents' bands. Cortez received the Langston Hughes Award for excellence in the arts and letters, the American Book Award, and the International African Festival Award, among others. Although she was not as known as peers like Amiri Baraka she was acknowledged by them for her searing literary heft. Cortez's poetry-laced funk/jazz excursions called out the oppressor with the authority of a spiritual PI ultimately in search of accountability for the soul.