



Author, educator and civil rights activist Maya Angelou was the featured speaker Friday at the Black History Month Extravaganza at the University of Delaware's Bob Carpenter Center. SUCHAT PEDERSON/THE NEWS JOURNAL

MAYA ANGELOU'S MESSAGE SOARS

Choir performance and life stories entrance sold-out crowd at UD

By Ryan Marshall
The News Journal

NEWARK — Gospel music bounced off the Bob Carpenter Center's walls as a sold-out crowd stood and clapped and the New Castle Canaan Baptist Choir set the mood for Maya Angelou.

Many stood during the performance of the choir, and no one sat as Angelou took the stage after a reading of her poem "Still I Rise" by Brooklynn Hitchens, president of the Black Student Union and a senior English and Black American Studies major at the University of Delaware.

Angelou's keynote address was a part of the university's Black History Month Extravaganza, which was organized by the Center for Black Culture and Cultural Programming Advisory Board. The group awarded Angelou with a Living Legend Award.

Angelou started off with a 19th-century folk song that stated God put a rainbow in the cloud to show that in the worst of times, there is a possibility of seeing gold. Angelou said that African-American poetry is a rainbow in the clouds.

"So I bring you African-American po-



Members of the New Castle Canaan Baptist Choir bring the crowd to its feet during Friday's event.

etry," Angelou said. "I bring it here to you to encourage actually in this institution of higher education. So that you may become yourselves a rainbow in somebody else's cloud."

Before the event began, Caroline Ruppert, a sophomore Spanish and political science major at the university, said she was thrilled to hear Angelou speak about her life experiences.

"I am just excited to see her opinions on things," she said. "I'm not exactly sure what is the focus of her speech."

Angelou shared a plethora of poems, personal accounts and even a few jokes.

Through narratives of her time spent with slain rapper Tupac Shakur

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Angelou: Importance of history stressed

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and comedian Richard Pryor, she gave insight of the slightest way she touched their lives and changed how they viewed the world.

Angelou has worked alongside historic figures such as civil rights leaders Malcom X and Martin Luther King Jr., author James Baldwin, who guided her in the writing of "I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings," and President Bill Clinton, for whom she wrote a poem to use in his inaugural address in 1993.

However, she came to Delaware to share her favorite works of poetry and the importance of people in our past. Angelou said people who have suffered, whether it has been in wars or slavery, have paid their dues. Even if it is just to see the sunrise, she said, someone



Members of the New Castle Canaan Baptist choir sing to a cheering crowd at the Bob Carpenter Center. SUCHAT PEDERSON/THE NEWS JOURNAL

has earned it.

She stressed to the audience the importance of institutions of higher education like the University of Delaware, which she

compared to a rainbow in many peoples' lives.

"Each of us is a rainbow in somebody's cloud," she said. "Amazing to have that nerve, to have

enough courage to be a rainbow in somebody's cloud who may not even look like you."

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MAYA ANGELOU



Maya Angelou gets emotional during her sold-out talk. Angelou shared poems and personal accounts at the University of Delaware on Friday.



Audience members are put in a celebratory mood by the New Castle Canaan Baptist choir before Maya Angelou takes the stage.