

# OPINION

## THE CHRONICLE

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### Angelou's Olympic Contribution



Our very own Dr. Maya Angelou has added another glorious accomplishment to her already stellar resume. Angelou, a longtime Winston-Salem resident and a Wake Forest University professor, was asked to pen a poem for the 2008 Olympics, which are going on as we type in Beijing, China.

Of course, Dr. Angelou is no novice when it comes to writing poems for high profile events. Her poem, "On the Pulse of Morning," which she wrote and recited for Bill Clinton's 1993 Presidential Inauguration, is a classic. We think this one will be too.

### AMAZEMENT AWAITS

BY MAYA ANGELOU

Sheer amazement awaits  
 Amazement luxuriant in promise  
 Abundant in wonder

Our beautiful children arrive at this Universal stadium  
 They have bathed in the waters of the world  
 And carry the soft silt of the Amazon, the Nile,  
 The Danube, the Rhine, the Yangtze and the Mississippi  
 In the palms of their right hands.  
 A wild tiger nestles in each armpit  
 And a meadowlark perches on each shoulder.

We, the world audience, stand, arms akimbo,  
 Longing for the passion of the animal  
 And the melody of the lark  
 The tigers passion attend the opening bells,  
 The birds sing of the amazement which awaits.

The miracle of joy that comes out of the gathering of our best,  
 bringing their best,  
 Displaying the splendor of their bodies and the radiance of their  
 agile minds to the cosmos.  
 Encouragement to those other youth caught in the maws  
 of poverty,  
 Crippled by the terror of ignorance.

They say Brothers and Sisters, Yes, try. Then try harder.  
 Lunge forward, press eagerly for release.  
 The amazement which awaits is for you.  
 We are here at the portal of the world we had wished for  
 At the lintel of the world we most need.  
 We are here roaring and singing.  
 We prove that we can not only make peace, we can bring  
 it with us.

With respect for the world and its people,  
 We can compete passionately without hatred.  
 With respect for the world and its people,  
 We can take pride in the achievement of strangers.  
 With respect for the world and its people,  
 We can share openly in the success of friends.  
 Here then is the Amazement  
 Against the odds of impending war  
 In the mouth of bloody greed  
 Human grace and human spirit can still conquer.  
 Ah ... We discover, we ourselves  
 Are the Amazement which awaits  
 We are ourselves Amazement.

### President Hearn

We join the rest of the community in mourning the passing of Thomas Hearn, the man who helped to put Wake Forest, and by extension, Winston-Salem on the map.

The former president of the university died this week after a lengthy battle with brain cancer. Hearn retired in 2005, soon after having surgery to treat the cancer. Contrary to popular belief, he did not step down at Wake because of his illness; he had made plans to retire way before that. Looking back at his more than two decades at the school, there's no wonder why he felt there was little else he could achieve.

He was only 45 when he arrived at the campus in the early 1980s to start his run as the school's 12th president. During his reign, Wake Forest flourished. The school had really only been known in local circles for its academic vigor and flair. Largely because of Hearn, the world would learn that as well.

He increased the school's coffers, recruited academic super-

stars and made the controversial decision to sever Wake's governance by the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina. As a result, the school's academic rigor has been constantly attested to by U.S. News & World Report and student enrollment rose through the roof. And few schools can boast that they've hosted two presidential debates like Wake has in 1988 and 2000.



Hearn

Hearn had his detractors, like all successful leaders. Some students complained that he wasn't warm and fuzzy; some faculty members lobbied similar complaints. But Hearn was Hearn, and Wake Forest and all of us should be thankful for that.

A memorial service will be held on Friday at 3 p.m. in Wait Chapel. In lieu of flowers, memorials can be made to the Wake Forest University Brain Tumor Center of Excellence, Office of Development, Medical Center Boulevard, Winston-Salem, NC 27157-1021.

## The Definition Of INSANITY:

Doing the ..



same thing over...



and over...



...and expecting a different result...

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## Bi-racial 'Black' Leaders



George Curry  
 Guest Columnist

If you had a choice of color  
 Which one would you choose  
 my brothers  
 If there was no day or night  
 Which would you prefer to be  
 right.

- Curtis Mayfield,  
 "Choice of Colors"

While Barack Obama was pondering whether to seek his party's nomination for president, there was another development already taking place in the Black community. More than any time in memory, there has been a growth in the number of people of biracial parentage assuming leadership roles in largely Black cities and organizations. They include Washington, D.C. Mayor Adrian Fenty, NAACP President/CEO Benjamin Jealous and Maryland Lieutenant Governor Anthony G. Brown.

As with so many things in the African-American community, the issue of color is a complicated one.

From the days slave masters forced themselves on Black women, there have been bi-racial children, some taking on the color of their mother and others looking as white as any White man. Even today, more than nearly 400 years later, some Blacks can still pass for White.

Complicating matters within the community, however, are the mixed signals Blacks have historically sent on color. In many social gatherings, a premium was placed on what was then called light-bright-and-damned-near-White. Some social clubs required potential members to



Mayor Fenty



Lieutenant Gov. Brown



Jealous

pass the paper bag test - if you were darker than a paper bag, you couldn't join.

But all of that changed - or, at least was challenged - during the Black Power Movement of the late 1960s. Black was in, White was out. No more White dolls, no more European beauty standards, no more self-hate. We were taught to love ourselves. Of course, the Black Pride Movement never took full hold in our community - after trying an Afro, James Brown even went back to his scary curl - but it represented a significant step in the right direction.

Now some of us would rather  
 cuss and make a fuss  
 Than to bring about a little  
 trust  
 But we shall overcome our  
 beliefs someday  
 If you'll only listen to what I  
 have to say.

With remnants of the live-and-let live spirit of the 1960s still in place, color isn't any less complicated today. Clarence Thomas, a dark-skinned man, is more hostile to civil rights than any of the White conservatives on the U.S. Supreme Court. Yet, Walter White - who, by all appearances, looked White - was an ardent civil rights activist with the NAACP, serving as executive secretary from 1931-1955.

Derrick Bell, a law professor at New York University,

reads nothing special into the increasing number of bi-racial leaders.

"It shows that interracial unions are on the rise," he explained. "Obviously a number of young Whites, male and female, are looking beyond race in choosing whom they wish to marry."

Until the U.S. Supreme Court struck down anti-miscegenation laws in 1967 (Loving v. Virginia), interracial marriages were illegal in 16 states. According to the Census Bureau, the number of interracial marriages increased from less than 1 percent in 1970 to slightly more than 5 percent in 2000.

And not all products of these unions accept others' definition of them. Consider this exchange between Michelle Martin, host of NPR's "Tell Me More," and Ben Jealous.

MARTIN: One other interesting thing about you is that you are also biracial as is Barack Obama, as is the lieutenant governor of Maryland, as is the mayor of Washington.

JEALOUS: Can I, can I make a small correction there?

MARTIN: Of course.

JEALOUS: I'm black, you know the only thing that we have, you know, the only definition that's out there on the books if you will, are state laws, and my family is from Virginia. When I was born ... the law said ... if you were at least 1/32nd of African descent, you were black, end

of story. White was an exclusive definition; black was inclusive definition...

The real issue, says Luke Harris, a professor at Vassar College, is not what people call Jealous - whose father is White and mother is Black - but how those in that group relate to the Black community.

"Biracial folk have always played significant leadership roles in the Black community. We need only think of Frederick Douglass," Harris said. "Whether their increased participation in these roles signals something good or bad depends on the ways in which they relate to the Black community. Do they see themselves as full-fledged members of our community? Do they offer a politics that genuinely reflect the interests of our community? These are the sorts of questions that will have to be asked."

I said now people must prove  
 to the people  
 A better day is coming for  
 you and for me  
 With just a little bit more  
 education  
 And love for our nation  
 Would make a better society.

George E. Curry, former editor-in-chief of *Emerge* magazine and the *NNPA News Service*, is a keynote speaker, moderator, and media coach. He can be reached through his Web site, [www.georgecurry.com](http://www.georgecurry.com).

## Juveniles don't belong in adult prisons



Marian Wright Edelman  
 Guest Columnist

Jails and prisons are dangerous places for anybody, but especially for children and teens. Many of these institutions house vicious predators who have been locked up for brutal violent crimes. Yet on any given day, approximately 9,500 juveniles under the age of 18 are locked up in adult penal institutions. Children as young as 15 can be prosecuted as adults in many states without review by a judge or a court hearing.

The Campaign for Youth Justice report, "Jailing Juveniles: The Dangers of Incarcerating Youth in Adult Jails in America," released in November 2007, outlines the challenges to keeping children safe in adult jails. It catalogs the numerous jurisdictions throughout the United States where teens are placed

in great danger because of the variety of flawed policies and laws governing juvenile incarceration. In 44 states and the District of Columbia, juveniles as young as 14 can be tried in the adult criminal system. Forty states either permit or mandate the jailing of young people in adult facilities before trial.

The report argues that children and teens should not be held to the same standard of accountability for their actions as grown-ups, citing research that shows the developmental differences between adolescents and adults. These findings indicate that the prefrontal cortex, which governs the "executive functions" of reasoning, advanced thinking and impulse control, is one of the last areas of the brain to mature.

In numerous cases, there is no public safety justification for locking up these young people in adult prisons. Juveniles may be held in adult jails for months or even years, although most of them are not charged with a violent crime, and many will not be convicted of any crime. Nevertheless,

they languish behind bars with dangerous criminals and are at great risk of being raped and beaten. Many are pushed to attempt suicide.

As in the administration of many laws in this country, Black and Latino children and teens end up in adult facilities in numbers disproportionately higher than their representation in the general population. Nationally, according to the Campaign for Youth Justice report, three out of four young people admitted to adult prison in 2002 were either Black or Latino.

At issue is the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974 (JJJPA). When originally enacted, it was designed to prevent young people from going to adult jails and prisons and to separate young people from adults while incarcerated. These protections were called "Sight and Sound Separation" - a young person would be beyond the sight and sound of the adult inmates. Over time, however, these provisions have been eroded and do not apply to young people being tried in

the adult criminal system.

Now judges in juvenile courts are often excluded from the decision to prosecute children and teens as adults. In many states, these decisions are made at the discretion of prosecutors, no matter how minor the infraction might be. The JJJPA does not provide a level playing field for Black and Latino youths who are more likely than White youths to end up in adult prisons and jails.

We have an opportunity and responsibility to do better in our country. Placing juveniles in adult jails and prisons is an appalling injustice - and it doesn't work to reduce crime. With the JJJPA set to be reauthorized this year, Congress must amend the Act to ban the placement of children or teens in adult jails or prisons no matter what court hears their case. This is the right and sensible thing to do.

For more information about Marian Wright Edelman and the Children's Defense Fund, which she established, go to [www.childrensdefense.org](http://www.childrensdefense.org).