

## ARMY CORPS BACKS RIVER PROJECT

Lobbying from L.A. leads to decision to support \$1-billion proposal to revitalize an 11-mile stretch.

BY LOUIS SAHAGUN

Federal officials gave a major boost Wednesday to the city's plans to turn the Los Angeles River into an urban oasis for recreation and an inviting locale for new commercial and residential development.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers said it has decided to recommend approval of an ambitious, \$1-billion proposal to restore habitat, widen the river, create wetlands and provide access points and bike trails along an 11-mile stretch north of downtown through Elysian Park.

The city sees those 11 miles as the starting point for a project that will eventually revitalize all 51 miles of the river, from the San Fernando Valley to Long Beach.

The decision, made by Assistant Army Secretary for Civil Works Jo-Ellen Darcy, opens the way for Congress to give its approval and work to begin to transform the unsightly concrete corridor into something resembling its natural state.

The Army Corps initially declined to approve the plan in favor of a less ambitious, \$453-million alternative. The city responded with an intense lobbying campaign.

"I was tenacious about this — it's a big win for the city," Mayor Eric Garcetti said. "As I argued in the [See L.A. River, A11]

## Pressure mounts for VA chief's ouster

BY RICHARD SIMON AND CINDY CARCAMO

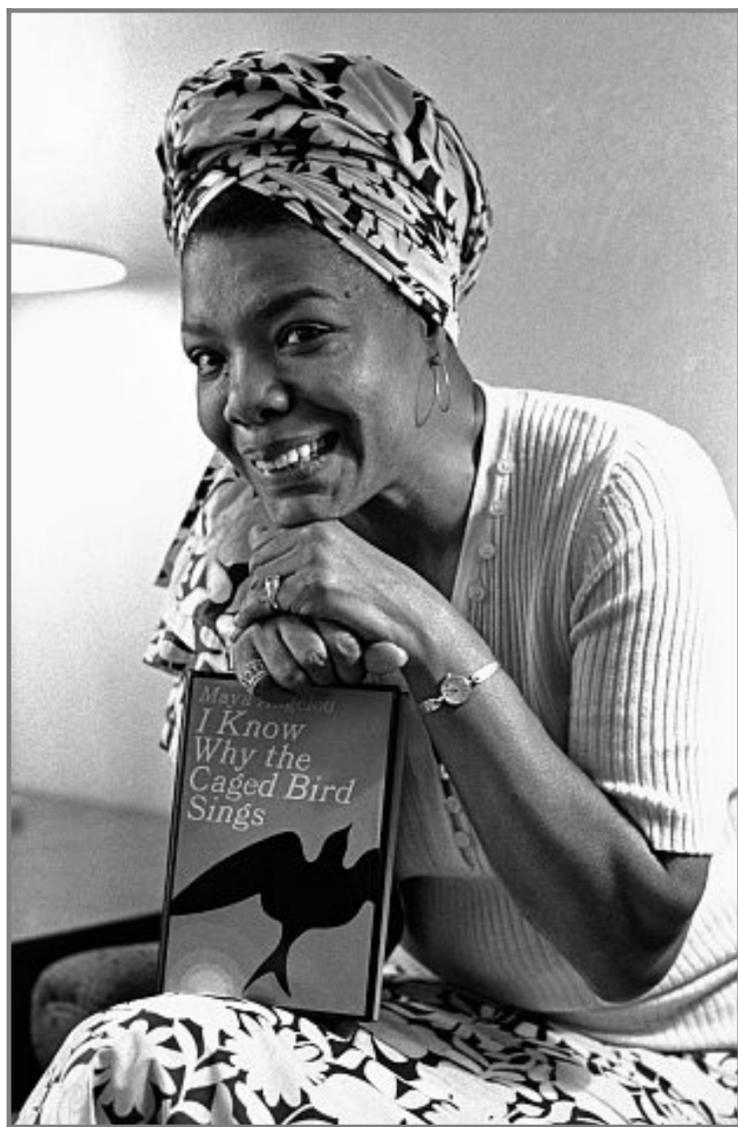
WASHINGTON — A scathing report finding a systemic problem at Veterans Affairs medical facilities nationwide, including manipulation of records to mask long waits for appointments, fueled new calls Wednesday for VA chief Eric K. Shinseki's resignation.

As the number of sites under investigation grew to 42, up from the 26 previously reported, the allegations over VA medical care have mushroomed into an election-year issue and become a major political headache for the Obama administration.

"We are finding that inappropriate scheduling practices are a systemic problem nationwide," said the interim report, which identified 1,700 veterans at the Phoenix VA Health Care System waiting for an appointment but not on a waiting list and therefore "at risk of being forgotten or lost" in the scheduling process.

"We have substantiated that significant delays in access to care negatively impacted the quality of care at this medical facility," Richard J. Griffin, acting inspector general for the Department of Veterans Affairs, said in the report.

Shinseki called the findings "reprehensible to me, to [See Veterans, A5]



Associated Press

### A STORY OF SURVIVAL

Maya Angelou holds a copy of her book "I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings," the first in a series of bestselling memoirs, in 1971.

MAYA ANGELOU, 1928 - 2014

# Author detailed black experience

BY ELAINE WOO

Maya Angelou was a diva of American culture: an actress, singer, dancer and film director as well as an essayist and Pulitzer-Prize-nominated poet, whose mainstream magnetism led her to write verses for Hallmark and recite one of her poems at the 1993 inauguration of President Clinton.

Her most celebrated achievement, however, were the stories she told about herself in "I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings" (1969), the first in a series of bestselling memoirs. Universal in its themes yet compellingly particular in its details about being a black girl in a white world, it is a story of survival that exposed the ugliness as well as the beauty in a prodigiously inventive life.

A staple of high school and college reading lists, the book made Angelou a frequent target of parents and others concerned about its graphic descriptions of racism and sexual abuse. But it established her as a clear-eyed inter-

preter of the black experience with a message of hope and transcendence that resonated with a vast, multiracial audience.

"In all my work, in the movies I write, the lyrics, the poetry, the prose, the essays," she told Paris Review in 1990, "I am saying that we may encounter many defeats — maybe it's imperative that we encounter the defeats — but we are much stronger than we appear to be, and maybe much better than we allow ourselves to be."

Angelou, who wrote more than 35 books over five decades, died Wednesday at her home in Winston-Salem, N.C., where she had a lifetime appointment at Wake Forest University. Her death at 86 was announced by her son, Guy B. Johnson. He did not give a [See Angelou, A10]

### An appreciation

Maya Angelou celebrated American diversity and fortitude, writes Hector Tobar. **CALENDAR, D1**

## L.A. to list structures at risk in quake

Council wants the citywide survey to focus on wood-frame apartments similar to Northridge Meadows.

BY ROSANNA XIA

The Los Angeles City Council on Wednesday took the most aggressive action on earthquake safety in nearly three decades, instructing building officials to find apartment buildings vulnerable to collapse in a major tremor.

L.A.'s survey would focus on the thousands of wood-frame buildings similar to the Northridge Meadows apartment complex, which collapsed and killed 16 people during the 1994 earthquake.

Until now, the city has rejected efforts to launch a citywide survey to figure out which structures might be vulnerable.

"This is something we should've done 20 years ago," said former Councilman Greig Smith, who pushed unsuccessfully for

seismic safety measures. "An inventory will allow you to assess what the risks are. And it hasn't been done."

The city has not decided what to do once it compiles the list. But seismic experts and policymakers say making a list of buildings that could be vulnerable is a necessary first step.

"It's so key," said L.A. City Councilman Tom LaBonge. "You have to have the data to know how many buildings are like this and where they are. And to give us a kind of road map of what we can do to improve these buildings."

The action marks the first in what is expected to be several seismic safety measures at City Hall. Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti said earlier this year that he supports some type of mandatory retrofitting of older buildings that have a risk of collapse in a major earthquake. He also said he wants buildings across Los Angeles to be graded for their seismic safety.

A Garcetti spokesman said the mayor supports the inventory of "soft-story" wooden apartments. Soft-story buildings have [See Earthquake, A7]

## Sterling bias lawsuits take on new relevance

BY KIM CHRISTENSEN AND NATHAN FENNO

After the Mark Wilshire Towers changed hands, several building staffers showed up at Darryl Williams' apartment one day with a woman who he said threatened to fine him for leaving two carts of his dirty laundry and other items in the hallway.

The encounter struck him as odd enough that he grabbed his video camera and asked her to affirm the introduction she made moments earlier.

"So you're Miss Shelby from the Health Department?" Williams said in the video of their brief exchange in April 2003 at the Koreatown high-rise.

"Yes sir!" she shot back and then walked away, the videotape shows.

But the woman in the



MARK J. TERRILL Associated Press

**SHELLY STERLING** and husband Donald paid sums to plaintiffs to settle housing lawsuit.

hallway was not "Miss Shelby," health inspector. She was Shelly Sterling, wife of billionaire Donald Sterling, real estate baron and owner of the Los Angeles Clippers.

The video was submitted as evidence in a federal lawsuit filed against the Sterlings in 2003 by the nonprofit Housing Rights Center. In a statement to The Times, Shelly Sterling said she did not hear Williams' question and "just answered a blanket 'Yes sir' to be polite."

In recent weeks, she has sought to distance herself from her husband's now-infamous remarks about blacks, insisting that she has never harbored such sentiments or discriminated against anyone.

But a review of two federal housing lawsuits against the Sterlings finds recurring allegations that she made derogatory remarks about minorities and that she also sought by subtler means, such as pretending to be a government inspector, to harass blacks, Latinos and families with children.

Sterling insists that the allegations are false and that she and her husband did "nothing wrong." The Sterlings agreed to settle the cases for millions to avoid trial, but they explicitly denied any discriminatory [See Sterlings, A8]

### Clippers could bring record price

Up to five bidders could offer Donald Sterling more than \$1 billion for the NBA team. **SPORTS, C1**

## Obama touts moderation in foreign policy

The president says U.S. military force cannot be the nation's only — or even primary — component of leadership.

**WORLD, A2**



### Seriously funny

Some of TV's most talented comic actors stop by to talk, discussing the importance of chemistry and audience expectations. **THE ENVELOPE**

### Weather

Clouds, then sun. L.A. Basin: 79/62. **AA6**

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### BRYAN STOW ATTENDS TRIAL

Beating victim Bryan Stow, in a wheelchair, is surrounded by family members and a caregiver as they leave a downtown L.A. courthouse Wednesday. Stow attended jury selection in his civil trial against the Dodgers and former owner Frank McCourt. Stow, who was attacked in a parking lot outside Dodger Stadium on March 31, 2011, claims McCourt funneled money into his lavish lifestyle, which led to inadequate security and poor lighting.