

Review of *An Evening with Maya Angelou*

Maya Angelou, a prominent and influential poet, novelist, educator, actress, and historian spoke at this year's Fall Convocation. Dr. Angelou began the night with a few song lyrics and then explained these lyrics and her thoughts on "being a rainbow in the clouds." She spent the next hour and a half telling stories and anecdotes from her life, reciting poetry, and then connecting these stories and lines of poetry to her inspirational worldviews. Many of the things that Maya Angelou spoke of resonated with me in their practical application to helping students become more globally aware citizens. Dr. Angelou explained that being a rainbow in someone else's cloud means that even through small actions, everyone has the ability to make a difference in another person's life. Simply smiling at a stranger or saying "good morning" to an acquaintance walking down the street has the power to create great change in the world. Although this has less of a direct impact on global change or global awareness, I think that simply having an overall positive attitude and recognizing that small actions can have a big impact is a step in the right direction towards a more productive global community. In addition, I believe that by fostering relationships with other human beings, who may at first seem like "strangers," we will begin to realize that we might not be as different as we first appear. Maybe reaching out to people that look or think differently from ourselves will help us to see that we are all one in the same. We are all human, no matter what our race, religion, gender, or language may be, and I think it is that simple yet vastly underrated commonality that can eventually bring us all together if we only stop and take the time to reach out.

Another point emphasized by Maya Angelou that stood out to me as having a connection to becoming a global citizen was the importance of learning other languages and learning, specifically, about African American poetry. I would take this a step further and say that it is important to read certain texts from many different cultures, especially cultures with which we are relatively unfamiliar. As we have done in our class with German culture, I think that it is important to read not only about a certain culture, but also to read texts that are a direct product of that culture, such as poetry, novels, or news articles. Because we live in the western world where the vast majority of the media is produced and controlled by the west, I also believe it is crucial to listen to music and watch movies that are the product of other countries and cultures. Additionally, speaking more than one language has its obvious benefits when moving in the direction of global awareness and global participation. Being a global citizen requires us to not only further understand other parts of the world, but also to have the ability to communicate with the people in these various locations. It is one thing to recognize and analyze the differences and similarities between cultures from an outside perspective, but it is another thing completely to be able to converse directly with these individuals and obtain a more first-hand perspective on various issues. I also believe that speaking the language of another can help in the previously mentioned fostering of relationships and bridging of gaps between human beings.