

Christian Civil Rights Leader Maya Angelou Dies at 86

American author and poet Maya Angelou, who is best known for her groundbreaking autobiography *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, has died at age 86 in North Carolina, her publisher confirmed on Wednesday.

The prolific African-American writer penned more than 30 books, won numerous awards, and was honored last year by the National Book Awards for her service to the literary community.

"Dr. Angelou has passed in Winston-Salem," said Sally Marvin, of Random House.

No other details were immediately available.

Angelou provided eloquent commentary on race, gender and living life to its fullest in poems and memoirs. Her latest work, *Mom & Me & Mom*, about her mother and grandmother and what they taught her, was released last year.

"She was beyond simply being a writer of autobiography and poetry. I think she transcended the idea of writing and using writing as a transcendence medium to further the individual," Harold Augenbraum, the executive director of the National Book Foundation, told Reuters.

"She was an extraordinary symbol in the United States of what can accomplished using the arts," he added.

Wake Forest University also mourned the loss of Angelou.

"Dr. Angelou was a national treasure whose life and teachings inspired millions around the world, including countless students, faculty, and staff at Wake Forest, where she served as Reynolds Professor of American Studies since 1982," the

university said in a statement.

“Our thoughts and prayers are with Dr. Angelou’s family and friends during this difficult time.”

It added that details about a campus memorial service will be announced at a later date.

I Know Why the Cage Bird Sings, a coming-of-age story in a hostile society in the American South in the 1930s and '40s that deals with racism and rape, is considered an American classic.

In addition to her many books, she was a Grammy winner for three spoken-word albums. She had a home in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, where she was a professor of American studies at Wake Forest University.

Reporting by Colleen Jenkins; Addtional reporting by Patricia Reaney in New York and Bill Trott in Washington, DC; Editing by Scott Malone and James Dalglish

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