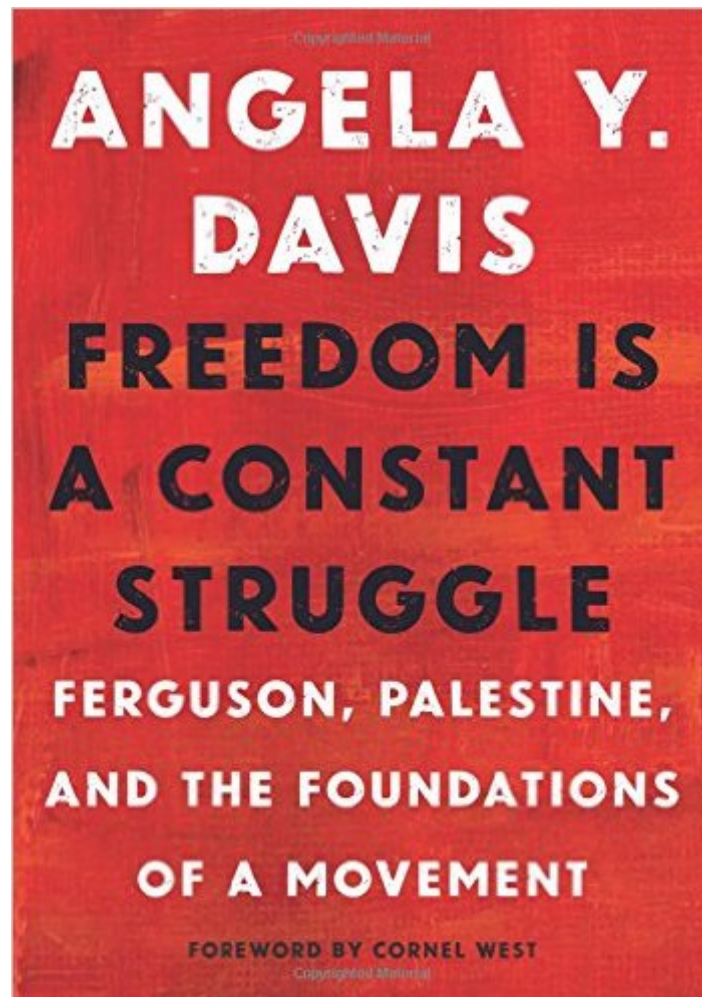


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# Freedom Is A Constant Struggle: Ferguson, Palestine, And The Foundations Of A Movement



## Synopsis

In these newly collected essays, interviews, and speeches, world-renowned activist and scholar Angela Y. Davis illuminates the connections between struggles against state violence and oppression throughout history and around the world. Reflecting on the importance of black feminism, intersectionality, and prison abolitionism for today's struggles, Davis discusses the legacies of previous liberation struggles, from the Black Freedom Movement to the South African anti-Apartheid movement. She highlights connections and analyzes today's struggles against state terror, from Ferguson to Palestine. Facing a world of outrageous injustice, Davis challenges us to imagine and build the movement for human liberation. And in doing so, she reminds us that "Freedom is a constant struggle." Angela Y. Davis is a political activist, scholar, author, and speaker. She is an outspoken advocate for the oppressed and exploited, writing on Black liberation, prison abolition, the intersections of race, gender, and class, and international solidarity with Palestine. She is the author of several books, including *Women, Race, and Class* and *Are Prisons Obsolete?* She is the subject of the acclaimed documentary *Free Angela and All Political Prisoners* and is Distinguished Professor Emerita at the University of California, Santa Cruz. One of America's most provocative public intellectuals, Dr. Cornel West has been a champion for racial justice since childhood. His writing, speaking, and teaching weave together the traditions of the black Baptist Church, progressive politics, and jazz. The *New York Times* has praised his "ferocious moral vision." His many books include *Race Matters*, *Democracy Matters*, and his new autobiography, *Brother West: Living and Loving Out Loud*. Frank Barat is a human rights activist and author. He was the coordinator of the Russell Tribunal on Palestine and is now the president of the Palestine Legal Action Network. His books include *Gaza in Crisis* and *Corporate Complicity in Israel's Occupation*.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

A fantastic new book by Angela Davis focusing on the global struggle and the need for every movements fighting for social justice to work hand in hand. A very powerful book with some in depth analysis in regards to black feminism, intersectionality, Palestine and the Black Lives Matter movement. Read it, to learn and become a better person/activist.

In *Freedom Is A Constant Struggle*, Angela Davis invites the reader to participate in important discourse covering a range of different subjects in relation to the struggle for freedom. The text is short and sweet. The reader, however, shouldn't expect to find the answers to all the world's problems. Rather, through a collection of interviews, speeches, and articles, Davis offers thought-provoking questions, almost to the point that the reader feels involved in the conversation. Davis is nothing, if not remarkable, in her ability to help the readers understand the complexity of issues and concepts that she presents. She helps the reader identify the ways in which our lives and issues intersect, causing the reader to examine her own life, her own perspective. Of course, racism is a constant theme. Davis explains the error of thinking that racism was over after certain monumental events such as the first black president, eradication of the legal apparatus with the Civil Rights Era, or even with the Emancipation Proclamation and ensuing end of slavery. She argues that racism is much more expansive and persists in a much more complex framework. People too often assume that racism comes from individual actors, when in reality is deeply embedded in the apparatus. Davis argues that, in order for substantial change to ever take place in regards to racism in America, there would need to be a call to develop a vocabulary that permits insightful conversation. Davis's words ring true here as using the same language consistent with history, we can surely expect the same confusion and lack of understanding that has been alarmingly and consistently present. Davis doesn't hesitate to tie in some of the more recent incidents, particularly those involving black slayings at the hands of police. Mike Brown, Eric Garner, Trayvon Martin, Freddie Gray, Tamir Rice; the list goes forever on. There is often an overwhelming response to protest the assailant's innocence. However, Davis invites us to challenge this premise. Would it really make much of a difference if these individuals were indicted? Probably not. Systemic change is needed if we want real change. We

cannot be satisfied with individual actions. Davis follows up on the mistake of credit and blame being placed on individuals. When we think of slavery abolition, we often give credit to Abraham Lincoln. We tend to forget about the freed slaves who fought for their own freedom. When we think about the Civil Rights Era, we give credit to Martin Luther King, Jr. We forget about the large amounts of organizers and protesters that made so much possible. In reflection, we make this error quite frequently in America. Giving all of the credit to individuals for large movements takes away from these efforts as a whole. It also encourages the messiah concept, where the oppressed wait for an individual to save them from their current situations. This idea in itself can most definitely discourage people from fighting and organizing for themselves. A concept generally pushed throughout the book is one that most Americans might find difficult to grasp, prison abolition or decarceration. Davis invites us to ask general questions about our preconceived notions: What makes a person bad? What is crime? Does it make sense to send so many people to prison? Prison is supposed to rehabilitate and make violent offenders less violent, right? According to Angela Davis, prison is an extremely violent place and only perpetuates more violence. People don't go to prison and come out rehabilitated. They usually come out worse. More violent. It is quite the phenomenon that, despite so much evidence, Americans are so wont to adhere to the crisis of mass incarceration. Davis suggests that, to start, we try to reimagine a society without prisons. One of the more polarizing subjects regularly discussed, is that of Assata Shakur. Shakur was recently, after nearly 40 years in Cuban exile, placed on the FBI's Most Wanted Terrorist List. Typical of Davis, she invites the reader to ask questions: Why, after all of these years, was she designated a terrorist? Let alone, one of the top 10 terrorists in the world? What does the word terrorist even mean? As for the question of motive, Davis believes that she could have been added to the list as a threat to the generation of Shakur's grandchildren. The FBI wants to scare and warn young black people against standing up, against considering any kind of revolution. History appears to back Davis on this matter. Black lives have always mattered less in America; specifically, when considered in relation to police or government lives. Police are rarely punished for harming or taking a black life, even when their actions are overwhelmingly reckless or when they blatantly go against police policy. On the other hand, if a black person kills, or is even accused of killing a police officer, they are demonized beyond redemption. In the case of Assata Shakur, one can easily look at the description of the alleged terrorists she is listed with, and realize that she has nothing in common with them. She has been largely dormant, in matters related to America or militancy and has never been convicted of anything related to terrorism. The idea in itself that the FBI can place Assata Shakur such a list is outrageous. It is surprising that more have not spoken

out up to this point. If I could provide friendly critique of *Freedom Is A Constant Struggle*, I would say that the collection of interviews and speeches often left me desiring more from Davis. While mentioning Assata Shakur briefly in several different sections of the book, the information presented is often redundant and repetitive. The same could be said about many of the issues and topics covered in the book. Davis is so adept at interweaving and intersecting so many different ideas and issues, that it often left me desiring more. Perhaps, an extended essay on Assata instead of briefly mentioning her in 4 or 5 different speeches could have more of a lasting impact. Friendly critique aside, Angela Y Davis is legendary in her ability to make all things matter, regardless of who you are.

After all these years, Angela Davis is still a great leader and teacher -- and, after having been on the FBI's most wanted list, it's a miracle she is still alive and doing such great work. I heard her speak in Flint during the Poisoned Water Crisis, and she tied current events to her own history, bringing in today's US struggles around Black Lives Matter and the Palestinian-Israeli anti-apartheid battles. It is powerful to see the intersectionality of our justice work laid out so simply. The book is a collection of short interviews and speeches, but I didn't feel it suffered from that. The format gave me a chance to reflect on each offering before moving on.

*Freedom Is a Constant Struggle, Ferguson, Palestine, and the Foundations of a Movement* by Angela Y. Davis, published in 2016. I first heard of Angela Davis when I was living in California and she was criticized by then Governor Ronald Reagan. This book is a collection of interviews and speeches by Davis. Read it if you want more information about why Colin Kaepernick refused to salute the flag during the playing of our national anthem. I recommend the book. Our prisons are a means of controlling people of color and also a source of profit to the prison-industrial complex. "The global prison-industrial complex is continually expanding as can be seen from the example of G4S\*. Thus, one can assume that its profitability is rising. It has come to include not only public and private prisons (and public prisons, which are more privatized than one would think, are increasingly subject to the demands of profit) but also juvenile facilities, military prisons, and interrogation centers. Moreover, the most profitable sector of the private prison business is composed of immigrant detention centers. One can therefore understand why the most repressive anti-immigrant legislation in the United States was drafted by private prison companies as an undisguised attempt to maximize their profits."\*GS4 operates prisons around the world and is the 2nd or 3rd largest private employer in the world after Walmart.

Davis continues to teach, this time in a collection of interviews and speeches from 2013-2015. What she does well as always, is explain concepts and how they are interrelated. She doesn't talk about Ferguson, prison abolition, or even Dr King in a vacuum but links them in a larger framework of struggle, across people's and continents. She also, maybe more importantly gets the reader to dig deeper, study more, and question more.

Angela Davis continues to inspire me. Like the others, this book does not disappoint. I found myself highlighting every few pages and nodding. I found myself holding back from applauding out loud (While I was on a plane) as she addressed some serious issues we activists are fighting for today. The first book I read of Angela's catapulted me into activism and she continues to build the passion for social change with every book.

As can be expected, Davis delivers! She connects the dots, bringing intersectionality into the international arena. For those frustrated by a seemingly over-focus on domestic policies, or confused about how they connect up to the struggles in other countries, this book is for you. Leave it to her to coin yet another phrase - "the intersectionality of struggles." We need to see how Palestine relates to what occurred in Ferguson (& continues to occur in Black & Brown communities), how war crimes relate to police murder, how imperialism relates to the underdevelopment of poor U.S. communities.

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