



**Media Contact: Terri Dixon**

LAGRANT COMMUNICATIONS

323.469.8680, ext. 232

[terridixon@lagrant.com](mailto:terridixon@lagrant.com)

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Statement from CAAM's Executive Director on the Passing of Dr. Maya Angelou**

**LOS ANGELES (May 28, 2014)** As the official California preservationists of African American history, art and culture, the California African American Museum's (CAAM) Executive Director Charmaine Jefferson releases a statement on the passing of Maya Angelou, who has profoundly affected the nation as a whole and more specifically, African Americans.

*"Today our hearts are weighted and deeply saddened by the passing of Dr. Maya Angelou. This is a strange grief. It is life as she taught us to expect it, but it feels too soon, too unthinkable and altogether incomprehensible..."*

*A woman strong of opinion, Dr. Angelou wore her genius gently. She ushered us into her world experience, and with words, brought the reality of the universe to our fingertips. She often acknowledged that she stood proudly on the shoulders of our elders who struggled valiantly so that she, and by extension all of us, could live rewarding and meaningful lives.*

*In her tweet on May 23<sup>rd</sup>, Dr. Angelou encouraged us to take a breath and listen to ourselves so that in that quietude we might hear the voice of God. I listened. Admittedly, I was afraid of what those words meant at this stage of her life, but I am sure that in Dr. Angelou, God sent a source for inspiration and strength that we were meant to internalize.*

*My daughter was a toddler when I discovered Dr. Angelou's 'Life Doesn't Frighten Me at All.' In her poetic interpretation of the complex artwork of Jean-Michel Basquiat she provided simultaneous links for navigating a scary world through the eyes of a child and an adult. A book read every night years ago, still has meaning to this day.*

*Whether simple sentences or complex thoughts, Dr. Angelou was America's Shakespeare – a brilliant raconteur, who had the laser-like ability to hone in, touch the rough edges, and without fear stare down the difficult and welcome the sublime, making them all lessons of life of equal value. Full of humor, she never seemed particularly interested in mediocrity or laziness. With intelligence she built bridges, set a high bar for presentation, and in her*

*diplomatic candor taught us the value of her expectations of whom we should be as people and as a nation.*

*Secretly I adored Dr. Angelou for having dance as a first love, but like everyone else, benefited most from her ability to see and utilize words and ideas creatively as a source for overcoming obstacles, living through mistakes and maintaining humility in the midst of unparalleled success.*

*In this moment of the quietude that she requested, I think God would tell us to we should thank Dr. Angelou for sharing her engaging smile and her agile mind.*

*It goes without saying, she will be sorely missed; but even in our grief, let's find joy in knowing that she was our best 'Voice,' and then let's give her the legacy she deserves by utilizing her words, actions and wisdom to improve our world and guide our hearts toward each other." **California African American Museum Executive Director Charmaine Jefferson***

## **ABOUT THE CALIFORNIA AFRICAN AMERICAN MUSEUM**

CAAM is a state agency charged with researching, collecting, preserving and interpreting for public enrichment the history, art and culture of African Americans. Collaboratively operating in partnership with its 501©(3) non-profit organization Friends, the Foundation of the California African American Museum, CAAM houses a permanent collection of over 3,000 objects of art, artifacts and historical documents, and a publicly accessible Research Library containing more than 20,000 volumes.

To bring its mission to life, CAAM hosts up to 13 exhibitions annually and tours several of its organized exhibitions nationally. CAAM also presents a wide variety of more than 80 annual public programs ranging from educational and curriculum-driven lectures and tours with scholars and experts to art workshops, film screening, and its highly popular signature series of monthly live performances, *Target Sunday at CAAM*.

In furtherance of its value driven commitment to mentor the next generation and give back to the community, CAAM proudly trains and employs high school students year-round through its *Young Docent* program; offers *Buses & Docents* as a source of equitable access to field trip opportunities for school and community groups that otherwise could not afford the transportation; fosters cross-issues, cross-town and cross-cultural learning and dialogue through its Young Voices at CAAM school exchanges; actively advocates literacy, books readying and written expression through *Heads are Turning, Children are Learning*; and, creates small business development and customer out-reach opportunities for artists through its on-site vending program.

###