

THE DAILY ORANGE

Activist Angela Davis discusses social justice with SU audience



Cydney Lee | Staff Writer

SU alumnus and Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity Inc., brother, Roshad Meeks (left) talked with Angela Davis at the fraternity's annual "Truth Be Told" speaker series Tuesday night.

By Cydney Lee

STAFF WRITER

Civil rights activist, author and educator Angela Davis received a standing ovation as she took to the podium in front of a sold-out crowd in Goldstein Auditorium. Davis's visit was part of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc.'s annual "Truth Be Told" speaker series.

"These days, we can use as much truth-telling as we can get," Davis said as she stood behind the podium.

This year, the fraternity invited Davis to remind students the sacrifices made for change to occur, said Syracuse University senior and vice president of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., Kenny Buckner.

Davis grew up in Birmingham, Alabama during the Jim Crow era. Having experienced racism and discrimination firsthand, her experiences influenced her radical views in the realm of civil rights and social justice for black people.

As a young adult, she held roles in both the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and the Black Panther Party. She also became affiliated with the Communist Party after joining an all-black faction of the party called the Che-Lumumba Club.

In the early '70s, Davis advocated for the prison release of "The Soledad Brothers," a group of three black men who were accused of beating a white prison guard. Because of her affiliation with the men, she was imprisoned for nearly 18 months until she was acquitted in 1972.

Davis later became an educator — having held teaching positions at numerous accredited universities, including at Syracuse University, where she spent some time teaching in the women's and gender studies department.

In her lecture, Davis said society is beginning to understand that the histories of slavery and colonialism still influence decision-making today. All eyes were on her as she began to discuss societal issues related to racism, sexual assault, America's prison industrial complex, global capitalism and freedom.

"These deeply embedded and widespread social molds of marginalization are responsible for what appeared to be unshakable hierarchies," Davis said. She added that economic status and social attitudes shouldn't be assumed at an individual level.

SU alumnus and brother of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., Roshad Meeks, then joined Davis on stage for a guided Q&A session with the audience.

As a women's and gender studies and anthropology major, junior Hanna Seraji said she enjoyed the event after having read Davis's work for class.

"I think the (topics) were very complex, but necessary. I've heard a lot about her work (and) I've just become familiar with the moves she's made as an activist," she said.

After nearly going over the time allotted, Davis answered one more question from a younger audience member.

Elaijah Flowers, a fourth grader at Roberts Pre-K-8 School, asked Davis what her advice is for young black girls. Davis told her that she should be proud to be a young black girl at this time, as she and her peers are the future.

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