Martin Luther King and Angela Davis:
Two Activists in Germany for the Black Civil Rights Movement

The city of Berlin during the Cold War era represents the bulwark of Western democracy, freedom and equality as opposed to the communist creed of the Soviet block; due to its position within the East German territory, the presence of American troops inside West Germany and West Berlin becomes more and more a matter of fact as the two blocks take form during the 1950s. Thus, the choice of Berlin as the only European city where to deliver the social and political messages of King and Davis is not accidental; instead, both of them are highly aware of the international role this place has and also of the political pressure it could put on American foreign policy, especially within Europe.

The visit of Martin Luther King to West and East Berlin in September 1964 is less known despite the relevance it acquires in the framework of the black civil rights protests within Germany; thanks to the collaboration established amongst students and African GIs, this topic spreads throughout the country and in mid-1960s it starts to keep direct contacts with American correspondent organizations. Thus, the presence of King as movement black leader and his message of hope bound to the request of support to Berliners is the first step to the creation of an international brotherhood of men that fights for their rights following the nonviolence ideology. Besides, it is not less important the fact that King delivers the same sermon both in West and East Berlin; in the latter, the audience turns out to be more curious and responsive to King’s message because of the social and political situation within the GDR. In fact, the absence of any official welcome ceremony by it can be seen as a demonstration of the revolutionary impact that King’s visit could have had on East Berliners (but it didn’t).

When Angela Davis visits East Berlin in 1972, the campaign that has been promoted by the GDR for her release is part of East Berliners everyday life. Documentaries, songs on the radio and rallies are used as a political tool to contrast American foreign politics; so, Angela represents the best bail to condemn the social internal situation within the USA and its acceptance of segregation as opposed to the democratic system it exports abroad. As a consequence, the speech she gives is unsurprisingly full of political references to the
proletarian revolution that happened within the Soviet Union and underlines the fact that they became an example to American communists. Moreover, the union they achieved in order to free her represents a great victory since this transnational collaboration will be used to defeat the “Yankee imperialism” as well.

**Photos:** Martin Luther King in West Berlin in 1964 and Angela Davis in East Berlin in 1972

**Quotations**

I am grateful to God that, through the Negro church, the way of nonviolence became an integral part of our struggle. (Martin Luther King, Jr., *Why We Can’t Wait*)

Revolution is a serious matter. When you commit yourself to the fight, it must be forever. (Angela Davis, *Angela Davis: An Autobiography*)

In a real sense we are all one in Christ Jesus, for in Christ there is no East, no West, no North, no South, but one great fellowship of love throughout the whole, wide world. (Martin Luther King, Jr., “East or West – God’s Children”, sermon in Berlin in 1964)

This victory is a lesson for all the people in the world: if the repressed throughout the world band together, then we have the power that will enable us one day to defeat imperialism. (Angela Davis, “Not Only My Victory”, speech in East Berlin in 1972)

**Suggestions for further readings**


The Civil Rights Struggle, African American GIs and Germany Online Digital Archive. “East or West – God’s Children. A Sermon by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr”. The Civil Rights Struggle, African American GIs and Germany.

“Not Only My Victory”, Speech by Angela Davis on September 11, 1972. Berlin – Friedrichstadt-Palast (translated from German by Lenore Bartko)


Rise, Radicalization, Fall and Legacy of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC)

1  Rise

- **February 1960**: Black students hold first lunch counter sit-ins in Greensboro, NC; sit-ins spread throughout the country; a new organization is needed to give the protest more coordination
- **April 15-17, 1960**: SNCC is founded at Raleigh Conference at Shaw University (sponsored by the SCLC and mentored by Ella Baker), first chairman is Marion Barry
- **SNCC** is designed as a nonviolent, direct action organization, mostly sustained by students and with a group-centered leadership
- **May 1961**: SNCC, together with CORE, carries out the first Freedom Rides from Washington, D.C. to Jackson, MS under great personal risk
- In the following years SNCC is engaged in voter registration campaigns in the Deep South
- **August 28, 1963**: March on Washington; by then SNCC has become one of the major civil rights organizations
- **In the summer of 1964**, SNCC is part of the Mississippi Freedom Summer. Thousands of black and white students help to mobilize voters, form Freedom Schools and organize the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP, an alternative to the all-white Democratic Party)

2  Radicalization

- **August 1964**: MFDP fails to present a serious political challenge to the Democratic Party (though the integrated delegation manages to get extensive national attention), a lot of SNCC members are disillusioned and disappointed in the jurisdiction and political decision-making
- **March 1965**: SNCC alienates itself from the SCLC and other mainstream civil rights organizations during the Selma To Montgomery Marches, because SNCC increasingly supports a more militant and uncompromising tactic
- **May 1966**: Stokely Carmichael becomes new chairman and steers SNCC towards the ideology of Black Power. From this turning-point onwards, SNCC radicalizes more and more and gradually abandons nonviolence as a tactic.
- **1966**: SNCC excludes all white members
- **1967**: SNCC is covered by the FBI’s Counterintelligence Program
- **1968**: SNCC changes its name to *Student National Coordinating Committee*

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Fall
- The decline of SNCC already started with its alienation from the mainstream Civil Rights Movement and its radicalization; the actual downfall, however, starts in 1968
- Among the various reasons are: discrepancy of ideology and results, political frustration, influx of members → fragmentation, growing separation from other civil rights organizations, dwindling financial support, expansion of actions from South to North, radicalization and fragmentation because of frustration within SNCC (also parallel to the development of the Civil Rights Movement as a whole)
- **1972:** SNCC simply ceases to exist

Legacy
- **SNCC** played a crucial role in the success of the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s. With its courageous campaigns in the Deep South **SNCC** helped to improve the lives of many Blacks.
- **SNCC** was a role model for the Student Protest all over the world by focusing on nonviolent, direct action.
- **SNCC**’s development in the second half of the 1960s, however, is highly disputable; nevertheless, its achievements outshine its deficits. In honor of its 50th birthday an Anniversary Conference was held at Shaw University and a **SNCC Legacy Project** was created to continue the work of this significant civil rights organization.

Selection of important members
- **Marion Barry:** first chairman of SNCC, later mayor of Washington D.C.
- **Stokely Carmichael:** SNCC chairman 1966-1967, turned SNCC towards Black Power, expelled from SNCC in 1967, became Honorary Prime Minister of the **Black Panther Party**
- **John Lewis:** early activist, Freedom Rider, SNCC chairman 1963-1966; since 1986 member of the US House of Representatives
- **Bob Moses:** SNCC field secretary 1960-1966; nowadays he is engaged in educational projects
- **Diane Nash:** early activist, Freedom Rider and successful organizer in the Civil Rights Movement

Bibliography
- http://www.ibiblio.org/sncc/
- http://america.docuwat.ch/videos/?alternative=2&channel_id=0&skip=0&subpage=video&video_id=122
- http://www.sncc50thanniversary.org/
The Role of Black Women in the Civil Rights Movement

Women were detrimental to the success of the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 60s, but have mostly received only scant attention. Some of them will be introduced on this handout. Many others (including white women who fought for civil rights) will unfortunately have to be left out.

Rosa Louise McCauley Parks "The mother of the freedom movement"1 *1913 ‡ 2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1913</td>
<td>Born in Tuskegee, AL, to James (carpenter) and Leona (teacher) McCauley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1925</td>
<td>Attends Montgomery Industrial School for Girls, Booker T. Washington High School and the laboratory school at Alabama State Teachers College for Negroses → drops out after 10th grade for family reasons (went back to school for her high school degree in 1933)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1926</td>
<td>Joins the African Methodist Episcopal Church which would remain an important part of her life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1932</td>
<td>Marries Raymond Parks, a Montgomery barber</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1944</td>
<td>Starts to work at integrated Maxwell Field Air Base</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1945</td>
<td>Joins NAACP becoming secretary (in 1949 Youth Group Advisor), and the Montgomery Voters League</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955</td>
<td>Attends workshops at Highlander Folk School (HFS) in Monteagle, Tennessee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>Is placed in police custody after having refused to give up her seat to a white man in a bus. This set in motion the Montgomery Bus Boycott, propelling young Martin Luther King Jr. to national fame</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>Looses her job and receives death threats → moves to Detroit with her husband in 1957</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>Staff assistant in the Detroit office of U.S. Representative John Coyer; retires in 1988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977</td>
<td>Founds the Rosa and Raymond Parks Institute for Self-Development (still active today)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>After her death at 92 her casket is placed at the U.S. Capitol’s rotunda for 2 days; flags flown half-staff</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Selected Awards and Honors: Martin Luther King Jr. Award (1980); Presidential Medal of Freedom (1996); Congressional Gold Medal (1999); Rosa Parks Library and Museum (2000); Statue at National Statuary Hall (2005)

Jo Ann Gibson Robinson *1912 ‡ 1992

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1912</td>
<td>Robinson is born as the youngest of twelve children in Culloden, GA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1934</td>
<td>Graduates from Fort Valley State College to become a teacher, marries Wilbur Robinson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949</td>
<td>Recieves an M.A. in English from Atlanta University and works on a doctoral program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>Moves to Montgomery, AL to work at English Department of Alabama State College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955</td>
<td>Joins Dexter Avenue Baptist Church and the Women’s Political Council (WPC; founded in 1946 by Mary Fair Burks) becoming its president in 1951</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>Initiates and sustains the Montgomery Bus Boycott with the WPC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>Resigns from teaching post at Alabama State College, moves to Louisiana to teach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>Moves to Los Angeles to teach at public schools; retires in 1976</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>Dies at 79; has been involved in several women’s organizations in her later years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Septima Poinsette Clark *1898 ‡ 1987

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1908</td>
<td>Born to Peter (born a slave) and Victoria (raised in Haiti) Poinsette in Charleston, SC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1916</td>
<td>Graduates from Avery Institute in Charleston, takes state examination for teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1919</td>
<td>Becomes teacher at Avery Institute, joins the NAACP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>Marries Nerie Clark (sailor), move to Dayton, OH with their two children (one dies)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1925</td>
<td>Nerie dies, Clark moves to Columbia, SC where she remains until 1947</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1935</td>
<td>Sends her son to live with his grandparents for financial reasons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1937</td>
<td>Enrolls at Atlanta University (taking a class by W.E.B. Du Bois) and Columbia University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1942</td>
<td>Receives a B.A. from Benedict College and an M.A. from Hampton Institute (1945)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>Works with Charleston’s YWCA6, attends workshops at HFS, serves as membership chair of NAACP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>Fired as teacher due to affiliation with civil rights → recruited as director of workshops at HFS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>Becomes the SCLC’s7 Director of Education and Training (recruited by Martin Luther King Jr.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>Leaves SCLC but remains active in civil rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>Elected member of the Charleston School Board (that had fired her in 1956)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>Awarded the Living Legacy Award by Jimmy Carter</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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2 National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
5 http://talesfromthelaboratory.typepad.com/.a/6a00d341c62a953e01335f2000a970b-800wi (accessed September 1, 2011).
6 Young Women’s Christian Association
7 Southern Christian Leadership Conference
Ella Josephine Baker  “My theory is, strong people don’t need strong leaders.” 1903 † 1986
1903  Born in Norfolk, VA, to Georgianna (teacher & church worker) and Blake (waiter) Baker
1927  Graduates from Shaw University in Raleigh, NC; moves to New York City to work for NAACP’s newspaper The Crisis and the Negro National News
1930  Helps form Young Negroes Cooperative League, becomes National Director
1935  Director of the Works Progress Administration’s Consumer Education Project (New Deal Program)
1938  Field organizer with NAACP, travels all over the South organizing new chapters
1942  Assistant Field Secretary and National Director of Branches (1943) of the NAACP
1946  Resigns as National Director of Branches, becomes councilor of youth program and president of New York branch of NAACP, works with National Urban League (NUL)
1954  Founds In Friendship with Bayard Rustin and Stanley Levison
1958  Organizes the SCLC’s ‘Crusade for Citizenship’
1960  Helps to found SNCC, leaves SCLC to work for SNCC
1962  Works with Southern Conference Education Fund until 1967
1986  Until her death she remained an activist, e.g. fighting for Angela Davis and against Apartheid

Afro-German activism started off in the 1980s with the so-called Neue Schwarze Bewegung (New Black Movement). Local initiatives were founded under the name of Initiative Schwarze Deutsche (Initiative Black Germans; www.isdonline.de) to make Afro-Germans more visible and protest against Germany’s latent racism. As a result of working on a book (Farbe Bekennen, see bibliography) about Afro-German women, the association ADEFRA (Afrodeutsche Frauen/Afro-German Women; www.adefra.de) was founded in 1986 with the help of African-American activist Audre Lorde.

Selected Bibliography

10 Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee
FEMINIST PEDAGOGY

WHAT IS FEMINIST PEDAGOGY?

“By most accounts, it is a perspective on teaching which is anti-sexist, and anti-hierarchical, and which stresses women's experience, both the suffering our oppression has caused and the strengths we have developed to resist it.” (Fisher, 1981: 20)

It can be defined as:

- result of the application of basic feminist principles to education.
- new theories of feminist pedagogy and development of alternative teaching models.

NEED FOR SOCIAL CHANGE: new strategies for the education of the oppressed

AIMS:

- empowering the self
- building community
- developing leadership

“Not only concerned with gender justice, feminist pedagogy seeks to remove oppressions inherent in the genderedness of all social relations and consequently of all societal institutions and structures.” (Shrewsbury, 1987 in Sandell, 1991: 180-181)

- promotion of student-centered experience, as opposed to teacher-based one

“critical to the education of the oppressed, be they women, minorities or others, it attempts to foster a confirmation of self-knowledge for the knower that is not provided by teaching in the traditional academic style” (Sandell, 1991: 181)

- emphasis on collaboration over competition
- relating problems to each other without categorizing them as inferior or superior

CHANGES AND PROPOSALS:

1. in the subject matter
2. roles teacher-student
3. structure of classes

- a new approach: SELF AS SUBJECT and SELF-AS-INQUIRER (not only to ask question, but to pose them!) (Maher, 1985 in Sandell, 1991: 182)
- Proposal of the **diminishment of the teacher's authority**: theoretical model in which the teacher assumes the role of a **midwife**.

**TEACHERS ASSIST STUDENTS IN DELIVERING THEIR IDEAS TO THE WORLD** (see Socrates' concept of Maieutics) (Belenky et al., 1986: 127 in Sandell, 1991: 181)

- Revision of people's place in society in terms of racism, sexism, oppression, and domination.

Suggestion for further discussions:

Introduction of the concept of **education as an instrument of oppression** vs the problem-posing concept of **education as an instrument of liberation** (see post-colonial approach: the reconstruction of the fragmented self begins with the acknowledgement of principles of personal liberation, critical democracy and social equality, hitherto despised and condemned by the oppressors)

**BIBLIOGRAPHY:**


The Rise of Black Power and the Black Panther Party

1. The Radicalization of the Civil Rights Movement towards Black Power

- the passage of the Civil Rights Act (1964) and the Voting Rights Act (1965) by President Johnson eventually gave legal equality and full Civil Rights to African Americans

- these measures were the major successes of the non-violent Civil Rights Movement, led by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

- but despite these legislative changes, the economic situation of many African Americans remained horrible and the first in a series of race riots broke out in Watts, L. A., only two weeks after the passage of the Civil Rights Act

- many African Americans, especially in the northern ghettos, felt that King’s non-violent approach had not helped to tear down the social and economic walls of racism

> James Meredith was shot on his March against Fear in 1966 and the major Civil Rights Organizations including King’s SCLC and SNCC decided to continue his project

> Stokeley Carmichael, chairman of SNCC, spoke to the gathering crowd after he had been arrested for civil disobedience and called for Black Power

> The slogan Black Power attracted nationwide attention and became a powerful symbol of African American economic, cultural and social independence and self-determination

2. The Black Panther Party for Self-Defense

- Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale founded the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense (BPP) in Oakland, California in 1966

- claiming Malcolm X as major influence, the Panthers promoted their constitutional right to arm themselves in public to protect African American communities from police violence and discrimination

- built on marxist ideology, the BPP valued its militant freedom struggle within the context of revolutionary independence movements all over the world, e. g. in Algeria

- besides their para-militaristic approach, the Panthers also organized social programs in the communities, e. g. the Free Breakfast Program, which offered food and assistance to neglected African American children
- soon after the Panthers had become a nationwide and hotly debated phenomenon, FBI director J. Edgar Hoover declared them to be the “greatest threat to national security”
- he started the counterintelligence program COINTELPRO to destroy the BPP through manipulation and violence, resulting in often deadly confrontations between police and Panthers
- due to these efforts and internal conflicts, the BPP split and lost influence within the Black Nationalist movements in the 1970s and eventually dissolved in 1982
- the BPP has achieved iconic status within American political and popular culture and remains a major signifier of Black Power

3. **The International Impact of the Black Power Movement**

- the appearance, strategies and goals of the *Black Power Movement* exercised strong magnitude on the emerging NEW LEFT in Western Germany
- the main organ of leftist student resistance was the SDS (Sozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund/German Socialist Student League), which was publicly identified with sociology student Rudi Dutschke

> hosted by the SDS, SNCC delegate Dale Smith spoke at the 1968 Vietnam Congress in Berlin and demanded more radical forms of resistance against the US military engagement in Vietnam

- SDS president “KD” Wolff organized the “Black Panther Solidarity Committee” after he had experienced the work and mission of the BPP first-hand during his stay in the US

- the imprisonment of Panther Angela Davis furthermore mobilized the German Student Protest Movement and led to the founding of the “Angela Davis Solidarity Committee”, which sought to raise consciousness about the inherent racist structures of US society

- BUT: the BPP also served as role-model for leftist terrorist organizations like the RAF (Rote Armee Fraktion/Red Army Fraction), which aimed to overthrow the capitalist German State by assassinating its main representatives “Konzept Stadtguerilla”

> **Question:** How did categories of race, class and gender influence and determine the overall enthusiastic perception of *Black Power* within the German Student Protest Movement

**Bibliography:**