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MAYA ANGELOU | 1928-2014

"If God put the rainbows right in the clouds themselves, each one of us in the direst and dullest and most dreaded and dreary moments can see a possibility of hope. Each one of us has the chance to be a rainbow in somebody's cloud."

MAYA ANGELOU, in a speech at Weber State University in Utah in 1997



Maya Angelou poses with a copy of her book "I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings" in Los Angeles in 1971. The first in a series of bestselling memoirs, it was a story of survival about being a black girl in a white world. It was her most celebrated achievement and resonated with a vast, multiracial audience.

Associated Press file

'Her greatest stories were true'



Gerald Herbert Associated Press file

Maya Angelou, shown in 2008, was an acclaimed cultural figure - an actress, singer, dancer and film director as well as an essayist and Pulitzer Prize-nominated poet. She wrote more than 35 books over five decades.

Author's tales of the black experience were infused with hope

GALLERY

To see more images from Maya Angelou's life, go to sacbee.com/multimedia

By ELAINE WOO | Los Angeles Times

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 Bill 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 interpreter 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 ANGELOU | Back page, A12

County sales tax hike floated

COALITION BACKS SOCCER STADIUM, OTHER CAUSES

By DALE KASLER dkasler@sacbee.com

A coalition including the Sacramento Republic FC soccer team and a host of nonprofit organizations is circulating a proposal to raise the county's sales tax rate, with proceeds going to a new soccer stadium, the Sacramento Zoo, the American River Parkway Foundation and other causes. Local governments also would get a significant funding boost.

The still-evolving proposal calls for the sales tax to increase one-eighth of a cent, to 8.125 percent. In Galt and the city of Sacramento, the one-eighth-cent increase would boost taxes to 8.625 percent.

The new tax would raise an estimated \$25.3 million in the first year. Organizers want to place it on the November ballot, where it would need a two-thirds supermajority to pass, but first they have to get the county Board of Supervisors to sign off on the plan. The tax increase would be open-ended and wouldn't expire.

Proponents say they hope to build broad political support by spreading the revenue to a multitude of programs, including the B Street Theatre relocation project and the proposed Powerhouse Science Center north of downtown. Other nonprofits could apply for funding, and millions would flow to local governments throughout the county.

"It's about creating a big-tent approach that doesn't leave anybody out," said Bill Blake, mayor. PROPOSAL | Back page, A12

VA report widens scope of scandal

DETAILS SPUR NEW CALLS FOR SHINSEKI TO RESIGN

By LINDSAY WISE McClatchy Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON - Inappropriate scheduling practices have compromised the care of patients at Department of Veterans Affairs hospitals and clinics nationwide, according to a preliminary report Wednesday by the VA inspector general.

The report revealed that the number of VA health care facilities under investigation for manipulating patient wait-time data to conceal treatment delays has expanded from 26 last week to 42.

Investigators also confirmed that 1,700 veterans were placed on an unofficial waiting list for primary care appointments at the VA hospital in Phoenix, but they did not determine whether the practice led to the deaths of 40 patients. Investigators will conduct a detailed review of medical records and autopsy results before drawing any conclusions about a link between the unofficial waiting lists and the patients' deaths.

The findings broadened the scope of a scandal that has focused new scrutiny on the management of VA, a huge federal agency that struggles to serve a booming veterans population despite record funding levels.

President Barack Obama "found the findings extremely troubling," White House spokesman Jay Carney said in a statement.

"The VA must not wait for current investigations of VA operations to conclude before taking VA | Page A2

ELECTION 2014

3 rivals vow to be watchdogs on spending

ROLE OF AUDITORS IS FACTOR IN STATE CONTROLLER RACE

By JIM MILLER jmiller@sacbee.com

Former California controller Steve Westly hit on an issue close to lawmakers' hearts when, in 2004, his office released a scathing audit of tens of millions of taxpayer dollars requested by individual legislators for their districts.

Some of the money hadn't been spent, with no plans to do so, and millions had been shifted to other uses. The report helped bring an end to the budget season tradition of lawmakers seeking money for local projects of dubious value.

"People should know that most of the money that government gives out is spent appropriately. However, there is always

that percentage ... that is just not spent in the public interest," Westly said in an interview. "You need to be paying attention. The controller's role is that important."

Often viewed as the state's chief financial officer, the controller's office runs the state's payroll and manages its cash flow, among other fiscal management duties.

Yet alone among other statewide constitutional officers, the

controller has a major oversight role that makes it the state's auditor-in-chief. From that perch, controllers and the hundreds of auditors at the office have broad latitude to scrutinize state and local spending, and, Westly said, occasionally "ruffle feathers."

The three leading candidates to succeed Controller John Chiang - Democrats John A. Pérez and Betty Yee and Republican Ashley Swearingin - all promise CONTROLLER | Page A2

TOP STORIES

OUR REGION

Regional Transit officials say they have seen an increase in ridership in both phases of the capital's Fix50 freeway construction project and hope it prompts some commuters to switch to rail service permanently. B1

CAPITOL & CALIFORNIA

As budget negotiations reach their final weeks in the Capitol, state Senate leader Darrell Steinberg is pressing for more spending to treat mental illness among inmates and people being released from prison. A3

BUSINESS

Google plans to build and launch onto Los Angeles streets a small fleet of subcompact cars that could operate without a person at the wheel. Actually, there would be no wheel, either. B6



NATION

President Barack Obama calls for a foreign policy that downplays military intervention in favor of diplomacy and international partnerships, defending his approach as better suited to fight terrorism. A5



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