Free Angela and All Political Prisoners

By Shola Lynch
In San Rafael, California, north of San Francisco, a judge and three other persons were shot to death today in an attempt by a group of convicts to escape. There are still a great many loose ends and a great deal of speculation about what happened here. Investigators will now try to determine if there was a conspiracy of some kind that involved, perhaps, more persons than those who actually participated in the bloody event. Today, it turned out that two of the guns used in the courtroom were bought by Angela Davis. She was the teacher fired from the University of California at Los Angeles, after she said, yes, she was a communist. I grew up in Birmingham, Alabama. I think we all realized that this was not the way things were supposed to be. And my mother used to say that. My father had guns in the house. And we all knew that when they came out, generally, it was in response to some threat. As much as I wanted to see change happen, I left the South precisely at the moment when radical change was about to take place. I discovered a new program to bring black students from the segregated South to the North. So, I didn't get to directly experience, you know, all of the protests in Birmingham. I attended Elisabeth Irwin High School in New York and went to Brandeis. There were very few black students there. And then, of course, I ended up studying in Germany when these new developments in the black movement happened,
the emergence of the Black Panther Party. And my feeling was that, "I wanna be there. "This is earth-shaking. This is change. I wanna be a part of that." Revolution is about thinking about things in a radically different way. And, I think, given the history of America, the idea that black people should be equal, and really equal, was a revolutionary thing. In America, black people are treated very much as the Vietnamese people. And the police, they are not to... In our community, are not to promote our welfare, or our security and our safety. But they are there to contain us, to brutalize us and murder us. Do you know what Black Power means? Black Power means dignity. The fact is that some of our fellow citizens have turned against our society and turned against our government. People, perhaps, that you do not see, people that, perhaps, you do not come in contact with, and the fact you can't get a job. Only 40% of the men that live in the ghetto have jobs that pay more than $60 a week. How can you support a family? How can you bring up children in dignity? The Panthers, if you look at their 10-point program, it's about jobs, it's about education, it's about equality. And the point that everyone remembers is the self-defense. The Panthers, they not only had guns, they wanted you to know they had guns. Exhibit A was when they burst into a session of the state legislature. The Black Panther Party for Self Defense calls upon the American people in general,
and the black people in particular,
to take careful note
of the racist California legislature
which is now considering legislation
aimed at keeping the black people
disarmed and powerless
at the very same time racist police
agencies throughout the country
are intensifying the terror, brutality,
murder and repression of black people.
All of these police were summoned,
and what they found
was, indeed,
the Panthers were not breaking any law.
I saw the photograph of the
Black Panther Party in some newspaper
when I was studying in Germany.
And again, I had this sense,
"The world is changing.
"My world is changing,
and I do want to be a part of this."
And I decided that I would go back.
I would go back
and I decided to go to San Diego,
which was where Marcuse was.
Herbert Marcuse was
an amazing philosopher.
The important message I got from him
was that knowledge
can help to transform the world.
That knowledge does not exist
in a dimension of its own,
but rather it can be active,
it can be practical.
Angela Davis is possibly
the most intelligent person
that I have ever been around,
when it comes to studying
classical German philosophy.
She had been a very, very
good student at Brandeis,
and she had gone to Germany
to the Frankfurt School.
She became, you know, part of
an international intellectual community. Her intellectual engagement, as the most important thing in her life, was clearly mapped out at that point. She smoked Gauloises, chain-smoked them, was very European. And she came out of that heavy intellectual atmosphere rise in San Diego that was just the beginnings of the Black Panthers, the wake of the riots, and so on. So, she wasn't really wired into that and hadn't had a lot of personal experience, I think, with it. When I had attempted to become involved in political organizations in San Diego, I had not had very much success. Some people thought I was an agent. You know, who was this black woman who's coming from Europe and wanting to know what's going on in the community? But I realized that I needed a collective. I needed people to engage with. I needed to... I didn't see myself accomplishing anything important as an individual. Said I wanted freedom Freedom! Black is beautiful Angela Davis wanted to be a part of the Black Power movement. I was the section leader of the Black Panther Party. And I asked Angela to participate in the educational that I was conducting on Marxism to my cadre. That was the extent of her involvement. I had gotten involved, very briefly, with the Black Panther Party, Black Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee,
the black student organization
on my campus,
but I did not like the nationalism,
I did not like the male supremacy,
I did not like the fact that women were
expected to take a back seat
and, literally, to sit at the feet of the men.
So it was really refreshing to meet
someone like Franklin Alexander
and Franklin's wife, Kendra.
I think, basically, what we're doing is
we're saying that this system
is rotten at its core,
while we fight for the immediate needs
of the people, constantly and continually.
Better housing, you know,
the end of police brutality.
Stopping the depression level of
unemployment in the black community.
And while we continue
to do those kinds of things,
we do know, in fact, that this
system itself creates those conditions.
The changing of those conditions
basically means establishing
a socialist society.
The Che Lumumba Club was
an open Communist Party club.
And the purpose of it was
to allow the Communist Party
to openly operate
inside the Black Power movement.
I don't know whether I would've joined
the Communist Party at that time,
had not the Che Lumumba Club existed.
You know, Che Guevara, Patrice Lumumba,
sort of symbolic of the global revolution
you know, very specifically Third World
people, people of color.
And that was
what really drew me into the party.
We have to talk about being radical.
And radical means, etymologically,
you know, to get things at their root.
It's very interesting. The white people have been called radicals for a long time. And black people have been called militants, you know? As if black people can't be radicals, too. But if we don't fight now, we'll never be able to put into practice that slogan which, I think, crystallizes what we've been talking about, and that is all the power to the people. I was invited to apply for this position at UCLA. They needed someone who was trained in continental philosophy and who could teach Marxism. I decided to accept the job. There had been an article written by a man who had joined the Communist Party, but, actually, he was an FBI agent. And then after that, a well-known reactionary reporter in Northern California wrote a scathing article about me. And that's when all hell broke loose. Yesterday was the first day of the fall term at UCLA, and philosophy professor, Angela Davis, was on her way to teach her first class amid controversy, for Miss Davis admitted that she is a member of the Communist Party. And the regents who run the university decided, because of that, she should not be allowed to teach. For UCLA, it has become the crisis of the year. I had known Angela as a child. I went down there, and I hadn't seen her in years, as we went different ways. And I went down there and I asked her, you know,
if I could be of help and so forth.
Her first lecture drew 2,000 students
and was on the philosophy
of Frederick Douglass.
What was your reaction to the lecture?
I think she is a superb lecturer.
You can learn so much.
As I infer from just what she said today,
it was terrific.
Well, I think she's trying to overthrow
our system of government,
and she admits that.
And while I think it is bad to limit
freedom of speech of any group,
because it limits democracy,
I think it is better
to have a limited democracy
that will last for a long, long time,
than complete democracy,
complete freedom,
that lasts only for a brief period.
If I were able to deliver that coherent,
that beautiful
and that intellectual a lecture
on my first time,
to how many thousands of people
there were in that place,
I'd feel like a superstar.
The woman is an admitted member
of the Communist Party.
She also, in her letter to Chancellor Young,
indicated that she felt
that the only way we could bring about
the social change that's necessary today
is through violence and militancy.
I don't think we need that on campus,
and so I'm for getting rid of her.
The regents seem intent
on meting out punishments
which concur with the fascist tendencies
of the times.
The sole reason they give
for their intention to fire me
is my membership in the Communist Party.
I became chancellor of UCLA in 1968.
The main issue at stake was,
I'll use a catchphrase, "academic freedom."
I think that was my main concern,
that while it was appropriate
to make sure that a person was not
misusing or abusing
his or her appointment
as a member of the faculty,
that a person's political views
should not be of concern
with regard to his or her appointment.
But my own personal opinion,
and that's all it can be,
I have no evidence otherwise,
my own personal opinion is
that this entire incident,
starting with the hiring of Miss Davis,
was a deliberate provocation.
It's probably true,
Reagan believed that she was dangerous.
That she would use her bully-pulpit
in the faculty
to indoctrinate students, to try to
win students over to communism,
to try to engage in activities
which would be harmful to the university.
Part of the policy of Governor Reagan
was really to do everything possible
to repress the radical political movement
as they saw it developing.
The Anti-War Movement,
Students for a Democratic Society,
the emergence of the Black Panther Party.
And Angela becomes a symbol of all
of those movements at the same time.
There was no precedent in my life
for this kind of public exposure.
And then, of course,
there were all of the threats.
You know, I was told to go back to Africa,
then I was told to go back to Russia.
And often times, I received
letters saying that
I was gonna be dead by sundown. 
And so, my life completely changed. 
I bought my first gun 
because I really feared that 
I might be in a situation where 
either the police, or agents 
or other people would take my life. 
What they're doing to her 
is an exaggerated form 
of what happens every day 
to black people in this country. 
And they're saying 
to those communities through her 
that, you know, people have to 
straighten up and fly right 
and be good niggers, you know? 
I think the first thing we have to do 
is certainly make sure that we do have 
some unity in the black community, 
so that when a sister like that stands up, 
that they don't wipe her out as one person, 
that they have to wipe out 
more than one person. 
Being a revolutionary, 
some of it was just being young 
and being romantic and... 
I don't know that we had a real idea 
of, you know, 
how bloody a revolution could really be. 
I was involved 
in hundreds of peace marches, 
and, I mean, peace marches 
against the war in Vietnam 
that ended up with the 
police beating people up 
and tear gassing people. 
Malcolm X gets assassinated, 
you might expect that 'cause he was 
talking about the ballot or the bullet. 
But Martin Luther King, Robert Kennedy. 
There was the beginnings of, on both sides, 
a sense that this isn't gonna 
be settled at the ballot box or in debates. 
This is gonna be war.
Los Angeles, four and a half years after the rebellion in Watts, 300 Los Angeles policemen are involved in a raging gun battle for nearly five hours. They are assaulting an office of the Black Panther Party, the most powerful militant black organization in the country. It is apparent that the undeclared war between the police and the Panthers has reached alarming proportions. Party members at 30 chapters across the country have stockpiled arsenals of automatic weapons, shotguns, pistols and homemade bombs. Vice President Agnew has called the Panthers, "A completely irresponsible, anarchistic group of criminals." FBI director Hoover has called them, "The greatest danger to the internal security of the country." Did you know that this was gonna happen? How was I to know the police were going to break into the Panther office at 4:

They obviously didn't broadcast it. How did you hear about it?
We got a call from someone who was inside, who said that the police had come and had attacked their office.
And what do you plan to do?
Do you plan to act as an intermediary or in any capacity like that?
- I'll do anything I can.
- Thank you.
It was as if we were living in a state of war. In a state of siege. For us, during that period, the revolution was right around the corner, and we had to do everything we could
to usher it in.
I'm representing the Che Lumumba Club
of the Communist Party.
There is a conspiracy in the land.
It's a conspiracy to wipe out, to murder
every single Black Panther in America
and to wipe out
the black community as a whole.
Brothers and sisters, this is genocide.
We have to call it by its name.
This is genocide.
Right on.
This conspiracy
to commit murder and genocide
on our people forces us
to exercise our constitutional right
to bear arms
and to use those arms to defend
our community, our families and ourselves.
Power to the people!
The overwhelming majority
of the faculty at UCLA
would have supported the position,
and did support the position I took.
But the majority of the general population,
who don't understand
what academic freedom really is,
had concerns about
Angela Davis as a communist,
Angela Davis as a black,
Angela Davis as a woman,
Angela Davis as an activist.
You couldn't have
put things together with anyone
that would've been more
problem-creating than with Angela Davis.
Today, in a rare action,
the Board of Regents voted 15-6
to overrule the university and fire her.
Governor Reagan voted with the majority.
He said it wasn't
because she's a communist,
but rather because she is unprofessional.
While the regents were voting, Miss
Davis was a few blocks away in a rally protesting the treatment of black prisoners in Soledad State Prison. She sees her dismissal as a case of political repression which she may or may not challenge. I'm gonna keep on struggling to free the Soledad Brothers and all political prisoners, because I think that what has happened to me is only a very tiny, minute example of what is happening to them. I suppose I just lost that job at UCLA as a result of my political opinions and activities. Some UCLA professors plan to raise money to pay her salary so she can continue to teach. The controversy is not over. I was still at UCLA defending my right to teach, and this case emerged involving three, then young, black men at Soledad Prison. All I could think about was the image of three black men walking into a silent courtroom in the city of Salinas with chains around their waists, chains under their crotch, their hands chained, while their only crime was having attempted to organize the human beings inside the Soledad Prison. They were the ones who were singled out to serve as examples to any and everyone in this country who dares stands up for the truth. So, what connected these three men, and what gave rise to the Soledad Brothers' case, is that a white guard was killed in Soledad by being thrown from an upper tier.
George Jackson, John Clutchette and Fleeta Drumgo were very prominent in the prison reform movement and were basically singled out and accused of killing this prison guard. These individuals, while they may have been incarcerated for crimes, now they have become persecuted because of their political belief. I hope the people on this campus realize...

What Angela Davis does is become a primary spokesman for a quest to free political prisoners. We have to start fighting back. Those three brothers in Soledad Prison are fighting back. They'd all been convicted of relatively minor property crimes. One of them had been accused of stealing a television set. George had been accused of stealing $70. He had been in solitary confinement for seven years. He'd been in prison for 11, and seven of those years had been in solitary confinement. Once he got into prison, he was a strong-willed, rebellious personality who continued to defy authorities. And then he also found his voice as a writer. And he studied and he became radicalized. And, I think, once he emerged as someone who could articulate revolutionary ideas, people gravitated to that kind of leadership. Look...

One of the most important elements of guerrilla warfare is to maintain secrecy. I've killed nobody until, you know, it's been proven. And they'll never be able
to prove anything like that. Most people I knew thought George Jackson was a hero. The fact that he may have also been a criminal was glossed over. I first saw him at a hearing. We may have mouthed some words, but it was, of course, illegal to communicate with prisoners in the court. I was, you know, drawn by a kind of tenderness that I did not expect to find in prisoners. He was a beautiful writer, a powerful writer, passionate writer. And I eventually felt very much seduced by that.

Brother George Jackson, one of the Soledad Brothers, has been in prison for 10 years since he was 18 years old on a second degree robbery charge. One of the things that we really have to talk about and come to grips with is this whole question of crime. What does it mean to be a criminal in this society? George had a younger brother, Jonathan, who was about 16, I think, when I first met him. He was an incredible writer, and wrote for his school newspaper, and wrote articles about his brother and the Soledad Brothers' case. I think he was totally devastated that his brother had been behind bars for 10 years. I came to realize that the Soledad Brothers Defense Committee was really a lifeline for him. He needed to have some hope that the person he most identified with in life was one day going to be free.
In San Rafael, California, north of San Francisco, a judge and three other persons were shot to death today in an attempt by a group of convicts to escape. Judge Harold Haley was hearing the case of a San Quentin inmate when an unidentified man armed with dynamite and an automatic weapon entered the courtroom. The defendant, along with two other inmates testifying for him, reportedly joined with the unidentified man in rounding up the judge, a deputy district attorney and three women jurors. When it was over, Judge Haley was dead, the deputy district attorney had been critically wounded in the back, one woman juror was wounded in the arm, two of the inmates were dead, as was the unidentified man.

I could not deal with the fact that this young man, who was 17 at the time, that he ends up lying on the cold cement in a parking lot in one of the most wealthy counties in the country.

The funeral for Superior Judge Harold Haley was a major civic event. The cortege escorted by a detail of 60 police officers from cities all over the San Francisco Bay. Judge Haley, after all, was a prominent man. And his death deeply shocked and angered his peers. His kidnappers, they described as hoodlums, who called themselves revolutionaries. Across the Bay in Oakland, there was another funeral for Jonathan Jackson, the young Panther who was supposed to have staged the bloody kidnap attempt.
I, and my husband, we went to Jonathan's funeral. Everybody in their Sunday best, many people weeping. When they brought the casket out, and Mrs. Jackson followed, people holding her up and a handkerchief to her face. And it said to me, what he had done represented something. 'Cause that was thousands and thousands of people out there in the street. Nobody organized that. People just came. While we were standing there, Franklin comes up, Franklin Alexander. We were standing in such a way that he was next to us, but looking straight, as though he wasn't talking to us. And he said, "Angela's been implicated." And he said, "She's gone underground." And he said, "I'm just, you know, letting you know. Okay?" We said, "Okay." And then he disappeared into the crowd. Today, it turned out that two of the guns used in the courtroom were bought some time ago by Angela Davis. It was clear that that was not the time to make myself available to the police for arrest. Mr. Alexander, you say that you are the chairman of the Che Lumumba Club of the Communist Party? Miss Davis has identified herself as a member of that group. She is a member of that group. Is it the doctrine of that club to use guns for black liberation? It is the doctrine of the Communist Party that black people, that all people
have the right to defend themselves
and their homes.
When asked by a reporter,
"What would you tell Angela Davis
if you could speak with her today?",
he smiled and said simply,
"I love you, baby."
"You wouldn't tell her to give herself up," he was asked.
And he repeated, "I would tell her,
' I love you, baby.' Nothing more."
The FBI has put black militant Angela Davis
on its list of the 10 most wanted fugitives.
She's charged with murder in California,
where authorities say
she bought weapons
for that San Rafael courtroom shootout.
Hoover put her on the top 10.
The key to the top 10,
she was a communist.
They were not his favorite people.
And if you were on the top 10,
you're gonna get a lot of attention.
We were devastated, you know.
In our gut, we had to know
there was something wrong here,
that this could not possibly be anything
Angela would be involved in.
Not the Angela we knew.
It couldn't be her.
Anyone involved in planning a violent
operation like Jonathan Jackson's,
that was on a need-to-know basis.
So, only certain people would know.
You would think that somebody
with an advanced degree,
particularly someone
who had a public profile,
would be the last person
who would want to use
those weapons in an illegal act.
On a truly common sense perspective,
it doesn't make sense.
But on the other hand,
crazy shit happens.
What is the evidence?
The evidence is
that Angela Davis purchased four guns.
There was a provision in the penal code
that anybody in this state could buy as
many guns as he or she wanted to buy.
And that's the law of the state of California.
And because Governor Reagan
wanted it that way,
Angela Davis bought four guns.
And why did she buy them?
I don't know and you don't know.
But it is reasonable to suppose
that anybody who teaches
at this institution and who speaks up
for power to the people,
who speaks up for
the freedom of political prisoners,
who speaks out on any issue
receives every week...
I receive every week, letters,
and the theme and tone
of those letters ranges from
violent and vicious imprecations
to outright threats of death.
And for Angela Davis,
whose prominence as a black woman
and a communist, that mail came every day.
And there were threats on her life.
And she bought four guns.
The FBI and the police descended
on the black communities
all over the country and began pulling in
any young, tall, black woman
with a space between her teeth.
'Cause they just had
this general description.
We had her fingerprints and a photograph
of a girl with a big afro.
And every office gets
a box full of those things.
There were unmarked cars
parked across the street.
I knew then, this was the FBI and that we were under surveillance. So many hundreds of black women with big afros were stopped on suspicion of being Angela Davis. I decided that I did not want to flee the country. Because, certainly, if I had decided to travel to Cuba or some other country that would have given me asylum, and I probably could have gotten asylum from any number of countries, I would have been there for the rest of my life. I flew from Las Vegas to Chicago, where I managed to hook up with David Poindexter. David was the person who helped me for the remaining period. The search for Angela Davis has spread from Los Angeles, through the Bay Area, through Canada, to a series of raids in her hometown of Birmingham after a US district court judge issued the fugitive warrants and set bail at $100,000. The attitude in the Bureau was, the only way you're gonna solve anything is to have an informant. And we used to think most of the Communist Party members are FBI. It was thoroughly, thoroughly infiltrated. A file was opened up in every office. Everybody had a file on her. I stayed at David's apartment, and then had to leave because he had gotten into an argument with one of his friends who lived in the building. And we were afraid that this person might reveal
that I was with him
if the FBI ever questioned him.
So we traveled to Miami,
and I was holed up in Miami for
what seemed like an eternity.
I was pretty scared.
At any moment, I felt
I was on the verge of being caught.
I had this fear with me all the time.
I thought a lot about
the people I had left behind,
my family, of course.
I worried about my mother.
I worried about my siblings,
I worried about my friends, my comrades.
And every strange noise I heard
I interpreted as, "The cops are coming.
"The FBI is knocking on the door."
And then the Alexander girl's name
comes into it, and they talked to her.
She wasn't helpful,
but nor was she antagonistic.
It was determined
that she had been in Chicago
with David Poindexter.
And there is some stuff
in there about David's woman,
she was jealous.
And she told us some things, that they were
there and they headed to Florida.
Once we identified the car,
and Chicago did that,
now we knew what we were looking for.
Sooner or later, we're gonna find that car.
And they located one place
where the guy thought
that they might have been here.
But the girl didn't look like her.
They questioned his mother
who lived in Florida,
which meant we had to leave Florida.
They had vacated the apartment,
and the agents went in there
and they looked all around.
And in the cushions of the couch, they found an exposed roll of 35mm film, which becomes a big thing in this case. Now, they were all pictures of Angela, but she doesn't have an afro. She's got a little pixie cut. They had vacated the apartment, and they were traveling north. The best place to hide in this world is right over there, New York City. We were actually, very rapidly, running out of money. So we were staying at the Howard Johnson, because that was the only thing we could afford. And I actually had a palpable sense of the FBI closing in. So we, in New York, started a detailed search of everything. We did LaGuardia and JFK and all the commercial parking lots in Manhattan. Lo and behold, we got a call one morning and they said, "We found the car. " "Come on. Stop this nonsense now." "No, it's in the Howard Johnson's parking lot." We head out for Howard Johnson's, we talked to the guy behind the counter and we showed him the picture. He said, "Yeah, I checked them in. " This is like something Hollywood would write. Everything was falling into place. A couple of minutes later, we hear the elevator door open. And you could hear them walking down the hallway. I handcuffed her before she even turned around. She didn't react to it at all. She was a little taken back when I said,
"I got to lift your upper lip."
And I said, "I'm looking for that gap."
They snatched the wig off of my head.
They kept repeating, over and over again, "Are you Angela Davis?"
Are you Angela Davis?"
I did not say, "Yes," I did not say, "No,"
I didn't say anything at all.
I only requested my telephone calls.
Black revolutionary,
Angela Davis,
appeared without her distinctive afro hairdo,
as she was arraigned in New York City today as a fugitive from justice.
Secretary General, Secretary Kennedy and ladies and gentlemen,
the purpose of my coming to the Department of Justice today in this great hall, is to sign the Organized Crime Bill.
I think that the actions of the FBI in apprehending Angela Davis, a rather remarkable story again in the long history of remarkable stories of apprehensions by the FBI, is an indication that once the federal government, through the FBI, moves into an area, we shall see to it that those who engage in such terroristic acts are brought to justice.
Free Angela Davis!
No extradition!
Free Angela Davis!
No extradition!
Free Angela Davis!
And therefore, the whole question... People say, "Why didn't Angela Davis give herself up?"
The question of getting a fair trial is a real difficult and serious problem for black Americans.
And therefore, I think she has
certainly the right to try and pick
the moment when
she can get closest to a fair trial.
The most important point
that should be remembered
is that Angela Davis
has been publicly indicted by the FBI.
She's been put on the 10 Most Wanted list.
Her picture has been
placed in all post offices,
and this has given a license to racists...
Ma'am, when she knew she was wanted,
why didn't she turn herself in?
Well, I don't know. Would you turn
yourself over to a pack of wolves?
I went to New York almost immediately.
She was arrested on October 13th,
and I think I flew out the next day.
She was in the Women's
House of Detention.
She was exhausted and gaunt and very pale.
But she was already focused on her defense
and on what needed to be done.
I was in solitary confinement
after they had placed me in the ward
for people with psychological disorders.
I had been doing all of this work on prisons,
I had been doing all this work
to free political prisoners,
but I hadn't really thought about what
it meant to be a woman behind bars.
Fania, when did you last see your sister?
I saw her last night at around 8:00 or 9:00.
You had a pretty bourgeois
and comfortable childhood,
and so did she, in Birmingham.
Can you trace the development
of someone from that kind of background
into a revolutionary and Marxist person?
I see in her life
the makings of a revolutionary.
I don't see in her life the makings
of a personal tragedy,
of a good girl gone wrong.
Her life in the South, her experience with white people in the North, all that to me would go into the makings of what she is now. And that is a revolutionary. And Angela's education is now being put into practice. And that's a raison d'être for her education. We challenged extradition. We took this all the way up to the US Supreme Court. And so, when at about 2:00

or 3:
guards came to my cell informing me that my attorney wanted to speak to me about extradition, it made sense. But they had other plans. I ended up being pushed down on the floor, they got my hands handcuffed behind my back. And then took me outside and placed me in a car. I kept asking, "Where are we going?" No one would say anything. And this long caravan began to drive through the streets of New York. I was totally shocked to discover, in the middle of the night, this National Guard plane surrounded by soldiers. And I remember saying to myself "I had better be very careful, "because if I so much as stumble, "they will probably open fire on me and that will be the end." Angela Davis was arraigned in the same San Rafael civic center where last summer a district judge was killed in an aborted kidnap attempt.
Security precautions were extraordinary. Each spectator carefully searched for weapons. There has been one bomb explosion and innumerable bomb scares here in the months since the judge's murder. Miss Davis entered the courtroom, turned and gave a Black Power salute to the gallery composed mostly of newsmen, and sat down next to her two temporary lawyers. Judge E. Warren McGuire ordered a copy of the charge delivered to her and advised her of her rights to an attorney and to a jury trial. When the Attorney General arraigned me in California after the extradition, he indicated that he wanted the death penalty on each of the three charges. So he wanted the death penalty three times. That made me realize how serious they were. And again, it made me realize that it wasn't about me because, first of all, I couldn't be killed three times. It was about the construction of this imaginary enemy, and I was the embodiment of that enemy.
- Angela must be free!
- Now!
- Angela must be free!
- Now!
We had a nice long visit with Angela. And she's in very high spirits. She's feeling good. Right on. She's feeling good because she knows that the movement to free all political prisoners is growing every day. That's what makes her feel good.
As long as we have people like you fighting to free Angela, he'll be free. All power to the people.
- Right on.
Right on!
Free Angela!
Free Angela! Free Angela!
Free Angela! Free Angela!
Free Angela! Free Angela!
- What do we want?
- Freedom!
- For who?
- Angela!
- When?
- Now!
We know that she is innocent, and the entire family, along with many other people, will be fighting for her freedom. We're not just sitting by letting this happen. We'd already formed a defense committee for Angela. We called ourselves, "The National United Committee to Free Angela Davis "and All Political Prisoners."
She insisted on "All Political Prisoners."
Free Angela and All Political Prisoners. We had connections and people in the Trade Union Movement and the churches, we were able to go and say, "Will you support a resolution "for Angela Davis to be released on bail?"
And they might say yes or no, but they'd say, "Persuade us. Come in and talk to us."
It was actually Henry Winston, who was National Chairman of the Communist Party, he said, "Campaign for bail."
I went like, looking at him, "What, are you nuts? "No way we campaign for bail."
The President of the United States made a public statement
in which he congratulates
the FBI on the capture
of the "dangerous terrorist,"
Angela Davis.
That's a quote. "Dangerous terrorist."
He was saying, "Campaign for bail."
We'd say, "Campaign for bail?"
President of the United States...
He says, "Campaign for bail."
That man was a genius.
He was a tactical genius,
because people would sign petitions for bail
who may have thought she was guilty,
but believed that she
was entitled to a fair trial.
Charlene Mitchell, who was the brain
behind the whole
National United Committee
to Free Angela Davis.
I didn't know the first thing about
organizing movements, but Charlene did.
All of our efforts and all of our energies
had to be focused
on getting her out of there.
Politically, I saw this case as a bellwether.
They are not going to kill her.
They're not going to imprison her,
we're going to free her.
We're gonna win her freedom.
I was in solitary confinement,
some distance from where
the majority of women were kept.
It was lonely, very lonely.
I read a lot. I wrote a lot.
I followed the examples
of other prisoners, such as George.
I was able to create
a certain sphere of freedom, you might say,
within the context of that confinement.
Well, I suppose as far as you're concerned,
it's no surprise
that you're in solitary confinement.
And I'm wondering what kind of
shock that has been to your sensibilities,
to your emotions?
But see, I understood
very well that the reason why
the Marin County officials
would not permit me to talk
to any other woman in that jail
was because they wanted to break me.
They wanted me to respond in that way.
They wanted me to feel
the burden of the solitude,
and I just had to make up my mind
that I was not going to
let it affect me that way.
I think that what George Jackson said about
life in prison is very appropriate here.
He says that prison either breaks
a person or makes the person stronger.
And I would like to think
that I have become stronger
during this experience.
My emotional relationship with George
became far more intense
when I was behind bars.
Part of that passion
consisted in
our being able to imagine ourselves
as comrades
helping to usher in a new world.
When she was in prison
and when George was in prison,
they had the opportunity to meet.
We met for a period of time,
we had discussions
and the type of things that you discuss
when you have a legal meeting.
And then Angela and George had met
separately to discuss things
that only the two of them wanted
to discuss with each other.
It was a meeting that was
really complicated and full of
all kinds of emotions and feelings.
She's been locked up.
And if she's had the opportunity
to do some hugging and kissing, right on.
That's my theory.
Those were the years
of the black revolution.
Everybody wanted to organize.
And your organization,
the first thing of it was, it was black.
Black teachers, black doctors,
black lawyers.
Black people who were professionals.
Black people who had done
everything that the system says,
they were, now.
I thought it was important strategically
for a black attorney to be the public face
of a political prisoner at trial.
We wanted to present to the world
the picture of African-American lawyers
performing at a very high level
on a worldwide stage.
And you have to understand the workings
of a racist judicial system,
that the system
is in control of the white people.
And white people don't take any risks
when it comes to black people.
So, I don't think that
you're gonna find a jury
who's going to have the courage
to do what's demanded of them.
I don't know of any other
cases in the last century
that presented that degree of difficulty.
Where the courthouse
itself was a crime scene,
and the judge, the prosecutor,
the jurors and witnesses were all victims.
A big issue at the beginning of the case
was whether or not
to sever the trials
of Angela Davis and Ruchell Magee.
So he is the surviving
prisoner from August 7th.
And he was being charged
with the same thing.
First degree murder,
first degree kidnapping
and conspiracy to commit both.
There were those who wanted me
to be disassociated with Ruchell
and felt that that was the best way
to assert my innocence.
I didn't want to disassociate myself.
Ruchell argued it was like a slave rebellion.
In a lot of ways, it probably was.
It was, kind of this last ditch effort,
some way to assert
some control over one's life.
We had a big debate because we said,
"Look, Angela wasn't even there.
"It's very prejudicial to her
to have him tried together with her.
"She never even met the man."
On the other hand,
we didn't want to abandon Ruchell.
Miss Davis' attorneys asked the judge
to set her free on bail.
But Magee objected,
saying it would prejudice his own case.
Apparently, defendants Davis and Magee
are at odds on each other's
defense tactics.
The court denied bail,
so both defendants
were sent back to their cells
until a new judge is appointed.
That could take several weeks.
None of the judges in Marin County
were qualified,
because Judge Haley was their colleague.
So, the judicial council
then had to select a judge
to try the case.
Will you ever find a judge who can give
you a fair trial in your estimation?
Well, we certainly
have got to search for one.
We are sort of like Diogenes,
looking for the honest man.
We're looking for an honest judge.
The next judge who was assigned
was Judge Richard Arnason
from Contra Costa County.
And the first day he was on the bench,
we reached the conclusion that this is
the judge that should have this case.
'Cause he had an air about him
that he would be fair,
he would make an effort to be fair,
and that he would be in charge.
I think that, perhaps,
it would be much better to ask
somebody who has seen me
in the years I've been on the bench,
what kind of a judge I am.
Self-analysis has never been
very productive for anybody,
and I'm not going to do it now at this time.
Defense attorneys today asked
that the murder and kidnap indictments
against Angela Davis be dismissed.
"Because she's completely
innocent of these charges
"and she's locked into a proceeding
that never gets started."
The judge, the sixth
to hear the pre-trial motions,
had already been charged with prejudice
by Miss Davis' co-defendant Ruchell Magee.
The judge said he would proceed
no further with the case
until the prejudice challenge
was ruled on by another judge.
Finally, I realized that
the case needed to be tried.
It needed to be tried soon.
And that was because
the organizing was at its peak.
And if we got involved
in all of these other motions
and motion for removal...
It might be five years
before the trial took place,
and I didn't want to do that.
So I reluctantly
decided that...
Ruchell was intransigent
on this idea of removal.
There were Communist Parties
everywhere in the world.
And they launched campaigns,
which very quickly
mushroomed into much, much larger
than themselves.
There was enormous feeling
for Angela everywhere in the world.
I was traveling around the world.
I was in Moscow. I think I was in Leningrad.
Kiev. I was in Poland.
I was in Czechoslovakia
and a number of different cities in Italy.
West Germany and East Germany.
So I was on the front lines
with all the people who were demanding
the freedom for Angela Davis.
These millions of people around
the world would not allow my sister
to be convicted,
would not allow her to be executed.
There were plays, and theater,
music being written about Angela Davis.
It just created this irresistible wave,
this irresistible force.
We want to tell that pharaoh in Washington
to let Angela Davis go free.
Nina Simone came and visited me
for a long time.
She came in with a balloon,
which the jailers did not
want to allow me to have,
but I fought for that balloon
because I love Nina Simone.
I kept that balloon as long
as it remained inflated.
Children of East Germany
wrote millions of letters to my sister.
The mailman arriving every day with a huge sack of mail on his back. Just addressed to, "Angela Davis, USA." This letter was written by a very, very young child, apparently. And it says very simply, "Dear Angela Davis, "My name is Sarah. I wish that you were free. "This is a picture of you when you will be free. "Love, Sarah." And on the other side, there's a picture that she's drawn. She says it's a picture of me. You see the smile on my face. I guess that's supposed to be symbolic of freedom. Bettina and I were in the jail with her in Marin. The prison guards came up and told us that we had to leave. And everything was locked down. There was no movement in the prison at all, not on the prison ground. As I was coming home, I heard on the radio there had been an outbreak at San Quentin, and George Jackson was believed to have escaped and had been shot in the process. And I felt that it was my responsibility to come back and tell Angela. And then it was Margaret and Howard who had told me that he had been killed. I didn't know the details. I had no idea what had happened, except that he had been killed. He had said that he expected that he would die in that way. He expected that he would probably be killed by the state. By guards, by police. I remember the scene in the cell
when I came back. 
She was just totally grief stricken. 
And inside that grief, 
again, I think true for Angela, 
but true for anybody, 
is rage, just enormous rage. 
Rage at the system that you couldn't stop. 
What should we do? What should we do? 
What should we do? 
And George's funeral which was enormous. 
And then picking ourselves up 
and saying, "We have to go on." 
San Jose, California, 
has changed over the last 20 years 
from a prosperous agricultural center 
to an urbanized extension 
of San Francisco. 
Roughly 85% of the people 
who live here are white. 
About 10% have Spanish surnames. 
And less than 2% are black. 
Over her objections, 
it is the site for the trial of Angela Davis. 
I knew nothing about 
San Jose, California, 
except the Dionne Warwick song. 
I came down and I thought 
that it was Birmingham, Alabama. 
The only thing was 
I didn't see any African Americans. 
The atmosphere, which often surrounds 
much publicized trials, 
is beginning to build. 
More than 300 newsmen 
have applied for credentials. 
Three-quarters of a million dollars 
has been spent on 
security and facilities for the news media. 
Fences for crowd control, reconstruction 
inside and outside the court building. 
The courtroom itself is small with only 
60 seats for spectators and newsmen. 
Closed circuit television will 
carry the proceedings to another building
with room for 150 more.
Questions from both sides
will only be answered
as the evidence unfolds day by day
in the California courtroom,
and the trial,
estimated to last six to nine months.
Howard had been on the case from the start.
I had a minimal role in the trial.
I think I questioned one or two witnesses.
I was there representing the party
and keeping an eye on the politics.
And I told them that
I thought she would be convicted.
I thought the crucial thing was getting
a different approach to the defense.
And that's what Leo brought to the case.
Leo Branton,
who was also African American,
very dynamic fellow, and very
well-known in the black community in LA.
He understood his client,
he understood the situation.
I felt much more optimistic with him there.
A trial lawyer
must be somewhat of a showman.
You are acting in front of a jury.
You cannot be all actor, though.
There must be substance
to what you're doing.
By being passionate about your cause,
being intellectual
and having prepared the case
to the point where you can make the
best possible presentation before a jury.
So the stakes are, we have to win
this case, and we have to win it now.
You either win the case now,
or you forget about it. It's over.
I was charged with
three crimes that carried the death penalty.
I tried to avoid actually thinking about that.
I tried to avoid thinking about what was,
at that time, a gas chamber.
Anyone facing the death penalty was not allowed bail. But the trial judge previously stated that if it weren't for the death penalty, he would allow Angela Davis to have bail on appeal. You get pressure all the time. They'd say, "Kill her, kill her, kill her. You can do it."

And I never let that bother me. I never told anybody about it. Today, the small green room at San Quentin is empty, unused. The California Supreme Court has outlawed the death penalty as "cruel" and "unusual" punishment. Immediately upon getting this news, I called Howard Moore on the phone, I said, "Call the judge and call the prosecuting attorney, and tell them "that you're gonna make a motion to free Angela Davis on bail."

Aretha Franklin had said that she would put up any amount of money for bail. And so I was trying to reach her. I was trying to call Aretha, man. "We need money, honey. As much as you can give us."

Well, she was in the West Indies and it wasn't possible to make the transfer, and I had one other person who said that they would put up money for bail. A white farmer from Fresno, California, which is one of the most conservative areas in the state. His name was Rodger McAfee. And I said, "Will you do it?"

And he said, "Yes. "I will put up my farm as collateral."

When Rodger McAfee goes out to feed the cows on his dairy farm near Fresno, he now carries an AR-15 semiautomatic rifle,
because he says his life and the lives of his wife and five children have been threatened. The threats began the day after McAfee put up some of his farmland as security for Angela Davis' bail bonds. Angela Davis has always promoted the path to the freedom of peoples. The freedom to speak out and... it's our American way of life. And when you have constant threats on your life and etcetera, that's not freedom. It just shows we haven't developed far enough yet. We're all outside the courtroom together waiting. And Howard comes out loping along, you know? Do some work, some typing. And we yell, "What happened?" I mean, we didn't know where he was going. I'm going to do some typing. The man has said he's going to do some typing and some work, and there are no more questions, all right? And he turned and he was crying. In a choked voice he said, "We got what we came for." After a tense day of closed door conferences, Judge Richard Arnason ruled Miss Davis should be freed from jail. It was the first legal fallout from the death penalty ruling. And the judge's decision did not please the prosecution. I think what he's going to do is contrary to law. Is this appealable? Can you appeal it? Well, I suppose we could seek some relief from the appellate court, but the time factor is so short that I don't think it would be worth the effort. Then we got to the bail bondsman's
office. His name was Steve Sparacino. Everything closes at 5:00, right? We wanted to get her out that night. And he said, "Well, I don't know. Should I do this? Should I not do this?" And perhaps about four minutes to 5:00, and he said, "Okay."

I'm so happy, boy. I just...
Kendra said to me, "Go tell Angela."

When I'm processed through and I'm allowed into Angela's cell, Angela had on a black shawl. She was getting ready to leave. She stood absolutely still for a moment, and her body rippled. There was, like, this little ripple and then she walked out.

Her release on bail transformed the trial because the presumption of innocence had been restored. She came into the courtroom as a free person, and it transformed everything about the trial.

After 17 months of pre-trial activity and three weeks to pick a jury, the Angela Davis trial is ready to hear evidence. Prosecutor Albert Harris outlined a conspiracy which he promised to weave out of circumstantial evidence. A plan to take hostages from a California courthouse and use them to free San Quentin prisoners. His first motive was political. Angela Davis, a communist, a Black Panther, a member of the Che Lumumba Club, anxious to free the Soledad Brothers and other political prisoners, did this out of revolutionary fervor. And then he changed midstream. Harris said Miss Davis aided and abetted that escape attempt.
driven by a passion for Soledad Brother
George Jackson.
A passion, he said, that knew no bounds.
When he got up and made this argument,
it was so stunning.
I'm thinking, like, "Whoa!"
It was basically an argument that I was...
I was a person who had uncontrollable
passion because I was a woman.
In the State's case,
the primary motive charged
was to free the Soledad Brothers.
Ironically, at the noon recess,
word reached the courthouse.
They had been found, "Not guilty."
- Soledad Brothers got acquitted.
- They got acquitted.
Soledad Brothers were not guilty
and they've received a just verdict.
Right on.
I thought of the idea of having Angela Davis
to make the opening statement to the jury.
An opening statement in which she could
tell all about herself all of who she was.
And she got to tell the jury that
without being cross-examined.
No one has heard
Angela Davis say anything.
And so, suddenly in the courtroom,
she had this moment.
And every eye in the courtroom is on her.
So the beginning of the trial
was really Angela Davis.
I'm just gonna read to you.
"The trial's most dramatic development
"was the defense's opening statement
delivered by the defendant herself.
"Miss Davis scoffed at the prosecution
of her motive.
"The suggestion that
her love for Jackson
"had driven her to crime, she said,
"was utterly fantastic, utterly absurd.
"Clear evidence of male chauvinism."
I mean, nobody expected that. You know, here's the beginning of a trial that everyone thinks is black and white. And what is she bringing up in her opening statement, but male chauvinism. Quite interesting.

Harris, in the early days, brought on a lot of witnesses to basically make the ground for his case. I was working in the darkroom, mixing fixer that day. And I heard on the police monitor that there was a...

They called a code 33. Armed convicts with hostages at the Marin County Civic Center Hall of Justice. There was a shooting, there were witnesses, so-and-so saw so-and-so.

I was across the archway from where they were exiting. And about that time somebody said, "Here they come."

And there were a lot of exhibits. The stick, that gun.

And the next thing I knew, I got a black man with a .357 Magnum aimed at my head saying, "Stand up, motherfucker, or I'll blow your brains out."

Harris then continued for days and days and weeks, putting on exhibit, after exhibit, after exhibit. And witness, after witness, after witness. What I saw, I saw through the lens of a camera. My photographs were my testimony. I think he presented 104 witnesses to overwhelm the jury with what had happened on August 7th. It was David and Goliath, you know? And Angela was David. The trial, for Harris, it was a hugely
important assignment for him.
Huge.
He was the one
who had to carry the government.
Albert Harris was not
a prosecuting attorney.
All the prosecuting attorneys
had been disqualified
because one of the victims of the crime
was a district attorney.
And so the Attorney General
took over as prosecutors.
So we had the advantage of having
better trial lawyers than they were.
Leo Branton made an argument
that was stunning.
That some of the most
unreliable testimony you'll ever hear
is eyewitness testimony.
Seated at the counsel table,
in addition to Angela and the lawyers,
was Kendra Alexander,
who's a close friend of Angela's,
and the head of the defense committee.
One day, when he had
this very hostile witness,
the guy even called him bald-headed,
and he was identifying Angela Davis as
being the one and he saw her.
They just kept egging this guy on.
They said, "Can you identify her?"
"Yes, that's her, right there."
And he chose Kendra.
It was an astounding moment.
And it revealed Leo's brilliant lawyering.
He set the guy up, that's really
what he did. He set the guy up.
You know these things,
the cumulative effect on the jurors.
But just the very idea
of making that argument
saying, "Eyewitness testimony is some
of the most unreliable you'll ever get."
That didn't
strike me right.
But then when you see them
cross-examine these people,
and there are these people saying,
"This is what I saw with my own eyes."
It seemed to be so...
Just tear their testimony up.
Makes you really think about
the eyewitness testimony, you know.
The prosecutor, Mr. Harris,
believed he had a case.
And I think the most powerful item
that he had
were what were referred to as "the letters."
Angela had written letters to George
when he was still in Soledad Prison.
Those letters which were, you know,
very passionate and very emotional,
and, you know, all about love,
but struggle and revolution.
It was all entangled.
But he wanted to use this
as the primary evidence of my guilt.
The defense did not
want these letters in there.
And the prosecution wanted them in there,
because they said,
"You read these letters,
you'll understand why she did this."
Here's a quote, it's from Harris.
"You will find, I think, from the letters,
a willingness on the part of the defendant
"to do whatever she felt had to be done
to free George Jackson."
It was as though the letters
were meant to, in fact, say,
"Look, I'll free you. And I'm so in love
with you, I'll do anything for you."
You know?
Leo was incensed, okay.
He was really incensed about
putting in this diary,
and particularly this part of the diary
where Angela is
expressing herself in this way. 
Now, Branton, he stood on his feet, 
and put his hand here, in his jacket, 
and this arm was way out in front, 
and he was just saying, 
"These are not admissible."
So, we fought. 
I mean, some of the heaviest fighting in 
the case was over editing this letter. 
The judge comes in 
with his sweeping black robes, 
and he kind of steps up the steps, 
and he sits down. 
The courtroom is very nervous 
and sitting forward, 
and no one's looking at anyone else. 
Arnason takes the 18 pages, 
came back with three pages. 
And so he read some of the letters in court. 
"I, your wife, your comrade, 
who's supposed to love you, 
"fight with you, fight for you, 
"I'm supposed to rip off the chains. 
"I'm supposed to fight your enemies 
with my body, 
"but I am helpless, powerless. 
"I contain a rage inside 
"as I re-experience this now, 
my pulse beats faster. 
"I begin to breathe harder. And I see myself 
"tearing down this steel door, 
fighting my way to you, 
"ripping down your cell door 
and letting you go free. 
"I feel as you do, so terribly is this love."
If I had been the prosecutor, 
I would try to put that in, too. 
It was very painful 
to have my expressions 
of my deepest emotional feelings 
splashed across the newspaper as a 
result of having been revealed in court. 
It was very difficult, yeah. 
It was very difficult.
Doris Walker and Margaret Burnham had been in charge of our witnesses. They had a whole slew of people lined up to testify. And what we ultimately decided was that we should not appear to be defensive. And we should only have witnesses for very specific points that might be confusing to the jury. Just imagine. This judge is taken out of the courtroom with a shotgun and you have someone that buys these weapons, but what makes that fall apart is, why, if that was the plan, why would she use her own identification to purchase these weapons? Basically, your defense is, and I think Leo Branton said it just like this, "Angela Davis is not stupid. You know she's not stupid. "She had to be stupid to buy these guns, "knowing that we were going to know that she bought them "and they're going to be the weapons in this crime." Carefully, without emotion, the prosecutor wound up his case against Angela Davis. "She conspired to kidnap and murder, " he said, "because of a passionate desire "to free her lover, Soledad Brother George Jackson." Prosecutor Albert Harris showed the guns she bought. He reviewed the testimony of witnesses who saw her with a young man who later used those guns. "This case is all about death, injury and kidnapping," Harris said. "And Angela Davis is responsible."
Assistant Attorney General Albert W. Harris
quietly turned from the wooden lectern
in the middle of the courtroom
and walked a few steps to
the prosecuting attorney's table.
He glanced down
at a pile of papers on his desk,
and announced, undramatically,
'The People rest their case.'
He did a magnificent job
of taking all of these pieces,
and pulling them all together
and telling you what to think.
I said...
'I believe Angela's gone.'
Leo told me, "See, now, Howard,
'you're gonna take the eyewitnesses.
They're yours.'
So I emphasized
the presumption of innocence,
the question of reasonable doubt,
and I attacked each one
of the eyewitnesses.
Then we paused and we set up the stage,
and my brother, Leo, rose to the occasion.
I knew that I had to prove
that Angela's flight
was not evidence of guilt.
I said to the jury,
'I want you to play a role with me.
'For the next several minutes,
I want you to think black.
'I want you to be black.
'Don't worry.
'I'll let you return to being white
when this is over.
'If you're black,
'you know that your fore parents were
brought to this country as slaves.
'And the United States
Supreme Court ruled,
"'There are no rights
(that a black person has
that a white man is bound to respect.'
"An intellectual like Angela Davis knew this.
"She also knew that during the '60s, every time a black person raised his voice in support of liberty and the freedom of the black man, he was assassinated.
"And so if you know all of those things, "if you are Angela Davis, "or if you're black, "you don't wonder why she fled. "You only wonder why in the world did she allow herself to be caught?"
Defense attorney, Leo Branton, said he did not know who the person was that the prosecution witnesses had identified as Angela Davis. But he said it wasn't his job to find out. "Angela Davis is no fool," he continued. "Why would she buy a gun to blow a judge's head off "and buy it in her own name?
"The prosecution's theory is absurd."
The jury will begin deliberating her guilt or innocence tomorrow. We were sitting on the lawn. Franklin came out and he said, "They've reached a verdict."
And I was standing next to Mrs. Davis, Angela's mother. And she said to me, "I can't go in. "I just... I can't go in." She couldn't bear it. She wanted to be with her own thoughts, and she obviously didn't think she could maintain her composure. And it was Angela who reached out to her and said, "Mom, you've got to come."
There was a way in which we were all kind of in our own silos. When we came into the courtroom with, you know, obviously, solidarity, but we were all also just steeling ourselves for whatever that jury was going to say. And the jury walks in,
and then Margaret falls apart completely. So, I'm in a situation where I'm having to help Margaret, and she kind of stretched her arms out. And then Franklin started crying. He was in the audience. And the judge says, "Have you reached a verdict?" And Mrs. Timothy said, "Yes, Your Honor, we have." The jury hands the jury slip to the clerk, and the clerk then hands it to the judge, and the judge then looks at it, and you look at the judge to see if he's happy or sad, or if he's giving away anything. And no judge ever does at that moment. The court clerk reads out the charge. "In the case of Angela Davis on the charge of first degree murder, "how does the jury find?" And she said, "Not guilty." And then they read the second one. "First degree kidnapping, how does the jury find?" "Not guilty." And then the clerk read out the next charge, which was the conspiracy, and that's the one we were most nervous about. I think I stopped breathing. Everybody was just sobbing. Angela reached over to touch her mother, who was sitting right behind her. And she said, "Not guilty." And there came the yell, "Power to the people! Power to the people! "Power to the people!" And then they started, "Power to the jury. "Power to the jury. Power to the jury." Today's verdict climaxed the trial which many have viewed
as a testing ground
for the American judicial system.
Supporters said political and racial bias
would prevent a fair trial.
But despite these claims,
today in San Jose, an all-white jury
acquitted Angela Davis.
The simple truth obvious to all long ago
was this,
there never was a legal case against Angela.
But the political necessity for such a trial
was incontrovertible for the state.
That is why it is so important
that this state's conspiracy to get Angela
was smashed.
Just general reaction.
Could you just take off and rap?
I think you've been able to see
from all of the celebrating
that has already taken place here
what my reaction is
and the reaction
of the members of my family.
And all of the sisters and brothers who
have been struggling for my freedom.
This is the happiest day of my life.
Throughout this country, people are
becoming increasingly aware
of the fact that whatever
the government does,
is not a priori the truth.
And it's not only the struggle around
political prisoners
that has begun to change
the climate in this country
so that an acquittal like this could occur.
But also the reaction to the war in Vietnam
and the reaction to Nixon's
economic policies.
I think there's a lot more resistance now.
And that means that we have to continue
to build that resistance
and allow it to mature.
This was not something
that we could set aside
and say, "This is over.
Now let's get on with our lives."
This was the way in which
we were creating our lives.
This is the way we were choosing
to live our lives.
Sisters and brothers,
this is really a beautiful, beautiful moment.
It would have been a little hard to imagine
22 long months ago
that tonight, thousands and thousands
and thousands of people
are here at Madison Square Garden
celebrating a magnificent people's victory!
I was so glad that
that part of my life was over.
At the same time, all of this energy
that had been generated.
We sat down to talk about
how we could keep that structure in place
and how we could go on
in order to bring more victories
to more people.
That became the theme of my life.
And here I am today.