



GLBT  
Historical  
Society  
*museum & archives*

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## Online Poster Exhibition “Angela Davis: OUTspoken” Explores Activist’s Radical History

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**San Francisco** — The GLBT Historical Society will be unveiling an online version of its successful exhibition “Angela Davis: OUTspoken,” which was on display at the GLBT Historical Society Museum from February to September 2018. The exhibition draws on rare posters and ephemera from a private collection to highlight the journey of Black lesbian activist Angela Davis: from radical scholar, to political prisoner, to revolutionary icon, to public intellectual.

Curated by community archivist Lisbet Tellefsen and historian Amy Sueyoshi, the exhibition considers some of the roles Davis has played in the American political imaginary and explores the complexity and impact of her life across nearly half a century. The virtual version of “Angela Davis: OUTspoken” opens on August 10 at [glbthistory.org/angela-davis](http://glbthistory.org/angela-davis).

“As a Black lesbian growing up in the Bay Area, I never really viewed Angela Davis through a specifically queer lens,” says Tellefsen, whose collection of rare Davis materials forms the basis of the exhibition. “However, for as long as I can remember, Angela was always fiercely claimed by the lesbian-of-color community as one of our own. While we could debate when or what exactly constituted her coming-out statement, what was always crystal clear was her unwavering and vocal support for LGBTQ rights.

“Angela Davis has always been about intersectionality — before the term was even coined,” Tellefsen adds. “She has always explored the connections between race, class, gender, sexual orientation, ability and citizenship. She is an African American woman, she is a lesbian, she is an ally for oppressed populations throughout the globe and a vocal champion for LGBTQ rights. This is who she is. She is a human rights activist of the highest order.”

Davis first came to public attention in the late 1960s with her dismissal from the faculty of the University of California due to her membership in the Communist Party, her involvement in the Black Panther Party, and her trial and imprisonment on charges of conspiracy, kidnapping and murder for which she was acquitted. Her outspoken activism and organizing efforts attracted both harsh criticism and strong support, resulting in her becoming a globally recognized symbol of radical resistance. Today, Davis continues her political

work, including challenging mainstream LGBTQ movements to see service in the armed forces and participation in marriage with a critical eye.

“It’s especially important now to be reminded of the radical roots of queer activism, particularly through African American women such as Angela Davis,” says Sueyoshi. “My hope is that history will honor the queer women of color and other activists who came up during times of extreme repression. The graphics displayed in ‘OUTspoken’ not only serve as a visual reminder of the power of speaking out; they also can inspire us to continue working for a world without exploitation.”

“Angela Davis: OUTspoken” opens on August 10 on the GLBT Historical Society’s website at [glbthistory.org/angela-davis](http://glbthistory.org/angela-davis).

For more information, visit the GLBT Historical Society website at [www.glbthistory.org](http://www.glbthistory.org).

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### **About Angela Davis**

Following are excerpts from a 1998 *OUT* Magazine profile in which Angela Davis discusses sexual politics and sexual identity:

[In the 1970s], Davis rejected all “identity politics” that made categories like race, gender, or sexual orientation the basis for political organizing. Behind many of her objections was Davis’ distrust of the principle that “the personal is political.” Politics was political, she believed, and the personal was not an arena she wanted to explore.

Davis’ approach began to change in the ’80s, she says, as “new feminisms emerged, particularly from feminists of color, with new vocabularies to talk about gender and sexuality.” She says that her research on the blues, for example, helped her understand how “personal” life historically played a role in Black women’s liberation. The blues women who sang about homosexual desire, abusive men, jealousy, lust, travel and love were creating, she says, “a working-class Black feminism” and “a politics of resistance challenging race and gender identity.”

Davis credits younger activists for other insights: how issues like sexuality can “enter into consciousness and become the focus of struggle,” how “private” issues like domestic violence and AIDS can spark social movements.

Meanwhile, her sense of her own personal and political has shifted. Her lesbianism, she says, is “something I’m fine with as a political statement. But I still want a private space for carrying out my relationships.”

—Sara Miles, “Angela at Our Table,” *OUT Magazine* (February 1998)

### **About the Curators**

**Lisbet Tellefsen** has been an archivist, collector and event producer in the

Bay Area for more than three decades. She was the publisher of *Aché: A Black Lesbian Journal* from 1989 to 1995. She frequently lends works from her collection of posters and fine arts reflecting African American radical organizing and other subjects for display in exhibitions around the United States. In addition, the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA) have acquired materials from Tellefsen for their permanent collections.

**Amy Sueyoshi** is a historian specializing in sexuality, gender and race. She serves as interim dean of the College of Ethnic Studies at San Francisco State University and holds a joint faculty appointment in Sexuality Studies and Race and Resistance Studies. She is the author of two books: *Queer Compulsions: Race, Nation and Sexuality in the Affairs of Yone Noguchi* (2012) and *Discriminating Sex: White Leisure and the Making of the American "Oriental"* (2018). Sueyoshi is a recipient of the GLBT Historical Society's Clio Award for contributions to queer history and served as community grand marshal for San Francisco Pride in 2017.

### **About the GLBT Historical Society**

The GLBT Historical Society is a public history center and archives that collects, preserves, exhibits and makes accessible to the public materials and knowledge to support and promote understanding of LGBTQ history, culture and arts in all their diversity. Founded in 1985, the society maintains one of the world's largest collections of LGBTQ historical materials. The society's operations are centered around two sites: the GLBT Historical Society Museum, located since 2011 in the heart of San Francisco's Castro neighborhood; and the Dr. John P. De Cecco Archives and Research Center, open to researchers in the Mid-Market district. For more information, visit [www.glbthistory.org](http://www.glbthistory.org).

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"Free Angela & All Political Prisoners" poster, anonymous, Oakland, California, ca. 1971; collection of Lisbet Tellefsen, used with permission.

# LIBEREZ ANGELA DAVIS



UNION DES ÉTUDIANTS COMMUNISTES DE FRANCE

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“Liberez Angela Davis” poster, Union des étudiants communistes de France, ca. 1971; collection of Lisbet Tellefsen, used with permission.

