

Faith and Learning Scholar Community: Dialogue, Agenda and Leading Questions
 Reading 4: Agenda for the Dialogue and Leading Questions
 March 19, 2024

Commencement Address by Maya Angelou

Letter To My Daughter Random House: New York 2008

Dialogue: Leading Questions:

1. Go around the table and introduce yourself and share ...

Commencements:

How many commencements have you had in your life so far?

What has been the most memorable and why?

Do you remember who spoke at any of your commencements...or a “gem of wisdom” from the speech?

2. Virtue: Courage

Growing in the VIRTUE of COURAGE is the message of Dr. Angelou’s message:

Commencements initiate life responsibilities!

What is courage? Have you spent your educational years of study and research developing COURAGE to “transform the world”?

-Share one experience that you have recently had when you witnessed courage in yourself, your relationships and/or our world.

3 Commencement Address: Maya Angelou

Share your first response to the poem and a favorite/challenging stanza(s).

Lines and stanzas from Angelou for the dialogue sharing:

❖ “You have shown the most remarkable of all virtues: Courage

To arrive at this moment

To invent this moment

Courage is your greatest achievement.

HOWEVER,

“Beyond the tassel you will see injustice.

What will you do with the courage?

What will you do in the face of.....?”

“Cruelties

-Irrational hate

-Bedrock sorrow

-Terrifying loneliness

This is your work.”

4. Discuss the African adage:

“The trouble for the Thief is not how to steal the Chief’s Bugle, but where to play it.”

5. Other lines to ponder:

- “To make this country, our country more than it is today.
This education is so that you can transform your country and world.”
- “And you will not be able to visit them even with an invitation since that is so you must face our presence.”
- “You are prepared.”

- “One person, with good purpose, can constitute the majority.”
- “Courage is one of the virtues that Maya highlights with the words of her poem and it is linked to “you are prepared. Go out and transform your world.”



Maya Angelou,

Maya Angelou, orig. **Marguerite Johnson**, (born April 4, 1928, St. Louis, Mo., U.S.—died May 28, 2014, Winston-Salem, N.C.), U.S. poet and [civil rights activist](#). She was raped at age eight and went through a period of muteness. She published seven autobiographies, three books of essays, several books of poetry, and is credited with a list of plays, movies, and television shows spanning over 50 years. She received dozens of awards and more than 50 honorary degrees.^[3] Angelou's series of seven autobiographies focus on her childhood and early adult experiences. The first, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* (1969), tells of her life up to the age of 17 and brought her international recognition and acclaim.

Angelou was also an actress, writer, director, and producer of plays, movies, and public television programs. In 1982, she was named the first Reynolds Professor of American Studies at [Wake Forest University](#) in [Winston-Salem](#), North Carolina. Angelou was active in the [Civil Rights Movement](#) and worked with [Martin Luther King Jr.](#) and [Malcolm X](#). In 1993, Angelou recited her poem “[On the Pulse of Morning](#)” (1993) at the [first inauguration of Bill Clinton](#), making her the first poet to make an inaugural recitation since [Robert Frost](#) at the [inauguration of John F. Kennedy](#) in 1961. In 2002 she published her sixth volume of memoirs, *A Song Flung Up to Heaven*. In 2011 she was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

Letter to My Daughter (2009) is the third book of essays by African-American writer and poet [Maya Angelou](#). Angelou had no daughters herself, but was inspired to write *Letter* as she was going through 20 years of notes and essay ideas, some of which were written for her friend [Oprah Winfrey](#). Angelou wrote the book for the thousands of women who saw her as a mother figure, and to share the wisdom gained throughout her long life.

Letter consists of 28 short essays, which includes a few poems and a commencement address, and is dedicated to “the daughter she never had”.^[2] Reviews of the book were generally positive; most reviewers recognized that the book was full of Angelou's wisdom and that it read like words of advice from a beloved grandmother or aunt.

Although she had no daughters, and gave birth to a son (Guy Johnson), which she called “the best thing that ever happened to me in my life”,^[3] many women in Angelou's career looked to her as a mother figure. She wrote *Letters* to speak to those women and to share with them the wisdom she has gained throughout her long life.