

# COLUMBIA SPECTATOR

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## Angela Davis

### To the Editor:

(This letter was addressed to the leaders of the Black Students' Organization)

I am writing to thank you for bringing Angela Davis to campus as the keynote speaker for Black History Month. I thoroughly enjoyed both the style and content of her presentation, and, while I am not sure that I agree with her assertion that Malcolm X would support her positions if he were alive today, she certainly gave me plenty of food for thought.

As a Columbia student, I have been disappointed when the BSO brought speakers onto the campus whom I considered proponents of hatred and bigotry. When Rodney Crump remarked that Angela Davis is "the most controversial" figure that the BSO has brought onto campus, I assumed he was reacting to the uproar over the invitation of Richard (Professor Griff) Griffin and Dr. Leonard Jeffries.

Whether Angela Davis is considered a controversial figure or not is of no concern to me. At issue are her ideals and goals: her message. I would like to believe that I am capable of hearing new ideas and evaluating them rationally, dispassionately--even if they contradict my own beliefs--to see if I find truth or merit in them. In order to fulfill this intellectual commitment, I must sometimes acknowledge truth in

concepts and assertions that are painful or distasteful to me: my pain does not mitigate their verity.

I draw the line at the point at which an ideology includes the hatred or objectification of a group. Even if that ideology contains truths about the human condition or about justice and injustice (and I do acknowledge those truths), I cannot accept it because of the negative, destructive aspect within it. Furthermore, I cannot in good conscience support a person who espouses such an ideology, as my support would promote the objectification or hatred of a group.

These criteria of mine apply to all ideologues. For instance, someone like Mordechai Levi (head of the Jewish Defense Organization) may have a few cogent points about the importance of defending Jews from anti-Semitic violence, but I cannot accept his ideology because of the way he turns entire groups of people into "enemies" and "anti-Semites" who can serve as the focus for Jewish fear and hatred. I reject such generalizations.

The message that Angela Davis articulated on Saturday night contained no calls for hatred, and no stereotyping. All the action and activism she argued for (e.g. raising feminist consciousness, protecting the environment, not allowing homophobia to interfere with caring for AIDS victims)--all within the context of the Black Unity movement--made a lot of sense to me. Of course, only the black community can set its own agenda and priorities, and I am not in a position to understand all the factors underlying its decisions. All I know is that I, as a Jew, would feel proud and

I, as a Jew, would feel proud and  
lucky to be able to bring a Jewish  
speaker to campus who could argue  
so convincingly for raising feminist  
consciousness within Judaism!

Thank you again for giving me  
the opportunity to hear Davis speak.  
I hope the BSO continues to bring  
such thought-provoking, construc-  
tive, and entertaining speakers to  
campus.

**Tobie Strauss, CC '92**