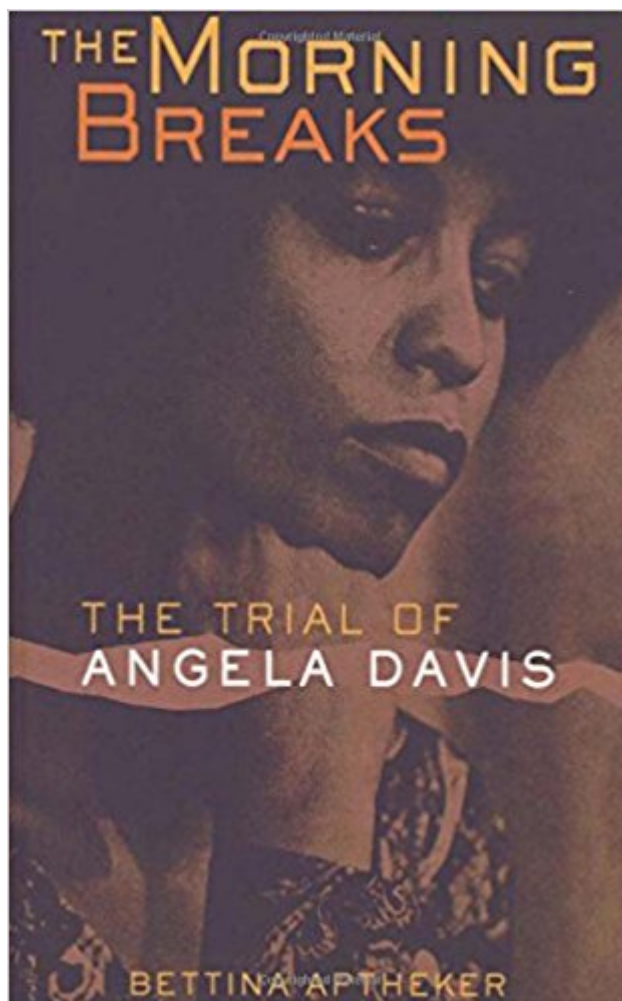


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The Morning Breaks: The Trial Of Angela Davis



Synopsis

On August 7, 1970, a revolt by Black prisoners in a Marin County courthouse stunned the nation. In its aftermath, Angela Davis, an African American activist-scholar who had campaigned vigorously for prisoners' rights, was placed on the FBI's "ten most wanted list." Captured in New York City two months later, she was charged with murder, kidnapping, and conspiracy. Her trial, chronicled in this "compelling tale" (Publishers Weekly), brought strong public indictment. *The Morning Breaks* is a riveting firsthand account of Davis's ordeal and her ultimate triumph, written by an activist in the student, civil rights, and antiwar movements who was intimately involved in the struggle for her release. First published in 1975, and praised by *The Nation* for its "graphic narrative of [Davis's] legal and public fight," *The Morning Breaks* remains relevant today as the nation contends with the political fallout of the Sixties and the grim consequences of institutional racism. For this edition, Bettina Aptheker has provided an introduction that revisits crucial events of the late 1960s and early 1970s and puts Davis's case into the context of that time and our own—*from the killings at Kent State and Jackson State to the politics of the prison system today.* This book gives a first-hand account of the worldwide movement for Angela Davis's freedom and of her trial. It offers a unique historical perspective on the case and its continuing significance in the contemporary political landscape.

Book Information

Paperback: 336 pages

Publisher: Cornell University Press; 2 edition (April 1, 1999)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0801485975

ISBN-13: 978-0801485978

Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 0.8 x 8.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 13.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.7 out of 5 stars 7 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #237,471 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #31 in [Books > Law >](#)

[Constitutional Law > Discrimination](#) #178 in [Books > Textbooks > Social Sciences > Political Science > Civil Rights](#) #259 in [Books > Law > Legal History](#)

Customer Reviews

Activist-scholar Angela Y. Davis was one of the most potent radical political symbols of the '70s, her defiantly clenched fist raised high over her reddish-brown, full-blown Afro. Her "celebrity" was

launched when she was put on trial in 1972 in San Jose, California, for murder and kidnapping, charges on which she was later acquitted. This second edition of Bettina Aptheker's gut-wrenching chronicle of the Davis trial is a fact-filled boon to a younger generation imbued with the era's mythologies. With a strange cast of characters, including then-governor Ronald Reagan, Aptheker reveals heroes, villains, and brilliant legal work. "Winning the freedom of Angela Davis was a singular achievement," she writes. "Three conditions were decisive: the intervention of world opinion, the unanimity of the Black community ... and the organizational coherence of the U.S. Communist Party." But also, as the portrait in *The Morning Breaks* makes plain, Angela Davis's amazing resilience. --Eugene Holley Jr.

"An essential read for the present generation of activists." -- The Gaither Reporter "This book, written so beautifully, is on the face of it, Bettina Aptheker's story of the movement to free Angela Davis. That is the fact. The truth is deeper. Painful. Beautiful. Cry-making. It is a story of love. Love of people for people. Adults for children. And overall, more than human desire for freedom, the unquestionable human need for it. It is that truth that brought millions of people together to set Angela Davis free. Bettina Aptheker's understanding and support of that truth, her poetry and strength, set the readers on a loving quest for their own freedom." -- Maya Angelou "I found this book totally absorbing, a slice of recent history told by a participant, that should become a classic the day it is published. More than a masterful piece of trial reporting, it is a brilliant reconstruction of events that led to the prosecution of Angela Davis, its roots in the brutally repressive, racist California prison system, and the eventual triumph of the world-wide movement for her freedom." -- Jessica Mitford "History gives us extraordinary moments and protagonists, but it is not often that we have the opportunity to examine a pivotal moment in the life of someone still giving her intelligence and courage to the landscape of these times. Such an opportunity is this new edition of Bettina Aptheker's important telling of the trial of Angela Davis, *The Morning Breaks*. Here we have process as well as heroism and memory. Cornell University Press has done us a great service by reissuing this important work." -- Margaret Randall "The second edition of *The Morning Breaks* provides valuable, new material indispensable to a thoughtful understanding of the ordeal, the trial, and the acquittal (thank God!) of Angela Davis -- three historical events of continuing, major significance for all of us studying, and reaching for, freedom." -- June Jordan, University of California at Berkeley "Enlightening and fascinating, this new edition comes when the history it recovers is sorely needed. Bettina Aptheker's lens is wide and clear and through it she makes a significant contribution to the kind of understanding that can lead to positive

action." — Adrienne Rich

Aptheker, a close friend and fellow CPUSA member with Davis, provides great insight into a trial we should all know about, especially those of us involved in revolutionary struggle. A CPUSA member directed me to the book after I'd seen the recent documentary "Free Angela and All Political Prisoners." I reference that great documentary because its pitfalls are filled in by Aptheker's narrative. The CPUSA's immediate involvement in the case is barely referenced in the documentary; the dissension in the CPUSA Central Committee whether to initially support Davis is not referenced either. The California farmer who put his own farm up to pay Davis' bail is really downplayed in the documentary, but Aptheker reveals him to be an activist who helped Cuba's revolution with its cattle breeding and was avidly making designs on collective farming. The point is this: what little we might get of the trial of Angela Davis, member of the Communist Party USA, is watered down and the role of the Party made absent. We must learn different.

This was too slow at first. I was pushing for the author to get to the facts and the trial. Once that happened, it was a good read.

Amazing book. Could not stop talking about this.

In the 1970s every one knew of Angela Davis' travails, trials and tragedy. If her expulsion from teaching and trial symbolised Frankenstein, then her freedom symbolised unrelenting and unending struggle against Abraham Lincoln's country's racist practice of rule of law. This minute by minute account of Bettina Aptekar (the world knew about her and her father, Herbert as well) is an eye opener even for those who were then part of the World Peace Council Movement in Defence of Angela Davis. This heart wrenching account bares the tentacles around the bodies of Black people's lives, psyche and existence. It is an expose of academic bodies' biases and prejudices eating into people's jobs and freedoms-both white and black dissenters. The revocation of the sentence against Angela Davis was then considered a victory for the Left Movement of the 1960s and seventies. In addition, it also lays bare the alienation and ennui in advanced societies of those decades, initially symbolised by the theatre of the absurd beginning with Kierkegaard, Becket and Ibsen. Lovers of freedom in the Neo-liberal era awake and read this part of liberals' dark tragedy with all its shades. Life is not a dark chocolate on shelves that consumers are dealt with. It is devilish.

A fascinating account of the legal maneuvering that quite possibly saved the life of this extraordinary woman. The fact is there should never have been a trial in the first place. Aside from that we are given an inside view of the strategy invoked by the defense team. Howard Moore and Margaret Burnham are the main players in the defense team. Angela's sister Fania headed up the national movement. I was most impressed with the tremendous outpouring of support from all over the country. The book goes into great detail concerning Angela's connection with the Soledad brothers. It was her interest in their trial that started this whole farce in the first place. If you believe as I do that this beautiful woman was singled out because her views ran contrary to those of Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan then you will love this book. It will make you mad and yet you will see that perhaps justice can prevail after all.

This book is undoubtedly rewarding reading, and yet it very much strikes the informed reader as having been created under [Communist Party, USA] discipline. As Aptheker notes in her introduction, she was a member of the CPUSA's national committee when she wrote this book in 1973; it was first issued by the party's International Publishers two years later. Ironically, Aptheker lauds the socialist countries, especially the USSR, throughout her narrative. It's deeply regrettable that Aptheker and her comrades protested the political incarceration of Davis and other U.S. militants and yet passively supported the repression meted out to Soviet and Czech dissidents during the same period. During an official visit to Czechoslovakia in 1972, Davis herself insisted that imprisoned rebels of the 1968 Prague Spring "deserved what they got" and should remain behind bars. As you read this book, I encourage you to keep the duality of such positions foremost in your mind.

Once you get past the communist/revolutionary rhetoric of the 60's-70's, a portrait of a bright, intelligent human being is exposed. The case of Angela Davis is important for many reasons - but most importantly the right to free speech and to believe as you wish. That is what makes this country great.

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