



Photo: *NaVo Newsweekly*

Mari Evans

Indianapolis, Marion County

July 16, 1923 – March 10, 2017

Mari Evans was born in Toledo, Ohio. After her mother died when Mari was 10 year old, her father encouraged her to write. After attending local public schools, Mari Evans enrolled at the University of Toledo where she majored in fashion design; however, she left before receiving a degree. An Indianapolis resident since 1947, she became a famed poet during the Black Arts Movement during the 1960s and 1970s. In 1969, she began teaching at universities throughout the United States. Her first assignment was as writer-in-residence at Indiana University-Purdue University at Indianapolis. Among other universities, she taught at Indiana University-Bloomington, Cornell University, and Spellman College.

Renowned for her poetry on the African-American experience, Mari Evans also wrote short stories, children’s books, theater pieces, and non-fiction articles. One of her best known poems, “When in Rome,” has been taught in many high schools and college English classes. Despite national recognition and many honors for her contributions to the literary world, her work was not well-known to many in her hometown. However, in recent years, community members who were moved by her work strove to change that. In August 2016, she was honored with a 30-foot-tall mural by Michael “Alkemi” Jordon located on Mass Ave in downtown Indianapolis. Later that year, an art exhibit opened in Indianapolis celebrating her work as an example of the strength and significance of black culture.

Mari Evans died in Indianapolis on March 10, 2017. Her poem, “The Rebel” pays tribute to her adeptness, humor, and wisdom:

When I	Curiosity	or just
die	seekers ...	trying to make
I'm sure	coming to see	Trouble...
I will have a	if I	
Big Funeral ...	am really	
	Dead ...	



- For more information about Mari Evans, go to: <http://www.indystar.com/story/entertainment/2015/10/08/indiana-poet-mari-evans-receives-lifetime-achievement-award/73545482/>.
- For more information about *Writing Her Story*, go to: <http://www.in.gov/icw/2440.htm>.

Additional and more detailed references available at the end of Women’s History Month