

# ARKANSAS BLACK HISTORY



Image courtesy of Encyclopedia of Arkansas

Maya Angelou (1928–2014) was born in St. Louis, Missouri, but spent her formative years in Stamps, Arkansas (Lafayette County) with her grandmother. Embracing the calypso art form, Angelou learned modern dance with legends Martha Graham and Alvin Ailey, making her debut with the studio album “Miss Calypso” in 1957. The expansion of her artistry was nurtured by a community of Black artists and scholars such as Cicely Tyson, James Earl Jones, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Lorraine Hansberry, James Baldwin and Minister Malcolm X. While traveling through various African countries, Angelou continued to connect to the beauty of language. In the late 20th century and throughout the 21st century, Angelou authored books, starred in films and spoke to presidents and dignitaries around the world. In 2014, Dr. Angelou passed away in her North Carolina home, leaving a vast legacy of achievement and art.

