



Maya Angelou (left) talks with Johnnetta Cole, director of the National Museum of African Art, at Maya Angelou's portrait unveiling at the Smithsonian's National Portrait Gallery on April 5 in Washington. PAUL MORIGI/AP Images for National Portrait Gallery

# ANGELOU

FROM D1

President Bill Clinton.

Tulsa writer and businessman Clifton Taulbert said, “She was a very vulnerable writer, someone who told the truth about her life. And her work gave many others, myself included, the reason to do the same.

“While I love her prose,” Taulbert said, “what I most admire about her is her poetry. It was so deeply passionate, because she wrote about herself living in the midst of this great mass of humanity.”

During an appearance at Langston University, Angelou said, “Go to the poetry. African-American poetry is full of love, self-love and humor.”

Angelou’s last Tulsa appearance was in 2003, when she spoke at the University of Tulsa’s Reynolds Center.

That appearance, part of TU’s celebration of Martin Luther King Jr., was co-sponsored by the Oklahoma Jazz Hall of Fame.

Chuck Cissel, then the Jazz Hall’s executive director, recalled meeting Angelou at that event.

“Just being in her presence was a powerful experience for me,” Cissel said. “But she was so very down-to-earth and genuine. When she learned that I was a performer and the head of an arts organization, she encouraged me always to inspire young people, to teach them the right roads to follow, and to get them involved in some way in the arts. That was of profound importance to her.”

Cissel had first met Angelou during his years as an actor and singer in New York City. He recalled attending events at which Angelou spoke and getting her to sign his copies of her books.

“What always fascinated me about her,” Cissel said, “was the impact she had on all people. That event at TU drew about 5,000 people, and she had everyone completely enthralled.

“But I saw that same reaction to her from people like Cecily Tyson and Roberta Flack, Ashford and Simpson,” he said. “That’s because her art came from the heart and resonated with people everyone. She was truly a universal spirit.”

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Adrienne Watt was a member of the first class of OCCJ Camp Anytown project. She is now director of advocacy for Legal Aid Services of Oklahoma. JACKIE DOBSON/ Tulsa World

# Leadership advocacy

## Camp Anytown alum talks of experience that helped spawn her legal career

### How to register

Sign up to participate in 2014 Camp Anytown by Friday. Go to [occjok.org](http://occjok.org) to register online or call 918-583-1361.

BY JAMES D. WATTS JR.  
World Scene Writer

Adrienne Watt did not know that Camp Anytown existed until three days before she attended its first session.

“I was between my junior and senior years at Cascia Hall,” Watt said, “and I had been asked by my debate coach to talk to some middle school students about leadership and social activism.”

By chance, Nancy Day, the longtime director of Oklahoma Center for Community and Jus-

tice, was also speaking that day.

“She told the students that they were unfortunately too young to take part in this new leadership camp OCCJ was starting in three days,” Watt said. “Then she said to me, ‘But you could attend.’ ”

Watt did, becoming part of the inaugural Camp Anytown, a weeklong conference sponsored by OCCJ that helps high school students develop self-esteem, practice good citizenship and learn leadership skills that will help them become responsible citizens of the world.

The 2014 Camp Anytown, which marks the 20th anniversary of the program, will be

June 15-21 at Dwight Mission Camp in Vian. Deadline for registration is Friday.

Watt, who serves as the director of advocacy for Legal Aid Services of Oklahoma, said that though she had long been interested in social issues, attending the very first Camp Anytown in 1994 “really helped confirm my determination that this was what I wanted to do with my life.”

“My parents are very concerned with social justice issues — it was a regular topic of conversation around the dinner table,” she said.

“And I think I was about 9 years old when my father said something to the effect that, if I really wanted to do something to help people, that I could always work for Legal Aid,” Watt said, laughing. “And here I am.”

Watt said she entered law school at Georgetown University with the plan of practicing public interest law. She had assumed that, upon graduating, that she would have to search

nationwide to find the sort of position she wanted.

“Then I learned that there was a position open in my hometown,” she said. “And I’ve been here ever since.”

Watt’s association with Camp Anytown has gone far beyond her original tenure as a student delegate. She has been a staff member for 15 years, beginning as a counselor during her college years to her current position as co-director.

“The things that I remember the most about that first camp was the chance to meet with other people my age that ordinarily I would never have had the chance to know,” Watt said.

“One of the goals of the camp is to have as diverse a population of delegates as possible,” she said. “And that leads to a lot of really meaningful discussions, that help you learn more about yourself as you learn more about others.”

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# GRAVE

FROM D1

his as-yet-unmarked grave in Floral Haven Cemetery.

Andrew Agee died on July 4, 2013. For most of his 35 years, Andrew Agee was obsessed with making and performing with puppets.

His creative imagination was first sparked by watching “The Muppet Show,” and soon he was enlisting his siblings and young relatives in assisting him in his shows.

“We’d do shows as kids,” said

Flowers and a stuffed toy are the only markers at the gravesite of Tulsa puppeteer Andrew Agee at Floral Haven Cemetery in Broken Arrow. His family can’t afford a permanent gravestone and is trying to raise funds to buy and install one. MATT BARNARD/Tulsa World

Sarah Abbott, Agee’s cousin. “And Andrew was always very specific about everything — telling us when to come in, what to do, the sort of voice we were supposed to use.”

“He was born to do this sort of thing,” Benjamin Agee said, smiling.

Andrew Agee staged his “Puppets Gone Wild” as part of the Tulsa PAC Trust’s annual SummerStage festival, and in 2012 he oversaw the puppeteering and played one of the lead roles in LOOK Musical Theatre’s production of “Avenue Q.”

Since his death, the Agee family has struggled to settle his estate and deal with the funeral costs, which left the family deeply in debt.

“I think we still owe around \$8,000, not counting the cost of the headstone,” Benjamin Agee said. “Our family has always been

the sort who live from paycheck to paycheck, but we also like to do things ourselves.”

Abbott came up with the idea of using a social media fundraising site to help purchase the headstone.

“I wanted to do this from the very start,” Abbott said. “Everyone else kept telling me to wait, that they would find a way to pay for everything. But it’s been nearly a year.

“When Andrew died,” she said, “a lot of people who knew him and loved him wanted to know what they could do to help. This would be a way to do that.”

Abbott set up a site on GoFundMe.com. The goal is to raise \$4,000 to purchase and install a bronze plaque that would feature Andrew’s portrait and some of his puppet creations.

Another of Agee’s brothers, Luke

Agee, said the family has a friend who worked for a company that creates such markers and would be able to sell one to the family at cost.

“And the people at Floral Haven have really gone above and beyond in helping us as much as they can,” Benjamin Agee said. “But we as a family would really like to get this taken care of. And we’re going to be doing all we can — I’m selling my motorcycle, and some of that will go toward this. We’re not the sort of people who just sit around and wait for donations.”

“We’d love to be able to raise the money by the anniversary,” Abbott said, referring to July 4.

The Andrew Agee fund can be accessed by going to [gofundme.com/puppetmancan](http://gofundme.com/puppetmancan). To contact the Agee family regarding donations or to share memories of Andrew may do so by emailing [rememberthepuppetman@gmail.com](mailto:rememberthepuppetman@gmail.com).

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### BENJAMIN AGEE

on the money needed to purchase a headstone for his late brother, Andrew Agee

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