

R.I.P. Maya Angelou

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Poet, author, civil rights activist and professor Maya Angelou passed today at her home in North Carolina. Angelou became famous after the 1969 publication of her first autobiography, *I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings*. She would write a total of 7 memoirs, 3 books of essays and several books of poetry. In the '60's she worked with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. as the Northern Coordinator of SCLC and she also helped Malcolm X with his Organization of Afro-American Unity briefly before he was murdered. Angelou, who received several honorary doctorates, taught at Wake Forest University in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, where she held the first lifetime Reynolds Professorship of American Studies. In 1993 she read "On The Pulse Of Morning" which was commissioned President Bill Clinton at his inauguration. Before she became an author with the help of her friend James Baldwin, she was a dancer and nightclub singer. Angelou's observations on race, America and humanity were respected by her peers and successive generations. Her high profile friendship with Oprah Winfrey gave her a bit of celebrity and kept in the mainstream most recently with Winfrey's Master Class series. Dr. Angelou was just as cognizant of hip-hop as she was the blues and several rappers and entertainers from the hip-hop generation respected her and flocked to her home in North Carolina. At different points in her long career as a wordsmith she also worked as a film producer, television producer, playwright and film director.