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Angelou clip sparks courtesy debate

BY LEANNE ITALIE
 The Associated Press

NEW YORK — Put a handle on it.

If you don't know what that means, you might not call elders by "Mr.," "Miss" or "Mrs.," insist that your children do the same or demand it for yourself. If you've heard the term, you're likely familiar with the history of the politics of respectability and what that means to some African Americans, pro and con.

Are you from the North or the South? A small town or big city native? From a religious, school or immigrant community that uses elder honorifics? Perhaps you're Professor, Doctor or Judge.

All of the above were widely debated on social media last week, focused on an old talk-show clip of the late Maya Angelou sharply chiding a teen girl for addressing her as Maya rather than Miss Angelou before asking the poet and memoirist for her views on interracial marriage.

"I'm not 'Maya.' I'm 62 years old. I have lived so long and tried so hard that a young woman like you, or any other, you have no license to come up to me and call me by my first name. That's first," she said to claps from the audience. "Also, because at the same time, I am your mother, I am your auntie, I'm your teacher, I'm your professor. You see?"

Angelou, who was black, apologized later in the show to the girl, Kim, also black.

Pierre Phipps, who tweeted the snippet dating to around 1990, has heard from all sides since then, and said opinions were varied and plentiful.

The 29-year-old Phipps, whose Twitter handle is @PrinceCharmingP, can't remember where he found the vintage exchange when he tweeted it out March 14 with: "I can't wait to turn 30 so I can read one of y'all for calling me by my first name like this:"

He told The Associated Press by phone Monday that he was surprised at the attention the tweet has received, especially among young people who disagreed with Angelou. She died in 2014 at age 86, and also favored the title Dr. in light of her numerous honorary doctorates.

"They think Miss Angelou's response was very elitist. They were really, really pissed about it," said Phipps, who lives in Los Angeles and writes for television. "We're living in progressive times and a lot of people said once they turn 18, they feel like they have an even platform no matter how old you are. History is no longer playing a part in how we go about our everyday lives. History is becoming history."

Phipps grew up in Chicago, but he has plenty of older female relatives from the South, including Mississippi and Alabama.

"It's an unwritten rule on respect for elders in which a lot of us were born and raised to 'put a handle on it,'" he said. "Me personally, coming from a strong black Southern family, I didn't see anything wrong with her response. Everyone is raised differently."

Carrie Salow is a 55-year-old mother of two girls in Phoenix, where she moved from Grand Rapids, Michigan, when she was 15.

"I absolutely expect my teen daughters to call their friends' parents Mr. and Mrs., and I expect the same," said Salow, who is white. "The kids who live across the street from us are now young adults, in and out of college. They still call me Mrs. Salow and I feel it is appropriate."



THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

How we address our elders set off a social media debate recently after a Los Angeles scriptwriter tweeted an old TV clip of MaY Angelou rebuking a young woman for calling her by her first name.



MICHELE DELUCA/Staff

Rita Weaver of Lockport, founder of Offline Connections, sits at Power City Eatery in Niagara Falls. As part of her new offline business for singles, she encourages those who are unattached to wear her pins and bracelets to let people know their status and to go out to places like coffee shops rather than sit at home online.

A symbol for singles

Bracelets, pins show the status of those open to meeting potential partners

BY MICHELE DELUCA
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Sometimes the greatest ideas come from a sort of kismet. And this story is about one of those moments.

Rita Weaver of Lockport was at the mall with her teenage son when she passed a man who walking with a young girl, likely his daughter. She and the man locked eyes, but both kept walking. They passed each other again about a half-hour later and both turned to look back at the other. Each of them continued on their way.

"I thought to myself, 'what happened?'" she recalled during a recent interview at Power City Eatery in Niagara Falls. "I thought, 'he must be married, he must be

in a relationship.'" Nothing came from those two encounters. But, the next morning, she pondered what might have been a missed opportunity. Wouldn't it be great if there was a way to tell whether or not people were single and happy to meet others?

"I thought, 'what if there was a symbol that people could wear that said, 'yes, I'm single and you can approach?'"

When she couldn't find such a symbol, she made one. "I created a symbol. It's two lines coming together in a circle of hope," she said. Then she created a company that sells the symbol in bracelets and on pins.

Wearing the symbol will help she's sure, and she hopes to encourage opportunities for connection. The pins and bracelets sell online for \$20 each. But, once people purchase the pieces, she wants them to get offline.

She has begun a social media campaign to get people to turn off their computers and go places like coffee shops, malls and libraries so they can mingle and talk to their fellow humans. "People ask me, 'you want me to go online to go offline?'"

She tells them, wholeheartedly and emphatically, "yes."

The twice-married, single mom has a dream. "I want to help people. Loneliness is becoming an epidemic in the U.S. People are sitting at home. My dream is to get them out of the house and talking to others again."

She wants people to talk face-to-face, rather than call or text. "This way, you know right away if you have chemistry. It's so much faster. It's what we used to do."

For more information, visit online at www.offlineconnections.com or visit [Offline_Connections](https://www.facebook.com/Offline_Connections) on Facebook and Instagram.



The top photo at right is a pin that denotes the wearer is single and open to meeting new people, created by Rita Weaver of Offline Connections. The bottom photo shows bracelets available with the same logo.

From millennials to Baby Boomers, houseplants are hot

GIVING GIFTS THAT GROW

BY MELINDA MYERS
 Special to Sunday Lifestyles

It's a jungle in there. Every window, surface and brightly lit corner is filled with decorative or edible greenery. There is no doubt what to gift this person for birthdays or other special events. More of the same.

A lack of outdoor growing space, limited growing seasons, and time constraints have many people filling their apartments and homes with fiddle leaf figs, palms, succulents, herbs and vegetables.

And you have probably heard of the houseplant craze amongst millennials. Perhaps the need to destress after a long work day, concern for purer air, an interest in safe fresh food and a desire to be close to nature contribute to this craze. No matter the reason, gifting a millennial a trendy houseplant is sure to be a hit.

No matter your age, living in a green space and tending plants has many benefits. It reduces stress, improves one's mood and provides a sense of emotional well being. Planting seeds and watching them grow generates feelings of hope. It's edible, even better. Indoor herb and vegetable gardens provide fresh, nutritious food to harvest and enjoy.



COURTESY WWW.MODSPROUT.COM

The mason jar garden can be a do-it-yourself gift or can be ordered online from companies like Modern Sprout.

Newbies and those making the gardening transition indoors may find it challenging. Limited light, a different pallet of plants and variable watering regimes can be intimidating. Those who have killed philodendrons and succulents in the past may have given up, but fortunately there are solutions and easy-care options for those looking to expand their indoor green spaces.

Take the guesswork out of watering with hydroponics. Water and nutrients are available and delivered via a wick or similar system to the plants when needed. Colorful Mason-type

canning jar planters fitted with hydroponic grow kits are perfect for starting seeds and growing plants on windowsills and countertops. Add a sleeker touch with a colored glass cylinder like Modern Sprout's Hydroponic Tumbler Grow Kit.

Give them all they need; seeds or plants, container and growing media. Make it yourself or buy a ready-made kit online. This gift is sure to provide a sense of satisfaction from planting to harvesting their first sprig of basil or decorating the spruce tree they grew from a seed.

Brighten up growing spaces

with indoor lights. Supplementing natural light or providing light in a windowless space can make the difference between success and failure. Energy efficient LED grow lights provide the light plants need, while saving on energy costs. Attractive options and space saving systems blend in nicely to any home. Complete lighting systems are designed to fit small spaces and make watering easy while protecting surrounding surfaces from water damage.

Match the plants to the light conditions and the recipient's gardening skills. Succulents are trendy and perfect for busy gardeners with sunny windows or grow light setups. They thrive with benign neglect; as do snake plants, Chinese evergreens, Anthuriums and ZZ plants in low light conditions. Orchids and bonsai make the perfect gift for those ready to take their indoor gardening to the next level. For the most fool proof winter option, gift an amaryllis or paperwhite bulb kit.

No matter the recipient's age or experience level, the gift of gardening will provide immediate and lasting enjoyment. Melinda Myers is the author of more than 20 gardening books and host of "The Great Courses' How to Grow Anything" DVD series. Her website, www.melindamyers.com, offers gardening tips and videos.