

The International Civil Rights Center & Museum Greensboro, North Carolina

For Immediate Release

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CONTACT

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MAYOR NANCY VAUGHAN TO LEAD GREENBORO'S TRIBUTE TO MAYA ANGELOU AT THE CIVIL RIGHTS MUSEUM

The International Civil Rights Center & Museum (ICRCM) will celebrate the life of the Piedmont Triad's legendary poet Maya Angelou (April 4, 1928 - May 28, 2014), on Friday, June 6, 2014, 6:30 p.m. The tribute coincides with the monthly First Friday festivities. Mayor Nancy Vaughan will lead the program with the presentation of a resolution signed by members of City Council. The instrumentalists and vocalists to appear include: harpist Rycal Simmons Blount who performs with the Temple Brass at Providence Baptist Church; Northeast High School Jazz Band under the direction of Michael Yelverton, and as well the Vocal Honors Ensemble and Musical Misfits under the direction of Robert Jarrell; and The Brothas, a band whose versatility ranges from gospel to jazz to hip-hop. Several local women will share their reflections on Angelou's legacy as they read selections of her poems. Among the lineup of "phenomenal women," as the famed poet would call them, are: Amelia Parker, founding executive director of ICRCM; Shirley Frye, Chair, Joseph M. Bryan Foundation; Adri-Anne Jones, professor of English, North Carolina A & T State University; Valerie A. Johnson, Director, Honors Program, Bennett College for Women; and others. The First Friday event is open to the public free of charge.

Angelou is highlighted in ICRCM's main exhibition—*The Battlegrounds*—that examines efforts of committed activists to dismantle institutionalized practices of racial segregation and oppression. During her varied career Angelou served as editor of the *Arab Observer* while living in Cairo, Egypt, and as feature editor for *The African Review*, and writer for *The Ghanaian Times* while living in Accra, Ghana. She also taught in the School of Music and Drama at the University of Ghana in nearby Legon. During her time in Ghana, Angelou met Malcolm X. Upon returning to the United States she worked with him in building the Organization of Afro-American Unity, inspired in part by the Organization of African Unity (now the African Union). When the organization dissolved following the assassination of Malcolm X, Angelou would serve as the Northern Coordinator for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, at the invitation of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. who headed the civil rights organization.

Celebrated around the world, Angelou like many others, had humble beginnings. The Oprah Winfrey Foundation underwrote one of the Museum's long-term exhibitions in honor of Angelou. Bearing the title of one of her signature poems, *And Still I Rise!*, the installation features African American performing artists and athletes who broke racially restrictive barriers with relentless determination. An excerpt from the poem introduces the exhibition with a profound sense of optimism as it proclaims:

Leaving behind nights of terror and fear
I rise
Into a daybreak that's wondrously clear
I rise
Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave,
I am the dream and the hope of the slave.
I rise

Like the lives of those who achieved success on the most celebrated stages and fields of competition, Parker reflected on the life and legacy of Angelou with these words: "She was a gift to this world, and she showed us how to live life even when you are challenged by obstacles."

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A TRIBUTE TO DR. MAYA ANGELOU

International Civil Rights Center & Museum
134 South Elm Street
Greensboro, North Carolina 27401

Friday, June 6, 2014
6:30 p.m.

336.274.9199

www.sitinmovement.org