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AUTHOR TONI MORRISON

World mourns the death of Nobel laureate Toni Morrison

By Hillel Italic

(AP) - NEW YORK (AP) - Nobel laureate Toni Morrison, a pioneer and reigning giant of modern literature whose imaginative power "Beloved," "Song of Solomon" and other works transformed American letters by dramatizing the pursuit of freedom within the boundaries of race, has died at age 88.

Publisher Alfred A. Knopf announced that Morrison died Monday night at Montefiore Medical Center in New York. Morrison's family issued a statement through Knopf saying she died after a brief illness.

"Toni Morrison passed away peacefully last night surrounded by family and friends," the family announced. "The consummate writer who treasured the written word, whether her own, her students or others, she read voraciously and was most at home when writing."

Few authors rose in such rapid, spectacular style. She was nearly 40 when her first novel, "The Bluest Eye," was published. By her early 60s, after just six novels, she had become the first black woman to receive the Nobel literature prize, praised in 1993 by the Swedish academy for her "visionary force" and for her delving into "language itself, a language she wants to liberate" from categories of black and white. In 2012, Barack Obama awarded her a Presidential Medal of Freedom.

"Her writing was not just beautiful but meaningful - a challenge to our conscience and a call to greater empathy," Obama wrote Tuesday on his Facebook page. "She was as good a storyteller, as captivating, in person as she was on the page."

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Stacey Abrams Says She'd Serve as Vice President

By Stacy M. Brown, NNPA Newswire Correspondent @StacyBrownMedia

The overcrowded Democratic presidential field has a record six women seeking the nomination.

But one prominent individual who isn't running for the top job has thrown her hat into the ring for vice president.

Former Georgia Gubernatorial Candidate Stacey Abrams said she would be delighted to serve under one of the 22 candidates.

"I would be honored to be considered by any nominee," Abrams told The New York Times on Wednesday, Aug. 14.

"I've just come to the decision that my best value add, the strongest contribution I can give to this primary, would be to make sure our nominee is coming into an environment where there are strong voter protections in place," Abrams told the Times.

"I would not have publicly raised the possibility if it was not a legitimate thought," Abrams said.

She said the current field, which includes former Vice President Joe Biden; Calif. Sen. Kamala Harris; New Jersey Sen. Cory Booker; and Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders, is talented.

Earlier this year when Biden entered the race, he was reportedly considering Abrams as a running mate.

YAHOO! News reported that Abrams dismissed those rumors, noting that at the time, Abrams was considering a run for president.

Earlier this year, Booker said he believed that a woman should be on the ticket.

Another candidate, former Texas Rep. Beto O'Rourke, said he would find it "very difficult not to select a woman" as his running mate.



"I would not have publicly raised the possibility if it was not a legitimate thought," Abrams said.

Rep. Cummings: 'Stop the hateful, incendiary comments'

By Matthew Daly

WASHINGTON (AP) - Government officials must stop making "hateful, incendiary comments" that only to serve to divide and distract the nation from its real problems, including mass shootings and white supremacy, Maryland Rep. Elijah Cummings said recently in comments aimed at President Donald Trump.

Cummings, the Democratic chairman of the House Oversight Committee, did not name Trump in a speech recently, but it was clear whom he was addressing. Trump disparaged Cummings and his native Baltimore in a barrage of racially-tinged tweets and insults in recent days.

"Those in the highest levels of the government must stop invoking fear, using racist language and encouraging reprehensible behavior," Cummings said in a long-scheduled speech to the National Press Club.

Use of such language "only creates more division among us and severely limits our ability to work together for the common good," Cummings said.

Cummings was responding after Trump attacked him over a series of days last month. Trump called Cummings' majority-black Baltimore district a "disgusting, rat and rodent infested mess" where "no human being would want to live," adding that "if racist Elijah Cummings would focus more of his energy on helping the good people of his district, and Baltimore itself, perhaps progress could be made in fixing the mess."

Cummings said recently that, "Enough is enough," and he called on the nation to confront hatred, white supremacy and mass shootings.

"We are done with the hateful rhetoric, done with the mass shootings, done with white supremacists and domestic terrorists fighting against everything our country stands for," Cummings said. "We are better than that."

Trump said recently that he doesn't think his rhetoric has contributed to violence, even though some of his words mirror language linked to one of the gunmen in two mass shootings this weekend in El Paso, Texas, and Dayton, Ohio, that killed 31 people. The alleged shooter targeted Hispanics in El Paso, where most residents are Latino.

"I think my rhetoric ... brings people together," Trump said before visiting Ohio and Texas. His critics are "political people ... trying to make points," Trump said.

Cummings said it was not just words that had him worried, noting that his 10-year-old niece recently asked him if one day she would end up in a cage like some migrant families on the U.S. border with Mexico.

Instead of focusing on differences, "We must stand together with those who we do not look like, those who we disagree with, and recognize that we have more in common than what separates us," Cummings said.

"We all are sick of this," Cummings added. "We all want decency and respect. We want our communities to be protected. We all want to live in a country where our children are safe when they go to the mall or to the Wal-Mart."

The Texas shooting took place at a Wal-Mart.

Asked about Trump, Cummings again invited the president to tour his congressional district with him, from the poorest parts of Baltimore to more well-to-do areas outside the city in suburban Baltimore and Howard counties.

"Come to Baltimore. Do not just criticize us, but come to Baltimore and I promise you, you will be welcomed," Cummings said recently.

The White House has not responded to the offer, Cummings said recently.

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