



THE ANGELA Y. DAVIS READER

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Introduction

I felt an almost unbearable tension – it was as if I were two persons, two faces of a Janus head. One profile stared disconsolately into the past – the fretful, violent, confining past broken only by occasional splotches of meaning. . . . The other gazed with longing and apprehension into the future – a future glowing with challenge, but also harboring the possibility of defeat.

Angela Davis, *Angela Davis: An Autobiography*¹

The Janus Head

In her memoir, Angela Davis evokes Janus – the Roman god of doors or beginnings. Depicted with two visages facing, like portals, in opposite directions, Janus serves as a metaphor for the past and future directions of Davis's political and intellectual life: the past manifests in the violent repression of blacks in the United States, the future reflects the possibility of an internationalist movement for a socialist, feminist, nonracialist democracy. Janus, like Eleggua, the Yoruba orisha of the crossroads, marks awakenings, polarities, and contradictions. In the autobiography, it references the possibilities of choice and realization within struggles for class, race, and sexual liberation. It also symbolizes simultaneous existence in the seemingly exclusive social worlds of black disenfranchisement and poverty and white privilege and education. Representing a dialectic of theory and resistance in revolutionary struggle in Davis's political and intellectual development, Janus signifies conflictual and transitional stages that foster feelings of alienation from the familiar, yet open new avenues. Life is set by a series of decisions, paths taken and paths avoided. The existential dilemmas described in *Angela Davis: An Autobiography* reflect a tension magnified by the heightened expectations and fears characteristic of revolutionary social and political movements. In the US, during the era of militancy depicted in the memoir, radical choices courted triumphs for liberation, or disasters and the possibility of imprisonment and death. Shaping Davis's future as a black radical, Communist, and international feminist, the past and present profiles of the Janus head denote transformative thought and personal/political struggle. Such thought, scanning both directions to avoid stagnation,

considers the past from which movements originate in order to maintain momentum for the future. For activist-intellectuals, such as Davis, who struggled with exclusionary but overlapping worlds shaped by race, class, sex, gender, and violence, Janus in its positive manifestation represents the opportunity to confront the contradictory existence of abrogated freedom within the world's most powerful nation-state. In its negative aspect, it represents hypocrisy and denial, a "two-facedness" manifest when states or political systems claim democratic principles while systematically disenfranchising marginalized peoples or political minorities.

The Formation of an Activist-Intellectual

Angela Yvonne Davis was born in Birmingham, Alabama, in 1944, near the close of the Second World War and the emergence of the United States as heir to British hegemony (a dominance which the US militarily retains, despite its slippage in the global economic and intellectual marketplace). She grew up in the Southern United States under Jim Crow segregation and codified racial discrimination. During the late 1940s, her family moved into a neighborhood that subsequently became known as "Dynamite Hill" because of Ku Klux Klan terrorism against black families being integrated into the previously all-white community. Although the Davis home was never targeted by white arsonists, houses across the street were bombed. Bombings and burnings continued for several years; "miraculously," recalls Davis, no one was killed.²

Racial segregation had created an apartheid-like Southern US in which African-American students, regardless of their economic status, usually attended the same (underfunded) schools. As a child, Davis was considered part of an elite among impoverished peers. Because of her family's financial security and the extreme poverty of some classmates, the grade schooler stole from her father, giving money to children to buy their school lunch. Partly to escape the social roles defined by her middle-class standing in the black community and the educational limitations of local schools bound by Jim Crow and inequitable state funding, Davis left the South in 1959, for Manhattan, New York, where, under the auspices of a Quaker educational program, she lived with a progressive white family and attended a private high school, Elizabeth Irwin/Little Red School House. There she studied Karl Marx and Frederick Engels's *The Communist Manifesto*, and at age fifteen became active in a youth organization associated with the Communist Party. Familiarity with the Party was part of her family history. Since her birth, Davis's parents had been close friends with black members of the Communist Party USA (CPUSA). Although neither ever joined the Party, they were black middle-class educators who organized as "commu-

nist sympathizers." Her mother, Sallye Bell Davis, was a national officer and leading activist in the Southern Negro Youth Congress, an organization associated with the CPUSA which had campaigned to free the Scottsboro Nine.³

During her childhood, anti-Communist repression in the McCarthy era forced the elder Davis's friends – the parents of young Angela's playmates – underground. Despite the prevalence of repressive anti-Communism, Davis was profoundly affected by Marxism, and sought a disciplined, antiracist movement against racialized economic exploitation. Like Janus, Marxism with one profile surveyed economic, political, and social oppression while the other provided a glimpse of a possible future without the inequities of capitalism.

Upon high school graduation and with a scholarship in hand, Davis left New York to attend Brandeis University in Massachusetts; she studied there with philosopher Herbert Marcuse, and took her junior year in France at the Sorbonne. This was the height of the civil rights movement emanating from the 1955 Montgomery, Alabama, bus boycotts that had destabilized US apartheid. The memoir describes the young Davis's dissonance as she embarks for Europe to develop as a formally-trained intellectual yet desires to remain connected to black liberation struggles in the US: "The Janus head was still fixed – one eye full of longing to be in the fray in Birmingham, the other contemplating my own future. It would be a long time before the two profiles came together and I would know the direction to both the past and the future."⁴ Janus would continue to haunt Davis politically during the civil rights movement as she furthered her academic studies in France and Germany. Like other influential, progressive writers, particularly the black "public intellectuals," Davis's educational and economic privileges both distanced her from the most marginalized (African Americans) and infused her theories of (black) liberation with an internationalist perspective. Parisian anti-Algerian racism had a strong impact on her understandings of international racism and colonialism and their connections to US antiblack racism (European racism also had a marked influence on another black American intellectual living in Paris during that time, James Baldwin). Torn between the desire to learn from different national cultures and political systems and the need to join "the movement," Davis decided not to pursue a doctorate at Goethe University in Frankfurt, Germany, choosing instead to return to the States to work with Marcuse at the University of California at San Diego.

Terrorist assaults against black activists provided the radicalizing impetus to end her European studies in the late 1960s. In fact, the racist murders of childhood acquaintances in her hometown during her first study abroad, in the early 1960s, profoundly affected her. In both the autobiography and a 1993 essay, "Remembering Carole, Cynthia, Addie Mae and Denise,"⁵

Davis recounts how, while in France, she learned of the September 15, 1963, bombing of Birmingham's Sixteenth Street Baptist Church. In that foray by white extremists, fourteen-year-olds Carole Robertson, Cynthia Wesley, and Addie Mae Collins, and eleven-year-old Denise McNair, died. The bombing occurred soon after the historic 1963 March on Washington, DC, and Martin Luther King Jr's eschatological "I Have a Dream" speech. Davis reminisces that declining the scholarship to the private school in Manhattan would have probably placed her nearby at Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee, at the time of the bombing. It was during her stay in Europe, far from family ties and a society schooled in surviving and confronting white violence, that Davis learned of, and became deeply disturbed by, the girls' deaths: "If I had not been in France, news would not have been broken to me about the deaths . . . in the 'objective journalism' of the *International Herald Tribune*. . . I was in Biarritz, living among people so far removed from the civil-rights war unfolding in the South that it made little sense to try to express to them how devastated I felt. I wrestled in solitude with my grief, my fear and my rage."⁶ The absence of public mourning in France for the slain youths – an absence put into sharp relief several months later when French nationals collectively mourned the assassination of US President John F. Kennedy – was strongly felt: "I carried around in my head for many years an imagined representation of the bombing's aftermath that was far more terrifying than any cinematic image of violence I have ever encountered: the fixed eyes of Carole's and Cynthia's bloody decapitated heads and their dismembered limbs strewn haphazardly among the dynamited bricks and beams in the front yard of the stately church. My own private imagination of what happened that day was so powerful that years would pass before I felt able to listen to the details of my mother's story."⁷

Three decades later, Davis extensively discussed the tragedy with Sallye Davis. In 1963, upon hearing the explosion from her home, the elder Davis had contacted Alpha Bliss Robertson and driven her to the Sunday School class at the church to find her daughter, Carole; instead, the women found debris and parts of the children's bodies. In the collective remembrance of this tragedy, Davis notes erasure: "The time in the country my mother and I spent remembering that terrible day three decades ago – 'Bloody Sunday', she calls it – was both healing and frustrating. As we spoke about the girls as we had known them, it occurred to me that the way the memory of that episode persists in popular imagination is deeply problematic. What bothers me most is that their names have been virtually erased: They are inevitably referred to as 'the four black girls killed in the Birmingham church bombing.' Another traumatic moment occurred in 1964 when James Chaney, Michael Schwerner and Andrew Goodman were killed in

Mississippi. A decade earlier, Emmett Till was found at the bottom of the Tallahatchie River. These boys, whose lives were also consumed by racist fury, still have names in our historical memory. Carole, Denise, Addie Mae and Cynthia do not."⁸ "Bloody Sunday," the term used by many activists to describe the atrocity, became a fixture in American political racial memory. Yet few, Davis observes, remember that the girls were young activists, who at the time of their deaths were preparing to speak about civil rights at the church's annual Youth Day program.⁹ For most, the four "function abstractly in popular memory as innocent, nameless black girls' bodies destroyed by racist hate."¹⁰ All four shared political commitments with other youths who in that volatile year had confronted police commissioner Eugene "Bull" Connor's high-powered fire hoses and, according to Davis, "filled the jails in Birmingham in a way that reenergized the Civil Rights Movement like nothing since the Montgomery Boycott."¹¹

Missing the courageous confrontations with repressive state laws waged by youths, particularly girls and young women, Davis spent most of her years between 1959 and 1967 outside of the South and therefore distanced from the Southern civil rights movement (as did other African-American women, such as Black Panther leaders Elaine Brown, Kathleen Cleaver, and Assata Shakur). However, Davis periodically "touched base" with the movement. For instance, testing voter disenfranchisement of blacks, in 1965, when she became twenty-one, she attempted to register to vote in Birmingham and was denied that right because of her race. In the early 1980s, during a National Women's Studies Association keynote address, Davis recalled the abrogation of her civil rights to illustrate the political repression of women. Examining the repressive legacy of continuing voter disenfranchisement during the Reagan administration's destabilization of social and political gains from the civil rights and women's movements, she cited the case of Julia Wilder and Maggie Bozeman of the Black Belt of Alabama who were convicted in January 1982, of voter fraud. Both women had "assisted older people and people who, as a result of the racist educational system that is particularly acute in the South, never managed to learn how to read and write well enough to fill out a ballot . . . [consequently] they were tried and convicted by an all-white jury and sentenced to four and five years, respectively, in the state penitentiary."¹²

With the 1964 Voting Rights Act and the de jure right to vote won by the "second reconstruction," the de facto abrogation of rights continued. Paradoxically, as repression continued, the definition of rights for the dispossessed expanded beyond that of civil rights to the more encompassing social and economic rights. This growing demand for justice and equality also sparked calls to militancy.

SNCC and the Black Panther Party

The search for human liberation greater than the US Constitution's promise of electoral powers led Angela Davis to the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and the Black Panther Party (BPP). The Black Panther logo of the Lowndes County, Alabama, Freedom Democratic Party was propelled into the national spotlight in 1966 by television broadcasts of a Greenwood, Mississippi, march. There – with Martin Luther King Jr in attendance – SNCC's Stokely Carmichael, having just been released from jail by local police attempting to destabilize the demonstration, galvanized the black gathering to chant for "Black Power!" The "Panther" captured the political imagination of black youths. Speaking to black political frustrations with the intransigence of an entrenched white power structure, one enforced by police malfeasance and brutality, it echoed Malcolm X's calls for self-defense with the heightened sense of risk and confrontation which followed his 1965 assassination. The Panther – which remains *the* political-cultural symbol for black militancy and resistance in the US – became the contested namesake and symbol for several organizations; interestingly, these organizations emerged on the west coast far from the civil rights struggles of the north- and southeast.

Huey Newton and Bobby Seale's Black Panther Party for Self-Defense emerged in Oakland, California, in 1966, and later expanded into Los Angeles where Davis was a member of the Black Panther Political Party. In 1967, at the demands of Oakland's leadership for exclusive claim to the title and SNCC national leaders Carmichael and James Forman's suggestion, the Black Panther Political Party became "Los Angeles SNCC." It was short-lived as a political group. Los Angeles SNCC women ran the office but men dominated as official spokespersons and media figures, according to Davis, who states that Los Angeles SNCC dissolved because of women's refusal to accept the sexist and masculinist posturing of male leadership. Other factors leading to the demise of the organization were national SNCC's anti-Communism, and attempts by the New York-based national SNCC office (under the leadership of H. Rap Brown, but over the protests of Forman) to dictate policy to chapters; one dictate led to an aborted attempt to merge with Newton's Panthers.

Upon leaving SNCC, Davis joined the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense. She describes her affiliation with the Panther organization as a "permanently ambiguous status" that fluctuated between "'member' and 'fellow-traveler'." Active in community organizing, temporarily in charge of political education in the West Side office (which she worked with Bunchy Carter and John Huggins to open) and formulating political education for the Los Angeles Chapter, Davis remained on the fringes of the Panthers'

internal contestations. Years later, she recalls her doubts about the Party's militarist posturing: "I thoroughly respected the BPP's visible defiance and principally supported the right to self-defense. . . . I also found myself using funerals and shootings as the most obvious signposts of the passage of time. However, sensing ways in which this danger and chaos emanated not only from the enemy outside, but from the very core of the Black Panther Party, I preferred to remain uninformed about the organization's inner operations."¹³

Part of the contradictions of internal operations revolved around sexual politics. The Black Panther Party as a masculinist, revolutionary organization operated in ways that promoted both males and females to perceive women "as objects of male sexual desire," according to Davis.¹⁴ No matter how close a woman came to approximating the contributions of the most esteemed male leader, maintains Davis, the respect granted a Panther woman, even those in high-ranking leadership, could be and was "reversed with the language and practice of [male- or female initiated] sexual seduction." Davis's generalizations concerning Panther women (and men) universalize the behavior of elite Oakland leadership (as portrayed by Elaine Brown), suggesting a gender uniformity for the leadership and rank-and-file of chapters and branches across the country.¹⁵ Despite its sexism, complexity marked Panther sexual politics; for example, the BPP newspaper took a stance for gay/lesbian, and women's rights as Davis remarks elsewhere.

Davis notes that although some African-American women in revolutionary organizations "detested the overt sexism of male leaders," they also associated feminism with middle-class white women: "In failing to recognize the profoundly masculinist emphasis of our own struggles, we were all at risk. We often ended up affirming hierarchies in the realm of gender relations that we militantly challenged in the area of race relations."¹⁶ Of her romanticizing of the Panthers, Davis writes: "I cannot deny the attraction that the Panther representations of black militant masculinity held for me at a time when precious few of us had begun thinking about the politics of sexism and compulsory heterosexuality."¹⁷ The construction of the revolutionary, of the militant leader with transformative agency for social justice, was masculine: "Revolutionary practice was conceived as quintessentially masculinist. The Party's imagined power was too often conflated with power over the means of violence, wielded both against the 'enemy' and in the ranks of the Party itself. This power was sexualized so that women's place was always defined as unalterably inferior. It articulated notions of revolutionary democracy with gang-inspired, authoritarian organizational principles. It sexualized politics and politicized sexuality in unconscious and dangerous ways."¹⁸

The Black Panther Party, as "part of our historical memory," provides a contested terrain, one often navigated with blinders of romanticized or

demonized iconography. Romanticization and demonization would also extend to the Communist Party, which by the 1960s was a radical (rather than revolutionary) organization, perceived as less of a political threat than the BPP and so less of a target for violent destabilization on the part of local and federal police agencies. The BPP was in decline by 1969 due to infiltration by police and FBI agents and provocateurs, internal factionalism, gender bias, and the corruption of west-coast elite leadership. The CPUSA, which had been infiltrated decades earlier and crippled by the McCarthy era's persecution, had its own internal contradictions around race and gender.

The Communist Party USA

Davis became a member of the Communist Party USA in 1968, at the same time that she joined the Panthers; however, her ties with the CPUSA proved less problematic than her relationship with the BPP. Her affiliation with the Panthers would last less than two years; with the Communist Party, it would endure for over twenty. Initially Davis joined the CPUSA because of her commitments to internationalist struggle. Like W. E. B. Du Bois, who after the Second World War, began to incorporate Marxist theory into his analyses of oppression, Davis felt that black liberation was unobtainable apart from an international workers' movement against capitalism, imperialism, and racism. Her understanding that a mass liberation struggle needed to be class-based in order to confront the racist foundations of capitalism was strengthened by a 1969 trip to Cuba. (In 1959, Cuba had waged a successful revolution against the US-backed Batista dictatorship, and in 1963, again successfully, defended itself against the US Bay of Pigs invasion.)

In part, joining the Communist Party was Davis's response to the deficiencies she found in the black liberation movement's nationalism. For her, black nationalism inspired African Americans by emphasizing the collective African past and a "black aesthetic," but its dominant culturalist outlook lacked comprehensive economic and political analyses for black equality and human rights. In her view, black nationalist ideology's construction of "race" distilled from economic, gender, ethnic, and class considerations erased the connections between oppressed blacks, other racially marginalized peoples, the exploitation of white workers, and sexism. The limitations of cultural nationalism in the 1960s led Davis (by then a Marxist for over a decade) to ideologies such as those espoused by the Che-Lumumba Club of southern California. One of the CPUSA's few all-black collectives, the Club conducted successful campaigns against police brutality and executions in black neighborhoods. Davis found Che-Lumumba

unhampered by the conservative gender and sexual politics undermining radical organizations such as the west-coast Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and the west-coast Black Panther Party.

Davis's political work and personal life within organizations such as the Communist Party and the Black Panther Party made her vulnerable to attacks by university administrations. By 1969, the new assistant philosophy professor at the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) was recognized in the state as a radical antiracist and a Communist. Although it had no formal punitive measures for ousting antiracists (as did schools in the South which had criminalized membership in the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People), the university administration codified persecution of Communists. In 1949, in the advent of McCarthyism, the University of California Regents had passed a bylaw banning the hiring of Communists. Twenty years later, it terminated Davis's contract under the leadership of then California Governor and later US President Ronald Reagan (when head of the Hollywood Screen Actors Guild, Reagan had provided the names of film artists/artisans suspected of "communist leanings" to the FBI).¹⁹ It would be two decades before Davis, who had trained for years to become an academic, would be permitted a tenured professorship in the University of California.

Despite the professional costs, she openly served for twenty-three years in active leadership on the Party's Central Committee and twice ran for Vice-President on its national ticket. In 1991, on the eve of the CPUSA 25th National Convention, seeking with other long-time Party members to democratize the internal life of the CPUSA, Davis and approximately eight hundred activists and intellectuals formulated, signed, and disseminated an internal document designed to open up avenues of debate, "An Initiative to Unite and Renew the Party." The "Initiative" criticized the CPUSA for elitism and racial and sexual bias. For example, it argues for the need to restore "the principle of black and white leadership,"²⁰ maintaining that the Party has "gone backward in attention to the struggle for African-American equality."²¹ Referring to the struggle for gender equality, the document states: "While the ultra-right has furiously attacked women's rights precisely to divide the people, a kind of simplistic interpretation of a class approach has led us to pay scant attention to the very dynamic women's movement."²² Advocating a stronger grassroots mandate for the CPUSA, the "Initiative" criticizes past Party practices as non-democratic: "Our participation in mass struggles should be our primary task and yardstick."²³ The "Initiative" makes no mention of sexuality, homophobia, and gay, lesbian, bi- and transsexual rights.

During the national elections that followed, Communist Party leaders who signed the paper were refused placement on the official slate; consequently, none of the "Initiative" signatories were re-elected to office. Later

that year, along with most of the eight hundred, including leaders such as Charlene Mitchell, Herbert Aptheker, and James Jackson, Davis left the Communist Party. The following year, at a Berkeley, California, conference, the reformers created the Committees of Correspondence, on whose National Coordinating Committee Davis briefly served.

Political Trials

Active in the Communist Party, Davis became engaged in prisoners' rights activism during the time that she was defending her right to teach at UCLA. Her organizing focused on a mass defense for the Soledad Brothers: George Jackson, Fleeta Drumgo, and John Clutchette. These three incarcerated African-American leaders in the California prisoners' rights movement were falsely charged with killing a prison guard in January 1970. Through the Soledad Brothers' Defense Committee she met prison intellectual and liberation theorist George Jackson. Author of *Blood in My Eye and Soledad Brother*,²⁴ he would eventually become an intimate friend of Davis. At the age of eighteen, Jackson had been sentenced to an indeterminate sentence of from one year to life for driving a car involved in a gas-station robbery which netted seventy dollars. Jackson, who had served ten years at the time Davis met him, maintained that he was unaware of his acquaintance's robbery as he sat in the car. On August 21, 1971, at the age of thirty, this Soledad prison leader and Field Marshall for the Black Panther Party was shot and killed by a guard, in what many activists viewed as a political assassination.

Before meeting Jackson, Davis established friendships with his family – mother Georgia, sisters Penny and Frances, and seventeen-year-old brother Jonathan, who eventually became one of her bodyguards. The activist-academic was daily receiving multiple death threats. Campus police provided some measure of protection as she taught classes and met with students. Friends and co-activists provided off-campus security, often with guns legally purchased by the twenty-six-year-old assistant professor and kept in her apartment. To publicize prison conditions and state abuses against the Soledad Brothers, and out of love for his brother, George, in August 1970, Jonathan Jackson, a member of Davis's security, carried guns into a courtroom in northern California's Marin County. With prisoners James McClain, William Christmas, and Ruchell Magee, he took as hostages the judge, district attorney, and several members of the jury. The high school student and inmates brought the hostages to a van in the parking lot. San Quentin guards fired on the parked vehicle, killing Judge Haley, Jonathan Jackson, and prisoners McClain and Christmas, while seriously wounding the district attorney, several jurors, and prisoner Magee who

later became Davis's codefendant.²⁵ She was not in northern California at the time, but because the guns were registered in her name, Davis was named by police as an accomplice. In that era, at the height of the FBI's counterintelligence program (COINTELPRO) to undermine the civil rights and black liberation movements – police, assisted by federal agents, had killed or assassinated over twenty black revolutionaries in the Black Panther Party.²⁶ Rather than turn herself in to the authorities, Davis went underground and for two months was on the Federal Bureau of Investigation's "Ten Most Wanted List." Captured in Manhattan on October 13, 1970, she would spend the next sixteen months in prison, most of it in solitary confinement, before her release on bail.

On January 5, 1971, in *The People of the State of California vs. Angela Y. Davis*, the state arraigned Angela Davis in a small Marin County Courtroom on charges of murder,²⁷ kidnapping, and conspiracy. Throughout 1971, various judges denied more than thirty pre-trial motions made by defense counsel. Responding to the defense team's motion for a change of venue – the defense hoped that the trial would be relocated to the more racially mixed Alameda county – the state moved the case to Santa Clara County, ensuring the likelihood of an all-white, conservative jury. Nevertheless, the case was closely monitored by progressive activists and intellectuals who petitioned for a fair trial. In April 1972 the National United Committee to Free Angela Davis published her opening defense statement in a pamphlet entitled *Frame-Up*, which argues that Davis was prosecuted because of her effective leadership in mobilizing African Americans to support political prisoners such as the Soledad Brothers, and to oppose the state's efforts to "eliminate" the Brothers and derail the radical movement.²⁸ California Assistant Attorney General Albert Harris, who was specially appointed to prosecute Davis, would later complain about the "international conspiracy to free the defendant" when Santa Clara County jail authorities were flooded with calls, telegrams, and letters from around the world protesting the conditions under which Davis was housed. President Richard Nixon, Attorney General John Mitchell, FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover (architect of the illegal and violent counterrevolutionary COINTELPRO), and Governor Reagan were also deluged with millions of pieces of mail objecting to inadequate conditions hampering Davis's defense team.

The trial took place in a time of severe government repression against radicals and revolutionaries that included the use of state juries to tie up black activists in court on falsified criminal charges or to falsely incarcerate them.²⁹ Nationwide though, exposés on COINTELPRO, state malfeasance, and flimsy evidence, coupled with educational campaigns and demonstrations to end repressive policing and judiciaries, led juries to throw out cases or rule in favor of activists. In New Haven, New York, New Orleans,

Los Angeles, San Francisco, Denver, and Detroit, juries exonerated defendants such as the Harrisburg 7, Ericka Huggins and Bobby Seale, the New York 21, and others. In fact, at the time of Davis's trial, jurors in a San Rafael court acquitted the Soledad Brothers of all charges (George Jackson did not live to see his exoneration), with some jurors greeting the defendants after the reading of the verdict, according to *Frame-Up*.

In February 1972, after intense and lengthy lobbying by activists to end dehumanizing prison conditions and judicial racism in sentencing, the state Supreme Court abolished the death penalty in California,³⁰ a decision that would facilitate Davis's release on bail. Organizers had effectively mobilized a massive, (inter)national campaign, inundating the trial judge with demands for immediate bail, including a telegram signed by all thirteen of the African-American US Congressmen, at that time, the entire membership of the Congressional Black Caucus. On February 23, 1972, noting the magnitude of the public demands, the presiding judge granted bail. Given that her release undermined the presumption of guilt, which had been promoted in most media, prosecutors sought, and were denied, a delay in the trial proceedings. The trial, which progressed throughout 1971 and into the following year, ended just as the Soledad Brothers' trial had: Angela Yvonne Davis was acquitted of all charges when the jury rendered its "not guilty" verdict on June 4, 1972.

Prison Writings

Davis's, pioneering works include her "prison writings," and the memoir *If They Come in the Morning: Voices of Resistance*.³¹ Women's rights and leadership remain a central theme in her work on liberation politics. Her leadership in the Soledad Brothers' Defense Committee led to correspondence with George Jackson (reprinted in Jackson's *Soledad Brother*), whose letters included critiques of the social function of prisons and a chauvinism antithetical to liberation praxis. According to Davis, "He seemed to have internalized the notions of black women as domineering matriarchs, as castrating females, notions associated with the Moynihan Report. I could detect this in the comments he made in his letters, especially comments about his mother."³² To challenge Jackson's gender politics, she began to investigate the role of African-American females during slavery and eventually developed the essay "Reflections on the Black Woman's Role in the Community of Slaves."³³ At the time, little had been written on enslaved black women from a feminist perspective. As an inmate, Davis was able to research this article only with extreme difficulty, obtaining books only by stating that they were pertinent to her case: "I informed the jail authorities that I had the right to whatever literature I needed for the

preparation of my defense. In a large sense this research really was very helpful for the preparation of my defense because in my trial I focused a great deal on the misogynist character of the prosecution's case. The theoretical work I did on black women actually assisted me to develop a strategy for my own defense."³⁴ Sexist imagery was a pillar in Prosecutor Harris's March 27, 1971, opening argument in which he depicted Davis as a "student of violence," and, referring to her relationship with George Jackson, a "'woman of uncontrollable passions', the vicious conspirator blinded by love."³⁵

Davis's autobiography recounts the conditions under which she was held while awaiting trial, describing the penal environment and key moments of her imprisonment and trial defense. Despite adverse conditions while incarcerated, she served as co-counsel, preparing her defense with movement attorneys. Scholarly literature produced while in jail, such as the above mentioned "Reflections on the Black Woman's Role in the Community of Slaves," reflected her own political experiences of sexism. Davis traces the thesis of black matriarchy (expressed by Jackson) to various theories, including E. Franklin Frazier's in the 1930s, that argue that black women "remained the only real vestige of family life" because slavery had destroyed the black family and consequently created hybrid black women, overwhelming creatures that oppressed or emasculated black males. Senator Daniel Moynihan's 1965 government report, *The Negro Family - A Case for National Action*, promoted this image as it portrayed black mothers as matriarchs who pathologized the black family through their subversion of gender roles. Davis's critique of the "Moynihan Report" addresses labor exploitation of black women and men in the community of slaves. Responding to the pervasive depiction of black women as domineering matriarchs, Davis offers one of the earliest analyses of the intersections of racism, sexism, and capitalism within the slave economy and one of the earliest essays on antiracist feminist theory contextualized in the black experience in the Americas. She also provides a corrective to biased historiography that marginalizes or caricatures the realities of enslaved women. Introducing the concept that equal exploitation or "deformed equality" tended to disrupt gender hierarchies for black women and men, the essay both challenges common misperceptions of black female life under slavery and highlights the manner in which stereotypes shape contemporary perspectives and scholarship. Precisely because it demystified stereotypical images of enslaved black women and emphasized the specificity of historical women in resistance, this influential essay became widely circulated among feminist and black studies readers.

Another prison essay, "Political Prisoners and Black Liberation," first appeared in *If They Come in the Morning: Voices of Resistance*, an anthology edited by Davis, from her cell, and activist-academic Bettina Aptheker, with

contributions from US radicals such as Aptheker, and political prisoners or prison intellectuals such as Davis and Newton. "Political Prisoners and Black Liberation" is perhaps the first essay authored by an African-American woman within the genre of contemporary black protest and prison literature, a genre traceable to Martin Luther King Jr's 1955, "Letter from Birmingham Jail." Davis writes in this essay, which was first published in 1971, that "the entire apparatus of the bourgeois democratic state, especially its judicial system and its prisons, is disintegrating. The judicial and prison systems are to be increasingly defined as instruments for unbridled repression, institutions which may be successfully resisted but which are more and more impervious to meaningful reform."³⁶ While she was incarcerated, her 1969 philosophy lectures on the Hegelian dialectic and the slave-turned-abolitionist Frederick Douglass (for a course she designed, "Recurring Philosophical Themes in Black Literature," as UCLA's first class on black philosophy, and to encourage philosophical reflections on black enslavement and freedom) were collected. The New York-based Committee to Free Angela Davis printed the lecture notes in 1971, as the pamphlet *Lectures on Liberation*. Later edited into "Unfinished Lectures on Liberation - II," Davis's first published theoretical piece appeared in the groundbreaking anthology on African-American philosophy, *Philosophy Born of Struggle*.³⁷

Davis's analysis of enslavement and freedom, developed prior to her own incarceration, proves relevant to both the postbellum and postmodern US where law codifies slavery. The Thirteenth Amendment to the US Constitution legalizes "involuntary servitude" within penal institutions, while US politics and racism create a racist legal system marked by sentencing disparity so that the majority of the nearly two million now incarcerated in prisons or detention centers are African-American, Chicano-Latino, and Native American. The desire for freedom on the part of the enslaved in the nineteenth century reflects the rights - or limitation of rights - of those incarcerated in the twentieth (and twenty-first) century. Her most recent writings return to the consuming interests of three decades ago. Her analysis of contemporary imprisonment in "Race and Criminalization: Black Americans and the Punishment Industry" details the rationalization of racist punishment in connection with militarism and industrialism within prisons. In "From the Prison of Slavery to the Slavery of Prison: Frederick Douglass and the Convict Lease System," Davis discusses how "blackness is ideologically linked to criminality in ways that are more complicated and pernicious than Douglass ever could have imagined." Writing about the racialization of crime in "Racialized Punishment and Prison Abolition," she critically examines Michel Foucault's *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*.³⁸ Arguing for a new "abolitionism," Davis maintains that raising "the possibility of abolishing jails and prisons as the institutionalized and

normalized means of addressing social problems in an era of migrating corporations, unemployment and homelessness, and collapsing public services [may] . . . help to interrupt the current law-and-order discourse that has such a grip on the collective imagination, facilitated as it is by deep and hidden influences of racism."³⁹

Antiracist Feminist Writings

As mentioned earlier, the most distinctive contribution of Davis's prison writings, in fact her work in general, is the gender analysis in which she radicalizes feminism through a class and antiracist analysis and offers new constructions for black female identity and politics. In the intersectional analyses of Marxism, antiracism, and feminism, exists the body of written work for which Davis is best known. Activist women's contributions to Marxism and Communism are frequently and easily overlooked, according to Davis. Citing women such as Lucy Gonzales Parsons and Claudia Jones, Davis notes that many women who devoted their lives to organizing for a revolutionary, socialist society produced neither theoretical nor autobiographical literature. In the absence of such writings, their intellectual and political agency has often "disappeared" or been dismissed. The reappearance of, and recognition for, the contributions of the intersections of Marxist, antiracist, and feminist praxes and radical female activists characterizes Davis's work.

Her writings examine the contradictions and contributions of contemporary women to radical and feminist politics. Davis asserts that the feminist movement of the 1960s and 1970s held little attraction for black female militants and other progressive Chicana, Puerto Rican, Asian, and Native American women, despite the gender hierarchies within their respective antiracist or nationalist movements (one exception she notes is the black or Third World Women's Alliance which grew out of SNCC chapters on the east coast to focus on a tripartite struggle against racism, sexism, and imperialism). In the nascent movements, the bifurcation of antiracist and antisexist struggles took curious turns: (middle-class) white women struggled with learned passivity and a hyper-femininity; black women were castigated for being too assertive and aggressive, or not feminine (passive) enough. In Davis's evolving feminism, radical black women and antiracist white women altered the nature of feminist theory and feminist practice, expanding praxes and ideologies, and leading to differentiations of feminisms. Feminists seeking "to open the executive suites of the corporations to women, regardless of the fact that these corporations are exploiting people" present an alien gender politics, writes Davis; she maintains that when women "oppressed not only by virtue of their gender but by virtue of

their class and their race win victories for themselves, then other women will inevitably reap the benefits of these victories"; asserting the value of Marxism for feminism, she continues, "it is possible to be a Marxist, emphasize the central role of the working class, but at the same time participate in the effort to win liberation for all women."⁴⁰ A theory that accepts the overlapping interests of different groups reflects the present range of social and political repression. Drawing on the intersections of racist, sexist, and heterosexist repression, Davis contends that sexism has a "racist component which affects not only women of color but white women as well. Ku-Klux-Klan-instigated violence against black people incites, for example, violence against women who attempt to use the services of abortion clinics. Low wages for women of color establishes a standard which leads to low wages for white women. So that white women are the victims of any upsurge in racism."⁴¹ For Davis, it is "not coincidental that the same forces" attacking "abortion clinics and their personnel have also tried to prevent integrated schools."⁴² Likewise, decrying the lack of a *mass* effort to challenge homophobia, and the "ghettoization" of the gay and lesbian political movements, Davis writes that the roots of homophobia are intertwined with the roots of racism, sexism, and economic exploitation. Reactionary intellectuals and activists, including extremists, have promoted violence against gays and lesbians, and a "fraudulent analysis holding homosexuals responsible for the so-called breakdown of the family."⁴³ Linking the repression of heterosexuals' sexuality and that of their gay, lesbian, bi- and transgender counterparts, Davis maintains that racism has played a central role in creating the prevailing repressive sexual environment.⁴⁴

Describing how African-American women's work in black liberation organizations constituted a form of feminist consciousness-raising, she marks the developing feminisms that presented an alternative to the women's circles in the emerging (white) feminist movement: "Black women and women of color were making important contributions to the effort to elevate people's consciousness about the impact of sexism. While we didn't define ourselves as women's liberationists, we were in fact fighting for our right to make equal contributions to the fight against racism."⁴⁵ Making an equal contribution often entailed confronting sexism both within the movement and embedded in literature and academic discourse about black women.

Unique to mainstream feminist thought of the early 1970s (and still somewhat of a novelty in contemporary mainstream feminism) were analyses of the intersections of racist and sexual violence. Addressing the simultaneous and intersectional appearances of sexism and racism, and by extension sexual and racist violence, Davis's early work presented a corrective to feminist theory that erased racist violence, and antiracist theory that

masked sexist violence. "Rape, Racism, and the Capitalist Setting,"⁴⁶ which first appeared in *The Black Scholar's* 1978 special issue on "The Black Woman," critiques the role of class in racial-sexual violence. Likewise, "Violence Against Women and the Ongoing Challenge to Racism,"⁴⁷ issued as a 1985 pamphlet, investigates the function of racist and sexist violence in a racialized, patriarchal society. Nowhere were the intersections of race and gender so volatile as in the antirape movement within the women's liberation movement, which in the late sixties or early seventies tended to represent rape only as a gender issue of male dominance of females, ignoring the impact of race and class on state prosecution and "protection."⁴⁸ As Davis notes, the black community bore the brunt of white women's demands for more police and longer prison sentences. In the early days of the feminist movement, the disparity in perspectives promised few possibilities for coalitions between black and white women. Yet they did coalesce, for instance in antirape/antiracist organizing around the JoAnne Little case. In "JoAnne Little: The Dialectics of Rape,"⁴⁹ Davis reflects on the case of the young black woman incarcerated in North Carolina for petty theft who in 1974 killed the white prison guard who was raping her. The Little case highlighted the complicitous role of the state in the intersections of racial-sexual violence. Little's act of self-defense, and subsequent flight, led to charges of murder and a "shoot to kill" edict from authorities. Her extradition from New York and subsequent trial in North Carolina were marked by effective mass mobilization and legal defense which led to her acquittal. After the trial, according to Davis, Little issued a call for women who had supported her to organize around the Florida case of a young black man fraudulently charged with raping a white woman, yet most white feminist groups initially refused (some later changed their position) to assist in a defense committee for an accused rapist. The possibilities for, and obstacles hindering, multiracial women's alliances against violence is a recurring theme in Davis's discourse on freedom.

The issues of women's emancipation are tied not only to countering violence but also to work — labor, reproductive, and political work. "Women and Capitalism: Dialectics of Oppression and Liberation"⁵⁰ explores economic exploitation in the workforce. Exploitation in nonwaged labor or reproductive labor for the household is the focus of "The Approaching Obsolescence of Housework: A Working-Class Perspective,"⁵¹ and its critique of the reconstruction of domestic labor is based in part on the Italian feminist movement's "Wages for Housework," which was influential in Europe in the 1970s. Davis presents an economic proposal for the liberation of women from domestic labor exploitation through restructuring domestic work as government-subsidized wage labor, suggesting that the deprivatization of labor coupled with attractive salaries and generous benefits liberates domestic work from its debased status as women's "free"

contribution to familial and social units, and national and international economies. She briefly discusses how the select group licensed to perform this labor may remain alienated given that the repetitive, isolated nature of the work is not necessarily altered through higher wages. Biological reproduction is another form of women's unpaid labor addressed by Davis in "Surrogates and Outcast Mothers: Racism and Reproductive Politics in the Nineties,"⁵² which reviews the medical ethics, health hazards, and social stigmatism associated with black women's fertility and reproduction in the late twentieth century. "Black Women and the Academy"⁵³ raises the issues of women's political work, responsibilities, and rights in connection with representation and education for social justice.

Essays on Culture and Political Interviews

Examining representation and commodification in popular and visual culture, Davis explores the impact of African-American music and politics on American (and by extension, world) culture. An early investigation into cultural studies, "Art for the People" appeared in the Communist Party publication *Political Affairs*, focusing on black rap artists, such as Gil Scott-Heron, engaged in cultural oppositional politics against the Reagan era's assaults on progressives. Political messages surfaced in music that predated the rap emerging in the 1980s. Davis's "I Used To Be Your Sweet Mama: Ideology, Sexuality, and Domesticity" examines black female sexuality and feminist identity in the lyrics of blues artists such as Bessie Smith and Ma Rainey.

Regarding the black image, "Photography and Afro-American History" discusses controversial representations and the erasure of people of African descent in visual culture and art, focusing on artist Roy DeCarava and Harlem photography. More recently, Davis has explored photographic representations of contemporary black revolutionary struggles in "Afro Images: Politics, Fashion, and Nostalgia," which also examines the commodification of black resistance through imaging. "Meditations on the Legacy of Malcolm X" reviews the growth of the famed black revolutionary beyond cultural nationalism and religious sectarianism and the contradictions surrounding his current iconographic status. Contesting the reified masculinity surrounding Malcolm X, Davis raises questions about consumers' "passive reception of Malcolm" in apparel and the consumption of his image and voice in ways that "fix male supremacy" within "challenges" to white supremacy. In "Black Nationalism: The Sixties and the Nineties," she reflects on the future, youths, cultural consumerism, and revolutionary politics.

Her interviews, "Coalition Building Among People of Color" (with

Elizabeth Martinez) and "Reflections on Race, Class, and Gender in the USA," discuss political organizing and social theory, liberation praxis and community-building. The oral and collective nature of liberation theory, as well as critiques that counter solipsistic academic theory influenced by masculinist, eurocentric, or nationalist ideologies, are central to these interviews.

Conclusion: Revolutionary Actors and Radical Intellectuals

The books *If They Come in the Morning; Women, Race, and Class; Women, Culture, and Politics*; and *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism* as well as articles in Communist, women's, ethnic/black studies, and cultural studies publications reflect thirty years of writings. In *The Angela Y. Davis Reader*, selected essays from this body of work are organized into four parts: prisoners' rights; intersectional analyses in Marxism and antiracist feminism; culture; and contemporary interviews. Although she has written extensively for nearly thirty years as a radical intellectual, Davis remains best known as a representational figure of a revolutionary movement in US domestic racial politics.

Consequently, her writings are surpassed in the popular mind by her iconographic status. This raises a number of questions for our consideration as readers and consumers. In an essay contained in this collection, Davis quotes from Marx's *Eleventh Feuerbach*: "Philosophers have interpreted the world in various ways. The point, however, is to change it." If the point is to change the world, one must address what constituted liberation praxis in the radical and revolutionary movements and moments of previous decades; and, what constitutes it today for intellectuals and activists at a time when both the Black Panther Party and the Communist Party are considered by many to be anachronistic or romanticized organizations.

Davis herself grappled with these questions in a 1997 course which she taught at the University of California at Berkeley. Discussing the distinctions between radical and revolutionary politics, and intellectual critique and political engagement, Davis recounted how black militant activists would define "radicals" as bourgeois whites who had political critiques and intellectual commitments to opposing racism and economic exploitation but little experiential confrontation with the state; "revolutionaries," on the other hand, were those whose philosophical ideals about a just society and democratic state were manifested in their risk-taking political acts against oppressive state apparatuses. Today few if any US writers qualify as "revolutionaries" (perhaps a notable exception, the over one hundred political prisoners that Amnesty International documents as being held in the US,

raises the issue of the relationship between radical intellectuals and revolutionaries).

Within the context of a past liberation movement, a younger Davis had offered insights into revolutionary liberation praxis in the 1970 *LIFE Magazine* profile published while she was underground. *LIFE's* cover superimposed the caption "The Making of a Fugitive" over her photograph, while the feature article reprinted the following quote taken from one of Davis's speeches for the Soledad Brothers:

Liberation is synonymous with revolution. . . . A revolution is not just armed struggle. It's not just the period in which you can take over. A revolution has a very, very long spectrum. . . . Che made the very important point that the society you're going to build is already reflected in the nature of the struggle that you're carrying out. And one of the most important things in relationship to that is the building of a collective spirit, getting away from this individualistic orientation towards personal salvation, personal involvement. . . . One of the most important things that has to be done in the process of carrying out a revolutionary struggle is to merge those two different levels, to merge the personal with the political where they're no longer separate.⁵⁴

Merging the personal with the political, young militants faced the urgent immediacy of struggle in which they attended funerals of slain activists and, with and as survivors, attempted to continue in their commitments for radical social change despite deadly state repression. Although the revolutionary movement of the previous era was derailed, according to Davis, contemporary progressive or Left intellectuals have "achieved a measure of lucidity, based on those experiences." For Davis, "There is much more extensive consciousness of that dialectic between the concrete work that we do, the activist work, and the international context. . . . [The challenge is to make] the transition from consciousness to action, from theory to practice."⁵⁵ In contradistinction to the construction of the theorist or philosopher as the disengaged, nonactivist, Davis adds, "while theoretical work, intellectual work, is extremely important, the work of the activist will determine whether or not we will move to a new stage . . . everyone should learn how to become an activist on some level, in some way. Everyone who considers herself or himself a part of this overall progressive movement must establish some kind of organizational ties, and must definitely participate in one or more movements."⁵⁶

Spanning three decades, Davis's work chronicles and contributes to progressive movements in radical philosophy and politics, emphasizing prison intellectualism, Marxism, antiracism, feminism, cultural studies and activism. This collection reveals the range of her writings, which have been published in scholarly journals as well as popular magazines. Some are agitational and others are analytical. Her work mirrors and documents

intersectionality in the phenomenal critiques and confrontations (and the countervailing forces of state repression) that flared at the height of revolutionary struggles in the US only to mutate and eventually become muted in progressive academic writings. Transformative American intellectualism and political culture can be marked, and in some ways measured, by Davis's integrative analyses of class, race, sex, and the commodification of (black) political culture. These themes contextualize the social condition as bound by repression and resistance, reflecting the collective desire and demand for freedom. Challenging mainstream analytical and political discourse, to illuminate a doorway in liberation praxis, her work has deeply influenced democratic theory and political struggles.

Readers have varying perspectives on Davis as political-intellectual. Some see her as a revolutionary of the late 1960s and early 1970s; still others, as a former political prisoner who now functions as a radical public intellectual. Whatever one's "read," it is clear that through her writing and political advocacy, Angela Y. Davis has expanded the scope of social thought and political theory. Scanning both directions, one recognizes Janus at the crossroads. In an encounter with her work, one sees the past revolutionary acts and state repressions which radicalized her political consciousness, the progressive intellectualism of contemporary thinkers, and the fluid, dynamic tension which charges the relationships between the two.

NOTES

- 1 Angela Y. Davis, *Angela Davis: An Autobiography* (New York: Random House, 1974). Davis was given a University of California Presidential Chair, 1994-7.
- 2 Angela Y. Davis, "Remembering Carole, Cynthia, Addie Mae and Denise," *Essence*, February 1993, 92.
- 3 The Scottsboro Nine were African Americans falsely accused of raping two white women. Tried and sentenced in Scottsboro, Alabama, the young males were incarcerated for decades before their pardon.
- 4 Davis, *Angela Davis*, 113.
- 5 Davis, "Remembering Carole, Cynthia, Addie Mae and Denise," 92.
- 6 *Ibid.*
- 7 *Ibid.*
- 8 *Ibid.*, 123.
- 9 Carole Robertson had contacted Sallye B. Davis days before the bombing to ask for a ride to a "Friendship and Action" meeting, a new organization formed by black and white parents and teachers to develop grassroots antiracist activism amid school desegregation and allow Birmingham School children to meet each other. Davis, "Remembering Carole, Cynthia, Addie Mae and Denise," 123.
- 10 Davis, "Remembering Carole, Cynthia, Addie Mae and Denise," 123.

- 11 Ibid., 123.
- 12 Angela Y. Davis, "Women, Race and Class: An Activist Perspective," *Women's Studies Quarterly*, X: 4 (Winter 1982), 5. This Keynote Address was first delivered at the Fourth National Women's Studies Association Convention at Humboldt State University, in Arcata, California, June 17, 1982, 5.
- 13 Angela Y. Davis, "The Making of a Revolutionary," Review of Elaine Brown's *A Taste of Power: A Black Woman's Story*, in *Women's Review of Books* (June 1993).
- 14 Ibid.
- 15 While a graduate student in philosophy at the University of California at San Diego, Davis's first major political project was a campaign on behalf of a young African-American Navy-enlisted man who faced court-martial charges during the Vietnam war for having circulated a petition accusing President Lyndon Baines Johnson of racist policies. Working in this campaign as a member of the Black Student Alliance, in 1967/68 she met Elaine Brown, who like Davis later joined the Panthers (Brown would serve as Chair of the Black Panther Party, taking over from Huey Newton).
- Kit Kim Holder argues that by the time that Brown became Chair of the Black Panther Party it functioned as a local organization rather than as the central leadership of a unified Party or national movement. See: Kit Kim Holder, "The History of the Black Panther Party, 1966-1972," dissertation, University of Massachusetts at Amherst, School of Education, May 1990.
- 16 Davis, "The Making of a Revolutionary."
- 17 Ibid.
- 18 Ibid.
- 19 Regents continue to denounce Davis, an influential academic and Professor of History of Consciousness at the University of California at Santa Cruz, as they demonize past liberation movements in order to oppose contemporary progressivism. In his March 18, 1996 correspondence to Davis, University of California Regent Ward Connolly, Chairman of the conservative Civil Rights Initiative which led California's anti-affirmative action legislation, castigated her for campus speeches to defeat the Initiative, writing: "your record as a revolutionary is not merely disturbing but it may impair your effectiveness as a member of the faculty of one of this nation's most highly respected academic institutions." Along with other conservative state officials, Connolly had opposed Davis's 1994 appointment to a University of California Presidential Chair, and her sharing the Chair's research funds with the UC-Santa Cruz "Women of Color Research Cluster" to support graduate and undergraduate research and teaching in multicultural, antiracist feminist studies. (Correspondence, author's papers.)
- 20 "An Initiative to Unite and Renew the Party".
- 21 Ibid., 3.
- 22 Ibid.
- 23 Ibid., 2.
- 24 See: George Jackson, *Blood in My Eye* (New York: Random House, 1970) and *Soledad Brother: The Prison Letters of George Jackson* (New York: Coward-McCann, 1970).

- 25 Ruchell Magee remains imprisoned. The autobiography's record of the trial testimony includes the defense cross-examination of a prison officer concerning official policy on escapes. To defense attorney Leo Branton's question, as to whether standard prison policy requires guards to prevent escapes where prisoners use hostages as shields "even if it means that every hostage is killed?" - San Quentin's Sergeant Murphy answered: "That is correct." Davis, *Angela Davis*, 370.
- 26 See Joanne Grant, *Black Protest: History, Documents and Analyses 1619 to Present* (New York: Ballantine, 1968); Ward Churchill and Jim Vander Wall, *Agents of Repression: The FBI's War Against AIM and the Black Panther Party* (Boston: South End Press, 1989); Clayborne Carson, *Malcolm X: The FBI File*, ed. David Gallen (New York: Carroll and Graf, 1991). FBI director J. Edgar Hoover designated the Black Panther Party as a pre-eminent threat to national security.
- 27 Although all deaths were a result of police shootings, under US law the defendants were charged with the killings.
- 28 *Frame-Up* (author's papers).
- 29 Geronimo ji Jaga (Pratt) is one such case. After spending twenty-seven years in prison for the murder of Caroline Olson, he was released on a \$25,000 bail in June 1997 when a California judge ruled that his incarceration was based on perjured testimony by a felon, FBI and LAPD informer Julio Butler, and that the District Attorney's office had withheld information from the jury concerning Pratt's innocence. Pratt maintains that he was in northern California at the time of the southern California shootings; FBI wire taps that could place him at a BPP meeting in northern California mysteriously disappeared when they were requested by his defense team. See Don Terry, "Los Angeles Confronts Bitter Racial Legacy," *New York Times*, July 20, 1997, A1, A10.
- 30 The death penalty was reinstated in California in 1977.
- 31 Angela Y. Davis (ed.), *If They Come in the Morning: Voices of Resistance* (New Jersey: Third World Press, 1971).
- 32 Ibid., 75.
- 33 Angela Y. Davis, "Reflections on the Black Woman's Role in the Community of Slaves," *The Black Scholar*, vol. 3, no. 4 (December 1971).
- 34 Davis, *Angela Davis*.
- 35 *Frame-Up*, iii (author's papers).
- 36 Davis (ed.), *If They Come in the Morning*, 3.
- 37 Leonard Harris (ed.), *Philosophy Born of Struggle* (Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall Hunt, 1981).
- 38 Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, translation by Alan Sheridan (New York: Random House, 1979).
- 39 Davis notes the hypocrisy of attacking Mexican and Latin American "migrating working class people" while exonerating "migrating transnational corporations . . . immigrant corporations in search of nations providing cheap labor pools" that abandon communities and destabilize their economic base, turning workers "into perfect candidates for welfare and for prison." She states that these corporations simultaneously, and cyclically, "create an economic demand for prisons, which stimulates the economy, provides jobs for people

who have been left without work" (Angela Y. Davis, Keynote Address for Defensa de Mujeres Benefit, Santa Cruz, California, June 9, 1995, author's papers).

40 Angela Y. Davis, "COMPLEXITY, ACTIVISM, OPTIMISM: An Interview with Angela Y. Davis," *Feminist Review*, Fall 1988 (Interview by Kum-Kum Bhavnani, July 1988, Berkeley, California).

41 *Ibid.*, 71.

42 *Ibid.*

43 *Ibid.*

44 Coalition-building is a central theme in Davis's writings and political work. Advocating the necessity of a multiracial feminist formation, she states in the 1988 Bhavnani interview: "To shed the attitudinal forms of racism and class bias inevitable in any racist society, white middle-class women cannot continue simply to work among themselves. . . . [Antiracist politics] will not happen as a result of white women attending workshops. . . . White women must learn in activist contexts how to take leadership from women of color."

Discussing such leadership in an address, "Women, Race and Class: An Activist Perspective," for the National Women's Studies Association, Davis refers to the 1851 women's conference in Akron, Ohio, and cites the speech "Ain't I a Woman," erroneously attributed to Sojourner Truth (historian Nell Painter's *Sojourner Truth: A Life, A Symbol* [New York: W. W. Norton, 1996] documents this common misperception): "Sojourner Truth spoke from her own experiences as the voice of black women during that era, as a matter of fact she could speak more effectively for all of the [middle-class white] women there than those women could speak for themselves, because of the political experiences that she had accumulated. She had had to fight for her own survival, as a slave: she had had to struggle for her children . . . practically all of her children were sold off to slavery. . . . there were lessons that could have been learned from her that would perhaps have assisted the women's rights movement" to progress more rapidly (Davis, "Women, Race and Class: An Activist Perspective," 7).

45 Davis, "COMPLEXITY, ACTIVISM, OPTIMISM," 69.

46 Angela Y. Davis, "Rape, Racism and the Capitalist Setting," *The Black Scholar*, April 1978, 24-30.

47 Angela Y. Davis, "Violence Against Women and the Ongoing Challenge to Racism," *The Freedom Organizing Pamphlet Series* (Latham, NY: Women of Color Press, 1985).

48 "The Myth of the Black Rapist," in Angela Y. Davis, *Women, Race, and Class* (New York: Vintage, 1981), proved a groundbreaking intervention in feminist critique of white racism and sexual violence.

49 Angela Y. Davis, "JoAnne Little: The Dialectics of Rape," *Ms. Magazine*, June 1975, 74-7, 106-8.

50 Angela Y. Davis, "Women and Capitalism: Dialectics of Oppression and Liberation," in *Marxism, Revolution, and Peace*, Howard Parsons and John Sommerville, eds (Amsterdam: B. R. Grüner, 1977).

51 Angela Y. Davis, "The Approaching Obsolescence of Housework: A Working-Class Perspective," *Women, Race, and Class*.

52 Angela Y. Davis, "Surrogates and Outcast Mothers: Racism and Reproductive Politics in the Nineties," in Annette Dula (ed.), *"It Jus' Ain't Fair": The Ethics of Health Care for African Americans* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1994).

53 Angela Y. Davis, Keynote Address, January 1994, "Black Women and the Academy," Massachusetts Institute for Technology, Cambridge, MA.

54 *LIFE Magazine*, September 11, 1970, vol. 69, no. 11, 26. The quote, from a speech Davis made for the Soledad Brothers, comes from a June 27, 1970, interview with Maeland Productions, which was doing a documentary on Davis.

55 *Ibid.*

56 *Ibid.*