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Angela Davis addresses racism

Activist tells students to demand more multicultural programming

By Julie Campagna
Staff Writer

Angela Davis, an internationally recognized author, scholar and human rights activist, arrived late Wednesday night to the University of Maine's Memorial Gym, but the half hour delay was well worth the wait.

Racism, repression and hate-violence were among the major subjects Davis discussed, including the alleged racial attack in February against UMaine students Quester Hannah and Aaron Phillips.

Davis told the audience that UMaine needed to "reverse racism and institutionalized racism, which you confront everyday in classes."

"Everyone has a history. All of us need to know (each other's) history," she said.

"Education should teach about

every people who had a part in developing our country. We must try to demystify this multi-cultural understanding how we all come together. How it effects women - all parallels. We have some serious work to do. We must save the society in which our children's children live together in harmony."

On the subject of the recommended multi-cultural curriculum to President Dale Lick by the UMaine African-American Society, Davis said, "the university has to adopt that for everyone's sake."

She also suggested the UMaine community should demand a multi-cultural curriculum and not just recommend one.

"Don't wait for the door to come to you," she said.

Davis encouraged the audience to take action. "I suggest you seriously think about what you can do as an activist. We're going to have

to change - radicalize."

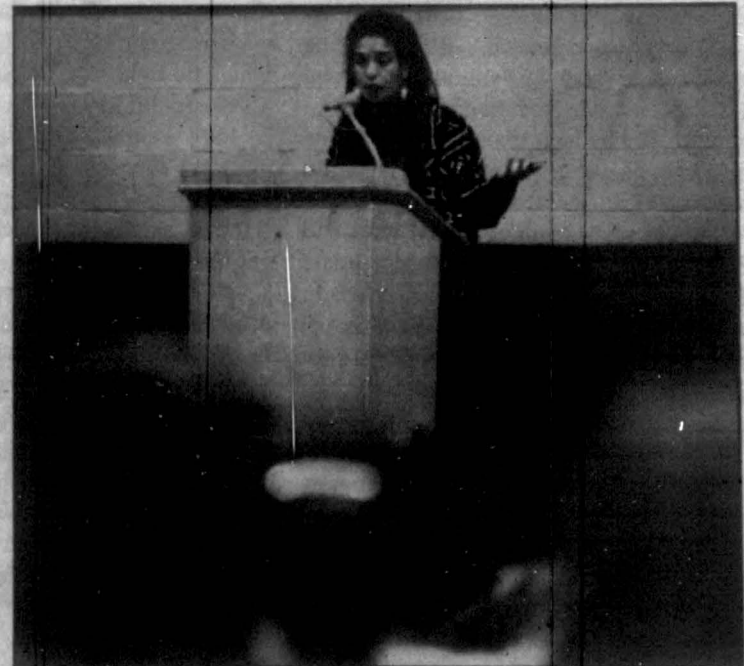
Davis provided her own definition of radical, which she said is "to understand things by the root, by their source."

Davis also addressed the recent brutal beating of Rodney King by members of the Los Angeles Police Department.

"We find it distressing that hate-violence is represented as a new issue - as if racism, which expounded right here in this community a month and a half ago, merged out of a vacuum," said Davis, currently a professor of philosophy and women's studies at San Francisco State University.

Davis referred to the beating of Rodney King by members of the LAPD as horrific and said, "(It) wasn't an aberration, as Daryl Gates (LAPD Police Chief) would have it.

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Angela Davis addresses an audience at UMaine Wednesday. (Photo by John Baer.)

Angela Davis speaks about racism and its effects

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"It frightens me that 30 seconds of videotape can do more to expose the pervasive problem of police violence...than the first-hand violent accounts of thousands and thousands of similar cases of police violence across the country," Davis said.

As a young girl at the age of two, Davis lived on "Dynamite Hill" in Birmingham, Alabama, where her family and other black families lived in fear of racist violence.

"One of the earliest memories I have as a child, was the sound of bombs exploding

across the street from the house in which my family lived," she said. "They were set off by the Ku Klux Klan to run black people out of the neighborhood."

In 1963, the Ku Klux Klan bombed a black church and killed four girls attending Sunday school who were friends of Davis.

In 1968, Davis decided to join the Communist Party, U.S.A. as a means of a "radical solution" to racism and repression.

Due to her affiliation with the communist party, in the late 1960s, Davis was fired

from her position at UCLA by the Board of Regents under Ronald Reagan's governorship, and became the subject of an intense FBI hunt.

In 1970, after two years of making herself "unavailable," Davis came to national attention after being placed on the FBI's Ten Most Wanted List for murder, kidnapping, and conspiracy.

"I was simply another community activist trying to organize our community against racism," Davis said.

After being captured and in jail awaiting trial for 16 months, she was acquitted of all charges.

Davis graduated Magna Cum Laude from Brandeis University, and is a member of Phi Beta Kappa Honor Society at UC San Diego. She is the author of numerous essays and four books.

In 1979, Davis was the recipient of the Lenin Peace Prize from the USSR, and has been nominated twice for the Vice President of the Communist Party in the USA.