

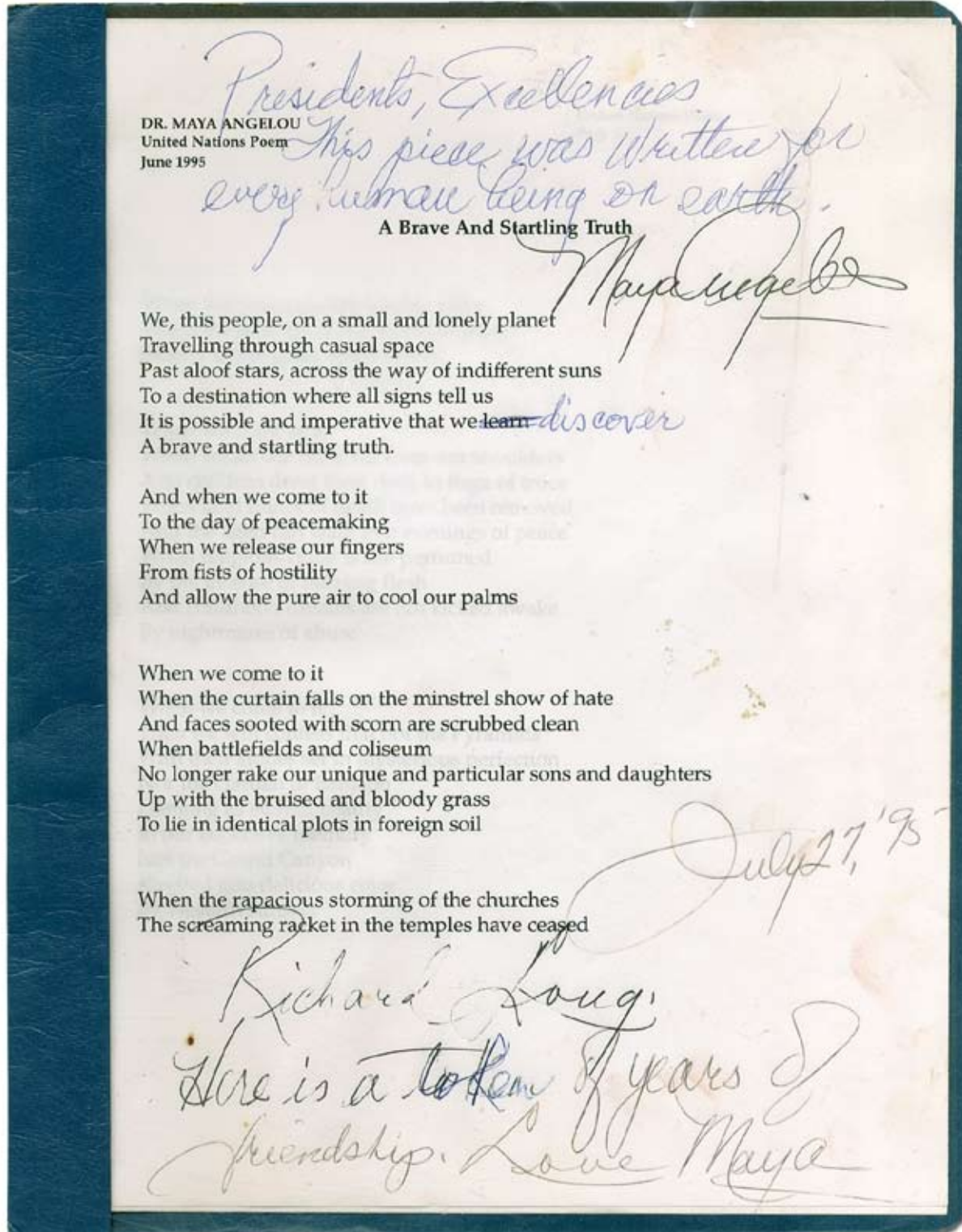
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Manuscript of Angelou's United Nations' Poem

Maya Angelou

[Manuscript]: United Nations Poem. June 1995. A Brave and Startling Truth
1995



Manuscript. Four computer generated quarto leaves printed rectos only and brad bound into a mylar and card folder. Faint crease on the mylar, else near fine, the pages are fine. A printed cloth access pass to a United Nations event affixed on rear cover. Inscribed by Angelou a month later to her friend Richard Long (scholar

on African-American art and dance) on the front leaf, a month after the event: "July 27, '95, Here is a token of years of friendship. Love, Maya." Angelou's pen has skipped a little, causing her to use a second pen, resulting in a little unevenness in the inscription. Additionally she has Signed the manuscript near the top of the first leaf.

DR. MAYA ANGELOU
United Nations Poem
June 1995

Presidents, Excellencies
This piece was written for
every human being on earth.

A Brave And Startling Truth

Maya Angelou

We, this people, on a small and lonely planet
Travelling through casual space
Past aloof stars, across the way of indifferent suns
To a destination where all signs tell us
It is possible and imperative that we ~~learn~~ discover
A brave and startling truth.

And when we come to it
To the day of peacemaking
When we release our fingers
From fists of hostility
And allow the pure air to cool our palms

When we come to it
When the curtain falls on the minstrel show of hate
And faces sooted with scorn are scrubbed clean
When battlefields and coliseum
No longer rake our unique and particular sons and daughters
Up with the bruised and bloody grass
To lie in identical plots in foreign soil

When the rapacious storming of the churches
The screaming racket in the temples have ceased

July 27, '95

Richard Long

Here is a token of years of
friendship. Love Maya

This was the copy that Angelou used to deliver her celebratory poem at the United Nations, celebrating the fiftieth anniversary commemoration of the organization. Angelou has changed two words in the text by hand (the changes are not reflected in the published version), and has additionally added a brief handwritten introduction: "Presidents, Excellencies. This piece was written for every human being on earth."

When the pennants are waving gaily
When the banners of the world tremble
Stoutly in the good, ~~great~~ breeze

clean

When we come to it
When we let the rifles fall from our shoulders
And children dress their dolls in flags of truce
When land mines of death have been removed
And the aged can walk into evenings of peace
When religious ritual is not perfumed
By the incense of burning flesh
And childhood dreams are not kicked awake
By nightmares of abuse

When we come to it
Then we will confess that not the Pyramids
With their stones set in mysterious perfection
Nor the Garden of Babylon
Hanging as eternal beauty
In our collective memory
Not the Grand Canyon
Kindled into delicious color
By Western sunsets

Upon Angelou's death in 2014, Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon of the United Nations wrote: "The United Nations owes her a particular debt of gratitude for her poem 'A Brave and Startling Truth', written for the 50th anniversary of our Organization." [BTC#403237]



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