

ANGELA DAVIS

A TIMELINE

1940s

January 26, 1944 | Angela Yvonne Davis is born in Birmingham, Alabama.

1948 | The Davis family moves from an all-Black Birmingham housing project, becoming the first Black family to integrate their new neighborhood. Davis attends segregated elementary and middle schools.

1949 | Across the street from the Davis home, a Black minister's home is destroyed in an explosion. In *Angela Davis: An Autobiography*, Davis would recall, "the bombings were such a constant response that soon our neighborhood became known as Dynamite Hill."

1950s

1959 | Joins an all-Black Girl Scout troop. She later credits her membership in the Girl Scouts with the beginnings of her political involvement.

1959 | Attends civil rights demonstrations while attending a progressive high school in Greenwich Village in New York.

1960s

January 14, 1963 | George Wallace, the governor of Alabama, proclaims in his inaugural address, "segregation now, segregation tomorrow, segregation forever!"

September 15, 1963 | In Birmingham, Alabama, a bombing at the 16th Street Baptist Church kills four young girls. Two of the victims are known by the Davis family.

1965–67 | Graduates from Brandeis University with a BA in French literature. Studies philosophy in Frankfurt, West Germany, and follows the Black liberation movement developing back home.

August 11–16, 1965 | The Watts riots take place in Los Angeles.

October 29, 1966 | Stokely Carmichael declares, "Black Power."

October 1966 | Huey Newton and Bobby Seale form the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense in Oakland, California.

September 1967–December 1968 | Returns to the University of California San Diego (UCSD) and completes her doctorate in philosophy.

On the UCSD campus, Davis helps organize the first Black Student Council and leads a multiracial coalition among Black, Chicano, and working-class white students.

April 4, 1968 | Martin Luther King Jr. is assassinated.

July 1968 | Formally joins the Communist Party and becomes involved in the Che-Lumumba Club, an all-Black communist collective, named for Che Guevara and Patrice Lumumba.

Fall 1968 | Joins the Black Panther Party's Los Angeles chapter. Later, ideological conflicts will arise, and she will leave the Panthers.

January 16, 1969 | Two leaders in the LA chapter of the Black Panther Party, John Huggins and Alprentice "Bunchy" Carter, are gunned down on the UCLA campus. Both are friends of Davis.

March 24, 1969 | Offered a position as an acting assistant professor in UCLA's Philosophy Department.

July 1, 1969 | A UCLA newspaper publishes a letter stating that a new member of the Philosophy Department is a communist. A week later, the *San Francisco Examiner* identifies Davis by name.

September 19, 1969 | The University of California Regents, urged by California Governor Ronald Reagan, vote to fire Davis under a 1950 university rule barring employment of communists—despite knowing that the resolution is constitutionally invalid.

October 1969 | Despite the UC Regents' ruling that no credit would be given for her courses, over 2,000 students and faculty pack Davis's first lecture. Campus-wide actions protest Davis's dismissal.

October 20, 1969 | Superior Court Judge rules Davis's firing unconstitutional and orders her fully reinstated.

For the rest of the school year, Davis becomes the target of harassment by right-wing elements. Threats are made against her life, and she purchases guns to protect herself.

December 1969 | The UCLA faculty Academic Senate votes to rescind the 1950 resolution against hiring communists, recognizing it as an attack on movements of Blacks, women, youth, workers and progressives.

1970s

1970 | George L. Jackson, who has been incarcerated for ten years, publishes *Soledad Brother: The Prison Letters of George Jackson*.

January 13, 1970 | At Soledad State Prison, a prison guard opens fire and kills three Black inmates.

January 16, 1970 | A Monterey County grand jury rules the killings justifiable homicide. That day, a white Soledad guard is killed.

February 1970 | A grand jury indicts three Black prisoners, including George L. Jackson, for first-degree murder in the guard's death. The Che-Lumumba Club launches a campaign to defend the three, who will become known as the Soledad Brothers, from a "legal lynching."

February 1970 | As co-chair of the Soledad Brothers Defense Committee, Davis uses her higher profile to focus attention on the Soledad Brothers' case, arguing that they have been framed and indicted because of their political beliefs.

Spring 1970 | Jonathan Jackson, George's younger brother, works closely with Davis and accompanies her at rallies, serving as her unofficial bodyguard.

June 1970 | The Board of Regents fires Davis, citing "extramural activities" on behalf of the Soledad Brothers and Black Panthers as their rationale.

1970s (CONTINUED)

August 7, 1970 | The seventeen-year-old Jonathan Jackson enters a San Rafael courtroom where James McClain, a Black San Quentin prisoner, is on trial. He gives guns to McClain and two inmate witnesses. They take five hostages, including the judge, and attempt to escape. A San Quentin guard opens fire and Jackson, McClain, and the judge are killed.

August 11, 1970 | The police announce that the four guns Jackson brought to court are registered to Davis. A warrant is issued for her arrest as an accomplice to kidnapping and murder—capital offenses. She goes into hiding.

August 19, 1970 | A nationwide hunt ensues. The FBI places Davis on the Ten Most Wanted list.

Signs announcing “Sister: You Are Welcome Here” appear in communities across the country. Black women with Afros are subjected to random stops and interrogation by law enforcement.

October 13, 1970 | Davis and a companion, David Poindexter, are arrested in a Midtown Manhattan hotel. Davis is held without bail at the Women’s House of Detention in New York City.

October 15, 1970 | On national television, President Richard Nixon congratulates the FBI on capturing “the dangerous terrorist, Angela Davis.” In a *New York Times* editorial, California Governor Ronald Reagan shares similar sentiments.

November 1970 | Davis’s legal team begins to assemble. The legal team will grow to include members of the National Conference of Black Lawyers, the ACLU and the National Lawyers Guild.

Black People in Defense of Angela Davis, a committee of Black writers from New York, issues a statement on Angela’s behalf.

December 22, 1970 | Davis is transferred to California to stand trial.

January 5, 1971 | At the Marin County Courthouse in San Rafael, Davis is charged with murder, kidnapping, and conspiracy. Cards and letters from around the world flood the Marin County Jail.

February 1971 | By this time, the National United Committee to Free Angela Davis comprises 200 local committees in the US and sixty-seven in foreign countries.

June 15, 1971 | Despite major efforts by the defense team, a superior court judge denies Davis bail because she is being tried for a capital offense.

August 21, 1971 | George Lester Jackson is assassinated by San Quentin prison guards.

October 1971 | More than 400,000 Parisians march in support of Davis with her sister, Fania.

February 1972 | A California State Supreme Court ruling overturns the death penalty, removing the obstacle cited by the judge in denying Davis bail.

February 23, 1972 | Days before the trial, Davis is free on bail.

February 28, 1972 | Davis’s trial begins.

June 4, 1972 | After deliberating for thirteen hours, the jury returns a verdict of not guilty on all counts.

June 29, 1972 | 15,000 people gather at New York’s Madison Square Garden to celebrate.

August 30, 1972 | Receives the Lenin Jubilee Medal in Moscow from the Soviet government.

May 11, 1973 | Announces the formation of the National Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression. Davis serves as founder and co-chair.

1974 | Random House publishes *Angela Davis: An Autobiography*, edited by Toni Morrison. Later, she will publish several other books, including *Women, Race, and Class* (1981), *Are Prisons Obsolete?* (2003), and *Freedom Is a Constant Struggle: Ferguson, Palestine, and the Foundations of a Movement* (2015).

1975 | The Claremont Colleges in California hire Davis as a lecturer in their Black Studies Center.

1979 | Becomes a professor at San Francisco State University. While there, she will teach a class on women and prisons with Ericka Huggins, her former Black Panther comrade.

1980s

April 30, 1980 | Awarded the Lenin Peace Prize by the Soviet government.

1980 and 1984 | Runs for vice president on the Communist Party ticket in the 1980 and 1984 presidential elections, with Gus Hall as presidential candidate. Their 1980 campaign slogan is “People Before Profits.”

July 1985 | Attends the United Nations Decade for Women conference in Nairobi.

1990s

1990 | Leaves the Communist Party.

1991 | Begins teaching at the University of California, Santa Cruz. Three years later, appointed to the University of California Presidential Chair in African American and Feminist Studies.

February 1998 | Appears on the cover of *Out*, a leading LGBT magazine.

September 1998 | Davis is one of the organizers of Critical Resistance: Beyond the Prison-Industrial Complex, a conference held in Berkeley.

2000–present

2008 | Retires from UC Santa Cruz as distinguished professor emerita.

February 2018 | Donates her papers to the Schlesinger Library at Harvard University. “My papers reflect 50 years of involvement in activist and scholarly collaborations seeking to expand the reach of justice in the world.”

June 2018 | At the 45th anniversary celebration of the founding of the National Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression, Davis invokes Toni Morrison: “The function of freedom is to free someone else.”

October 2018 | Birmingham Civil Rights Institute (BCRI) names Davis the recipient of the 2018 Fred Shuttlesworth Human Rights Award.

January 15, 2019 | The BCRI board rescinds the award after protests against Davis for her long-term support of Palestine. Weeks later, they reaffirm Davis is the recipient of the award.

September 14, 2019 | Inducted into the National Women’s Hall of Fame in Seneca Falls, New York.

Summer 2020 | George Floyd is killed by Minneapolis police. National and global protests erupt. The killings of Breonna Taylor by Louisville police and Ahmaud Arbery by three armed white men result in more protests.

June 19, 2020 | Throughout the US, crowds gather to celebrate Juneteenth, the holiday marking the emancipation of enslaved people in the US. In Oakland, Davis, Boots Riley, and other activists address the crowd, calling for a continued commitment to the struggle for freedom.