

Regular Session, 2014

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 179

BY SENATOR BROOME

CONDOLENCES. Expresses the condolences of the Louisiana State Senate upon the death of famed poet, author, and activist, Dr. Maya Angelou.

A RESOLUTION

To express the sincere condolences of the Senate of the Legislature of Louisiana upon the death of famed poet, author, and activist, Dr. Maya Angelou.

WHEREAS, it is with deep regret and profound sorrow that the Louisiana State Senate has learned of the death of Dr. Maya Angelou, at the age of eighty-six, at her home in Winston-Salem, North Carolina; and

WHEREAS, charismatic and passionate, warm and wise, formidable without being forbidding, Maya Angelou's life was a gift to the world; she selflessly shared her talents as a professor, singer, dancer, actress, author, poet, and activist, and it is appropriate to commemorate her life and legacy; and

WHEREAS, Marguerite Johnson was born on April 4, 1928, in St. Louis, Missouri, to Vivian Baxter Johnson and Bailey Johnson; she grew up between St. Louis and Stamps, Arkansas and spent her early years studying dance and drama in San Francisco before dropping out at age fourteen, instead becoming the city's first African-American female cable car conductor; and

WHEREAS, due to tragic and unfortunate events in her childhood, Maya did not speak for many years as an adolescent; out of her silence, a star of world-famed magnitude was born; and

1 WHEREAS, Maya later returned to high school to finish her diploma and gave birth
2 a few weeks after graduation; as she waited tables to support her son, she acquired a passion
3 for music and dance; and

4 WHEREAS, Maya toured Europe in the mid-1950s in the opera production "Porgy
5 and Bess"; in 1957, she recorded her first album, "Calypso Lady"; and

6 WHEREAS, in 1958, Dr. Angelou become a part of the Harlem Writers Guild in
7 New York and played a queen in "The Blacks", an off-Broadway production by French
8 dramatist Jean Genet; and

9 WHEREAS, Dr. Angelou worked as a coordinator for the Southern Christian
10 Leadership Conference, and lived for years in Egypt and Ghana, where she met
11 Nelson Mandela, who became a lifelong friend, and Malcolm X, whom she remained close
12 to until his assassination, in 1965; and

13 WHEREAS, Dr. Angelou was also a close friend of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.; she
14 helped Dr. King organize the Poor People's March in Memphis, Tennessee, where the civil
15 rights leader was slain on her fortieth birthday; and

16 WHEREAS, in 1971, Dr. Angelou published the Pulitzer Prize-nominated poetry
17 collection "Just Give Me a Cool Drink of Water 'Fore I Die"; and

18 WHEREAS, Dr. Angelou's most revered and acclaimed work was "I Know Why the
19 Caged Bird Sings", which was described as a work of art which eludes description, a tough,
20 funny, lyrical voice that transforms her story from a litany of isolation and suffering into a
21 hymn of glorious human endurance; it made literary history as the first nonfiction best-seller
22 by an African-American woman; and

23 WHEREAS, Dr. Angelou was most famous for her poems and books, which were
24 uplifting, inspiring, and motivating literary masterpieces; in 1993, she was asked to recite
25 her famous classic, "On the Pulse of Morning", at President Bill Clinton's inauguration in
26 1993, and for President George W. Bush, she read "Amazing Peace" at the 2005 Christmas
27 tree lighting ceremony at the White House; and

28 WHEREAS, in 2011, President Barack Obama awarded Dr. Angelou with the
29 country's highest civilian honor, the Presidential Medal of Freedom; she also received
30 presidential recognition with a National Medal of Arts and an honorary National Book

1 Award; and

2 WHEREAS, Dr. Angelou was also one of the first black women film directors; her
3 work on Broadway was nominated for Tony Awards in addition to countless other honors
4 she received throughout her lifetime, including thirty honorary degrees, two NAACP Image
5 Awards, and three Grammy awards; and

6 WHEREAS, Dr. Angelou was a role model to millions across the globe; her work
7 inspired dignitaries and heads of state around the world and she will be remembered as a
8 Renaissance woman, a cultural pioneer, and a beacon of hope and light; and

9 WHEREAS, Dr. Angelou once said that she wished to be remembered as in the
10 closing lines of her famous poem "Still I Rise": "Leaving behind nights of terror and fear,
11 I rise; Into a daybreak that's wondrously clear, I rise; Bringing the gifts that my ancestors
12 gave, I am the dream and the hope of the slave; I rise; I rise; I rise"; and

13 WHEREAS, Dr. Angelou's life was a gift to the world and it is wholly appropriate
14 to express condolences upon her death; she leaves behind a rich, renown history of literary
15 works and poems that will forever speak of the profoundness and greatness of
16 Dr. Maya Angelou.

17 THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Senate of the Legislature of Louisiana
18 does hereby express condolences upon the death of Dr. Maya Angelou; does hereby
19 recognize her life as a treasure to the United States and the world; does hereby
20 commemorate her journey as a black woman born poor who went on to write and recite the
21 most popular presidential inaugural poem in history; does hereby record for prosperity her
22 contributions as an activist and author who recorded and celebrated the experience of being
23 black in the United States; and does hereby express the deep regret of the entire state upon
24 the loss of this legendary and iconic woman.

25 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to the
26 family of Dr. Maya Angelou.

The original instrument and the following digest, which constitutes no part of the legislative instrument, were prepared by J. Ashley Mitchell.

DIGEST

Broome

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