

## FACEBOOK TRIBUTES

### AMARI BARAKA (LeROI JONES)

[Frank Gagliano](#)

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Amari Baraka died today. Before he took the name of Amari, he was the poet LeRoi Jones and a founding member of the first batch of playwrights in the new Playwright's Unit, when Richard Barr, Clinton Wilder and Edward Albee started the Playwright's Unit at the Vandam Theatre in the early 1960s.

I vaguely remember then LeRoi Jones at our first playwright's meeting. Soon, of course, Jones's play *DUTCHMAN* (that came out of the Unit) was produced at The Cherry Lane Theatre. I was at the preview and it was explosive and the first grenade the poet/playwright/political activist was to lob in the turbulent Civil Rights movement. *DUTCHMAN* takes place in a subway car and is "a one-act showdown between a middle class black man, Clay, and a sexually daring white woman, Lula, ending in a brawl of murderous taunts and confessions."

Soon after, my one-act play, *CONERICO WAS HERE TO STAY* (also coming out of the Playwright's Unit, and also dealing with urban violence) was also produced at The Cherry Lane Theatre by Barr, Wilder, Albee. *CONERICO* takes place on a subway platform. I always regretted that the two subway plays were never produced as a double bill. Well. R.I.P. Amari.

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About this website

NYTIMES.COM

**Amiri Baraka, Polarizing Poet and Playwright, Dies at 79**Mr. Baraka's work was widely anthologized, and he was also long famous as a political firebrand, with critical opinion divided in every arena.