Dr. Maya Angelou

AUTHOR, POET, ACTRESS

1928-2014

An author, poet, actress and champion of civil rights, Dr. Maya Angelou was one of the most dynamic voices in American arts.

Her book “I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings,” published in 1969, established Dr. Angelou as a major figure in literature. She would go on to write 33 more books, including “Just Give Me a Cool Drink of Water ’Fore I Die,” which was nominated for the Pulitzer Prize for poetry.

An extraordinarily versatile woman, Dr. Angelou was also a singer, an actress and a writer, director and producer of plays, movies and television programs. Her poem “On the Pulse of Morning” was heard by millions during the inauguration of President Bill Clinton and won her a Grammy for best spoken-word recording.

In 1981 she was named the first Reynolds Professor of American Studies at Wake Forest University, and she made Winston-Salem her home for the rest of her life.

In a career spanning more than 50 years, Dr. Angelou received more than 50 honorary degrees and dozens of awards, among them the National Medal of Arts and the Presidential Medal of Freedom. Her portrait was installed in the National Portrait Gallery in Washington, D.C. in 2014.