

# A Journey Through Maya Angelou's Life

## Walnut Terrace Center



Take a journey through Maya Angelo's life as we read and discuss her autobiographies in chronological order throughout 2021-2022. Maya Angelou wrote seven (7) autobiographies that span her life. The themes throughout these autobiographies include racism, identity, family, and travel. Beginning with *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* and ending with her final autobiography, *Mom & Me & Mom*, Angelou uses the metaphor of a bird (which represents the confinement of racism and depression) struggling to escape its cage. Ms. Angelou's original goal in writing her autobiographies was to write about the lives of black women in America, but it evolved in her later volumes to document the ups and downs of her own personal and professional life.

*These book discussions are being offered in-person or virtual. Space is limited, pre-registration is required.*



***I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*** (1969)  
Describes Ms. Angelou's early years. This coming-of-age-story illustrates how strength of character and a love of literature can help overcome racism and trauma.  
April 20, 21 Tue 6-8pm Fee: \$3

***Gather Together in My Name*** (1974) This book follows Angelou, called Rita, from the ages of 17 to 19. The book "depicts a single mother's slide down the social ladder into poverty and crime." The title of the book is taken from the Bible, but it also conveys how one black female lived in the white-dominated society of the U.S. following the Second World War.  
July 13, 21 Tue 6-8pm Fee: \$3

***Singin' and Swingin' and Gettin' Merry Like Christmas*** (1976) Set between 1949 and 1955, this book spans Angelou's early twenties. In this volume, Angelou describes her struggles to support her young son, form meaningful relationships, and forge a successful career in the entertainment world.  
Oct 19, 21 Tue 6-8pm Fee: \$3

***The Heart of a Woman*** (1981) Recounts events in Angelou's life between 1957 and 1962 and follows her travels to California, New York City, Cairo, and Ghana as she raises her teenage son, becomes a published author, becomes active in the civil rights movement, and becomes romantically involved with a South African anti-apartheid fighter. One of the

PARKS, RECREATION  
AND CULTURAL  
RESOURCES

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most important themes of *The Heart of a Woman* is motherhood, as Angelou continues to raise her son. The book ends with her son leaving for college and Angelou looking forward to newfound independence and freedom.

Jan 18, 22 Tue 6-8pm Fee: \$3

### **All God's Children Need Traveling Shoes**

(1986) Set between 1962 and 1965, the book begins when Angelou is 33 years old, and recounts the years she lived in Accra, Ghana. The book, deriving its title from a Negro spiritual, begins where Angelou's previous memoir, *The Heart of a Woman*, ends — with the traumatic car accident involving her son Guy — and closes with Angelou returning to America.

April 19, 22 Tue 6-8pm Fee: \$3

**A Song Flung Up to Heaven** (2002) Set between 1965 and 1968, it begins where Angelou's previous book *All God's Children Need Traveling Shoes* ends, with Angelou's trip from Accra, Ghana, where she had lived for the past four years, back to the United States. Two "calamitous events" frame the

beginning and end of the book—the assassinations of Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, Jr. Angelou describes how she dealt with these events and the sweeping changes in both the country and in her personal life, and how she coped with her return home.

July 19, 22 Tue 6-8pm Fee: \$3

**Mom & Me & Mom** (2013) Focuses, for the first time in her books, on Angelou's relationship with her mother, Vivian Baxter. The book explains Baxter's behavior, especially Baxter's abandonment of Angelou and Angelou's older brother when they were young children and fills in "what are possibly the final blanks in Angelou's eventful life". The book also chronicles Angelou's reunion and reconciliation with Baxter

Oct 18, 22 Tue 6-8pm Fee: \$3



Masks and wellness screenings are required for all participants. During the screening, you will be asked a few short questions and a temperature check will be performed with a touchless thermometer. Those who do not pass the screening will not be allowed to participate. **Registration is required for all programs.**

#### **How to Register:**

1. Online via RecLink [parks.raleighnc.gov](https://parks.raleighnc.gov)
2. In-person at any Raleigh PRCR facility

Walnut Terrace Center

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