



A BRIEF DISCUSSION ON MAYA ANGELOU'S CHILDHOOD, WRITING, AND THE IMPORTANCE OF HER FAMILY

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Abstract:

Maya Angelou, an American poet and novelist, has had a life that has been rich in both diversity and passion. She is known for her poetry and memoirs, and mainly *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* from 1969. Angelou has also been a singer, a composer, a dancer in *Porgy and Bess*, an actor in the Obie-winning play *The Blacks* and in films like *Calypso Heat Wave* and *How to Make an American Quilt*, a civil rights worker with Martin Luther King, Jr., a journalist in Egypt and Ghana, a writer for TV and Hollywood, and the director of the 1998 film *Down in the Delta*.

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Brief introduction about her achievements:

The poet and author Maya Angelou has had a varied and exciting life. Her writings have won her more than 30 honorary degrees and Pulitzer Prize nominations. She is recognised for her poems and memoirs, notably 1969's "*I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*." In February, she received a Grammy award for the audiobook version of her most recent biography, *A Song Flung Up to Heaven*. She wrote "On the Pulse of Morning" for Bill Clinton's inauguration in

1993. She was only the second poet in U.S. history to be asked to write an inaugural poem. Robert Frost was the first for John F. Kennedy.

Angelou is Wake Forest University's Reynolds Professor of American Studies in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. She is a lecturer and talk show guest who just developed greeting cards for Hallmark. In addition to that, there is no indication that she will slow down shortly. In her art-filled Winston-Salem home, she was eager to talk about her many accomplishments in the professional world. The people in her life who saw her; through the hardships of her youth, instilled in her the confidence to take on whatever obstacle. She encountered in her adulthood a common topic of discourse. Her grandmother Annie Henderson was one of the most influential, devout women whomanaged a general shop in Stamps, Arkansas.

Angelou spent much of her youth with her grandmother, whom she nicknamed "Momma." Vivian Baxter, Maya Angelou's

mother, had a strong will and many successful occupations despite her daughter's frequent absences. She contributed to a crucial trauma in Angelou's life. When Angelou was eight and temporarily living with Baxter in St. Louis, her mother's lover molested her.

The individual was taken into custody, tried, and then given his freedom; shortly afterwards, his body was discovered with signs of blunt force trauma. Angelou refused to speak for years, believing she had caused the murder by telling of the rape. Only her elder brother, Bailey, could encourage her to speak. He continued to be a pillar of strength throughout her life, until a little over a year before his passing. Guy Johnson, Angelou's 57-year-old son, is the author of *Echoes of a Distant Summer* and another book. Here are the few questions discussed with her:

You claimed society's image of the black woman is so harmful to her health that she will die every day until she changes her perspective. Your self-image?

I got a note from Milan University that a person is doing a doctoral dissertation on my work. It is called *Sapienza*, which means wisdom. I am intelligent, knowledgeable and usually curious. I have never been bored in my life.

You have never had boredom, have you? What are the odds of it happening?

Oh my God, if I were bored, it would catch my attention. My first thought would be, "Oh my God, how did it occur, and what is going on?" I could not escape its clutches. Are you kidding? Bored?

When I was 20 years old, I had the realisation that my life would end. It terrified me to such an extent. I was aware of it because I had heard about it and someone had informed me about it. It horrified me that I double-locked the doors and made sure that the windows were also double-locked, all to keep the spectre of death at bay, until I ultimately came to terms with the fact that there was nothing I could do to stop it. After I had finally arrived at that realisation, I was finally able to start appreciating life, and now I do so to a great extent.

The first event freed me temporarily, but the second event set me free for good. The second event took occurred around the same time as the first one, or maybe around a year later. I had two jobs and was taking care of my child. We occupied a little, weeny space for our home. My mother's home consisted of 14 rooms, and she employed a housekeeper to keep everything in order. She was the owner of a hotel as well as several gems. It doesn't matter what she offers; I won't take it. However, once a month, mom would prepare a meal for me.

And whenever I went to her place, she always looked stunning no matter what she was wearing.

One day, after we had had lunch together, she had to go for another appointment. She would don furs from silver foxes, and when she did, the heads of the two foxes would seem to be biting into each other's heads. She would wear the furs with the tails facing front, and then she would turn the garment so that the furs would arch back behind her. When we were about halfway down the hill, she turned to me and said, "Baby," despite being relatively short, she stood just 5 feet 4 1/2 inches tall while I was 6 feet tall. "You know something? I believe you to be the most fantastic lady I have ever seen. We came to a standstill. I gazed down at this gorgeous little lady done up so wonderfully, jewels in her earrings.

She told me that I, together with Mary McLeod Bethune, Eleanor Roosevelt, and my mother were the most incredible people in the world. Even now, it makes me think of tears.

We walked down till we reached the bottom of the hill. In order to get into her automobile, she navigated the roadway to the right and crossed it. After making it across the street, I stopped to wait for the next streetcar. Furthermore, I boarded the streetcar and headed to the vehicle's rear. I will never forget that. I can still see the streetcar's wooden boards in my mind and

how light entered the room via the window. Moreover, I found myself thinking, what if she's right? Both her intelligence and her integrity prevent her from ever telling a falsehood. Imagine for a moment that I actually am someone.

These two events gave me the freedom to conceive expansive concepts, regardless of whether or not I could fully grasp them.

I believe talent is like electricity: no one really knows what it is. I believe it is a massive disservice to our youth to warn them, "Oh, just be cautious constantly. In other words, you won't be good at anything in particular.

I have never heard something so ridiculous. In my opinion, the ability to "juggle" many roles effectively is possible. It is possible if you put in the time and effort to learn about it and apply a decent amount of brainpower, energy, and electricity to the task. You probably will not master the drums as Max Roach did. Drums, however, are something that can be learned. That is how I have felt for a very long time. Do I have the ability to do this? No other black lady will be asked to do it for at least five years if I do not. I reply, "Sure, yes, when do you want it?" It is no secret that my mother was a sailor. The city of Los Angeles was my home for a while. I gave her a ring in San Francisco and proposed we meet halfway between our respective cities since I was heading to New York and didn't know when I would be

returning. Oh, darling, she said, "I needed to see you before I go to sea." You are going to see what, I asked. "I am going to become a sailor," she said. Really, Mom, I urged her, come on. She said, "They told me they do not accept female members into their union." After that, I asked, "You want to bet?" 'I sank my hip through the door so that women of all colours may join that union and sail the seven seas.' Women of many races celebrated their retirement in 1980. She was revered as the ocean's "mother," after all.

Therefore, it is true that we handicap our children and we cripple one other with such labels, such as the idea that someone who works as a brick mason should not have a passion for ballet. Who decided upon such a principle? Have you ever seen someone laying bricks?

Given the eye and the hands, it is only natural that he or she would be interested in watching the ballet. It has reached that level of accuracy, that level of establishment, level of organisation, and that kind of progression from the bottom up.

Do you resent the fact that your mother wasn't there for much of your childhood? Oh, absolutely. Yes. As far as I was concerned, Bailey and I were both abandoned children when we were younger. We did not hear from her; the last

time we spoke was probably not more than two times in seven years or whatever. After that, I concluded that she was hilarious and loving and that there are definitely two distinct types of parents. There is the kind of person who has the potential to be an excellent parent to young children. They put cute tiny bows in the children's hair, beads on their shoestrings, and gorgeous little socks on them before dressing them in these adorable little outfits. However, when those same youngsters reach the ages of 14 or 15, their parents are at a loss for what to say to them as they develop breasts and testosterone begins to affect the guy.

My mother was a poor example of how a parent should treat young children. I thank God every time I think about it — I was transferred to live with my grandfather's mother. Oh, but my mother was a wonderful parent to a young adult while I was growing up. She responded with, "All right." when she learned that I was pregnant. "Could you kindly run me a bath?" Being asked to do anything like that in our household is a really kind gesture. Probably no more than two or three times in my life, she had requested that I draw a bath for her. After that, she invited me into the restroom and thanked me for taking care of her. In the bathroom, my mother took a seat in the tub. She inquired as to whether or not I had feelings for the lad. I said no. "Does he have feelings for you?" I said no. "Well,

there's no need to destroy three lives, is there?" We are planning to have a child together."

In addition to that, she was a nurse. Thus she was the one who delivered Guy. She provided my ride to the emergency room. My physician was not present since he was celebrating one of the Jewish festivals at the time. After my mom informed the nurses who she was and cleansed her hands, they brought me into the delivery room to meet my new baby brother. She knelt down next to me on the table, pressed her shoulder on my knee, and grasped my hand. Whenever she felt a twinge of discomfort, she cracked a joke. I would just laugh and laugh and try to keep my composure. And she said, "Here he comes, here he comes" many times. And she started with him, my kid, putting her hand on him first.

Consequently, she set me free throughout her whole life. I was granted complete freedom. They believed in me, appreciated what I sought to do, and respected me as a person. I lived in Los Angeles then, so when I went to see her in San Francisco, I would stay out at an after-hours club until very late in the evening. Mother was familiar with everyone there, even the bartenders. The bartender would be talking on the phone while I had a drink and laughing, and he would tell me, "Yeah, Mama, yeah, she's here." When my mother called, she would tell me, "Baby, it's your

mother. Visit your house. Make it known to the people on the street that you have someplace to go. Your mom and Bailey always helped you. Do you believe they were more careful since you were quiet? My mother and brother understood I would revert to mutism in times of dispute and stress. Mutism is addicting. I do not believe its abilities fade. It is almost behind my right or left shoulder. When I move swiftly, it disappears. However, it continually says, "Come back to me. "Stop talking; you have nothing to do." When stressed, my mother or brother would come wherever I was, New York, California, and say, "Hello, hello, speak to me." Onward! Let us play Scrabble and converse. Story?" Because they saw mutism's strength, I finally recognised their love.

What went through your mind during the years you were mute?

Yes, I did remember much poetry. I would put my memory to the test by trying to recall a discussion I had missed. I committed sixty sonnets by Shakespeare to memory. Also, I never really heard any of the things I remembered uttered, so I had to memorise them in my brain using the rhythm I imagined. Edgar Allan Poe was one of my favourite authors, and I memorised anything I could get my hands on by him. I also used to remember 75

poems by Paul Laurence Dunbar, whom I continue to like. As simple as popping in a CD. Just by thinking, "That's the one I want to hear," I could quickly and easily recall the desired piece from memory.

In that respect, I think that my brain underwent a process of self-repair over those years. There was no involvement, in my opinion, from the parts of the brain responsible for producing and encouraging spoken communication. Since brain cell B was not responding, I think that brain synapses instead travelled from A to R. Do you get what I am trying to say here? As a result, I was able to train myself to have an exceptional recall, which has let me acquire a surprisingly large number of tongues. It is as if I have command of the brain; I can just tell it to do what I want. It would be best if you kept in mind this and that, I insist. Moreover, we have a catch!

Your quiet years were spent with grandma. Her reply: "Sister, Momma does not care what they say about you being an idiot because you cannot talk," she said. Mom cares not. When you and God are ready, I will be a teacher."

If your mother liberated you to think big, what gifts did your grandmother give you? I was showered with presents from her assurance of my love's existence. She instilled in me the values of honesty and

humility by discouraging me from both of these vices. She helped me realise that it's okay to say that the emperor isn't wearing any clothes. He may be decked out in period attire, but if I don't see it, I'll have to acknowledge that I don't. I suppose she is the reason why I have always been a really straightforward female. The world consists entirely of what you now see. Sorry, I can't come up with any elaborate disguises. Also, I learned from her not to whine. Approximately twice a year, my grandma would do one special thing for me.

An annoying whiner or complainer might be seen coming down the hill by mom. That's when she'd invite me in. She constantly pleaded with her sisters to "Sister, Sister, come out here." I kept looking up the hill, and sure enough, there was a whiner slogging along. Once the customer entered the shop, my grandma would inquire, "How are you feeling today?"

Aw, Sister Henderson, I can't tell you how much I despise winter. My shins are on fire and my face is splitting apart. Even still, all I ever got from my mother was a "Uh-huh" and her gaze. My grandma would always say, "Sister, come here," as soon as the visitor left. I'd place myself squarely in front of her. She would sadly remark, "There are individuals all around the globe who went to sleep last night and did not wake again."

Their bedding has morphed into makeshift winding sheets and cooling boards. They'd give everything to hear her gripe for just five more minutes.

When you were a kid, did you ever write anything?

I suppose I have always had a pen in my hand. I have a diary I started keeping when I was nine. My grandmother's papers were burned, but the guy who handed them to me stored them in his house across the street. Some essays were mine. When I was little, and even now, I adored poetry. However, at the time, I adored it. I always put my thoughts on paper, no matter how bad it was.

"On the Pulse of Morning" was written in a hotel room, I read. Did you write it while travelling?

I write at a Winston hotel where I stayed for a month. I aimed to be in room by 6 a.m., so I prepare coffee and bring a thermos. I would have removed all decorations from the room. I have a bed, table, chair, Roget's Thesaurus, a dictionary, a sherry, a yellow pad, and pens. I work till 1 if it is going well, 12 if not. Then, I go home and pretend to be normal.

Where does writing rank in your accomplishments?

I am delighted with my identity as a creator of words, whether prose, poetry or anything else. Unless they are a hermit or mute, everyone on the planet communicates verbally. I am aware of no other type of art that is consistently used. The writer must take the most common parts of speech (nouns, pronouns, verbs, adverbs) and roll them into a ball, causing them to bounce and elicit either a romantic or combative response from the reader. My greatest joy in life is writing.

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