



Board of Commissioners of Cook County

118 North Clark Street
Chicago, IL

Legislation Text

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PROPOSED RESOLUTION

HONORING THE LIFE AND LEGACY OF DR. MAYA ANGELOU

WHEREAS, God has called from our midst Dr. Maya Angelou on May 28, 2014; and

WHEREAS, Maya Angelou was an African American poet, author, singer and dancer; and

WHEREAS, She published seven autobiographies, three books of essays, and several books of poetry and was credited with movies, and television shows spanning more than 50 years; and

WHEREAS, born Marguerite Annie Johnson on April 4, 1928 (Maya Angelou) was the second child of Bailey Johnson and Vivian Johnson; and

WHEREAS, her older brother Bailey Jr, nicknamed Marguerite “Maya” derived from “My” or “My Sister”; and

WHEREAS, during the 1950’s she took up modern dance classes and met choreographer Alvin Ailey, with whom she formed a dance team, calling themselves “Al and Rita,” and performed modern dance at fraternal black organizations throughout San Francisco; and

WHEREAS, beginning in 1954 she began to dance professionally in clubs around San Francisco where she sang and danced calypso music under the name of Marguerite Johnson but at the suggestion of her managers changed it to Maya Angelou, a distinctive name that set her apart and captured the feel of her calypso dance performances; and

WHEREAS, in the 1968 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. asked Maya Angelou to organize a march but before it could take place Dr. King was assassinated on her 40th birthday, it devastated by this loss she was encouraged by her friend James Baldwin to write about her pain; and

WHEREAS, She wrote, produced and narrated Black, Blues, Black a ten part series of documentaries about the connection between blues music and black Americans’ African heritage for National Education Television, the precursor of PBS; and

WHEREAS, In 1969 addition, she wrote her first autobiography, I know Why the Caged Bird Sings, which brought her international acclaim and recognition; and

WHEREAS, during the 1970’s Maya Angelou worked as a composer, writing for singer Roberta Flack, as well as film scores, and she also appeared in a supporting role in the television miniseries Roots; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Maya Angelou received over thirty honorary degrees from colleges and universities from all over the world including in 1981 the lifetime Reynolds Professorship of American Studies at Wake Forest University in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, and considered herself a teacher who wrote on various subjects of interest including ethics, theology, science, theater, and philosophy just to name a few; and

WHEREAS, in 1993, Dr. Maya Angelou recited her poem “One the Pulse of Morning” at the inauguration of President William Jefferson Clinton, becoming the first poet to make an inaugural recitation since Robert Frost at President John F. Kennedy’s inauguration in 1961; and

WHEREAS, her recitation resulted in more fame and recognition for her pervious works and broadened her appeal across educational, racial and economic boundaries; and

WHEREAS, one of Dr. Maya Angelou quotes perfectly captures her indomitable spirit “all my life, everything that I have done was about survival not just rare, awful plodding survival but survival with grace and faith. While one may encounter many defeats, one must not be defeated”; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Maya Angelou was truly a phenomenal woman who’s love for poetry, commitment to the arts, dedication to activism, and true humanitarianism will live on in the hearts of many generations to come; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Maya Angelou is survived by her son Guy Johnson; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that I Toni Preckwinkle, and the Cook County Board of Commissioners, on behalf of the 5.2 million residents of Cook County, do hereby express our deepest sympathy to the family of the late Dr. Maya Angelou for the invaluable contributions that she has made to the citizens of Cook County, Illinois; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that a suitable copy of this Resolution be spread upon the official proceedings of this Honorable Body and that an official copy of the same is tendered to the family of Dr. Maya Angelou.