

WORDS OF WISDOM

*From beloved poet and civil rights activist
Dr. Maya Angelou. By Ivy Lamb*

★ | Educator, historian, best-selling writer, actress, playwright, producer, director — Dr. Maya Angelou is a true Renaissance woman. In everything she does, her characteristic wit and wisdom shine through. We asked the legendary author of *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* to share her thoughts on Black History Month and civil rights.

What does Black History Month mean to you? Why is it important?

Well, I think it's important as long as it's necessary. I long for the time when we don't need one month set aside for black history, but until that time it's wonderful to have it so all children — black children, white children, Asian children, Spanish-speaking children — realize that only equals can be friends.

We're all looking for civil rights for everybody: for men, for women, for children — for fat people and thin people, and pretty ones and plain ones, and gay ones and straight ones. That's really what civil rights is an attempt to do.

Do you have any ways that you observe Black History Month every year?

I observe it every day.

There's a deep sense of hope and resilience across your work. Where does that come from?

At one time it was not against the law to lynch a person. People would actually go to the city hall or the city square to watch other people being lynched. Well that's



against the law now; you can't do that now. So, we are getting better.

We have a long way to go, and we mustn't kid ourselves because we've come a long way and think, "Ahh, it's all over now but the shouting." It is not. All of us have to do more than we are doing today to make this country more than it is — more than what [novelist] James Baldwin once called, "these yet to be United States."