



Winter 1-30-2007

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Recommended Citation

ReCupido, Amanda, "Angela Davis to Speak at Soul Food Dinner" (2007). *News and Events*. 3173.

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Angela Davis to Speak at Soul Food Dinner

January 30, 2007

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. - Long-time activist Angela Davis will speak at Illinois Wesleyan University's Soul Food Dinner on Feb. 11 in the Hansen Student Center (300 Beecher St., Bloomington). The dinner will begin at 5:30 p.m., and Davis will speak at 6:30 p.m. Sponsored by the Issues and Programming Commission of IWU's Student Senate, the event is scheduled in celebration of Black History Month.

The cost of the dinner is \$12, but those wishing to attend only the presentation may do so at no charge. The price of the dinner for IWU students with a valid student ID is \$5. Tickets can be purchased at the IWU Bookstore in the Hansen Student Center from Jan. 29 through Feb. 9, and at the steps of the Bertholf Commons of Memorial Center (104 E. University St., Bloomington) from Feb. 2 through Feb. 9. Anyone with special food needs should contact Student Senate Issues and Programming Commissioner Charlene Carruthers at ccarruth@iwu.edu, as there are a limited number of vegetarian plates.

Davis was chosen as this year's speaker for her life-long commitment in advocating for women and the imprisoned in America. She will speak on issues of punishment and democracy, focusing on prison reform and women's rights. Davis is internationally known for her ongoing work to combat all forms of oppression in the United States and abroad. A principal focus of her current activism is the state of the prison systems within the United States. Her solutions include abolishing prisons and addressing the class, race and gender factors that have led to the incarceration of large numbers of blacks and Latinos.

Davis's political activism began in her youth in Birmingham, Ala., but it was not until 1969 that she came into national attention for her social activism and membership in the United States' Communist Party. In 1970, she became the third woman and the 309th individual to appear on the FBI's Ten Most Wanted Fugitives List when she was charged with conspiracy, kidnapping and homicide, due to her alleged participation in an escape attempt from Marin County Hall of Justice. The search for Davis drove her underground, during which supporters organized a massive international "Free Angela Davis" campaign.

Davis evaded police for over two months before being captured in New York City, where she was tried and acquitted of all charges eighteen months after her capture. In 1972, John Lennon and Yoko Ono released the song "Angela" about her, and the Rolling Stones released "Sweet Black Angel," which chronicled her legal problems and advocated for her release. That same year, she was exonerated on all charges.

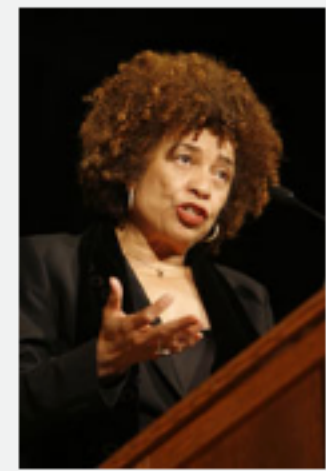
Following her release, Davis relocated to Cuba, where she had a significant impact on Afro-Cubans at a time when expressions of black identity were rare on the island. Her revolutionary credentials allowed admirers to identify with her without fear of being labeled counter-revolutionary by their peers.

In 1994, Davis received the distinguished honor of an appointment to the University of California Presidential Chair in African American and Feminist Studies, and is currently a professor in the History of Consciousness Department at the University of California, Santa Cruz. She is the author of several books, her most recent one being *Abolition Democracy: Beyond Prisons, Torture, and Empire* (2005).

Davis has continued a career of activism; in 1995, she rallied against the Million Man March, arguing that the exclusion of women from this event promoted male chauvinism and furthered the idea that women should take a subordinate role in society. In 2000, she formed the African American Agenda, a small alliance of black feminists in response to the March.

In more recent years, Davis left the Communist Party to help found the Committees of Correspondence for Democracy and Socialism, believing that democracy and socialism are more compatible than democracy and capitalism. She has also spoken out against the death penalty, and remains a prominent figure in this debate in California.

For additional information about the Soul Food Dinner, contact Carruthers at ccarruth@iwu.edu.



Angela Davis