

Continue

By Maya Angelou
(originally written to honor Oprah Winfrey's birthday)

On the day of your birth
The Creator filled countless storehouses
and
stockings
With rich ointments
Luscious tapestries
And antique coins of incredible value
Jewels worthy of a queen's dowry
They were set aside for your use
Alone
Armed with faith and hope
And without knowing of the wealth which
awaited
You broke through dense walls
of poverty
And loosed the chains of ignorance which
threatened to cripple you so that you
could walk
A Free Woman
Into a world which needed you
My wish for you
Is that you continue
Continue
To be who and how you are
To astonish a mean world
With your acts of kindness
Continue
To allow humor to lighten the burden

of your tender heart
Continue
In a society dark with cruelty
To let the people hear the grandeur
Of God in the peals of your laughter
Continue
To let your eloquence
Elevate the people to heights
They had only imagined
Continue
To remind the people that
Each is as good as the other
And that no one is beneath
Nor above you
Continue
To remember your own young years
And look with favor upon the lost
And the least and the lonely
Continue
To put the mantel of your protection
Around the bodies of
The young and defenseless
Continue
To take the hand of the despised
And diseased and walk proudly with them
In the high street
Some might see you and
Be encouraged to do likewise

Continue

To plant a public kiss of concern

On the cheek of the sick

And the aged and infirm

And count that as a

Natural action to be expected

Continue

To let gratitude be the pillow

Upon which you kneel to

Say your nightly prayer

And let faith be the bridge

You build to overcome evil

And welcome good

Continue

To ignore no vision

Which comes to enlarge your range

And increase your spirit

Continue

To dare to love deeply

And risk everything

For the good thing

Continue

To float

Happily in the sea of infinite substance

Which set aside riches for you

Before you had a name

Continue

And by doing so

You and your work

Will be able to continue

Eternally