



YOSEMITE COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT
COLUMBIA COLLEGE • MODESTO JUNIOR COLLEGE

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NEWS Release

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MAYA MESSAGE SHINES THROUGH TO MJC CROWD

MODESTO, CA – November 2, 2001 – Dr. Maya Angelou, renowned poet, educator, historian, best-selling author, actress, playwright, civil rights activist, producer and director; was a “rainbow in the clouds” to an overflow crowd of over 3,000 at Modesto Junior College as part of the Yosemite Community College District’s Beyond Tolerance Initiative.

She skillfully intertwined song, poetry, and stories to convey the message from an old gospel song that when “it looks like the sun isn’t going to shine anymore, God put a rainbow in the clouds.” Each one of us, according to Dr. Angelou, can be a rainbow in the clouds for others. We all have the capability to become a rainbow, an inspiration, for someone else to make strides to their fullest potential, despite what may appear to be impenetrable obstacles. She shared who her rainbows were, by revealing her own experiences.

Her presentation included an insight that ‘someone has already paid for us.’ No matter what our race, nationality or situation, people before us have paid for us through various ways of suffering which allows us the freedom to be whatever we can, as individuals, today. She pondered if we were ever to meet those ancestors and others who paved the way for our freedom, what would we say? How would we be able to show them the value of their sacrifice? The answer to these questions represents the challenge that each of us has to do something and make something of our lives or at least to serve as a rainbow for a future generation.

Speaking directly to the events of September 11, she reminded the audience that others have suffered and have been frightened before us. Tragedy has happened in the past, is happening now, and will happen in the future. The key is that “somebody survived, and better yet thrived, and better still, thrived with passion and compassion, and humor.” Her performance illustrated her many talents in all corners

of the arts and her perceptive insights into how we live our lives and interact with each other. She left the crowd with a plea to become a rainbow, and honored the Yosemite Community College District Beyond Tolerance Initiative as a prime example of one.

The Modesto Junior College music, dance, and theater departments, in honor of her visit, prepared a music and dance presentation based on two of her poems, "Just Like Job" and "Martial Choreograph." 'An Evening with Maya Angelou' was the best attended speaking event in school history.

ATTACHMENT: Photo (Maya.jpg)

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