

House Concurrent Resolution No. 8

98TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY

INTRODUCED BY REPRESENTATIVE GARDNER.

0206L.011

AN ACT

Relating to the designation of the Maya Angelou Day of Recognition in Missouri.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the state of Missouri, as follows:

2 **WHEREAS**, Maya Angelou, born Marguerite Ann Johnson on April 4, 1928, in St.
3 Louis, Missouri, became one of the most renowned and influential voices of our time; and

4 **WHEREAS**, after her parents divorced, Maya and her brother, Bailey (who gave her the
5 name "Maya"), were sent to rural Stamps, Arkansas, to live with their paternal grandmother in
6 the living quarters behind Johnson Grocery Store which their grandmother owned; and

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8 **WHEREAS**, Maya's grandmother would tirelessly teach Christian principals, love, and
9 respect while exhibiting examples of independence and courage. As an entrepreneur at a time
10 when blacks owned very little, her grandmother encouraged Maya to believe in God, honest
11 work, and family; and

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13 **WHEREAS**, at age eight, Maya was devastated when she was raped by her mother's
14 boyfriend while on a visit to St. Louis. After Maya testified against the man, several of her
15 uncles beat him to death. Believing she had caused the man's death by speaking his name, Maya
16 refused to speak for approximately five years; and

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18 **WHEREAS**, as a teenager, Maya Angelou's love for the arts won her a scholarship to
19 study dance and drama at San Francisco's Labor School. At age 14, Maya dropped out to
20 become San Francisco's first ever African-American female cable car conductor; and

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22 **WHEREAS**, Maya Angelou later finished high school, giving birth to her son, Guy, a
23 few weeks after graduation at age sixteen. As a young single mother, she supported her son as
24 a waitress and cook, but her passion for writing and poetry would soon take center stage; and

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26 **WHEREAS**, writing about her experience with eloquence and detail, Maya Angelou
27 recorded history through poetry, biographies, journalism, children's books, cookbooks, and
28 essays painting a picture of the American landscape for generations to come; and

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30 **WHEREAS**, Maya Angelou is best known for her series of six autobiographical volumes
31 which focus on her childhood and early adult experiences. The first and most highly acclaimed
32 volume, "I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings", tells of her first seventeen years and concludes
33 with Maya having regained her self-esteem after being raped at age eight and caring for her
34 newborn son, and offers insights into the social and political climate of the 1930s; and

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36 **WHEREAS**, Maya Angelou was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize for her 1971 volume of
37 poetry, "Just Give Me a Cool Drink of Water 'Fore I Diie"; and

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39 **WHEREAS**, Maya Angelou's life mirrored the American landscape of the time, paving
40 the way for a firsthand experience with racism, single parenting, overcoming poverty, seeking
41 higher education, creating wealth, and living through and participating in the civil rights
42 movement; and

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44 **WHEREAS**, Dr. Angelou's continued work in civil rights made her a widely recognized
45 international ambassador for goodwill, crossing lines of race and culture; and

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47 **WHEREAS**, Dr. Angelou served on two presidential committees. President Clinton
48 requested that she compose a poem to read at his inauguration in 1993. Dr. Angelou's reading
49 of her poem "On the Pulse of the Morning" was broadcast live around the world; and

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51 **WHEREAS**, in 2000, Dr. Angelou was awarded the Presidential Medal of Arts and
52 received the National Medal of Arts; and

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54 **WHEREAS**, Dr. Angelou penned the poem "Amazing Peace" for President George W.
55 Bush and delivered the poem at the 2005 Christmas tree lighting ceremony; and

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57 **WHEREAS**, in 2010, President Barack Obama presented Dr. Angelou with the
58 Presidential Medal of Freedom, the country's highest civilian honor; and

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60 **WHEREAS**, with more than fifty honorary doctorate degrees, Maya Angelou is known
61 for her many quotes of inspiration, which continue to "stir our souls, energize our bodies, liberate
62 our minds, and heal our hearts":

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64 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the members of the House of
65 Representatives of the Ninety-eighth General Assembly, First Regular Session, the Senate
66 concurring therein, hereby designate April 4th each year as "Maya Angelou Day of Recognition"
67 in Missouri in honor of the accomplishments and legacy of Maya Angelou, a celebrated poet,
68 memoirist, educator, dramatist, producer, actress, historian, filmmaker, and civil rights activist;
69 and

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71 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the General Assembly recommends to the citizens
72 of this state to observe the day with appropriate activities and events in honor of and out of
73 respect for Maya Angelou, one of the most renowned and influential voices of our time; and
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75 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that this resolution be sent to the Governor for his
76 approval or rejection pursuant to the Missouri Constitution.

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