



FREE ANGELA

And All Political Prisoners

Dossier pédagogique **Anglais**

CRÉDITS DU DOSSIER

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INTRODUCTION

Free Angela and All Political Prisoners suit la vie d'Angela Davis de son enfance jusqu'à 1972, après son acquittement pour les chefs d'accusation de meurtre, terrorisme et enlèvement. Née en Alabama et élève brillante, Angela fuit le Sud grâce à une bourse scolaire et après de brillantes études de philosophie, se rapproche des mouvements civiques, féministes et communistes américains. Proche du parti des Black Panthers, Angela Davis s'investit dans le comité de soutien aux Frères de Soledad, trois prisonniers noirs américains accusés d'avoir assassiné un gardien de prison en représailles du meurtre d'un de leur codétenu.

Devenue un symbole de la lutte contre toutes les formes d'oppression : raciale, politique, sociale et sexuelle, Angela Davis incarne, dans les années 70, le "Power to the People". Avec sa coupe de cheveux "boule" et sa superbe silhouette, elle lancera, malgré elle, la mode "afro", reprise à cette époque par des millions de jeunes gens.

Quarante ans plus tard, à l'occasion de l'anniversaire de l'acquittement d'Angela, la réalisatrice Shola Lynch revient sur cette période cruciale de la deuxième partie du XX^e siècle. Des images d'archive sont savamment mélangées à des interviews des principaux protagonistes, et notamment d'Angela elle-même, qui lève une partie du voile sur les événements de cette époque. L'approche documentaire recherchée est, tout en suivant la chronologie, d'éclairer certaines zones d'ombre.

Ce documentaire, tout en permettant de découvrir la contre culture américaine des années 60 et 70, s'inscrit parfaitement dans les programmes du Secondaire (Lieux & Formes de Pouvoir et Mythes & Héros au cycle terminal ; Mémoire et Lien Social en Seconde ; repérer et donner des informations sur une personne, repérer l'implicite en 3^e).

DANS LES PROGRAMMES

Enseignement	Niveau	Dans les programmes
■ Anglais	Tous niveaux	La contre-culture américaine et la résistance à l' <i>Establishment</i>
	4 ^{ème} / 3 ^{ème}	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Description physique - Repérer et donner des informations sur une personne - Travail sur l'implicite (motivations des personnages, non dits)
	Seconde	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mémoire - Lien social
	1 ^{ère} / Terminale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lieux et formes de pouvoir - Mythes et héros



Free Angela and All Political Prisoners

Un film de Shola Lynch

Genre : documentaire

Année : 2013

Langue : Anglais

Pays : États-Unis

Durée : 97 minutes

Distribution France : Jour2Fête

Production : De Films en Aiguille (France) / Realside Production (Etats-Unis)

Synopsis :

Free Angela and All Political Prisoners raconte l'histoire d'une jeune professeure de philosophie, née en Alabama, issue d'une famille d'intellectuels afro-américains, politiquement engagée. Profondément marquée par son expérience du racisme, des humiliations de la ségrégation raciale et du climat de violence qui règne autour d'elle, elle obtient une bourse d'excellence qui lui permet d'aller étudier dans le nord et donc d'éviter les émeutes raciales des années 60. Diplôme en poche, elle part étudier la philosophie à l'université en Allemagne, d'où elle revient sympathisante du parti communiste.

De retour aux États-Unis, elle obtient un poste à l'université de Californie. Mais ses positions féministes, son appartenance au club communiste Che Lumumba et sa proximité avec le parti des Black Panthers lui font rapidement perdre son poste, notamment sous la pression du gouverneur républicain Ronald Reagan.

Accusée en 1970 d'avoir aidé une tentative d'évasion de prisonniers noirs injustement accusés d'un crime lors de leur incarcération et une prise d'otage qui se soldera par la mort d'un juge californien et de quatre détenus, Edgar J. Hoover la place sur la liste des criminels les plus recherchés des États-Unis, alors que le président Nixon dit qu'elle est une dangereuse terroriste.

Finalement arrêtée après une longue cavale, emprisonnée et jugée, elle sera acquittée, notamment sous la pression des comités de soutien internationaux dont le slogan est " **FREE ANGELA !** "

ACTIVITÉ 1

TIMELINE

Free Angela
Un film de Shola Lynch
2013



I/ Take notes and recreate a timeline of Angela Davis's life and of the events described in the documentary

Note au professeur : Afin de ne pas noyer les élèves sous les informations, on pourra se limiter, pour cette frise chronologique, à l'acte I.

II/ Now write a short biography using connecting words (first, then, so, after that, however, finally, in the meantime, while + ING, etc.) and the passive voice when necessary.

Rappel : la voix passive

A l'actif, le sujet effectue l'action; au passif, il la subit. La construction se fait comme en français: le verbe lexical de l'actif devient un participe passé au passif, et l'auxiliaire ETRE/BE du passif est conjugué au même temps que le verbe lexical de l'actif.

Le sujet de la voix active devient complément d'agent au passif, introduit par *by*, et il peut être oublié dans certains cas.

Ex: *The police arrested the criminal last night.* > *He was arrested last night.*

The cat will chase the mouse. > *The mouse will be eaten by the cat.*

Note au professeur : La trace écrite proviendra des élèves, en reprenant les éléments donnés en corrigé à l'exercice précédent

ACTIVITÉ 2

COUNTERCULTURE AND THE ESTABLISHMENT

Free Angela
Un film de Shola Lynch
2013



Here is the opening paragraph of Wikipedia's entry on "the counterculture of the 1960s":

"The counterculture of the 1960s was a cultural phenomenon that developed first in the United States and United Kingdom and spread throughout much of the Western world between the early 1960s and the early 1970s. The movement gained momentum during the U.S. government's extensive military intervention in Vietnam. As the 1960s progressed, widespread tensions developed in American society that tended to flow along generational lines regarding the war in Vietnam, race relations, human sexuality, women's rights, traditional modes of authority, experimentation with psychoactive drugs, and differing interpretations of the American Dream. New cultural forms emerged, including the pop music of the British band The Beatles and the concurrent rise of hippie culture, which led to the rapid evolution of a youth subculture that emphasized change and experimentation."

I/ As you watch the film, pick out elements (people, places, events, dates, quotations, etc.) that fit either the description of this counterculture or of the Establishment (the "traditional mode of authority" they were rebelling against), and organize them in the following grid.

Counterculture	The Establishment

What can you conclude about Angela Davis's role in this counterculture?

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ACTIVITÉ 2

COUNTERCULTURE AND THE ESTABLISHMENT

Free Angela
Un film de Shola Lynch
2013



Explain and contrast how she was seen by the Establishment, by the youth of America, and by the world.

Rappel : exprimer la similarité et le contraste

Similarité: Both + V / Both of + pronom / Neither + V / Neither of + pronom / A thinks this, and so does B / A doesn't think this, and neither does B / Similarly, ... / Likewise, ... / In the same way, ... / etc.

Contraste: On the one hand,... - On the other hand, ... / However, ... / On the contrary, / Contrary to A, B ... / Unlike A, B ... / A thinks this, whereas B thinks that / A does this, while B thinks that / etc.

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ACTIVITÉ 2

COUNTERCULTURE AND THE ESTABLISHMENT

Free Angela
Un film de Shola Lynch
2013



II/ Official vs. Off the Record

- Angela Davis was officially fired from her teaching job on account of her *"inflammatory language"* on four occasions during speeches made on campus. She had notably called the police *"pigs"*.

What was the real reason according to you?

Rappel: donner son avis

To my mind, ... / In my opinion, ... / As far as I'm concerned, ... / I can't help but feel that... / All things considered, / To put it in a nutshell, ... / I strongly believe that ... / I would say that ... / It might be true that..., but... / etc.

- You heard during the commentary that President Nixon famously congratulated the FBI on the *"capture of the dangerous terrorist, Angela Davis"* in 1970.

Then in a secret recording at the White House after her acquittal in 1972, he said the following to his secretary:

Nixon: What the hell do you think of getting Angela Davis off?

Rosemary Woods: I think it's so disgraceful. And then the jurors, they partied together with them. Dancing and having a big time together 'cause she got freed. It's just unbelievable.

Nixon: You know damn well, she's guilty as hell. She bought the gun, everything.

Rosemary: Terrible. And what a miscarriage of justice.

Nixon: True, true."

ACTIVITÉ 2

COUNTERCULTURE AND THE ESTABLISHMENT

Free Angela
Un film de Shola Lynch
2013



In your opinion, what reason(s) did he have for calling her a “*dangerous terrorist*” at the time of her arrest?

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Then, in 1972, what do you think of his assessment that she was “*guilty as hell*”?

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ACTIVITÉ 3

A POLITICAL PRISONER?

Free Angela
Un film de Shola Lynch
2013



I/ The Black Panther party & the Che Lumumba club

FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover called the Black Panthers *"the greatest threat to the internal security of the country"*, and he supervised an extensive program (COINTELPRO) of surveillance, infiltration, perjury, police harassment, assassination, and many other tactics to bring them down. Vice President Agnew has called the Panthers a *"completely irresponsible anarchistic group of criminals."*

Can you remember elements from the film to illustrate this?

From what you have seen in the documentary, do you think his assessment was justified?

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ACTIVITÉ 3

A POLITICAL PRISONER?

Free Angela
Un film de Shola Lynch
2013



II/ Here is the 10-point political program of the Black Panther party

1	We Want Freedom. We Want Power To Determine The Destiny Of Our Black Community.
2	We Want Full Employment For Our People. We believe (...) the means of production should be taken from the businessmen and placed in the community.
3	We Want An End To The Robbery By The Capitalists Of Our Black Community.
4	We Want Decent Housing Fit For The Shelter Of Human Beings.
5	We Want Education For Our People That Exposes The True Nature Of This Decadent American Society. We Want Education That Teaches Us Our True History And Our Role In The Present-Day Society.
6	We Want All Black Men To Be Exempt From Military Service. We will not fight and kill other people of color in the world who (...) are being victimized by the White racist government of America. We will protect ourselves from the force and violence of the racist police and the racist military, by whatever means necessary.
7	We Want An Immediate End To Police Brutality And Murder Of Black People. The Second Amendment to the Constitution of the United States gives a right to bear arms. We therefore believe that all Black people should arm themselves for self-defense.
8	We Want Freedom For All Black Men Held In Federal, State, County And City Prisons And Jails. We believe that all Black people should be released (...) because they have not received a fair and impartial trial.
9	We Want All Black People When Brought To Trial To Be Tried In Court By A Jury Of Their Peer Group Or People From Their Black Communities, As Defined By The Constitution Of The United States.
10	We Want Land, Bread, Housing, Education, Clothing, Justice And Peace.

ACTIVITÉ 3

A POLITICAL PRISONER?

Free Angela
Un film de Shola Lynch
2013



Pick out and classify the ideas of the Black Panthers according to how they account for Hoover's opinion.

A reasonable political party	"the greatest threat to the internal security of the country"

To your mind, was Hoover right?

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ACTIVITÉ 3

A POLITICAL PRISONER?

Free Angela
Un film de Shola Lynch
2013



III/ An American Revolution?

The last paragraph of the Black Panther party's program is identical to the first paragraph of the American Declaration of Independence of 1776.

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

That, to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed; that, whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or abolish it, and to institute a new government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and, accordingly, all experience hath shown that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But, when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same object, evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such government, and to provide new guards for their future security."

Go to http://americanhistory.about.com/od/declarationofindependence/a/declaration_sg.htm to find out more about the Declaration of Independence and its historical context.

According to you, in what way were the Black Panthers right to reproduce this extract word for word? Show the similarities and contrasts of the two cases.

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ACTIVITÉ 3

A POLITICAL PRISONER?

Free Angela
Un film de Shola Lynch
2013



IV/ From what you have just studied, during her time in prison, was Angela Davis a criminal awaiting her trial or a political prisoner?

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ACTIVITÉ 4

STORYTELLING / THE MAKING OF AN ICON

Free Angela

Un film de Shola Lynch
2013



According to Christian Salmon, storytelling is a marketing method applied to the news and to politics, in order to standardize and manipulate people's reactions, by blurring the distinction between fiction and reality and by appealing to the public's emotions.

Note au professeur : Pour sa culture personnelle, on pourra se référer à une publicité électorale, Ashley's Story, utilisée lors de la campagne de réélection de George W. Bush en 2004. D'un coup de 6,5 millions de dollars, cette publicité où Bush apparaît comme un Messie, un ange descendu du ciel pour amener paix et guérison, montre à quel point la frontière entre fiction et réalité est effacée afin de provoquer une réaction émotionnelle et non réfléchie chez les électeurs. (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LWA052-BI48>.)

I/ The Good Girl Gone Bad

In the documentary, we hear Fania Davis, Angela's sister, say "I don't see in her life the makings of a personal tragedy, of a good girl gone wrong." Indeed, the media were trying to force this image of the "good girl gone bad", of a woman who had had a proper education but whom a tragic event traumatized, as this *Life* cover illustrates:



Using your knowledge of Angela's biography, comment on the use of this concept to explain the events before and after the Marin County Court incident.

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II/ The Woman in Love

Once this image of the “good girl gone bad” used by the media didn’t prove relevant, the justice system went another way to explain her behavior and convict her.

Coleman: The prosecutor, Mr. Harris, believed he had a case, and I think the most powerful item that he had were what were referred to as “the letters”. Angela had written letters to George when he was still in Soledad Prison.

Angela: Those letters which were very passionate and very emotional and all about love, but struggle and revolution, it was all entangled, but he wanted to use this as the primary evidence of my guilt.

Here is a letter that was read in court :

“I, your wife, your comrade who’s supposed to love you, fight with you, fight for you. I’m supposed to rip off the chains. I’m supposed to fight your enemies with my body, but I am helpless, powerless. I contain the rage inside. As I re-experience this now, my pulse beats faster. I begin to breathe harder and I see myself tearing down this steel door, fighting my way to you, ripping down your cell door and letting you go free. I feel as you do, so terribly is this love.”

ACTIVITÉ 4

STORYTELLING / THE MAKING OF AN ICON

Free Angela

Un film de Shola Lynch

2013



Here is a copy of an article published in the *Spartanburg Herald* on April 25, 1972:

The defense fought bitterly not to have these letters read in court.

In a "Dear George" letter written June 22, 1970, and intercepted in Jackson's mail at Soledad prison, Miss Davis wrote:

"Since that day described to you, my life, all my life's efforts have gone in one direction—Free George Jackson, Free the Soledad Brothers.

"Man, I have gotten into a lot of trouble but I don't give a damn. I love you. I love my people. That is all that matters—liberation by any means necessary. Those means are determined by the nature and intensity of the enemy's response.

"The American oppressor has revealed to us what we must do if we are serious about our commitment. If I am serious about my love for you, about black people, I should be ready to go all the way. I am." The letter was signed "I love you. Hasta la victoria—until victory. Angela."

In both letters, pick out words and phrases justifying the inclusion of these personal love letters as evidence in her trial.

Do you think describing her as a woman passionately in love, ready to do anything to save her man, was accurate or another example of storytelling?

Using your knowledge of Angela's biography, comment on the use of this concept to explain the events before and after the Marin County Court incident.

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ACTIVITÉ 4

STORYTELLING / THE MAKING OF AN ICON

Free Angela

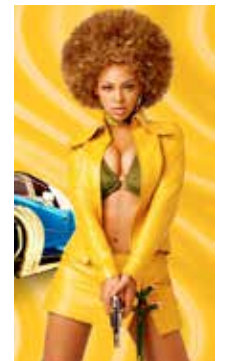
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2013



III/ the Icon/Pin-Up

1/ However, Angela Davis also rapidly became an icon, the symbol of a generation. Just like Che Guevara before her, her image has been used in many ways. Becoming an icon is another form of storytelling: we move away from reality and into fiction, to tell a more convenient "truth"...



Beyoncé as Foxy Cleopatra
in *Austin Powers 3*

ACTIVITÉ 4

STORYTELLING / THE MAKING OF AN ICON

Free Angela
Un film de Shola Lynch
2013



Both Ernesto Guevara and Angela Davis were anti-Capitalist, Marxist revolutionaries. How has their image been used? <
What do you think of this evolution?

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ACTIVITÉ 4

STORYTELLING / THE MAKING OF AN ICON

Free Angela
Un film de Shola Lynch
2013



2/ Her cause was also defended in famous songs by John Lennon (*Angela*) and the Rolling Stones (*Sweet Black Angel*).

Note au professeur : Après une première écoute des deux chansons où on demandera aux élèves de relever les mots clés et de donner leur impression, on divisera la classe en groupes, certains avec le texte de John Lennon, d'autres avec celui des Rolling Stones.

Using what we have seen so far, analyze the lyrics of the following song. Pay particular attention to the themes of the counterculture vs. the Establishment, of political prisoners and of storytelling.



Angela
John Lennon & the Ono Plastic Band
(J. Lennon/Y. Ono)
(1972)

Angela, they put you in prison.
Angela, they shot down your man.
Angela, you're one of the millions
Of political prisoners in the world.

Sister, there's wind that never dies,
Sister, we're breathing together,
Sister, our loves and hopes forever
Keep on moving oh so slowly in the world.

Angela, can you hear the earth is turning?
Angela, the world watches you.
Angela, you soon will be returning
To your sisters and brothers of the world.

Sister, you're still a people teacher.
Sister, your word reaches far.
Sister, there's a million different races,
But we all share the same future in the world.

They gave you sunshine,
They gave you sea,
They gave you everything but the jailhouse key.
They gave you coffee,
They gave you tea,
They gave you everything but equality.

ACTIVITÉ 4

STORYTELLING / THE MAKING OF AN ICON

Free Angela

Un film de Shola Lynch
2013



Sweet Black Angel,
The Rolling Stones
(M. Jagger/K. Richards)
(1972)

Got a sweet black angel,
Got a pin up girl.
Got a sweet black angel,
Up upon my wall.

Well, she ain't no singer,
And she ain't no star.
But she sure talk good,
And she move so fast.

But the gal in danger,
Yeah, the gal in chains,
But she keep on pushing,
Would you take her place?

She counting up the minutes,
She counting up the days,
She's a sweet black angel (wooo),
Not a sweet black slave.

Ten little niggers
Sitting on the wall,
Her brothers been a-falling,
Falling one by one.

For a judge they murdered,
And a judge they stole.
Now the judge he's gonna judge her,
For all that he's worth.

Well the gal in danger,
The gal in chains,
But she keep on pushing
Would you do the same?

She counting up the minutes,
She counting up the days,
She's a sweet black angel,
Not a gun-toting teacher,
Not a Red-loving school mom,
Ain't someone gonna free her,
Free the sweet black slave,
Free the sweet black slave.

ACTIVITÉ 5

FINAL TASK

Free Angela
Un film de Shola Lynch
2013



I/ EXPRESSION ECRITE ET/OU ORALE EN CONTINU : Prepare an oral presentation of another political prisoner (Nelson Mandela, Solzhenitsyn, Aung San Suu Kyi, Gandhi, the Pussy Riot, Eugene Debs, Padraig Wilson, etc.).

II/ EXPRESSION ORALE EN CONTINU : Recreate the missing closing arguments during Angela Davis's trial. You can choose to either play her lawyer or the prosecution.

Rappel

Les auxiliaires modaux ont deux valeurs: une valeur radicale (*I couldn't remember the answer, You must do your homework, She should exercise more*) et une valeur épistémique qui sert à exprimer la certitude et à faire des prédictions.

Numérote les phrases suivantes contenant un modal épistémique de la certitude la plus forte (1) à la moins forte (7).

He should be home at 8pm.

They will watch TV tonight.

We may go to Thailand next summer.

It can't be happening!

It might rain this weekend.

You must be joking!

He could be sick.

La certitude au passé

Un auxiliaire modal étant toujours suivi d'une base verbale, pour exprimer la certitude au passé, la construction à utiliser est la suivante: auxiliaire modal + have + participe passé du verbe lexical.

Ex : *He could have been sick. We may have gone to Thailand last summer.*

ACTIVITÉ 5

FINAL TASK

Free Angela
Un film de Shola Lynch
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III/ EXPRESSION ORALE EN INTERACTION : The safety and wealth of the majority matters more than the rights of a minority. Discuss.

Note au professeur : On pourra découper la classe en trois groupes : le gouvernement, des représentants de "minorités" (femmes, minorités raciales, militants LGBT, etc.) et des chefs d'entreprises, par exemple.

IV/ EXPRESSION ECRITE : During the commentary, Angela Davis was said to be motivated in turn by love, by race, by gender, and by political ideas. In your opinion, which of these can prove the strongest motivation?