

INTERVIEW WITH ANGELA DAVIS

ON SEPTEMBER 19, 1969, THE BOARD OF REGENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA VOTED TO DISMISS ANGELA DAVIS, A 25-YEAR-OLD BLACK ASSISTANT PROFESSOR, WHO HAD BEEN FIRED BY THE PHILOSOPHY DEPARTMENT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA AT LOS ANGELES SOLELY ON THE BASIS OF HER MEMBERSHIP IN THE COMMUNIST PARTY. SHORTLY THEREAFTER, DONALD KALISH, CHAIRMAN OF THE UCLA PHILOSOPHY DEPARTMENT, ANNOUNCED THAT MISS DAVIS WOULD BE ASSIGNED TO TEACH A COURSE ON "RECURRING PHILOSOPHICAL THEMES IN BLACK LITERATURE," TO BEGIN OCTOBER 6. THE REGENTS MET AGAIN ON OCT. 3, THIS TIME IN EMERGENCY SESSION, AND VOTED OVERWHELMINGLY THAT NO CREDIT WAS TO BE GRANTED TO STUDENTS ENROLLED IN MISS DAVIS' COURSE. A MASSIVE PROTEST MOVEMENT ENVELOPED ALL OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA CAMPUSES, AND MANY OTHER ACADEMIC INSTITUTIONS IN CALIFORNIA. LIKEWISE, THE BLACK COMMUNITY HAS BITTERLY CONDEMNED THE REGENTS' DECISION.

CONNIE: Angela, could you explain to me the way in which you see what has happened to you at U.C.L.A. to be a victory for Black people in the struggle and how do you relate this to what is happening in the communities.

ANGELA: One of the things I have tried to constantly point out is that the Regents' attempt to fire me, according to a resolution which they have a standing order barring communists, was in effect an attack not only on members of the Communist Party but potentially an attack on anyone who posed radical solutions to the problems in our society. If they can still keep that particular resolution on their standing orders they can also pass a resolution barring members of the Black Panther Party from teaching on the campuses. They can pass a resolution barring members of Chicano organizations, white organizations which are pushing forth in a radical direction. Therefore, I think that the decision the judge made which in effect implied that no political test should be used is a major victory for Black people because it means that we can talk about our political views. We can use our political views in order to expose the kinds of atrocities that are going on in the society on the campuses. On the other hand it's a victory only in the sense that we continue to push forth in the streets. It's not a court victory, a legal victory. It's insignificant unless it's accompanied by a move of the masses of the people in order to push forward in the struggle.

CONNIE: What do you intend doing now? You have had quite a lot of speaking engagements. How do you intend to carry on? You have the public interest focused on your activities. How will you take all this one step further, and to the benefit of the struggle?

ANGELA: Well one of the things I did, and not too long ago, was when I was asked to respond to the decision the judge made, by the press. I stated that I didn't want to hold a press conference up at U.C.L.A. isolated from where the real struggle was, but rather right down in the Black community. We had representative students from the Black high schools in the area who are involved in struggling for a better education for Black people. A representative from the Black Panther Party was supposed to be present at the press conference but an emergency came up that day and Elaine wasn't able to make it. So

what I am trying to do is to show the people how this, the action that the Regents attempted to take against me, is only one minute instance of all the repressive acts which are taking place in the society today, and really nothing compared to the way for instance that the Black Panther Party is being subjected to a really calculated genocide. Like the brother who was in charge of the distribution of the Black Panther Party Paper in Los Angeles and was shot down by the pigs a couple days ago. This is what I have been trying to put forth. The loss



CONNIE MATTHEWS INTERVIEWS ANGELA DAVIS

of my job, really would mean nothing to me and my fight for this job is significant, only in-so-far in that it is symbolic of the fight of Black people and oppressed people in this country and all over the world to push forward towards liberation. CONNIE: You have heard recently about the proposed exchange of prisoners: that the Vietnamese are willing to discuss the release of American prisoners of war, in exchange for the freedom of Huey P. Newton Minister of Defense and founder of the Black Panther Party, and Bobby Seale, Chairman of the Black Panther Party. How do you see this? What impact do you think this will have on the struggle here in the U.S., and how do you view this as far as internationalism

concerned in bringing together the people for a world proletarian revolution?

ANGELA: I think that this is one of the best political ways in which we can begin to establish a concrete solidarity with our brothers and sisters who are fighting in the Third World for their liberation. And I think that the statement that Bobby Seale made at the Montreal Conference last year—that if we are talking about fighting against racism, should handle this, as there are lots of American women who have been trying to put forth. The loss

of Vietnam because they are really on the front lines of the battle field Vietnam. What do you think? ANGELA: I think it is going to have to become a major issue of mass involvement. It shouldn't only be kept on a diplomatic level. One of the reasons why the few Congressmen called for the moratorium on Oct. 15, was because of all the mounting pressure that has been building during the last couple of years and I think that if we begin to pose this to the masses of the people, and if we make this one of the major issues of the upcoming mobilization war then we can be victorious. But as you pointed out, it is going to have to become an issue in the streets and not just with the government on a high level of diplomacy.

we, know that the U.S. government will not just release Huey Newton and Bobby Seale just like that so we will have to put it into the hands of the people and take them onto the streets. Do you have any ideas on this, because we know that we are in the belly of the monster manifested in the U.S., is a monster with tentacles and the other oppressed peoples of the world are trying to cut off the tentacles but that we here have to get the monster from inside.

CONNIE: Now, we look at it this way, we know that the U.S. government will not just release Huey Newton and Bobby Seale just like that so we will have to put it into the hands of the people and take them onto the streets. Do you have any ideas on this, because we know that we are in the belly of the monster manifested in the U.S., is a monster with tentacles and the other oppressed peoples of the world are trying to cut off the tentacles but that we here have to get the monster from inside.

ANGELA: I think that it is very significant that over the last few years a number of organizations, Chicanos, Black, White were afraid of the terms socialism and communism because of all the indoctrination that has gone on. It is significant that many of the organizations are now beginning to turn towards Marxism-Leninism and are beginning to see that socialism has worked in many countries all over the world and is continuing to work. People are beginning to wake up to the fact that in order to talk about constructing a real humane society we have to destroy imperialism, and we have to destroy capitalism. One of the things which really impressed me during the trip I made to Cuba this summer is that the Cubans really look to us, Blacks, Browns, and White revolutionaries in this country, as being the crucial element in the struggle. They look towards us as fighting for their revolution and they really depend on us to continue to put internal pressure on the government, on capitalism. Another thing which was very amusing throughout Cuba, Kendra Alexander and I were on a small tour this summer, and everywhere we went people knew about the revolutionary struggle here. They knew about the Black Panther Party. And when they noticed us with our natural hair they immediately said we must be from the Black Panther Party. I also think the upcoming Venceremos Brigade is another way of showing our solidarity, symbolically showing our solidarity with countries which are carrying out the task of building a real socialist revolution. But my perspective on the movement is that we are moving constantly in a progressive direction towards socialism and towards linking up with oppressed peoples all over the world, particularly linking up with those people who are also fighting against American imperialism and see socialism as the only alternative way of creating a humane existence for all people over the world.

THE PEOPLE VS. CAPITALISM

Capitalism is a cancer which eats away all signs of humanity in people. Capitalism does not care who it exploits (cheats). Capitalism is for a selfish few and not for the masses of the people. A capitalist is one who owns factories, stores, and money (capital) etc., and with these things he takes the people's money and makes more money. He doesn't return any of the money to the community, but instead takes the money to the suburbs and his split-level house. Let's break down the different things the capitalist owns and how we're being exploited (cheated) by him. Factories: The workers in factories make things that are

needed for everyday survival. The people need these jobs to survive, and the capitalist uses the people to make more money here's how he does it: You work in a factory making shoes, you make \$50 worth of shoes a day, but you get \$15 a day for making the shoes, which means you're paying the capitalist \$35 a day to make his shoes: DIG IT! Stores: The capitalists' main bag of exploitation (cheating) is the stores from which we must buy our everyday needs, from food and clothing to roach killers. The capitalist knows he doesn't pay us our correct salaries, he knows he underpays us; but the capitalist pigs don't want

just a little of our money, he wants ALL. The community capitalist is the grinning pig at the corner store who takes all the cash money we have with his high prices, and all that we don't have through his bill system. When we don't have cash and our bills are high the grinning pig tells us no more food, clothing, etc. He's sucking us dry with a porky grin on his face. The downtown capitalist is the big department stores where we got to get our "good" things; a dress that cost the capitalist \$8.50 to make sells for \$35. The big and little capitalist pigs are cheating us the same way but on a lower and higher

level. One oinks in our faces from our communities; the other we have to go to for him to oink in our faces. The money (capital) that these capitalists have is not theirs; it belongs to the people and the people see what the pigs are doing to us, they see that the capitalist is working in no one's interest but his own, he's making us spend more money for less. Giving his money to other capitalists for their exploitive (cheating) ventures; to suck even more money from our already empty pockets. We the people of this decadent society are now beginning to realize that we make things in the

capitalists factories, and we're not being payed fairly for our work. When we go to the capitalists' stores and buy the same things we make, we pay twice the amount of money, and sometimes more, than it costs for us to make them. We now realize that there must be an end to the robbery by the capitalist of our poor communities. Let all the poor peoples of Babylon shout together. "We're going to take it from the greedy, and give it all back to the needy!" BLACK PANTHER PARTY New Haven Chapter Verna