



The New York Public Library
Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture,
Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division

Guide to the

National Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression (U.S.), Angela Davis Defense Committee collection

1970-1976

Sc MG 155

Summary

Creator: National Alliance against Racist and Political Repression (U.S.)

Title: National Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression (U.S.), Angela Davis Defense Committee collection

Date: 1970-1976

Size: 1.25 linear feet (4 boxes)

Source: Gift of the National Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression, ca. 1977.

Abstract: The records of the Angela Davis Defense Committee including incoming letters of support and sympathy from the United States, Germany, and Eastern Europe (many in German). Many of these letters are postcards to Angela Davis, signed and with notes, mostly from abroad (some are in French). A large number are birthday cards to Angela Davis with notes and others are greeting cards portraying Angela Davis. The rest of the collection includes printed material from magazines and newspapers; Alliance newsletters; pamphlets by or about Davis and other political cases, such as the prison inmate riot at Attica; and printed material, posters, and information about other cases in which the Alliance was involved.

Preferred citation: [Item], National Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression (U.S.), Angela Davis Defense Committee collection, Sc MG 155, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library

Language of the Material: English English, French, and German.

Separated Materials:

Transferred to Art and Artifacts Division: art and artifacts.

Transferred to the Moving Image and Recorded Sound Division: audio materials. For more information, please contact the division at schomburgaudiovisual@nypl.org or 212-491-2270.

Related Materials:

Angela Davis Legal defense collection, 1970-1972, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.

Creator History

The Angela Davis Defense Committee was established in London, in 1970, on behalf of Angela Davis, who was charged with murder, kidnapping, and conspiracy. The case garnered national and international attention and thrust Davis, then in her 20s, into the leadership of the black liberation movement.

The National Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression was founded in 1973 in Chicago, Illinois, to mount organized action against unjust treatment of individuals because of race or political beliefs. Its founding grew out of the struggle to free Angela Davis from a racist frame-up on murder charges surrounding the aborted attempt by Jonathan Jackson to free his brother, George Jackson, and the Soledad Brothers, in 1970. On August 3, 1970, Jackson, tried to assist James McClain, on trial for an alleged attempt to stab an officer, escape from the courthouse. During the escape attempt Jackson, with William Christmas and Ruchell Magee, two prisoners who were in the courtroom as witnesses for McClain, took five hostages: three jurors, the district attorney, and the judge.

During the escape attempt the judge, Jackson, and Christmas were killed in a shootout with the police; one juror and the district attorney were wounded. The guns used in the kidnapping were traced to Davis, implicating her in the escape attempt. A California warrant was issued for Davis's arrest, in which she was charged as an accomplice to murder, kidnapping, and conspiracy. She fled Los Angeles and evaded arrest by seeking refuge in several places including New York City. A federal fugitive warrant was subsequently issued and she was placed on the Federal Bureau of Investigation's ten most wanted list.

Two months later Davis was captured in New York City. Almost immediately a groundswell of support developed in favor of Davis's and Magee's release. Davis, in particular, received widespread national and international support from the black community, liberals, and the progressive left. The Communist Party mounted a major political campaign and held rallies in the United States and abroad; published articles, pamphlets and posters; issued petitions; distributed postcards; and requested that the public mail cards and letters on Davis's behalf. The National Council of Black Lawyers offered Davis assistance with her trial and the Presbyterian Church gave the Davis Defense Fund \$10,000. Singer Aretha Franklin had offered to pay Davis' bail but was out of the country when Davis had her bail hearing. A white farmer from Fresno County who sympathized with Davis gave her the money she needed for bail, and on February 23, 1972, five days before her trial, Davis was released on \$102,000 bail after serving seventeen months in jail.

After a trial by jury, consisting of eleven whites and one Latino, Davis was acquitted of all charges.

Scope and Content Note

The records of the Angela Davis Defense Committee including incoming letters of support and sympathy from the United States, Germany, and Eastern Europe (many in German). Many of these letters are postcards to Angela Davis, signed and with notes, mostly from abroad (some are in French). A large number are birthday cards to Angela Davis with notes and others are greeting cards portraying Angela Davis. The rest of the collection includes printed material from magazines and newspapers; Alliance newsletters; pamphlets by or about Davis and other political cases, such as the prison inmate

riot at Attica; and printed material, posters, and information about other cases in which the Alliance was involved.

Arrangement: Arranged into two series: (1) Correspondence and (2) Printed matter.

Key Terms

Subjects

African American women political activists
Political postcards
Political prisoners -- United States
Racism -- United States
Trials (Political crimes and offenses)--United States

Names

Davis, Angela Y. (Angela Yvonne), 1944-
Angela Davis Defence Committee (Great Britain)
National Alliance against Racist and Political Repression (U.S.)

Container List

Correspondence 1970-1972

This series includes petitions, greetings cards, postcards, and letters in support of Angela Davis, many signed and some with personalized notes.

Some of the correspondence is in French and German.

- b. 1 f. 1-2 1970
- b. 1 f. 3 1971
- b. 1 f. 4 undated
- b. 1 f. 5-6 1972
- b. 1 f. 7-8 Petitions and cards
- b. 2 f. 1 Greeting cards 1970
- b. 2 f. 2 Signed birthday cards 1971
- b. 2 f. 3 Postcards and form cards 1971
- New Year's postcards
- b. 2 f. 4-8 Signed 1970 December-1972 January
- b. 3 f. 1
- b. 3 f. 2 Unsigned 1971 December-1972 February
- b. 3 f. 3-4 Postcards and cards 1972

Printed matter

This series consists of pamphlets, flyers, and articles about Angela Davis and other political prisoners.

Arranged into two subseries: (1) About Davis and (2) About other political prisoners.

- b. 3 About Davis
- Includes pamphlets, flyers, articles, and remarks.
- b. 3 About other political prisoners