

= Wouldn 't Take Nothing for My Journey Now =

Wouldn 't Take Nothing for My Journey Now , published in 1993 , is African @-@ American writer and poet Maya Angelou 's first book of essays . It was published shortly after she recited her poem " On the Pulse of Morning " at President Bill Clinton 's 1993 inauguration . Journey consists of a series of short essays , often autobiographical , along with two poems , and has been called one of Angelou 's " wisdom books " . It is titled after a lyric in the song Keep Your Eyes on the Prize . At the time of its publication , Angelou was already well respected and popular as a writer and poet . Like her previous works , Journey received generally positive reviews .

= = Background = =

Wouldn 't Take Nothing for My Journey Now (1993) is Maya Angelou 's first book of essays , published shortly after she recited her poem " On the Pulse of Morning " at the inauguration of US President Bill Clinton , making her the first poet to make an inaugural recitation since Robert Frost at John F. Kennedy 's 1961 inauguration . Her recitation resulted in more recognition for her previous works and broadened her appeal " across racial , economic , and educational boundaries " . Journey is , together with the 1997 book Even the Stars Look Lonesome , one of the volumes that writer Hilton Als called Angelou 's " wisdom book , comprising " homilies strung together with autobiographical texts " .

Journey was published during the period between her fifth and sixth autobiographies , All God 's Children Need Traveling Shoes (1986) and A Song Flung Up to Heaven (2002) . Angelou 's second book of essays , Even the Stars Look Lonesome , was published in 1997 . She had earlier published several volumes of poetry , including the Pulitzer Prize @-@ nominated Just Give Me a Cool Drink of Water ' fore I Diie (1971) . Angelou 's first personal essays were published in Essence in late 1992 . The positive response from her readers and the encouragement of her friend Oprah Winfrey inspired her to write Journey . She later admitted that the public 's response was " puzzling " to her . She also stated that she attempted to be " accessible " to her readers in the book . Journey appeared on The New York Times bestseller list and had an initial printing of 300 @,@ 000 copies . The Los Angeles Times , in a report about the 1993 financial struggles of Angelou 's publisher , Random House , speculated that the success of Journey partly compensated for the publisher 's other losses .

By 1993 , when Journey was published , Angelou had become recognized and highly respected as a spokesperson for Blacks and women . She was , as scholar Joanne Braxton stated , " without a doubt ... America 's most visible black woman autobiographer " . She had also become , as reviewer Richard Long stated , " a major autobiographical voice of the time " . Angelou was one of the first African @-@ American female writers to publicly discuss her personal life , and one of the first to use herself as a central character in her books . Writer Julian Mayfield , who called her first autobiography I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings " a work of art that eludes description " , stated that Angelou 's series set a precedent not only for other Black women writers , but for the genre of autobiography as a whole .

= = Overview = =

Wouldn 't Take Nothing for My Journey Now consists of 24 " journalistic homilies " or " meditations " , many of which are autobiographical , that range in number from 63 to a few hundred words . Siona Carpenter of Religion News Service considered Journey as a part of the increase in popularity of motivational and inspirational books written by and for African Americans during the mid @-@ 1990s . The book 's topics include fashion , entertainment , sensuality and pregnancy , racism and death . Her character sketches are similar to the descriptions of people , including those of herself , that appear throughout her autobiographies . The book contains two poems , " Mrs. V.B. " about her mother Vivian Baxter , who was one of the first Black females to join the merchant marines , and an untitled poem about the similarities between all people , despite their racial and cultural differences .

The book 's title , which Angelou called " a great song " , was taken from a gospel song first recorded by The Happy Goodman Family , which became their " signature song " , in the late 1950s :

= = Reviews = =

As with Angelou 's previous works , reviews of *Wouldn 't Take Nothing for My Journey Now* were generally positive . Mary Jane Lupton compared the essays in *Journey* to traditional Asian poetry and to the writings of Confucius . Many reviewers saw similarities between the essays in the book and Angelou 's autobiographical writing . Anne Patterson @-@ Rabon , who was emotionally impacted by Angelou 's essays , praised Angelou for her effective use of essays to tell her story and to illustrate her points . Lupton compared many of the events and character sketches in this book to descriptions in Angelou 's autobiographies . She compared two essays about Angelou 's grandmother to the descriptions in Angelou 's first autobiography *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* , and the essay " *Extending the Boundaries* " to her quarrel with her husband 's mistress in *The Heart of a Woman* . Marigold A. Clark of the *Bowling Green , Kentucky Daily News* called *Journey* " an autobiography like none other " . She praised Angelou for using " her experiences as examples "

Genevieve Stuttaford of *Publishers Weekly* called the essays in *Journey* " quietly inspirational pieces " . Anne Whitehouse of *The New York Times* wrote that the book would " appeal to readers in search of clear messages with easily digested meanings " . Patterson @-@ Rabon stated that the book " sings " like the song from which it got its title . *Journey* made an emotional impact on Clark , who stated : " The reader can almost hear her voice through the written words . " Paul D. Colford of the *Los Angeles Times* said that the essays in the book " pass as easily as an evening breeze " .