

## Angelou Tells Inspiring Story

by Karen Lewis

In I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings, the first of her four autobiographies, writer and poet Maya Angelou confronts her early childhood with touching honesty, with understanding and humor which raises it above other autobiographies. She writes not to praise herself, scold others or even to condemn the oppressors of her youth, but instead to reveal the blessings and curses of growing up black in the white South in the days before the Civil Rights Movement. More than that, she writes to share the dreams and heartaches of a romantic and intelligent girl struggling to rise above prejudice and hate, daring to be more than times allow.

The tale is colorful, spiritual, and poignant, at times infuriating and violent; her warm, flowing prose conveys with surprising accuracy the whirlwind emotions of her adventurous childhood. From Stamps, Arkansas, where she lives as an orphan with her grandmother and crippled Uncle Willie, to the sooty, living streets of St. Louis, where she first meets her beautiful and daring mother and rowdy, powerful uncles, to California, where she becomes the first black to operate a San Francisco street car - her imagination, perseverance, and strength thrusts her up, above the ambivalence around her, into excellence.

The characters of Maya Angelou's life are memorable and larger-than-life. We see some part in each of them which contributes to the whole of the great woman who has given so much of herself to the literature of our time. Of particular importance is her brother, Bailey, for years her only friend and the greatest influence of her childhood. It is inspiring, and it is true.

Maya Angelou continues her story in Gather Together in My Name, Singin' and Swingin' and Gettin' Merry like Christmas, and The Heart of a Woman, all available in Bantam Books. She has also published poetry, some of which was featured in last week's issue of this paper. She is now a member of the Humanities Department at Wake Forest University.

I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings was originally published in 1970.

## Sociologist Entertains

by Tamiko Harrison

"Get down and get back up again" was one of the many one liners Bertice Barry left with the Salem community. A doctor of Sociology, Bertice made us laugh at ourselves while giving insight on what is it like to be a black woman in the United States. Some laughed knowingly while others chuckled self consciously when Bertice told of an incident that took place in a public bathroom not long after she got her PhD. It seems that there were two women waiting to use the bathroom after Bertice, yet neither of the women were anxious to use the stall Bertice had just vacated. Bertice was able to turn her disbelief at the behavior of the women into a double edged sword by exclaiming as she pulled her sleeves over her hands before turning on the water, "I always do this because you never know about white people."

Through her humor, Bertice delivered a message of understanding and appreciating our differences. There was also an opportunity to laugh at...excuse me, laugh with some of Salem's finest as Bertice encouraged Ty Rice to express himself as a Tina Turner look-a-like. She also gave a new twist to Shakespeare by updating the language just a tad. Bertice also gave a small lesson in linguistics, tracing the origin of the infamous four letter word often used to brush off unwelcomed male attention: "For Unlawful Carnal Knowledge man."

## Free at Last

by Kara Hayes

"Universal suffrage on a common voters roll in a united democratic and nonracial South Africa is the only way to peace and racial harmony."

These are the words spoken by anti-Apartheid activist Nelson Mandela in his speech at Cape Town City Hall upon his release on February 11, 1990 after more than 27 years of imprisonment. It was in 1961 that the black lawyer-activist spoke of the fight against white supremacy in South Africa as "no easy walk for freedom" after almost three centuries of white domination. His walk certainly proved to be a hard one when he was arrested on August 5, 1962 for leaving the country illegally and organizing illegal political protests through the banned organization, the African National Congress (ANC). Sentenced to life imprisonment two years later on charges of sabotage and plotting to overthrow the nationalist government, Mandela spent 18 years at the high security prison at Robben island. It was only in 1982 when he was transferred to Pollsmoor prison near Capetown that he was able to communicate with his wife after almost twenty years and to receive uncensored letters and newspapers. After a battle with tuberculosis, Mandela was transferred to Victor-Vester prison farm near Cape Town.

Former South African President Botha offered Mandela his freedom in 1985 on the condition that he renounce his policy of violence. Upon Mandela's refusal of the proposed terms of his release, Botha began unofficial meetings with Mandela to discuss terms of his release. These meetings were continued after F.W. DeKlerk assumed the Presidency of the South African Nationalist government on August 14, 1989. DeKlerk began reforms in September 1989 when he announced that peaceful protests against the governments were allowed. He continued with reforms on October 15, 1989 with the release of six ANC leaders and one Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC) leader. On February 2, 1990, President DeKlerk removed the ban on the African National Congress as well as the bans on thirty other organizations, and announced that Mandela would soon be released.

DeKlerk described Mandela as an "elderly", "dignified" and "interesting" man in his press conference on February 10, 1990 following the announcement that Mandela would soon be released unconditionally on the following day. President F.W. DeKlerk remarked that there was concern about Mr. Mandela's safety due to the rightist, white supremacist demonstrations against Mandela's release, as well as extreme leftist protestors calling for the violent overthrow of the national government. But Mandela had refused any formal relationship with the government, including government protection, until the state of emergency declared on June 12, 1986 had been lifted and the political prisoners jailed for protests against Apartheid were released. DeKlerk was careful not to speak on Mandela's behalf, rather he talked of the proposed peaceful negotiations for a constitution for South Africa in which he assured the 28 million black Africans complete citizenship rights but not black supremacy over the 5 million white South Africans. He called for an open door policy for Mandela, and any other black leaders to discuss negotiations for the new constitution and assured the audience that the government was taking steps that were in the best interest of South Africa.

On February 11, 1990, Mandela walked a free man from Victor-Vester prison farm near Cape Town, raising his fist in the bold, black nationalist salute to a crowd of approximately 5000 black and white supporters. His entourage travelled down roads packed with cheering South Africans bearing signs that read "Welcome Home" and "Power". He spoke that afternoon in his unique and eloquent but militant fashion to a crowd of 20,000 South Africans at the Cape Town City Hall. He reaffirmed his support for the ANC and stated that he would not negotiate for the new Constitution. Instead, he would encourage negotiations between the ANC and the national government. Mandela forcefully called for an increase of pressure in the white nationalist government until Apartheid is completely destroyed. He saluted the "Spear of the Nation", which is the military faction of the ANC,

cont. on p. 9 - Mandela