

WOMANifesto

MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S CENTER

October, 2016

"The long, long, long lines for voting are not an accident, they're on purpose and your country needs you to overcome with the simple, unexpectedly heroic act of voting."

-Rachel Maddow

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FORWARD
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The 2016 Sexist Olympics

By Loren Thornton

This year's summer Olympics were ripe with sexist news coverage and comments, diminishing the accomplishments and strength of the female athletes participating in the games. These gender disparities arise from a lack of awareness and an overall disregard for women's athletics. When Corey Cogdell-Unrein won the bronze medal in shooting, the *Chicago Tribune* referred to Cogdell-Unrein as "wife of a Bears (as in the NFL team) lineman." Rather than acknowledging her personal triumphs, the network defined her in terms of her husband's fame. Katie Ledecky, a recording-breaking swimmer and winner of four gold medals, was belittled by the press when they said she "swims like a man," as though a woman could not possibly have the skills to swim the way Ledecky does.

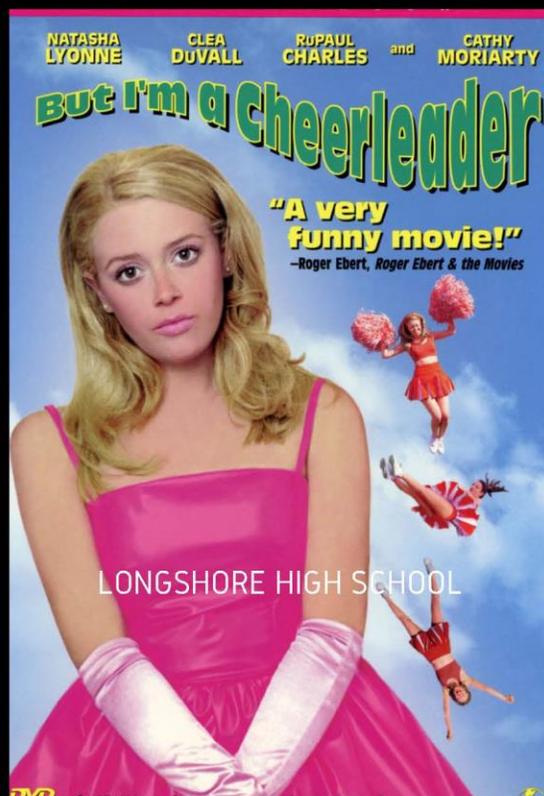
In addition, female competitors in the Olympics are also often defined by their appearance. The Mexican gymnast Alexa Moreno was torn apart on twitter for supposedly being too heavy to compete in the Olympics, ignoring her talent and focusing only on her looks. Fox News hosted a discussion about whether or not female athletes should wear makeup when they compete in order to gain sponsors. One of the men debating the topic, Bo Dietl, offered up this winning question: "Would you put money behind a gal that won the gold medal that looks like a washed out rag?" A Korean newspaper wrote a story on how difficult it would be for the incredible Korean volleyball Olympian Kim Yeon-Koung to get a boyfriend due to her height, completely ignoring her sport and her notable achievements.

Male athletes competing in the Olympics are rarely described or demarcated by anything outside of their strength and skill. As is true in almost every field (politics, business, and certainly in the film industry), women are subjected to criticism and judged by a variety of criteria that by no means defines their Olympic achievements or their athleticism. Much of the coverage of this year's Olympics diminished the female competitors' status as athletes, and made the competition a gossipy reality show rather than a treasured athletic event. The constant criticism of women and our appearance is offensive, demeaning and, in the long run, can lead to problems of self-esteem, inadequate performance, and in worse case scenarios, depression. The lack of appreciation for women's skills and abilities above and beyond our physical appearance is an ongoing battle that we obviously still need to fight.

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AN LGBTQ HISTORY MONTH FILM EVENT

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WHEN 5:30 P.M. WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 12TH
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STUDENT SUPPORT, QSA, THE DIVERSITY
AWARENESS OFFICE, AND THE F-WORD

Angela Davis: The Black Radical Tradition Today

Loren Thornton

Dr. Angela Davis's views on democracy, freedom and the black radical tradition altered my perception of how the past has shaped our country and the wider world today. She focused on ways in which our laws, our economy, our society, and virtually all aspects of our lives, have developed from the largely unacknowledged underpinnings of racism and sexism. Her argument effectively tied today's gender and race issues to those that shaped the colonies over two hundred years ago.

I began to examine my preconceptions about capitalism when Dr. Davis pointed out that it was slave labor that originally built the economic system that we still have today in the United States: an economic system that is silently sustained by sweatshops and other grossly inequitable forms of labor. Dr. Davis's emphasis on intersectionality especially interested me, for although she stressed the importance of the connection between issues of race and gender, she also included a variety of problematic issues integral to these ethical struggles, including the environment, Indigenous rights, and the death penalty, to mention but a few.

Her perspective resonated with me because it is common for people to view an issue within a narrow scope and to disregard its link with a myriad of other problems. We often feel isolated from others when fighting for a cause, when, in reality, our causes are interwoven. Dr. Davis demonstrated these inter-relationships when she addressed Black Lives Matter. She claimed that this is not an exclusively racial movement but rather one that embraces all of humanity. She used as an example how the empty phrase "all men are created equal" did not historically even truly include all white men. Black Lives Matter, she argued, is a way to look through the eyes of an oppressed people and in so doing, improve all of society. Dr. Davis's talk strove to get her audience to critically examine our assumptions and to appreciate the true interconnectedness of the problems facing modern society.

Angela Davis and Freedom

Betsy Danforth

Angela Davis is a constant source of inspiration. As a kid, I remember older siblings discussing her "radical" ideas (luckily, in my family, admiringly)—I also remember the "Free Sister Angela" poster up on my brother's bedroom wall. When the Women's Center had the opportunity to co-sponsor a lecture by Davis in Bozeman, I was thrilled about the prospect of hearing her speak and learning from her. I most certainly was not disappointed!

Angela exudes confidence, wisdom, hope, and peace. The incredible richness of her life experience and the immense challenges she has overcome, combined with an uncanny ability for critical thought, insight, and imagination, have led her to the belief that borders of every kind are exceedingly problematic and destructive to human nature. This philosophy which most likely first found its roots in Marxist socialism, the Black Civil Rights movement, and other more radical traditions, has led Davis to her current work on prison abolishment.

Her discourse focusing on the multitude of difficulties that we as individuals and societies face (racism, classism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, etc.) is, at first, overwhelming to the point of being discouraging. But something about her inner peace, intellect, thoughtful consideration, undying optimism, and many accomplishments make progressive and lasting change seem not only necessary, but also possible. She recognizes that progressive transformation begins in the home, slowly moves out to communities, and then, ideally, to the world at large. Her message echoes Dr. Martin Luther King's quote: "*no one is free until we are all free,*" and indeed, she prescribes to the adage that the individual's freedom is meaningless without a completely free community. Her search for the definition and meaning of the term "freedom" is ongoing, but she notes that, as Nelson Mandela said, "To be free is not merely to cast off one's chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others."

Dr. Davis's vision for the world is indeed, revolutionary, but her inclusive and comprehensive ideals draw a wonderful image of a world free from oppression, hate, and judgement. I believe this world is something we should all strive towards.

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Angela Davis and Voting Andrea Lawrence

With Bernie Sanders no longer in the running for President after Secretary Clinton's Democratic Primary victory, today's young voters have found it difficult to choose between Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump. I think it is easy to see the weaknesses of each candidate which perhaps makes this election more stressful. As a result many people are suggesting that they may choose not to vote at all. Why have so many lost hope in our government? What can we do to help restore that hope and get our friends to the polls?

Dr. Angela Davis answered these questions eloquently at her inspiring and thoughtful lecture last week at the Emerson Cultural Center. When a member of the audience explained that she has many friends who are idealist and rather disillusioned, she then posed the following question: "What can I say to encourage them to go to the polls?" Dr. Davis explained that she has never been registered as a member of any political party and feels that: "the electoral arena is not the best place to exercise one's radical liberties." Instead, the polls can be viewed as a place to vote for the candidate who will keep us safe. She suggested that we not focus on voting for the "best" candidate or the candidate who promises to bring us the most "change" but, instead, to vote for the candidate who "will allow us to create a more capacious space for the exercise of our radical proclivities in the organizing of massive movements." Dr. Davis strongly believes that the government is not about each individual, it is about making the U.S. a safe place, especially for our youth. Hopefully, they will "write themselves into the history books" as a generation that can finally say "we have reached the root of the problem".

Nothing Dr. Davis discussed was irrelevant to contemporary society; the same battles she fought in the late 1950s and 60s are still struggles today. She specifically addressed modern systemic racism, which was not widely talked about until recently. Angela Davis inspired me to be an active voice in the conversations about racism and feminism. I think she would agree that the important issues behind revolutionary movements, like the Civil Rights Movement, can only be solved through discussion and compromise.

Updates from F-Word

The F-Word feminist club at MSU, is in its fourth year and is bigger and more spirited than ever! We meet every Tuesday at 7pm in the SUB room 235. Our meetings typically focus on a topic one member chooses to present to the group (for about 15 minutes), and we follow that up with a discussion. The floor is open to everyone--whether you are a freshman or a graduate student, and whether you want to talk about LGBT, racial, religious, social justice, or gender issues. The club members practice intersectional feminism and welcome all discussion. Members also have the option to just come and listen if that is more your style. The F-Word is a safe space to talk, explore, and learn about a wide variety of social justice issues with open minded people.

One event that F-Word is co-sponsoring in the near future is the upcoming **LGBTQ Film Event on Wednesday, October 12th at 5:30 p.m. in the SUB Procrastinator Theater.** We are joining the LGBTQ Student Support program, the Women's Center, and the Diversity Awareness Office to screen **two films focusing on different lesbian experiences: *Pariah* (2011), and *But I'm a Cheerleader* (1999)—join us for movie fun and free snacks!** A future event we are planning, and will co-sponsor with Students for Choice, is a 'Silent Disco' on campus. We will host a variety of information booths to help educate people about various feminist issues and to raise awareness about local politics and policies that effect reproductive justice.

There are many ways to get involved with the F-Word, whether you want to help out with just one event that interests you, or if you want to become a weekly member! Email the F-Word at msufword@gmail.com if you want to learn more or get on our email list.

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A Big Thank You to Our 2016 Donors!

Thank you all so much for your donations to our "34 Dollars for 34 Years" campaign. We are truly overwhelmed by the generous support shown by all our friends. It warms our hearts to know that you are out there rooting for the Women's Center! With your generosity, we have raised over \$1,100 towards new library resources, programming, and educational efforts!

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