

Media Coverage, [1994]

**Black Women in the  
Academy:  
Defending Our Name  
1894-1994**

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**Media Coverage**

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**January 13-15, 1994  
Massachusetts Institute of  
Technology**

# **Black Women in the Academy: Defending Our Name 1894-1994**

## **Media Coverage**

Over 50 members of the media from across the U.S. attended the conference.  
Media outlets included:

**Afterimage  
Associated Press  
Bay State Banner  
Black Issues in Higher Education  
Boston Globe  
Boston Herald  
Boston Neighborhood Network  
Cambridge Chronicle  
Chronicle of Higher Education  
Dorchester Community News  
IN Newsweekly  
Ms. Magazine  
NBC Network  
New England Cable News  
News and Notes, Newton Theological School  
Pacifica Radio Network  
Patriot Ledger  
Resist, Inc.  
San Francisco Sun-Reporter  
SDSU  
Sojourner  
The Black Scholar  
Vogue  
WBUR  
WBZ-TV, Ch. 4  
WCVB-TV, Ch. 5  
WGBH Radio  
WGBH-TV, Ch. 2  
WMBR Radio  
WNET-TV, New York  
WYBC Radio, New Haven**

Following is the media coverage that we have record of as of 2/4/94:

## Pre-Conference Coverage

11/10 MIT Tech Talk	Forum on black women in the academy
12/93 Sojourner	Black Women in the Academy: Defending Our Name 1894-1994
1/5 MIT Tech Talk	National conference at MIT focuses on black women academics
1/9 Boston Globe	African-American women convene
1/9 Boston Globe	Life as a female gentleman
1/11 The Tab	Guinier to head MIT conference
1/12 WBUR	Radio brief at 6:29 and 7:70 a.m.
1/12 Boston Globe	National forum at MIT to focus on black women in academics
1/12 MIT Tech Talk	Black women's conference draws large registration, 1500 expected
1/12 WFXT-TV25	Brief story
1/12 The Tech	Conference for black women to be held at MIT
1/13 Cambridge Chronicle	Lani Guinier comes to MIT

\* Broadcast coverage not included

## Coverage During Conference

1/13	WBUR	Guinier's 1st public appearance at conference sponsored by MIT, Radcliffe and Wellesley at 5:07 and 6:30 p.m.
1/14	WHDH 850	40 second story
1/14	Boston Herald	Black women in academe: their time has come
1/14	Boston Herald	Guinier slams Clinton for lacking leadership
1/14	Boston Globe	Guinier cites vacancy of key civil rights post
1/14	Associated Press	Story on conference with Guinier speaking **
1/14	Cape Cod Times	Guinier addresses MIT conference (AP)
1/14	WBUR	Guinier talks about Clinton at MIT 6:00 a.m. and 7:30 a.m. brief
1/14	WFCR, Amherst	Guinier spoke at MIT at 7 a.m.
1/15	Boston Globe	Black women scholars seize chance to share notes

\* Broadcast coverage not included

\*\* not able to secure article

## Post-Conference Coverage

1/17	WGBH--TV The Group	Interview with several organizers, participants and speakers
1/19	The Tech	Guinier speaks to Kresge crowd
1/19	The Tech	Davis discusses issues concerning black women
1/20	Bay State Banner	Black women demand inclusion in academia
1/20	Bay Windows	Black lesbians in academe speak Jan. 15 at conference
1/20	Cambridge Chronicle	Black women scholars call for change at MIT conference
1/?	Inner City New Haven paper	article on conference **
1/26	Chronicle of Higher Education	COVER STORY Black Women in Academe, More than 2,000 gather for what one says could be 'the event of the century'
1/26	Boston Globe	Letter to the Editor--Globe's coverage of meeting was superb
1/26	MIT Tech Talk	Black Women Send Appeal to Clinton
1/27	Bay State Banner	Choose issues carefully, Angela Davis advises
1/30	IN Newsweekly	COVER STORY Angela Davis upfront at MIT, addresses sexuality, race and class at MIT conference
2/94	Sojourner	photos of conference
2/2	The Thistle	Black Women in the Academy: Identity, Community, and Mission

\* Broadcast coverage not included

\*\* not able to secure article

## Upcoming:

Jet	February 14
Black Issues in Higher Education	February
The Black Scholar	March
Afterimage	March or April
Vogue	May

## Possible:

US News and World Report

MS Magazine

Sojourner (may run speeches in March edition)



**CENTURY LANDMARK**—Evelynn M. Hammonds, assistant professor in the Program in Science, Technology and Society, and Robin W. Kilson, assistant professor of history, are the organizers of "Black Women in the Academy: Defending Our Name, 1894-1994," a national conference to be held January 13-15, 1994, at MIT. See story on page 5. Photo by Donna Coveney

**COMING IN JANUARY**

## Forum on Black Women in Academy

A major, three-day conference at MIT in January, "Black Women in the Academy: Defending Our Name, 1894-1994," is expected to bring more than 1,000 participants to the campus for discussions on concerns central to the lives of black women, inside and outside of the academy.

The keynote speakers, all nationally known, are:

Professor Lani Guinier of the University of Pennsylvania Law School, proposed by President Clinton, but later withdrawn, to head the Civil Rights Division of the Justice Department.

Dr. Johnnetta Cole, president of Spelman College.

Professor Angela Davis of the University of California, Santa Cruz.

The January 13-15 conference is being organized by two MIT faculty members, Professor Robin Kilson, who teaches women's studies and African-American history, and Professor

Evelynn Hammonds of the Program in Science, Technology and Society, where she teaches the history of science and medicine and women's studies.

MIT President Charles M. Vest, a member of the conference advisory committee, said the Institute "is proud to host this important endeavor whose influence promises to extend far beyond the conference itself." He said the publication of papers and proceedings, the networking opportunities provided by the conference, and the mentoring opportunities for graduate and undergraduate students will combine to give impetus to the important issues addressed at the conference.

Professors Kilson and Hammonds said the conference will present a unique opportunity to address historical and contemporary issues facing black women in the academy and "to examine the role of black women scholars in public life."

Joining Professors Kilson and Hammonds on the conference's executive committee is Florence Ladd, di-

rector of the Bunting Institute at Radcliffe College.

The conference is jointly sponsored by MIT, Wellesley College and Radcliffe College, with support from the Kellogg Foundation. At MIT, substantial program and logistical support is being provided by the Women's Studies Program, the History Program, the Program in Science, Technology and Society and the Office of Conference Services.

The January 13-15, dates were selected as a between-semesters period during which many academics would find it possible to attend.

Professors Kilson and Hammonds said: "We believe that the time has come for black women in the academy to come together to focus our scholarly energies and public attention on the various worlds which we inhabit." The conference will have more than 60 workshops and sessions addressing a wide variety of topics from institutional issues to black women's studies.

**Robert C. Di Iorio**

MIT Tech Talk 11/10/93



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EDUCATION

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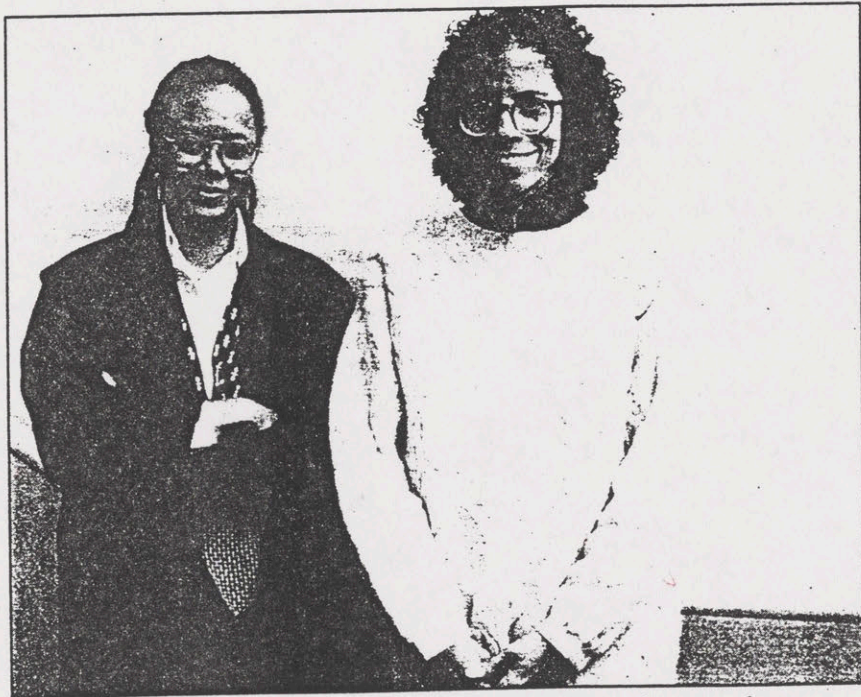
# Black Women in the Academy: Defending Our Name 1894-1994

by Robin Kilson

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On January 13-15, 1994, a unique event will occur at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. MIT will be the site of a three-day conference entitled "Black Women in the Academy: Defending Our Name 1894-1994." The conference is expected to be large: the program contains some 60 panels, workshops, and roundtables, with over 160 papers. Presenters come from over 100 different schools: historically Black colleges, small community colleges, large state-run research universities, and the Ivy League. At least 1,000 people from across the country are expected to attend. Many universities are sending student delegations in recognition of the implications of so many role models gathered in one place. White scholars interested in antiracist work in the academy will also be there. There are even four brave men on the program. Keynote speakers are Lani Guinier (making her first Boston appearance since her withdrawn nomination to head the Civil Rights Division of the Justice Department); Jonnetta Cole, the president of Spelman College in Atlanta (one of only two single-sex universities for Black women in the country); and Angela Y. Davis. Performance artist Vinie Burrows will present her one-woman show on the evening of January 14. There has never been another conference convened by Black women professors for Black women professors. And it is happening at MIT, a school among those with the smallest number of Black female faculty in the greater Boston area. I know; I am one of them.

The conference will address a diversity of topics, starting with institutional issues surrounding Black women's presence in the academy and fanning out to the



© Donna Covey/MIT

*Evelynn Hammonds and Robin Kilson, cocoonators of  
the Black women in the Academy conference*

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*Because there are so few of us,  
we have many more tasks to perform:  
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wider world of contemporary Black women. Some panels will showcase work currently being done in the field of Black women's studies, demonstrating the maturity of that discipline and the ways in which it diverges from its older sister, women's studies. Two groups of women are coming from overseas, bringing a comparative perspective to the proceedings: one contingent of women of African descent from the Netherlands and another group of African women from the University of Witwatersrand in South Africa. African and Caribbean women working in American universities will add their experiences. Panels on politics, welfare organization, health and reproductive rights, and the media will examine the recent trend toward the demonization of Black women in public discourse. Various panels will examine the roles of Black women in popular culture, including a roundtable on Terry McMillan's recent bestseller, *Waiting to Exhale*. More usual academic literary and historical work is also on the program. Finally, as befits the venue of the conference, a major examination of Black women in science and engineering is planned.

The conference was born out of frustration, loneliness, and the belief that Black women had spent far too long as one of academia's best-kept secrets. In part, the impetus came from what appeared to many of us as the scapegoating of Black women academics over the course of the last few years, starting with the disrespect shown to Professor Anita Hill's academic standing by the Senate Judiciary Committee, maturing in the political discourse generated by last year's electoral campaigns centered on

the issues of welfare reform and "family values," and culminating with the media's recent scandalous treatment of Professor Lani Guinier. Another stimulus came from the disillusionment resulting from the profound isolation many of us felt in academic jobs, which once seemed to be the dream of a lifetime. Too many of us suffer the burdens of tokenism in silence in an attempt to live up to white models of collegiality. Too many of us go to too many conferences hoping for some of the companionship denied us on campuses where we are alone only to be disappointed. We are still only a handful. It seemed more than time to try and gather *the mass* of Black women academics in a single place, to combine our voices, not only for our own benefit but for the edification of our employers and the media as well.

Historically, white men entered the academy first, then white women, and then Black men. Black women followed far behind. The first three Black women took their Ph.D.s in 1921, a full generation behind the first Black men. Our numbers remained small until the '60s. No one knows for sure how many Black women earned doctorates before the advent of civil rights legislation—probably fewer than 125. No one knows for sure how many Black women have doctorates now, although some 8,000 of us seem to be currently employed in academia, out of a total professoriate of about 400,000, working in some 3,500 schools. Statistically, despite a fairly competitive job market for minority academics, Black women professors are paid less than anyone else in the academic teaching hierarchy, a situation that echoes national trends across the labor

market. Affirmative action has not done us a lot of good, despite the myth of double advantage that has grown up around us: the idea that any Black woman hired is a "twofer" and countable in two minority categories at once. For the last decade, African Americans have averaged about a million undergraduates yearly; fewer than 1000, male and female, manage to take doctorates each year. Although Black women are currently earning slightly more than half of all doctoral degrees granted to African Americans (annually about 500—half of which are in education and social work), this represents only about 1.4 percent of the national total of 34,000. White women are currently averaging about 12,000 doctorates a year. Once employed, Black academic women are concentrated in the lower ranks: as of 1985, nationally we made up 3 percent of instructors and lecturers, 2.7 percent of assistant professors, 1.4 percent of associate professors, 3.4 percent of administrators and only 0.6 percent of full professors.

The way this dispersal plays out on the ground of university and college campuses is frightening. Most schools can boast only one or two Black female faculty members, usually without tenure; the school that has a handful, with one tenured, is doing very well indeed. (If you are wondering how we are doing locally, Harvard has just hired a senior Black woman, its one and only, due on campus next year. MIT has no tenured African-American women faculty, while UMass/Boston is doing very well with five tenured African-American women.) Having spent the last eighteen months working on a study of Black women doctorates, I am forced to conclude that our

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small numbers have as much to do with the enduring conviction in the white academy that Blacks are inherently inferior, *no matter how much education they obtain*, as with the frequently cited difficulty with the minute number of incoming graduate students, the so-called pipeline issue. As an example of the insidious nature of this belief, I should tell you that the chair of my department in a new job told me the first time she came to dinner at my house that she hadn't really thought me an intellectual until she saw the books in my house. I can only imagine that she expected me to share her relief.

Our tiny numbers, compared to white men, white women, and Black men on campus, are the source of most of our difficulties. Small numbers mean there are precious few role models for either students or faculty. Small numbers mean we can never blend into the woodwork, but rather are highly visible among our colleagues in every conceivable context. Because there are so few of us, we have many more tasks to perform: we do not have the luxury of single-mindedness available to our white colleagues. There are simply never enough Black bodies on any predominantly white campus to go around. We are not just teachers and researchers; we are also counselors, comforters, and advisors to students, colleagues, and administrators, typically to

the detriment of our careers. As women, we do all of this and cope with personal lives outside of the academy—homes and children—often alone. Our advanced education makes it difficult to find spouses in our communities, given the sociological and demographic realities of African-American life today. The emotional and physical toll taken by trying to be so many things to so many people is enormous.

In January, however, the realities of our daily existence will be thrown into focus for three days at MIT's historic conference. One sponsor, the Kellogg Foundation, has provided the funds for the construction of a database that will be the foundation of a permanent network of Black women scholars. It is our hope that another school will pick up where MIT leaves off and volunteer to host another similar conference in two or three years' time. At the very least, for three days we all will experience something precious few of us have ever had in our academic lives—the confidence and solidarity of numbers. It is a beginning, and a fulfillment.

*Author's note: Registration for the conference is \$60 before December 1, \$75 after December 1 for nonstudents; \$20 before December 1, \$40 after December 1 for students. A special day rate of \$20 will be available for people who cannot attend the whole event. Registration forms and information can be had by calling MIT's Conference Services Office, (617) 253-1700, or the Black Women in the Academy conference office directly at (617) 253-8889.*

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*Robin Kilson is currently a Bunting Fellow at Radcliffe College, where she is working on a project entitled "Passing for Ariel: Black Women Doctorates in American Universities, 1921-91." A coorganizer of the Black Women in the Academy conference, she teaches Black history and women's studies at MIT.*

**FIRST OF ITS KIND**

# National Conference at MIT Focuses on Black Women Academics

More than 1,000 registrations have been received for the major national conference, "Black Women in the Academy: Defending our Name 1894-1994," which will be held at MIT January 13, 14 and 15 in Kresge Auditorium and around campus.

The conference is the first national meeting to focus on the special issues and scholarship of black women in higher education, say its organizers, Robin Kilson, professor of history and a specialist in European imperialism and colonialism, African and African-American history and women's studies, and Evelyn Hammonds, an assistant professor of the history of science in the Program in Science, Technology and Society, a specialist in the history of medicine.

Sponsored by MIT, Wellesley College and Radcliffe College, with support from a number of foundations, the conference is a unique opportunity to address historical and contemporary issues facing black women at colleges

and universities and to examine the role of black women scholars in public life, said Professors Kilson and Hammonds.

Prior to this conference, there has been no forum for black women academics to share their issues and experiences, collectively see each other's research and to network with other professionals with similar backgrounds.

The conference's three keynote speakers are:

—Lani Guinier of the University of Pennsylvania Law School, proposed by President Clinton, but later withdrawn, to head the Civil Rights Division of the Justice Department.

—Dr. Johnnetta Cole, president of Spelman College.

—Professor Angela Davis of the University of California, Santa Cruz.

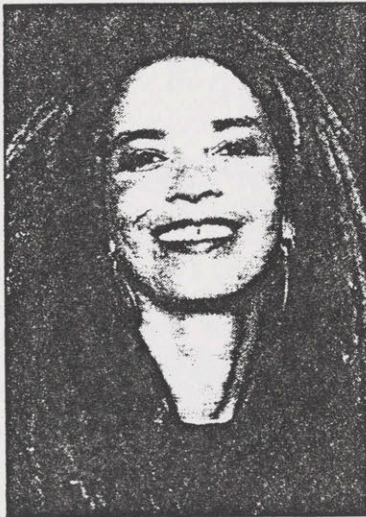
The program also lists more than 60 varied panels, workshops and roundtable discussions. Topics include: Foremothers: Rethinking Our Intellectual Debts; Black Women and the

Welfare State: Intersections of Social Policy; Pedagogical Concerns: Race, Gender and Authority in the Classroom; Exploring the Realities of Black Student Life on Predominantly White Campuses; and Black Female Sacrificial Political Lambs: Anita Hill and Lani Guinier. Discussions will also cover the media, Hollywood, marginalization and social change.

Professors Kilson and Hammonds hope the conference will break through the isolation that colleagues have complained about within the academic environment.

Academics will be coming from all over the United States and from South Africa and the Netherlands. Many universities are also sending groups of students.

*Reh Talk 1/5/94*



Professor Angela Davis



Dr. Johnnetta B. Cole

Boston Globe 1/9/94

## CAMBRIDGE NOTES

### African-American women convene

A national conference on African-American women will convene at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Thursday through Saturday.

Entitled "Black Women in the Academy: Defending our Name, 1894-1994," the conference is meant to focus scholarly energies on public perceptions of African-American women, and how views have changed over the last century. At the forefront will be discussions of the public discourses spurred by the Clarence Thomas Supreme Court confirmation hearings and the ongoing issue of welfare reform.

The keynote speakers will be Lani Guinier, the law professor who was President Clinton's nominee for attorney general; Johnnetta Cole, the president of Spelman College; and Angela Davis, a professor at the University of California at Santa Cruz.

### Meeting Friday for Kendall group

This Friday will be the annual breakfast meeting of the Kendall Community Group, a collaboration of local businesses that offer philanthropic support to social service ef-

forts in the Area 4 neighborhood.

The breakfast, which is open to all who would like to volunteer their time or financial support, will be held at the Royal Sonesta Hotel at 8:30 a.m. on Jan. 14.

Established in 1987, the Kendall Community Group is a project in which financial, in-kind and volunteer support is raised among corporations in Kendall Square, led by Draper Laboratory, Polaroid and MIT. The support benefits the Area 4 neighborhood through services provided by the Community Art Center, Margaret Fuller House and Tutoring Plus.

"It is a unique collaboration," said Kathleen Granchelli of Draper Labs. "We raise about \$55,000 a year which is distributed among the agencies, and we keep striving to increase our budget."

### From Model T's to biotech

In 1916, when officials from the Ford Motor Co. constructed the huge building at 640 Memorial Drive as an assembly plant for Model T autos, they probably did not envision that the cavernous facility would one day be home to a panoply of biotechnology firms.

But MIT, the new owner of the old plant, has announced that the newly renovated building is now 93 percent leased by medical technology and biotechnology firms. The building's anchor tenant is Lifeline Systems Inc. of Watertown, which makes and distributes personal

emergency medical response units (known to many users as "the button").

The other tenants so far are Endogen, Millenium Pharmaceuticals, and Pathology Services.

As Henry Ford was usually on the cutting edge of technology, he probably would have been proud.

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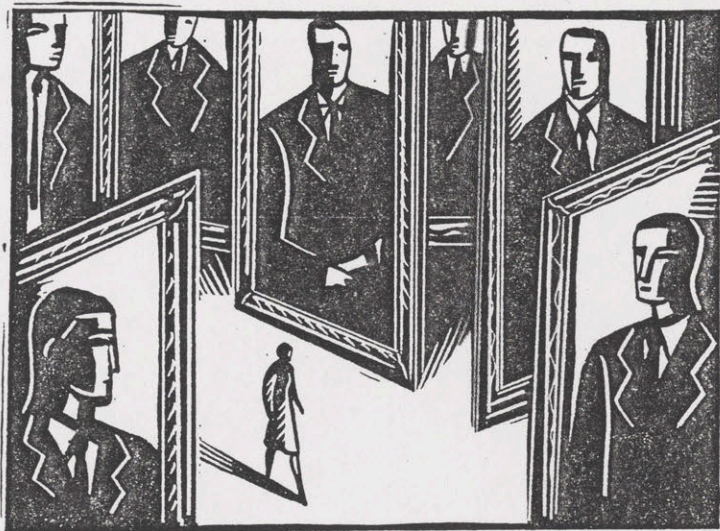
Compiled by Jennifer Kingson  
Bloom

# FOCUS

THE BOSTON SUNDAY GLOBE • JANUARY 9, 1994

SOCIETY

## LIFE AS A female GENTLEMAN



IN THE 'CIVILIZED' SETTING of Yale or Washington, one learns the rules can be ungentlemanly and unmindful of those who have long gone unheard

By Lani Guinier

In 1984, I returned to Yale Law School to participate on a panel of mainly black alumni reminiscing about the 30 years since Brown vs. Board of Education. It was a panel sponsored by the current black students who were eager to hear the voices of those who came before them.

Each of us on the panel spoke for 10 minutes in a room adorned by the traditional portraits of larger-than-life white men. It was the same classroom in which, 10 years earlier, I had sat for "Business Units," the name Yale gave to "corporations," with a white male professor who addressed all of us, male and female, as gentlemen.

Every morning, at 10 minutes after the hour, he would enter the classroom and greet the upturned faces: "Good morning, gentlemen." He described this ritual the first day. He had been teaching for many

years; he was a creature of habit. He readily acknowledged the presence of a few "ladies" by then in attendance, but admonished those of us born into that other gender not to feel excluded by his greeting. We, too, in his mind, were simply gentlemen.

In his view, "gentlemen" was an asexual term, one reserved for reference to those who shared a certain civilized view of the world and who exhibited a similarly civilized demeanor. By his lights, the greeting was a form of honorific. It was evocative of the traditional values of men, in particular men of good breeding, who possess neither a race nor a gender. If we were not already, law school would certainly teach us how to be gentlemen. That lesson was at the heart of becoming a professional.

Now back in the familiar class-

room preparing to address a race- and gender-mixed audience, I felt the weight of the presence of those stern gentlemen's portraits. For me, this was still not a safe place.

Yet, all the men on the panel reminded us how they felt to return "home," with fondly revealed stories about their three years in law school. Anecdotes about their time as law students, mostly funny and a touch self-congratulatory, abounded. These three black men may not have felt safe, either, but they each introduced their talks with brief yet loving recollections of their experiences. Even the so-called "black radical" among us waxed nostalgic and personal with proud detail about his encounters as the law school troublemaker.

It was my turn. No empowering memories found my voice. I had no

personal anecdotes for the profound sense of alienation and isolation that caught in my throat every time I opened my mouth. Nothing resonated there for a black woman, even after my 10 years as an impassioned civil rights attorney. Instead, I promptly began my formal remarks, trying as hard as I could to find my voice in a room in which those portraits spoke louder than I ever could. I spoke slowly, carefully and never once admitted, except by my presence on the podium, that I had ever been at this school or in that room before. I summoned as much authority as I could to be heard over the

WOMEN, Page 72

Lani Guinier is a professor at the University of Pennsylvania Law School. This is an excerpt from the keynote address to the Black Women in the Academy Conference to be delivered at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology on Thursday. A collection of Guinier's essays, "The Tyranny of the Majority," will be published by the Free Press in March.

# Women

Continued from Page 69

sounds of silence erupting from those giant images of gentlemen hanging on the wall and from my own ever-present memory of slowly disappearing each morning and becoming a gentleman of Business Units I.

Immediately after my presentation, the other black woman on the panel rose to speak. She, too, did not introduce herself with personal experiences or warm reminiscences about her past association with the law school, but, like me, remained upright and, I thought, dignified. Afterwards she and I huddled to talk about how different the law school we had experienced was from the one recollected by our male colleagues.

We were the minority within a minority whose existence, even physical presence, had been swallowed up within the traditions associated with educating *gentlemen*. Even from our places up front at the podium, those portraits were like some attic jury reminding us that silence about what we knew was the price of our presence.

Years and career options intervened. I joined the academy along with other women, including women of color. The memory receded of the time when larger-than-life gentlemen imposed such heavy silences on women. Then, in the spring of 1993, I was nominated to be assistant attorney general for civil rights, and those law student memories assumed contemporary urgency. Once again, a larger-than-life jury commanded silence.

This time, I was explicitly admonished not to speak, as a courtesy to the Senate prior to confirmation hearings. I could not explain misconceptions contained in ideas attributed to me because I was not allowed to speak for myself or even to be myself. This time, the jury spoke in a way more personal, more overtly hostile and more public than I had known before. This experience was much worse than my transformation from black woman to gentleman as a law student. Yet that law student experience proved an important reference point. The academy had prepared me well for the feeling of being cast outside the mainstream, even as I was welcomed within it.

Unlike many male colleagues whose breeding, status and gender assured them traditional presumptions of respectability both inside the academy and beyond, I never became my resume. Instead, as the assistant attorney general for civil rights-designate, I was defined entirely by my opponents and those in the media who took control over my image. Like the female gentlemen of Business Units I, I had fallen down a rabbit hole, only this time it was in Washington.

In this "wonderland," the distortions were so great, even my own mother could

not recognize me in the images the media produced. Things got curiouser and curiouser. I was like Alice, her size changing every 10 minutes, facing the Caterpillar, who demanded to know just who she was:

"I-I hardly know, sir, just at present - at least I know who I was when I got up this morning, but I think I must have been changed several times since then."

"What do you mean by that?" said the Caterpillar sternly. 'Explain yourself.'

"I cannot explain myself, I'm afraid, sir," said Alice, 'because I'm not myself, you see.'"

Identified by my ideas - or more precisely by caricatures of them - I came to represent America's worst fears about race. Sentences, words, even phrases separated by paragraphs in my "controversial" law review articles were served up to demonstrate I was outside the mainstream of polite society.

I became a cartoon character, Clinton's "quota queen." It didn't matter that I never advocated quotas. It did not matter that I am a professor of law, gainfully employed, with life tenure. Like the welfare queen, quota queen was a racial stereotype and an easy headline looking for a person. And, like Alice, I walked into the looking glass of manipulated images from which my real ideas were never allowed to emerge.

Through my law review articles, I had spoken about the problems of a democracy in which people of color have a vote but no voice. I had written about people like Milagros Robledo, a Latino voter in Philadelphia. Following a recent absentee voting scandal, Mr. Robledo lamented that he knows now what his vote means: "It means a lot to politicians. It means nothing to me."

As a civil rights lawyer, I challenged electoral systems in which voters were alienated from actively participating in the process of self-government. As a law professor, I promoted alternative, race-neutral remedies to empower all voters and to make elected officials more accountable to all their constituents. I had followed the trails blazed by James Madison, an author of the Constitution, and traversed by Nikolas Bowie, my then 4-year-old son, both of whom taught me about democracy. I sought consensus, positive-sum solutions to the dilemma - identified two centuries before by Madison - of a self-interested majority that fails to rule on behalf of all the people. In those situations where 51 percent of the voters were excluding the other 49 percent on the basis of their race, their gender, or their ideas, I questioned whether 51 percent of the people should enjoy 100 percent of the power.

As Madison reminded us, if the majority in a racially mixed society does not represent the interests of the whole, but instead single-mindedly pursues its own special interests, then majority rule can become majority tyranny. And in playing "Sesame Street" games, Nikolas had provided the insight that



At a June 1993 press conference at the Justice Department after President Clinton had withdrawn her nomination to be an assistant attorney general, Lani Guinier says she still believes she is "the right person for the job."

AP FILE PHOTO JUNE 1993

children often "take turns." Politics could be different if adults learned how to do the same. Winners would not win everything, and losers would not be permanently excluded. They could take turns.

Yet, while I remained silent, those who opposed my nomination had a platform from which to speak, defining the parameters of conversation and debate. Like the gentlemen's portraits featured prominently along the walls of my law school experience, even the self-proclaimed radicals among my conservative critics enjoyed the larger-than-life status of neutral observers.

I did not get a hearing, but I did not lose my voice for long. In the many intervening years since law school, I had gained the confidence to question directly speech that silences rather than enlightens. I had been forewarned by those law student memories of larger-than-life gentlemen's portraits dominating the debate.

I began to comprehend what W. E. B. Du Bois eloquently described at the dawn of this century as the twoness, the double identity of being black and American. For me, there was a threeness because I was also a woman.

Living as an outsider "within the veil," I, like Du Bois, saw myself revealed through the eyes of others. Yet, like Alice through the looking glass, the experience eventually became a gift. As Du Bois would say, it was the gift of second sight.

At the twilight of the century, many of us who are not white or male still live "within the veil." We, too, may experience Du Bois' peculiar sensation of measuring one's soul by the tape of others. But, drawing on the multiple consciousness of second-sighted outsiders, we have found within our own voice a source of information and legitimacy.

Yes, I didn't get a hearing. Nor as a female gentleman law student did I speak out. But as a result of conferences like the one in Boston Thursday, organized by women of color in the academy, some of us are working to ensure that other voices are heard. And by insisting on our ability to speak out about our ideas, we can spark the debate that we have so often been denied.

But when we speak, despite our experience, we need not speak from anger: for we are women with a gift, not a grievance. Real democracy is strengthened by including

those who were left out. Our gift then is to turn silence into insight and to make a chorus of many voices contending. As Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart wrote in 1964, our government reflects "the strongly felt American tradition that the public interest is composed of many diverse interests, [which] . . . in the long run . . . can best be expressed by a medley of component voices."

"Gifted with second sight," we can share our stories so the rest of the world gains from our knowledge and experience. Remember, though, that our stories are not monolithic. Nor are they monotone or monologue. They are part of a dynamic conversation, in which there is a space for everyone to have her say. As Nikki Giovanni writes, the purpose of leadership is to speak until the people gain a voice.

And if we persist in telling our own stories in our own voices, eventually we will be heard over the thunderous silence of the gentlemen and their larger-than-life portraits. Like Alice in Wonderland, our stories will become classics in their own right, because we shall speak until all the people gain a voice.



The TAB, January 11, 1994

## **Guinier to headline MIT conference**

Lani Guinier, whose nomination for a top spot in the Justice Department was pulled by President Clinton after she was deemed too liberal by some in Congress, will headline the national "Black Women in the Academy" conference at MIT this week. More than 1,000 women are expected at the conference, according to MIT.

Dr. Johnetta Cole, president of Spelman College, and Angela Davis, the radical political activist who is a professor at the University of California at Santa Cruz, will also speak at the conference.

Among the 60 workshops and round-table discussions are "Black Women and the Welfare State" and "Exploring the Realities of Black Student Life on Predominantly White Campuses."

## National forum at MIT to focus on black women in academics

By Traci Grant  
CONTRIBUTING REPORTER

Robin Kilson, an assistant history professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, is a rarity at academic conferences: She is female and black.

When Kilson attended an academic conference designed for blacks four years ago in Madison, Wis., it turned into "an amazing show of male ego," she recalled.

"At the end of that conference, I said we have to have a conference of our own."

So Kilson organized a three-day national conference, "Black Women in the Academy: Defending Our Name 1894-1994," starting tomorrow at MIT. The conference will showcase black women in the academic world and talk about key related issues.

Those issues include finding mentors in the academic community, addressing the paucity of prospective black women professors and receiving tenure at universities, Kilson said. Tenure gener-

ally ensures a professor lifetime job security and offers academic freedom.

Conference attendance, which Kilson originally projected at 500 participants, has snowballed. MIT officials report that about 2,000 people from around the country, as well as from South Africa and the Netherlands, have registered.

The conference will feature keynote speakers Angela Davis, a professor at the University of California at Santa Cruz, and Lani Guinier, a professor at the University of Pennsylvania Law School.

"There's never been a conference specifically focused on us," Kilson said. "It's been clear from the response from the beginning that everyone thought it was an idea whose time had come."

The conference is co-sponsored by MIT, and Wellesley and Radcliffe colleges.

Throughout her academic career, Kilson, 40, of Watertown, has endured "a continuous sense of isolation following me around wherever I went," she said.

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## Academic conference set for black women

■ CONFERENCE  
Continued from Page 13

Not only have faces and voices like Kilson's been virtually absent at these conferences, but in a pool of nearly 1,000 total faculty at MIT, Kilson was the only black female on tenure track at the university for five years. In the last year, Kilson said, only three more black women at MIT have joined her on the tenure track - a figure that Kilson called on par with other universities.

Nationally, black women comprised about 1.9 percent of all tenure track faculty at colleges and universities in 1991, the latest year for which statistics are available, according to the Office of Minorities in Higher Education for the American Council on Education in Washington. The figure for black men was only slightly better: 2.6 percent of tenure track faculty for 1991.

The percentage of black women teachers who hold full-time faculty positions with tenure is 59 percent, according to the council. By compari-

son, about 71 percent of all full-time faculty hold tenure.

"The need is really tremendous ... to increase the number and status of African-American women in higher education," said Deborah J. Carter, associate director of the Office of Minorities in Higher Education. "By and large, they are in assistant professor positions or they are lecturers or work part time, concentrated at our historically black institutions and in community colleges."

For her part, Kilson said, she was willing to work for the past 14 months organizing the black women's conference with MIT assistant science professor Evelyn Hammonds, although others at MIT discouraged the endeavor because it would detract from Kilson's time for research and publishing. Kilson said she hopes that when she is reviewed for tenure, this conference will be regarded as one of her highest achievements.

For more information on the conference, call 617-253-8889.

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**1,500 EXPECTED**

## Black Women's Conference Draws Large Registration

Registration for January 13-15 national conference, Black Women in the Academy: Defending our Name, 1894-1994, has soared past the 1,300 mark.

Plenary sessions will be held at Kresge Auditorium where the three keynote speakers—Lani Guinier (10:30am Thursday, Jan. 13); Johnnetta Cole (5pm Friday, Jan. 14); and Angela Davis (2pm Saturday, Jan. 15)—will deliver their remarks. Every session is expected to have a capacity audience. They can be seen on closed-circuit television in Rms. 10-250, 34-101, and 9-150.

Several workshops and panel sessions will be held at various locations on campus on Thursday, Friday and Saturday.

The executive committee organizing the conference consists of Professors Robin Kilson and Evelyn Hammonds of MIT and Florence Ladd of

Radcliffe College's Bunting Institute.

Serving on the advisory committee are MIT President Charles M. Vest and his fellow college presidents Linda Wilson of Radcliffe, Neil Rudenstine of Harvard, Diana Chapman Walsh of Wellesley, Nan Keohane of Duke and Johnnetta Cole of Spelman. Other members are Shirley Malcom, AAAS; Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot, Harvard School of Education; Nell I. Painter, Princeton; Nellie Y. McKay, University of Wisconsin, Madison; Darlene Clark Hine, Michigan State; Henry Louis Gates Jr., Harvard, and Cornel West, Harvard.

The program notes that the conference is dedicated to the memory of Phyllis Wallace, professor emerita, MIT Sloan School of Management; Sylvia Boone, Yale, and Audre Lorde, Hunter College, "and other women of color who have labored in the academy and helped to prepare the way for the present generation."

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MIT Tech Talk 1/12/94

# Conference for Black Women to Be Held at MIT

By Sarah Y. Keightley  
NEWS EDITOR

A national conference focusing on issues concerning black women in academia — the first of its kind — will be held at MIT this Thursday, Friday, and Saturday.

"Black Women in the Academy: Defending Our Name 1894-1994" will include keynote speakers in Kresge Auditorium and presentations around campus. Among the headline attractions is a keynote address by Lani Guinier.

"This is an extraordinary event for MIT," said Robin W. Kilson, professor of history and women's studies and one of the meeting's organizers. It will go "a long way to changing the image of MIT for minority faculty across the nation," she added.

Organizers are expecting about 2,000 people to attend, according to Kilson. "People are enormously excited," she said. She noted that it

is quite an event to get people to come to Boston in the middle of January.

People are coming from all over the country, from community colleges to Ivy League schools, Kilson said. Scholars will also be coming from South Africa and the Netherlands.

Though the conference is targeted at black women faculty, organizers expect a diverse group of people to attend. **Forum for sharing experiences.**

The main purpose of the conference is to create a forum for black women in academia to share their experiences and their work and to network with others in similar fields.

The conference has no central focus. Instead, about 200 participants will be presenting papers on a wide variety of topics, Kilson said. Presentations will concern topics such as "career issues, getting jobs, getting through graduate school," she said. Also, some presen-

ters will discuss issues "of wider interest to black women in general." This includes politics, the fates of Anita Hill and Lani Guinier, reproductive policy, and welfare policy, she said.

Kilson said she does not anticipate one particular highlight for the meeting. Rather, "the whole conference is the highlight."

The conference will feature three keynote speakers: Lani Guinier from the University of Pennsylvania Law School — President Bill Clinton's candidate to head the Civil Rights Division of the Justice Department before he withdrew her nomination; Dr. Johnnetta Cole, president of Spelman College; and Professor Angela Davis of the University of California Santa Cruz.

In addition to these speeches, more than 60 panels, workshops, and round-table discussions

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The Tech 1/12/94

## Conference Focuses On Black Women

Women, from Page 1.

will take place.

### Original idea for the conference

Kilson came up with the idea for the conference "through [her] personal frustration through the sense of isolation as a black woman." There are few black female faculty members, especially here at MIT, she noted.

Furthermore, when she went to academic conferences, she felt isolated because few black women were present. With this conference, black women can have the "experience of being in the majority instead of the minority for a change."

She came up with the idea four years ago, then found collaborators to help her plan the conference. Evelyn M. Hammonds, professor of the history of science, is the other organizer. The conference is sponsored by MIT, Wellesley College,

Radcliffe College, and several foundations.

If there were a prototype to this conference, it would be a small meeting held about 20 years ago at Radcliffe College, Kilson said. One hundred people attended the event.

Because of the great amount of planning required and the high costs, the conference will not be an annual event, Kilson said. Planning this conference has "taken up 14 months of my life," she said.

Kilson hopes another school will take on the project three to five years from now. A likely choice would be Spelman College in Atlanta, she said. Spelman is a college for black women.

Though it is still possible to register for the conference, people should be aware that registration has exceeded the capacity of Kresge, Kilson said. Interested people could still see the keynote speeches via video monitors in designated over-

THURSDAY, JANUARY 13, 1994

CAMBRIDGE CHRONICLE

## UNIVERSITY NOTEBOOK

### Lani Guinier comes to MIT

Lani Guinier and a host of other prominent black women will be at MIT from Jan. 13 to 15 as part of a national conference on black women in academics.

"Black Women in the Academy: Defending our Name 1894-1994," will include more than 60 panels,

workshops and round-table discussions on topics facing black women. Among the subjects to be discussed are: Gender and Authority in the Classroom, Black Women and the Welfare State and Black Female Sacrificial Lambs: Anita Hill and Lani Guinier.

MIT officials say the conference is the first-ever forum for black women academics to share their issues and experiences.

Guinier, along with Professor Angela Davis from the University of California at Santa Cruz and Johnnetta Cole, president of Spelman College, are scheduled as keynote speakers.

### Coretta King to speak at MIT

Coretta Scott King will be the keynote speaker at MIT's 20th annual celebration of the birth of her husband, Dr. Martin Luther King.

The month-long celebration will begin 8 pm Saturday, Jan. 15, with a musical tribute to Dr. King in Kresge Auditorium. Mrs. King will speak in Kresge Feb. 15, following the traditional silent march of MIT community members from Lobby 7 to the auditorium.

MIT's memorial activities are scheduled for February this year rather than on King's birthday to

coincide with Black History Month.

## Black women in academe: Their time has come

**O**f all the schools where Evelyn Hammonds could have enrolled, she chose the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, following in the footsteps of Shirley A. Jackson, who in 1973 became the first black woman to receive a doctorate in physics.

Although Hammonds went on to get her doctorate somewhere else — Harvard — her experience at the institute helped shape her life for years to come.

When she arrived at MIT in 1976 with her bachelor's degree from Spelman College, Hammonds traded the security of an all-black women's college for a life of isolation as one of two black women in the graduate physics program.

A year later, the other woman left.

So it was no surprise that Hammonds, now an MIT professor, would be elated at the sight she beheld yesterday as she took the stage of the Kresge Auditorium.

Awaiting her greetings was an entire assembly of black academic women, each with her own story of achievement, each one of them inspired by the next.

"I never thought I would ever see so many black women at MIT," Hammonds said to a laughing and cheering crowd. "Thank you so much for being here."

But to hear other women tell it, the thanks belongs to her for being courageous enough to help organize such a gathering.

Like so many other women in academics, Hammonds does not have tenure. For that matter, neither does Robin Killson, another MIT professor who helped organize the conference.

Tenure translates to job security, and being without it could have been an uncomfortable position for them given the subject matter of the conference.

"There's never been a conference specifically focused on us," Killson said of the gathering, titled "Black Women in the Academy: Defending Our Name."

"Everyone thought it was an idea whose time had come."

Among the issues being discussed at the three-day conference are the role of mentors in the academic community, survival strategies and the need for cultural sensitivity training.

Kilson, speaking perhaps for most of the 2,000 people registered at the conference from the United States, South Africa and the Netherlands, said that being one of the few black women at her college often made her feel isolated in the world of academics.

Until Hammonds and two other black women joined the faculty, Killson spent five years as the only black woman on tenure track among nearly 1,000 faculty members at MIT.

Her story is not unique. Nationally, black women comprised about 1.9 percent of all tenure track faculty at colleges and universities in 1991, according to the Office of Minori-



**LEONARD  
GREENE**

ties in Higher Education for the American Council on Education.

While about 71 percent of all full-time faculty have tenure, only 59 percent of full-time black women faculty members do, the council said.

Not even the recognition of university Professor Toni Morrison, who won last year's Nobel Prize for literature, could make up for the abuses black women have suffered in the world of academics, Hammonds said.

As examples, she cited the recent excoriations of Anita Hill and Lani Guinier.

Hill's disregarded charges of sexual harassment and the silencing of Guinier, a former Justice Department nominee, stand as testimony to the nation's unwillingness to count among its chorus the voices of black women.

"The achievements of these two women galvanized the academic community in a way that no other set of events has in recent memory," Hammonds said.

Guinier, a featured speaker at the conference, said her academic mistreatment did not begin with the failed nomination and the poor coverage that followed it.

It started at Yale University Law School in the classroom of a professor who, despite the number of women there, insisted on calling everyone "gentlemen."

Guinier spoke of the irony of overcoming the experience of being virtually disregarded only to later be silenced.

"Some of us are working to ensure that other voices are heard," Guinier said.

"We are survivors, not victims. We are women with a gift, not a grievance. Our gift is to shift silence into insight."

That is difficult, though, when those at the opposite end of the academic spectrum — white men — don't want to listen, like the ones at Nebraska Wesleyan University, where Olga Davis is an assistant professor.

Often, when a famous black person comes to her university to speak, Davis is asked to make an introduction. The last such speaker was an artist. Never mind that Davis' background is in theater.

"That, to me, was insulting," Davis said. "But a situation like this will either make you or break you. I have chosen that it will make me."



SUPPORT: Genii Guinier, left, shares a laugh with daughter Lani Guinier yesterday. Staff photo by Mike Adaskaveg

# Guinier slams Clinton for lacking rights leadership

By CONNIE PAIGE

Law professor Lani Guinier maintained her silence yesterday on her personal feelings about President Clinton's flip-flop in June on nominating her to the nation's top civil rights post, but blasted him for lacking a civil rights policy.

At a Massachusetts Institute of Technology conference on black women in academia, Guinier accused Clinton of falling down on his pledge to rein-vigorate civil rights enforcement.

"I think that there's a vacuum of leadership," she said.

"I think people are desperate for leadership, they're desperate for vision, they're desperate for a sense that there's a moral center to this administration that is going to stand firm on issues of substance. Because of various political calculations, apparently that leadership is not yet forthcoming from Washington."

Guinier said she had not spoken to the Clintons since being dropped as nominee for U.S. assistant attorney general for civil rights. Clinton dropped Guinier under pressure from

**'People are desperate for leadership, they're desperate for vision.'**

— Lani Guinier

congressional Republicans and Democrats.

But she did receive "two identical, machine-signed Christmas cards from the White House," Guinier said.

When asked if she was surprised by the first lady's silence on her plight, Guinier responded, "I think you've got it right."

Guinier's mother was more outspoken about the family's disappointment in the Clintons.

"I just felt Mr. Clinton did not measure up to what Lani told me about him. She said he was a man of some integrity," Genii Guinier said.

During her keynote speech at the first of its kind conference at MIT, attended by about 1,600 black women academics from across the country, Lani Guinier reserved special scorn for the media, which she said had misrepresented her views on voting rights.

Instead of giving special weight to black votes, as widely reported, Guinier said she had actually advocated proportional representation — much like the election system in the city of Cambridge. That kind of system, she said, ensures that "majority rule does not become majority tyranny."

Guinier urged African-American women in academia to build coalitions to relieve their isolation.

Frequently interrupted by applause and laughter, Guinier captivated the audience, with several women breaking into tears.

"I cried, because I'm you and you are me," explained July Rose-White of Southern Connecticut State University during the question-and-answer period.

Guinier promptly stepped to the edge of the auditorium stage to give Rose-White a hug.

# Guinier cites vacancy of key civil rights post

## Sees Clinton's policy as muddled

By Alice Dembner  
GLOBE STAFF  
and Traci Grant  
CONTRIBUTING REPORTER

CAMBRIDGE - Lani Guinier, whose name was nominated and then withdrawn by President Clinton to be assistant attorney general, said yesterday there is "a vacuum of leadership" on civil rights issues in Washington.

"The administration has not followed through on its pledge to reinvigorate the civil rights division of the Justice Department," said Guinier, a University of Pennsylvania law professor whose nomination for the nation's top civil rights post was withdrawn amid controversy about her views on voting rights. She said Clinton's apparent difficulty in filling the post reflected his administration's muddled vision and its unwillingness to discuss race.

Guinier also said she was disturbed that the US Supreme Court in a recent voting rights case had indicated that it believes "we are living in a color-blind society." She said she sees growing polarization of blacks and whites.

Her comments came at a news conference following a moving speech kicking off a three-day conference at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. The conference attracted about 1,500 black women academics from around the world to share ideas and support, develop strategies to increase their numbers and discuss solutions to the nation's problems.

Drawing deeply on her own experiences as a black female law student at Yale University and as a nominee whom her opponents characterized as "Clinton's quota queen," Guinier urged black women scholars to fight attempts to silence them and to work for change.

"What was happening to me was a metaphor for the experiences of many women of color," she said.

Women in the audience at Kresge Auditorium agreed, giving her three standing ovations, many with tears in their eyes. "Your speech gave me a path to follow," one participant said.

While making it clear that she had never advocated quotas, Guinier stood strongly behind her belief in the need for proportional representation in elections and other means "to ensure that majority rule does not become majority tyranny."

Robin Kilson and Evelyn M. Hammonds, both assistant professors at MIT, said they organized the conference in part because of their feelings of isolation, as two of only three black women on the MIT fac-



GLOBE STAFF PHOTO / DAVID L. RYAN

Lani Guinier prepares to address a conference at MIT yesterday.

ulty. Nationally, black women made up about 1.9 percent of all tenure-track faculty in 1991, the latest year for which statistics are available, according to the American Council on Education.

Kilson said she hoped the conference would help persuade many of the undergraduate and graduate students attending to pursue academic careers, sentiments that were echoed by MIT President Charles Vest. Vest pledged to continue efforts to recruit and retain more black women faculty, but he noted that nationwide, only four black women earned PhDs in chemical engineering last year. MIT hired one.

Hammonds said the conference, "Black Women in the Academy: Defending our Name, 1894-1994," also was organized to respond to the "public humiliation" of Lani Guinier and Anita Hill and to the "relentless assault" on black women in the debate over welfare reform and family values.

In conference workshops, about 70 professors presented academic research papers on topics ranging from black feminist literary criticism to strategies for gaining political power.

For Lina Bell, an assistant director of admissions at George Washington University who took in a session titled "Race Gender Politics in Academic Culture," the workshops were unique.

Bell and about 100 others discussed the obstacles black women face not only to get a faculty appointment, but the issues they must deal with once hired - including providing "the black perspective" and heavy responsibilities for mentoring.



# Guinier addresses MIT conference

## Former Clinton nominee speaks on color, sex in academia

### THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

CAMBRIDGE — Lani Guinier spoke yesterday of being a minority within a minority. Her audience was a receptive one: about 2,000 people attending a conference on black women in academia.

The national conference is the first of its kind. Organizers estimated that about one out of every three black women in academia traveled to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology for the three-day event that began yesterday.

"This is the first opportunity for us to get together with each other. It's never happened before," said Evelyn Hammonds, an organizer and assistant professor of the history of science at MIT.

Hammonds said that the conferencees shared the alienation of being a double minority — black and female. Many said they were the only black woman faculty member at their colleges and universities

across the nation.

Guinier, who gave the opening speech, was nominated to be assistant attorney general for civil rights in the Clinton administration, only to have the appointment withdrawn under opposition to her views on voting rights.

Guinier was greeted by a standing ovation, and in some cases tears. At the end of her address, audience members told the University of Pennsylvania Law School professor that she was a role model to other black women in academics.

"What happened to me is not about me," Guinier said. "It was a metaphor for what has happened to many women of color."

She compared the silence and admonitions she received not to defend herself or her academic writing which became controversial to the larger silence all black women experience in academia.

Guinier said after her nomina-

tion was withdrawn, she realized "we are survivors, not victims. We are women with a gift, not a weakness."

MIT and Wellesley and Radcliffe colleges are co-sponsoring the conference, which will cover areas of mentors in the academic community, receiving tenure at universities and the scarcity of potential black women professors.

The conference will end tomorrow with a closing speech by Angela Davis, a professor at the University of California, Santa Cruz.

"Some of us are working to ensure that other voices are heard at a conference like this one," Guinier said. "We can spark the debate we have so often been denied."

"We were the minority within a minority, whose existence had been swallowed with neutral terms used in educating gentleman," she said. "Silence was the price of our presence."

# Black women scholars seize chance to share notes

By Alice Dembner  
GLOBE STAFF

CAMBRIDGE — For Gwendolyn Zoharah Simmons, the troubles come from all sides.

As a black female graduate student in the predominantly white religious studies department at Temple University in Philadelphia, she says she faces racially demeaning remarks in class and a feeling that she doesn't belong.

As a teaching assistant, she tries to provide other black students with the support she wishes she were getting, even though it leaves her struggling to keep up with her own work.

Simmons says that her self-confidence, developed over years in the workforce as a development officer for the American Friends Service Committee, helps her shrug off problems, but does little to ease her disillusionment with university life.

Yesterday, however, she was buoyed by the opportunity to share her experiences

with hundreds of others at a national conference on black women in academia.

About 1,500 black women scholars — from undergraduates to professors to college presidents — have gathered at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology this week to share ideas and support. For many it is a rare chance to break the isolation they suffer daily as the only black female in their department or even institution.

"To see all these women already teaching validates my place in the academy," said Simmons, whose department of 17 includes only one black faculty member and graduated its first black doctoral student in 1992. "It's a treat to the eyes as well as the mind."

The conference also provided inspiration for Jonora K. Jones, an MIT sophomore from Houston who hopes to become a university professor of history.

"Walking across Mass. Ave. and seeing hordes of black women academics was a special experience," she said. "As a black student here, it gets very lonely."

For Tricia Rose, the conference afforded a chance to discuss race and black women's

**White colleagues  
'presume you can't  
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[through affirmative  
action]. You're smart!'**

TRICIA ROSE  
Assistant professor, NYU

scholarship without having to fight to get it on the agenda.

As an assistant professor of African studies and history at New York University, she

attends many conferences where she feels she has to work twice as hard as whites to be heard, particularly because her work focuses on contemporary black culture.

While she says she has been fortunate to attend Yale and Brown universities and has done well, she believes she has faced consistent subtle forms of discrimination from white colleagues.

"They presume you can't handle certain kinds of analytical work," she said. "And when they see you can, then the lights come on. You're not a person we had to bring in [through affirmative action]. You're smart!"

As an assistant professor of educational policy studies and sociology at the University of Illinois at Urbana, Bernice McNair Barnett has felt similar pressure to prove herself.

"There's a perception that black women experience multiple advantages, but there's not an understanding that they face multiple disadvantages," she said.

Getting hired is getting easier, she said, but receiving tenure — or a lifetime appointment — is very difficult, in part because black

women are asked to spend so much time serving on committees as "the black voice" and mentoring students that they lose time for their research and teaching.

Mary Johnson Osirim, the only African-American woman teaching at Bryn Mawr College in Pennsylvania, hopes to get tenure this spring in sociology, having successfully juggled the roles of teacher, scholar, adviser and committee member.

To ease the isolation, she helped organize an alliance of Asian, Latino, Native American and black faculty and staff at Bryn Mawr and nearby Haverford and Swarthmore colleges.

Fostering similar connections among black women at institutions across the nation was a goal of the conference organizers, and one that Osirim was actively pursuing.

Other conference goals included encouraging more black women to become professors and spurring their academic work.

"This is a validation of my own experiences, a reaffirmation of who we are as a people," said Osirim. "But above all, it is empowering. We are not here as victims."

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YUEH Z. LEE—THE TECH

Lani Guinier opened the conference on "Black Women in the Academy" with her keynote speech about her withdrawn nomination to head the civil rights section of the Justice Department. Guinier defended her support of cumulative voting.

# Guinier Speaks To Kresge Crowd

By Sarah Y. Keightley  
NEWS EDITOR

On Thursday morning, Lani Guinier spoke at the opening of the "Black Women in the Academy: Defending Our Name 1894-1994" conference held at MIT. Using humor and anecdotes to illustrate her points, she captivated the audience that filled Kresge Auditorium.

Guinier studied at Radcliffe College, then went on to Yale Law School, graduating in 1974. She is a civil rights attorney, and spent seven years as a litigator for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. Since 1992 she has been a professor at the University of Pennsylvania Law School.

In April, Clinton nominated Guinier to be Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights. Because some of her scholarly work created much controversy, he withdrew her nomination in June.

Guinier's speech focused on the unique role of black women in academia, her withdrawn nomination for Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights, and her support for cumulative voting.

After her keynote address, she responded to questions from the audience. These questions ranged from how she would have handled her nomination differently to her opinion on specific legal issues to dealing with stereotypes.

The audience was clearly moved by her speech. Many women said they could relate perfectly to her experiences. Guinier received many thank you's and several requests for hugs.

Guinier began her talk by speaking of her Yale Law School expe-

# Guinier: Being a 'Minority within the Minority'

Guinier, from Page 1

riences. One of her professors called the class "gentlemen." "In his view, 'gentlemen' was an asexual term," Guinier said. This was evocative of the traditional values of men, she said.

She came to realize that she was a "minority within the minority" — a black woman.

What W.E.B. DuBois had called a "two-ness, the double identity of being black and an American," was now a "three-ness" for black women, Guinier said. Women have to take on what Mari Matsuda calls a "multiple consciousness," which is "a bifurcated thinking between personal consciousness and the 'gentleman's' consciousness that dominates the status quo."

## The withdrawn nomination

Guinier also spoke about her withdrawn nomination for Assistant Attorney General. Her main complaint was that she never got a chance to present herself and her ideas at a hearing. "The academy had prepared me well for being out-cast from the mainstream though accepted within it."

"I could not express ideas attributed to me because I wasn't allowed to speak for myself or explain myself," Guinier said.

The media took control of my image, she said. "The distortions were so gross, even my mother could not recognize me."

Guinier said she doesn't advocate quotas, but "Quota Queen" was an easy stereotype for her. "My real ideas were never allowed to emerge," she said. And though Guinier could never speak for herself, those who opposed her could speak out.

Still she assured the audience: "I did not get a hearing, but I did not lose my voice for long."

The big controversy arose when Guinier's critics focused on one of her law review articles that supported alternative electorate procedures. Though people have the right to

vote, that does not necessarily mean anything, Guinier said. For situations when 51 percent of the voters enjoy 100 percent of the power, they are excluding 49 percent of the voters, she said.

Guinier explained how groups can be excluded for participation, and how she believes this goes against the idea of fair play in a multi-racial democracy. As an 8-year-old Brownie, she resigned from a "rigged" hat-making contest. Another Brownie, whose mother was a hat maker and made her daughter's hat in front of everybody, won the contest. This "stands as an example of rules that are patently rigged or patently subverted," Guinier said.

"Yet sometimes, even when rules are perfectly fair in form, they serve in practice to exclude particular groups from meaningful participation," she said. "Some rules can seem just as unfair as the milliner who makes the winning hat for her daughter."

The fairness of majority rule assumes shifting majorities — losers on one issue may be winners on another issue — connected with the value of cooperation, she said. But, "sometimes the majority is a fixed group that seems to rule by ignoring the minority."

Quoting James Madison, Guinier said the "tyranny of the majority requires safeguards to protect one part of society against the injustice of the other part." Guinier's solution is cumulative voting, allowing all voters to take turns and ensuring that "majority rule does not become majority tyranny."

## Minority shut out by majority

As an alternative to "winner-take-all" decision making, Guinier supports the idea of cumulative voting. Under this system, even the loser gets something, and the rule of taking turns results in a positive sum solution, she said.

For example, last spring a private high school in Chicago had two proms — one mainly attended by

white students and the other mainly attended by black students. The controversy arose when the all-white prom committee was choosing songs. Each student could vote for three songs, and the songs with the most votes would be played at the prom. It turned out that many of the black student's songs were not chosen.

The black students felt shut out by the decision-making process based on majority rule. Guinier quoted one student as saying: "With us being in the minority, we're always out-voted. It's as if we don't count."

White students were hurt that their black peers were holding a separate prom. They thought the black students were not playing by the rules, namely the supposedly fair majority rule, Guinier said.

An alternative to the situation would be to give each student 10 votes to place on how ever many songs, reflecting the intensity of their preferences. In this way, the black students could pool their votes to hear some of their songs at the prom. So even if the majority's favorite songs were played more often, the "songs that the minority enjoyed would also show up on the roster."

## Not a new idea

Cumulative voting is not a new idea, Guinier said. "Thirty states require or permit corporations to use this system to elect their boards of directors," and both Reagan and Bush supported it under the Voting Rights Act, she added.

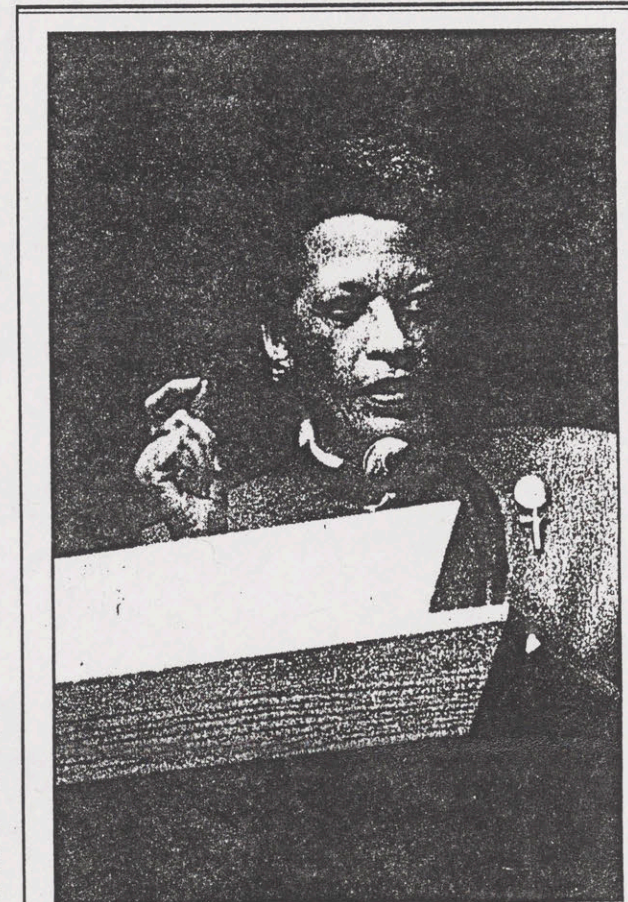
"Yes, I didn't get a hearing, nor as a female-gentleman law student did I speak out, but as a result of conferences like this one ... some of us are working to ensure that other voices are heard," Guinier said.

Guinier advised the conference participants to "spark the debate that we have so often been denied." She

also urged the participants not to speak with anger — "We are survivors, not victims." Through conversation, black women can share their insight and through collaboration they can work to solve prob-

lems.

"Gifted with second sight, we can share our stories ... build coalitions, develop a voice. ... We shall speak until all the people gain a voice."



YUEH Z. LEE—THE TECH

Johnnetta B. Cole, president of Spelman College, gives the second keynote address at the Black Women in the Academy conference.

# Davis Discusses Issues Concerning Black Women

By Rishi Shrivastava  
STAFF REPORTER

Angela Y. Davis spoke in Kresge Auditorium on Saturday afternoon, at the closing of the "Black Women in the Academy: Defending Our Name 1894-1994" conference.

Davis, a professor at the University of California, Santa Cruz, has been a spokeswoman on racial and economic issues, as well as women's rights, for more than twenty years.

She addressed the conference's theme at the beginning of her speech. "We've been called upon to defend the names of many of our sisters in sometimes new and provocative ways," Davis said.

Recently, black women came to the defense of Anita Hill, Lani Guinier, and Johnnetta B. Cole when they were attacked by the right wing. However, black women could have defended Guinier better when she was considered for Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights in the Clinton Administration, she said.

She stressed the need to further defend black women such as Surgeon General Jocelyn Elders. Elders had the courage to suggest drug decriminalization, Davis said.

"I want to publicly thank my sister Toni Morrison," Davis said. She said Morrison, the first black female Nobel Laureate, has defended the name of black women to the world.

## New problems for black women

Davis went on to speak about the new problems black women face. "While courageous people fought to make the walls of academia less impenetrable, these very victories have spawned new problems and foreshadow new struggles."

The rights of all black women are not respected equally, she con-

tended. It is not more important that an assistant professor is denied tenure than that a secretary is trapped in a dead-end job, she said. "What was and remains a problem is the premise that middle class women necessarily embody a standard that poor sisters should be encouraged to emulate."

Davis then discussed sexual harassment in the work place. Since black women held mainly domestic jobs from the end of slavery to World War II, they were particularly susceptible to sexual harassment, Davis said. Furthermore, the white public would wrongly blame these black women when harassment occurred, she said.

In other matters, more education is necessary to prevent the spread of AIDS, she said. Also, Davis called for campaigns to acknowledge the "sexual autonomy of young black women."

## Four guidelines

Davis outlined four major guidelines for black women to follow. First, "we can no longer assume that there is one monolithic force against which we position ourselves in order to defend our name. It's not just the white establishment," she said.

Also, "there is a sense in which neo-liberalism and neo-conservatism are coming dangerously close together." For example, Davis said both groups are raising reverse discrimination arguments and are also taking stances against affirmative action.

Her second guideline was that black women refrain from talking to each other in ways they themselves do not wish to be addressed by others. "We can no longer ignore the ways in which we sometimes end up reproducing the very forms of domination which we like

to attribute to something or somebody else."

Davis's third point concerned society's criteria for characterizing black women. "We have to go out of the habit of assuming that the masses of black women are to be defined in accordance with their status as victims." Furthermore, she said it is wrong for blacks to portray themselves as victims to gain advantage "like when Clarence Thomas invoked the idea that he was the victim of a high-tech lynching."

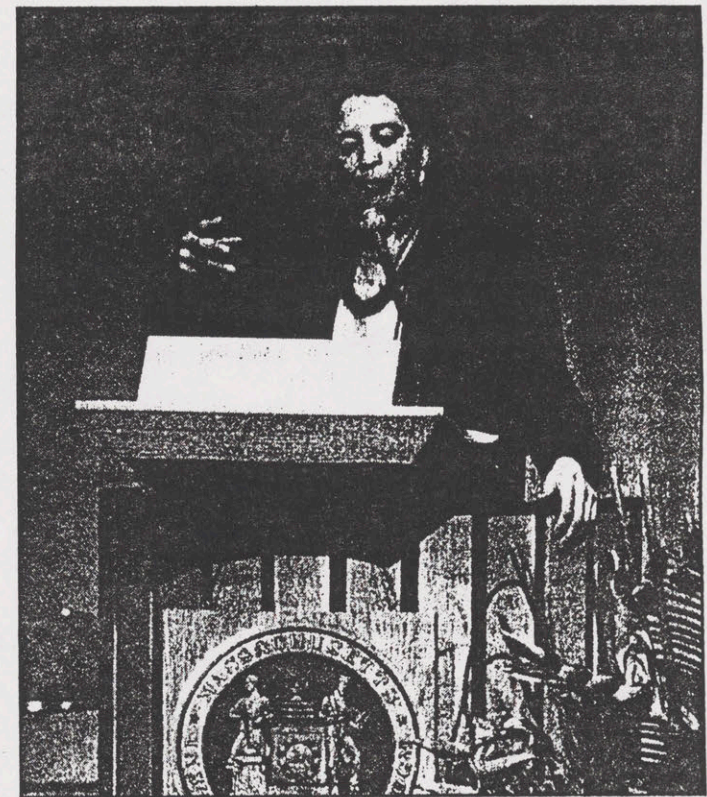
In her final recommendation, Davis argued against damaging race relations with other minorities. "We cannot afford to commit ourselves so fervently to defending our names that we end up poisoning ourselves against" other races.

## Opinions on recent issues

Davis also expressed her opinions on recent controversial issues. She criticized the government's treatment of illegal immigrants. "Black migrant workers from the South were historically treated in very much the same way as undocumented Latinos are treated today." We must all discourage backlash against immigrants and understand that they are not responsible for high unemployment, she said.

In addition, socialism is not an empirically flawed concept, Davis said. "Just because socialist states have fallen ... for reasons that had much more to do with a lack of democracy than with socialism itself, this doesn't mean that socialism is an obsolete political project."

Regarding criminal issues, sentencing guidelines are inherently biased against blacks, Davis said. For example, she said that the sentence for possessing crack is the same as the sentence for possessing 100 times as much powdered



YUEH Z. LEE—THE TECH  
Angela Y. Davis gives the concluding address to the "Black Women in the Academy" conference on Saturday afternoon.

cocaine to get the same sentence as one who possesses crack. This law is discriminatory because blacks use crack more often than they use powdered cocaine, she said.

Also, increased prison construction only promotes crime, and incarceration should be abolished for many groups, she said. In fact, Davis suggested the possibility of releasing women from jails since they are generally involved in less violent crimes.

Davis said prisoners should be

given voting rights. She said state laws prohibiting inmate voting rights discriminate against minorities because a disproportionate number of inmates are black or Latino. Approximately four million prisoners in the United States are denied suffrage, she said.

She concluded by emphasizing the need for a new United States-Caribbean policy, especially for Cuba and by encouraging the audience to attend a 1995 women's conference in Beijing.

Bay State Banner 1/20/94

## Black women demand inclusion in academia

Richard Thorpe

"I came to represent America's worst fears about race. Sentences, words, even phrases separated by paragraphs in my 'controversial' law review articles were served up to demonstrate I was outside the mainstream of polite society."

Those words, uttered by University of Pennsylvania Law School Professor Lani Guinier, were part of a dialogue of empowerment by hundreds of African American women from the halls of academia.

Spelman College President Dr. Johnetta Cole and Angela Davis, a professor at the University of California at Santa Cruz joined Guinier

as keynote speakers at the event.

Guinier received national attention last spring when her nomination as assistant attorney general was withdrawn by President Clinton after he deemed her legal writing and opinions too controversial for his administration.

In her speech on the opening day of the conference, Guinier helped set the tone of a three-day event at MIT, "Black Women in the Academy: Defending Our Name 1894-1994." The purpose of the national event was to come up with methods to increase the number of black women in academia, as well as to make sure their voices are

*continued to page 10*



MIT Professor Evelyn Hammond joins University of Pennsylvania Law Professor Lani Guinier and MIT Professor Robin Kilson at a press conference following Guinier's keynote address during the

"Black Women in the Academy: Defending Our Name" conference at MIT. Guinier spoke chiefly about her highly publicized Justice Department nomination process. (Julia Cheng photo)

## • academia

*continued from page 1*  
heard.

According to the conference statement of purpose, cowritten by MIT Professors Robin Kilson and Evelynn M. Hammonds—the conference conveners, 14,366 of the 38,814 people who earned doctorate degrees from American universities in 1992 were women. However, only 570 of those women were African American. Together, black men and women make up about only 2.5 percent of tenured

faculty personnel in the United States.

They explained: "The issue of advancement through the ranks of the academy is therefore critical," Kilson and Hammond said. "The conference is intended to provide a rare opportunity for black female members to meet and talk to each other across ranks and disciplines; most African American women scholars find themselves the sole female of color in their departments and institutions."

Kilson described the historical significance of the conference, hence its name.

"During the Columbian World Exposition of 1893, blacks were denied full representation. Fannie Barrier Williams, a black activist, was allowed to address the Ladies Pavilion meeting and she basically said that as black people, we have to stand up for ourselves," Kilson explained.

"In 1993 [when the conference was being planned] it didn't seem as though that much had changed. Black women are still ignored, looked down upon and blamed for promiscuity and the downfall of American society. We are only

thought of as welfare queens, teenage mothers and referred to as bitches and ho's."

MIT's president, Charles M. Vest, stated his support of the conference's goal, while calling for accelerated and thoughtful mentoring and recruitment programs to increase the low number of female African American faculty members.

Last year, Vest said, 25 percent of all the black women who earned Ph.D.s in chemical engineering in this country joined MIT's faculty.

"That was one woman. So you see my point. The important way to increase the opportunities universities have to recruit black women

for faculty posts is by encouraging more young black women to pursue academic careers," said Vest.

Most of Guinier's comments were in direct response to her Justice Department nomination process, during which Clinton, a longtime friend, refused to grant a hearing for Guinier to defend her views and the attacks against her. She urged the 1,500 participants to join forces and speaking out when injustice and media attacks prevail.

"I didn't get a hearing. Nor as a female 'gentleman' law student did I speak out. But as a result of conferences like the one in Boston, organized by women of color in the  
*continued to page 12*

## ● academia

*continued from page 10*

academy, some of us are working to ensure that other voices are heard. And by insisting on our ability to speak out about our ideas, we can spark the debate that we have so often been denied.

"But when we speak, despite our experience, we need not speak from anger: for we are women with a gift, not a grievance. Real democracy is strengthened by including those who were left out. Our gift then is to turn silence into

the "double whammy" of the aforementioned isms, while calling for African American females in the academy to use the tools like the conference to make universities and American society as a whole more reflective of its racial, sexual and ethnic diversity.

"African American women have the best chance of being change agents and transforming America as ever," said Cole. "The academy does not stand apart from America, it's very much a part of American

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*"The conference is intended to provide a rare opportunity for black female members to meet and talk to each other across ranks and disciplines...."*

— Robin Kilson

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insight and make a chorus of many voices..." said Guinier.

The conference, which featured 60 panel sessions, had diverse topics such as "Black Female Sacrificial Political Lambs: Anita Hill and Lani Guinier," and "Black Women and the Welfare State: Intersections of Social Policy."

Spellman's Johnetta Cole, in her electrifying address, spoke of the academy as a microcosm of society, an institution filled with racism and sexism. She underscored the trials of black women having to live with what she called

society. The academy is an intense reflection of society at large."

Cole said that increasing the number of African American females in academia was paramount.

"We do appear on the boards of trustees of colleges and universities. We are not in large numbers [in academia] but we are here. We have slipped through the cracks where hordes should have been," said Cole.

Cole, a former anthropology professor at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, said that black women in academia, as in

other professions, must resist self-oppression. At the same time, diligent efforts must be made so that university administrators do not deliberately exclude qualified black women candidates from being hired, she said.

"We've looked high and low and we couldn't find one so we had to hire another white man," Cole characterized generic university officials to enthusiastic applause from the audience.

She also suggested that since black women are the most oppressed, that they are in a unique position to help remedy the problem in academia.

"Black women know what it is like to witness racism and sexism. Clearly, in the academy, life ain't been no crystal stair," said Cole. We have the ability to see racism and sexism more clearly than others because African Americans have been oppressed the most. You might say it is double vision."

Following Cole's remarks, Vinie Burrows, a New York-based performance artist, gave a riveting slice of life into the experience of African women all over the world.

Wearing a green dress and a long sash that she expertly used to alter her appearance, Burrows, transformed herself from a child in sequences depicting female circumcision and rape, to an older woman's tales of woe and exhilaration.

Burrows also portrayed Winnie Mandela, Sojourner Truth and a multitude of women from Mali, the United Kingdom, Egypt and the

United States. Partly humorous and at times riveting, Burrows's 90-minute routine was a brilliant look at black women.

Burrows began her career as a child actress. She started performing solo after becoming disillusioned by the lack of quality roles for black women on Broadway, and also directs and creates her own productions.



# LOCAL • NEWS • NATIONAL

## Black lesbians in academe speak Jan. 15 at conference

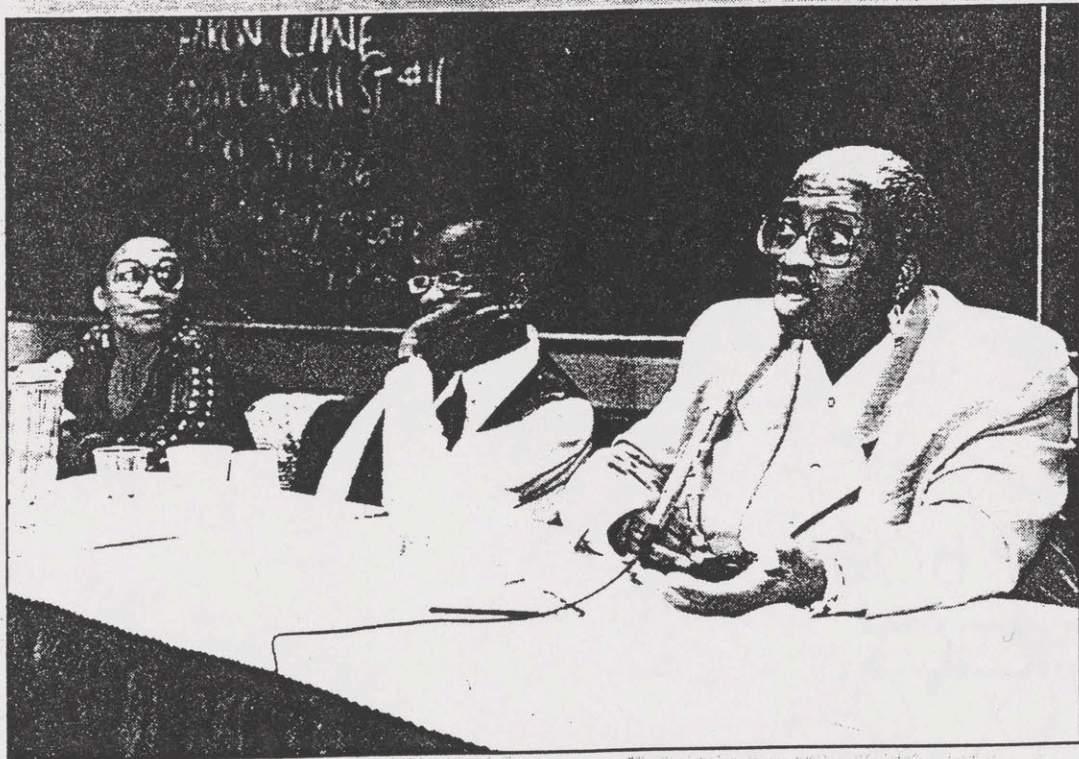


PHOTO: MARIANN HUMPHRIES

Black lesbian academics spoke to their experiences at a Jan. 15 workshop at a larger conference, titled, "Black Women in the Academy: Defending Our Name, 1894-1994." Pictured above are, left to right, Marva Nelson of Southern Illinois University, C. Lindi Emoungu of MIT, and Angela Bowen of Clark University. The conference took place at MIT from Jan. 13 - 15.

Cambridge Chronicle  
January 20, 1994

## Black women scholars call for change at MIT conference

BY JONATHAN R. SEGAL  
Special to the Chronicle

**S**ome 1,600 black women scholars came to the MIT campus last week to discuss their common struggles in academia and address the problems black women have experienced in the political world.

Among the participants were Lani Guinier, President Clinton's former nominee to head the Civil Rights Division of the Justice Department, Johnnetta Cole, president of Spelman College, and Angela Davis, professor at the University of California, Santa Cruz.

The conference, "Black Women in the Academy: Defending Our Name 1894-1994," consisted of more than 60 panels, workshops and roundtable discussions on such varied topics as "Black Women and the Welfare State," "Race and Gender Politics in Academic Culture," and "Black Female Sacrificial Political Lambs."

Organized by MIT professors Robin Kilson and Evelyn Hammonds, the conference was the first national meeting focusing on the issues of black women in higher education. Both Kilson and Hammonds said they felt the need for such a conference because of their feelings of isolation, as two of only three black women on the MIT faculty.

The conference also addressed the political realities of black women today.

In her keynote address, Guinier criticized the Clinton Administration for not following through on its pledge to reinvigorate the civil rights

division of the Justice Department.

Guinier, whose nomination to the Justice Department post was withdrawn amid controversy surrounding her views on voting rights, added that there is "a vacuum of leadership" on civil rights issues in Washington and urged black women scholars to "work for change."

Some members of the conference issued a call to black women to be more inclusive in their struggle for equal opportunity.

In a roundtable discussion Friday, "Political (Re)Awakening of Black Women," Davis discussed the need for black women to cast aside the barriers of identity politics and reach out to other women of color to join in their struggle.

"It's about time black women step out and support activist organizations by other women," said Davis. "This is a historical moment when we as black women have to think about not reproducing the very hierarchies that exist today."

The three-day event, which was sponsored by MIT, Wellesley College and Radcliffe College, also provided some potential signs of progress in the realm of academia, where black women currently account for only 1.9 percent of all tenure-track faculty.

As he opened the conference, MIT president Charles Vest encouraged black women to pursue academic careers, saying that opportunities await those who focus on science and engineering.

"Science and engineering... are human endeavors. And they will reach their full potential only when their leaders and practitioners bring a wide range of experiences and perspectives to the profession. Thus, we need more women, and more black women, in advanced roles in order to be as successful as possible."

*Boston Globe 1/26/94*

### **Globe's coverage of meeting was superb**

The Boston Globe's coverage of the conference "Black Women in the Academy: Defending Our Name, 1894-1994," was superb. With the Jan. 9 publication of the text of Lani Guinier's address to the conference and intelligent reporting (Jan. 14-15) on the rationale for the conference, the conference highlights and the sense of affirmation experienced by the 2,010 conferees, the Globe contributed to the documentation of a historic episode in higher education.

The administration of MIT, which hosted the conference, ensured the success of the event. The remarks of MIT President Charles Vest and MIT's effort to create an inclusive climate enhanced the comfort of conferees.

FLORENCE C. LADD, director  
Bunting Institute  
Radcliffe College  
Cambridge

*The Globe welcomes correspondence from readers. US mail address: Letters to the Editor, The Boston Globe, Boston 02107-2378.*

*The Internet address:  
letter@globe.com*



**CONFERENCE CROWD**—Hundreds of people packed Kresge Auditorium for the start of the Black Women in the Academy conference, which included questions and comments from audience members to the speakers. The first-of-its-kind event drew more than 2,000 attendees. **Photo by Donna Coveney**

### THOUSANDS STRONG

## Black Women Send Appeal to Clinton

This month's heavily attended conference focusing on black women academics culminated in an appeal to President Clinton asking him for action on a variety of domestic and international issues.

The appeal, drafted by some of the more than 2,000 attendees at the conference entitled "Black Women in the Academy: Defending Our Name 1894-1994," asked President Clinton to com-

mission a blue-ribbon panel on race relations; to promote black women's research and extend the Glass Ceiling Commission to address women of color in academia; to extend funding for community-based social service organizations for the poor; to end covert actions against Haiti and restore President Aristide to power, and to continue to support democracy in South and Southern Africa.

"Critical aspects of this new public policy initiative must center on economic independence, not just welfare reform; the non-demonization of black youth in the anti-crime bill and elsewhere, and youth upliftment programs," the letter said in reference to domestic social initiatives.

Attendance was considerably greater than the 500-600 initially expected. *(continued on page 8)*

# Black Women Pen Appeal to Clinton

(continued from page 1)

pected for the event, which took place on campus Jan. 13-15 and was conceived and planned by Assistant Professors Robin Kilson and Evelyn Hammonds. Attendees and more than 50 members of the media came from all over the country. The keynote speakers were Professor Lani Guinier of the University of Pennsylvania Law School, Dr. Johnnetta Cole, president of Spelman College, and Professor Angela Davis of the University of California, Santa Cruz.

At the opening of the conference, President Charles M. Vest called for accelerated and thoughtful programs of recruitment and mentoring to increase the numbers of black women academics at the nation's colleges and universities. Mentoring and career development are crucial for black women academics, "but it won't do the job alone—not until there are more black women on the faculty to share the load," he said.

Last year, Dr. Vest said, 25 percent of all the black women who earned PhDs in chemical engineering in the United States—four—joined the tenure-track faculty at MIT. "That was one woman. So you see my point," he said. The most important way to increase the opportunities universities have to recruit black women for faculty posts is by encouraging more young black women to pursue academic careers, he added.

"Science and engineering... are human endeavors. And they will reach their full potential only when their leaders and practitioners bring a wide range

of experiences and perspectives to the profession," Dr. Vest said. "Thus, we need more women, and more black women, in advanced roles in order to be as successful as possible."

Conference attendees participated in more than 60 sessions, many dealing with issues of how academia and black women relate to each other, such as the session entitled "Race and Gender Politics in Academic Culture." Many sessions also dealt with reaching into society in general. Discussions ranged from the welfare state to the power of information to the portrayal of black women in Hollywood and the media.

The Jan. 14 panel session "The Political (Re)Awakening of Black Women: What's Feminism Got to Do With It?" was one of the most popular. Attendees crowded into the room to

hear a discussion about whether feminism was a match for black women and the need to act together and in support of others such as Asian women. Panel members included Angela Davis, Kimberle Crenshaw of the University of California in Santa Cruz, Gina Dent of Columbia and Wahneema Lubiano of Princeton.

Other large sessions included "Black Female Sacrificial Political Lambs: Anita Hill and Lani Guinier" and "The Truth of Our Lives: Black Women's Narratives as Primary Knowledge Sources."



**WORDS OF WISDOM**—Keynote speaker Lani Guinier, a professor of law at the University of Pennsylvania, drew repeated applause during her address.

Photo by Donna Coveney

# Choose issues carefully, Angela Davis advises

Damola Jegede

Women around the world rose to the defense of a young black woman who was arrested for three capital crimes in 1970.

On Saturday, Angela Y. Davis returned the favor as a keynote speaker for the Black Women in the Academy Conference themed, "Defending Our Name: 1894-1994"

The veteran activist spoke

mainly on the government's treatment of people of color, but called on African Americans to acknowledge and take responsibility for some of the problems within their communities.

"We cannot just fight the white establishment," said Davis. "We have to defend our name in those places we consider home as well."

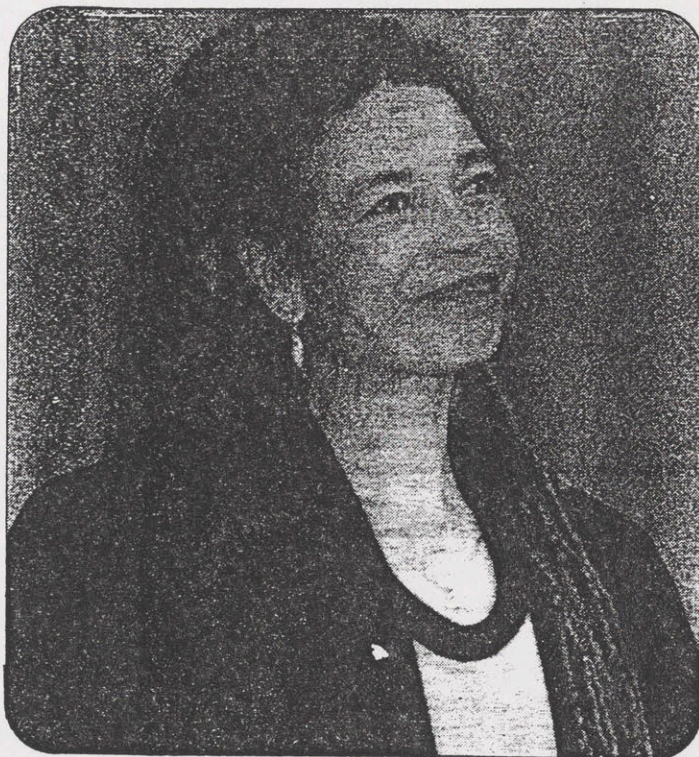
Davis expressed a longing for the return of the '60s, where po-

litical lines were more clearly drawn.

"Things were so much simpler. We knew who the enemy was," she said. "We can no longer assume that there is a monolithic force against which we position ourselves."

Davis commented that racism and sexism has been sewn into government policies, from immigration to prison sentencing to White House treatment of prominent African American women.

"Because black people were so instrumental in the election of Clinton, we often find it difficult to talk about the extent to which the



Professor Angela Davis addresses the audience at an MIT forum on Black Women in the Academy. Professor Davis spoke on government policies toward blacks and criticized the Clinton administration's commitment to blacks. (Julia Cheng photo)

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*"....we often find it difficult to talk about the extent to which the erasure of race by the new Democrats mirrors the arguments by neo-Conservatives."*

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— Angela Davis

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erasure of race by the new Democrats mirrors the arguments by neo-Conservatives," said Davis, listing arguments against affirmative action and the implications of reverse discrimination as examples.

*continued to page 13*

*continued from page 2*

"There's a system in which neo-liberalism and neo-conservatism are coming dangerously close together," she said.

"The Clinton administration does not deal with issues of racial discrimination, even in the health care plan. What kind of discussion has there been about safeguarding people of color who are already subject to the worst kind of racial discrimination? None."

Davis also talked about the distribution of the Norplant contraceptive, which causes temporary sterility, in Baltimore high schools.

"In the debate against Norplant in

the schools there is the evolution of the specter of genocide, black genocide. But what doesn't get talked about is the women themselves. There is no discussion of safe sex."

African Americans are supporting policies that are detrimental to communities of color, Davis said.

"We have to acknowledge that our first black woman senator has sponsored the anticrime bill. I think it is important for us to write her and tell her that she needs to look at that a second time," said Davis.

"I'm not holding Carol Mosely-Braun by herself responsible for this trend, because within the black community, there is an ever-in-

creasing cry for more police and more prisons.

"We have to look at the hidden racialization of sentencing policies. Federal sentencing guidelines make the mandatory minimum for crack cocaine much higher than the minimum for powdered cocaine,"

"The omnibus Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1986 requires five years in prison for possession of more than five grams of crack. For the same sentence of powdered cocaine, you have to have 100 times this much (500 grams)."

But only 25 percent of de-

drugs, we have witnessed the insane proliferation of jails and prisons. Dr. Joycelyn Elders has had the courage to place the issue of decriminalization of drugs across our political agenda," said Davis.

"Because she raised the only reasoned solution, she has been harshly rebuked by the White House. Clinton has employed that same distancing strategy in relation to Joycelyn Elders as in relation to Lani Guinier," said Davis.

Abolishing jails and prisons for a substantial section of the incarcerated may also be an alternative, according to Davis.

"I think we can start with the women and then move on. A vast majority of women are in jails and prisons for nonviolent crimes like welfare fraud."

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*"When slavery was abolished, it was abolished for all except those in prison. In many ways, those structures of domination have continued."*

— Angela Davis

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said Davis. "More than 90 percent of defendants in crack cases are black.

defendants in powdered cocaine cases are black, said Davis.

"In the name of the war against

*continued to page 21*

*continued from page 13*

The jail and prison system is a continuation of slavery, said Davis.

"When slavery was abolished, it was abolished for all except those in prison. In many ways, those structures of domination have continued, hidden away behind the walls," explained Davis.

"The vast majority of states do not even allow inmates to vote. We're talking about at least four million people in this country who do not have the right to vote, a disproportionate number of whom are black and Latino."

African Americans need to be concerned about struggles in all communities of color, said Davis.

"Black migrant workers from the South were historically treated very much the same way as undocumented Latinas are treated today," said Davis. "There are Latina immigrant women, Asian immigrant women, Haitian immigrant women. On the West Coast, there is a

strong tendency for African Americans to support the crackdown on undocumented immigrants from Mexico and Central America."

"We have to speak loudly against the anti-immigrant backlash. Joblessness in the black community has reached crisis proportions, but joblessness in our various communities is not a result of immigrant workers," Davis said.

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*When you attain this pure knowledge,  
ignorance never troubles you again.  
You pervade the entire cosmos.  
Your freedom accomplishes everything.*

—Swami Muktananda

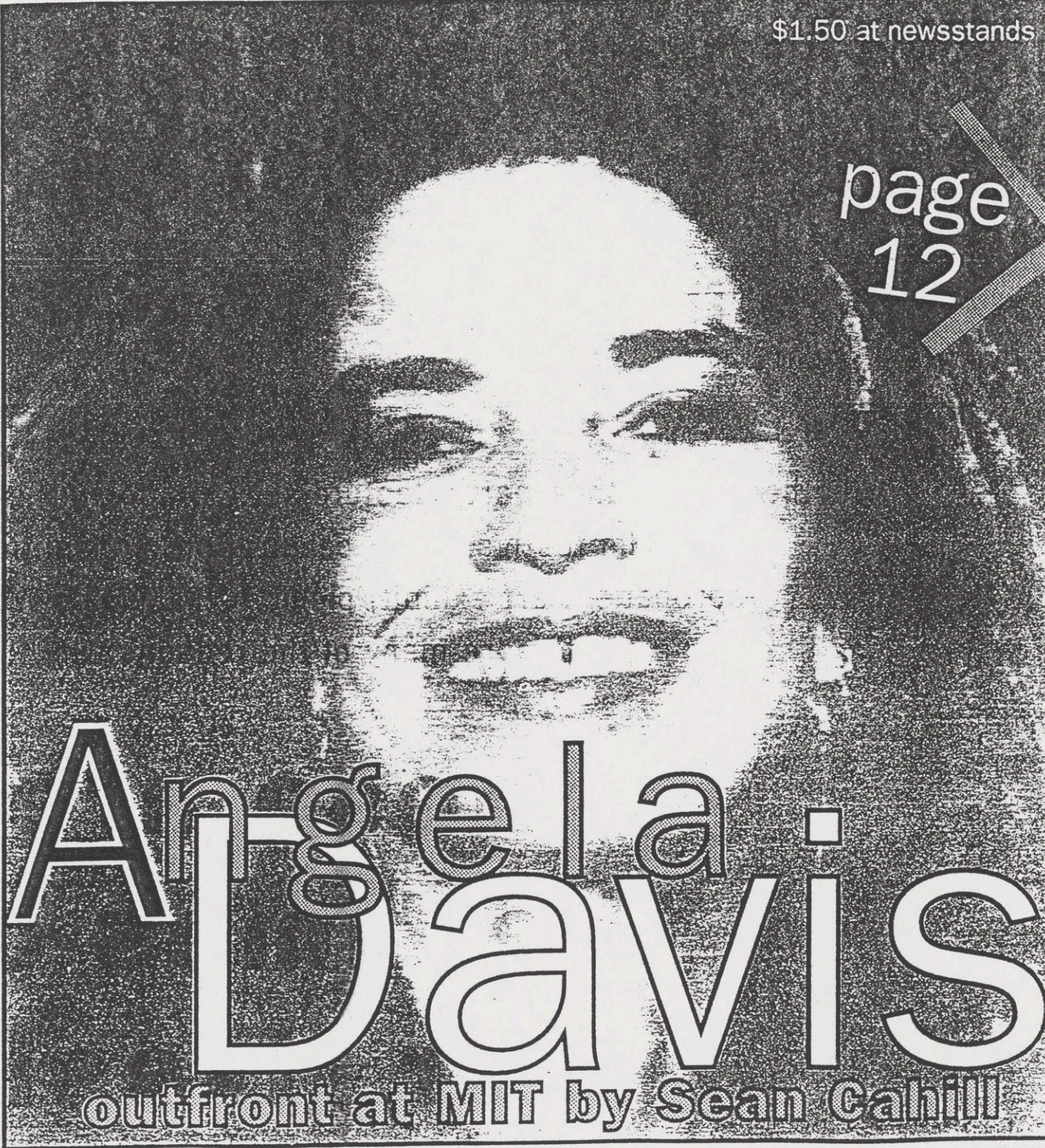
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# Angela Davis

outfront at MIT by Sean Cahill



# Angela Davis

addresses sexuality,  
race and class at



Photo by Brian Lanker © 1989

by Sean Cahill

**“R**epresentations of black women have historically been bound up with images of racial hypersexualization,” Angela Davis told a crowd of 2,000 gathered at MIT January 15 to discuss the state of black women in academia. In order to defend black women against sexual abuse and harassment which, “up until the 1950s, was a major problem” in American workplaces, black women unwittingly engaged in their own subjugation, Davis argued.

White men defined black women, as well as black men, as oversexed, “inferior sexual animals,” Davis said. “In the defense of black women’s sexual purity, of the morality of black women, sexual agency was for the most part denied.”

Davis, life-long anti-racist, anti-capitalist and feminist activist and Professor in the History of Consciousness at the University of California at Santa Cruz, was the keynote speaker at a conference titled “Black Women in the Academy: Defending our Name 1894-1994,” which attracted over 2,000 scholars and activists, most of them African American women, to MIT this month.

“In the aftermath of slavery, sexuality was one of the few realms in which black women could exercise some autonomy,” Davis said. “This denial of sexual agency may have been the denial of freedom for working class black women.”

## Targeting young black women’s sexuality

“Young black women’s sexuality is the unstated target” of pregnancy prevention programs, including a plan to distribute Norplant, which temporarily prevents fertility, in the Baltimore Public Schools, Davis claimed. Government officials in Philadelphia also floated the idea of requiring Welfare mothers to take Norplant to regulate their reproduction.

“Most campaigns against teen pregnancy fail to describe the possibility of sexual autonomy among young black women. George Will wrote in support of the Baltimore program, stating that ‘distribution of Norplant in schools may be the most feasible preventative’ of teen pregnancy,” Davis said. “But what doesn’t get talked about are the women themselves and the need for education to keep them out of situations where they might get AIDS. There is not discussion of safe sex here - only whether they have a baby.”

## “Defending the names of our sisters”: janitors as well as law professors

“In the very recent period we have been called upon to defend the names of our sisters often in new and provocative ways - Anita Hill, [one-time nominee for Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights]

IN Newsweekly

January 30, 1994

Lani Guinier, [US Surgeon General] Jocelyn Elders," Davis said. "[Recently named Nobel Laureate] Toni Morrison has dramatically defended our name before the world. But our victories in making the academy more open have sparked new problems, new struggles."

Davis cautioned the crowd of black women academics gathered from around the world against buying into the elitism often found in academia: "Why is it considered more important to defend the name of the assistant professor denied tenure than the secretary kept in a dead-end job, or the woman of color janitor not allowed to organize?"

Davis implored her audience to become involved with other struggles, especially those with which other people of color - Latinas and Latinos, Caribbean Islanders, Native Americans, Asians - find themselves confronted, including growing anti-immigrant sentiment, which is especially pronounced in California. "On the West Coast, there is a strong tendency among African American women to support the crackdown on Mexican immigrants," she said. "Joblessness in our communities is not the result of immigrant workers taking our jobs. Black migrant workers from the South were historically treated the same way that undocumented Latino workers are treated today," Davis continued. "Like the black migrant worker in the past, the Latino migrant today has become the scapegoat of a faltering capitalist economy. We should not allow politicians to reinvent the lie that was used against our own people 30 years ago," she said, to thunderous applause.

Davis reiterated the conference's call for immediate US action to restore the democratically elected government of Jean-Bertrand Aristide to Haiti.

Davis also called for the release of most prisoners, a disproportionate percentage of whom are poor people of color. She said that "communities of color are becoming increasingly criminalized," and decried "the hidden racialization of sentencing" reflected in the disparity of mandatory sentences given for rock cocaine (crack) versus powder. While blacks are only 12% of those who regularly use drugs - equivalent to their proportion of the population - they are 36% of those arrested for drug violations. Ninety percent of defendants in crack cocaine cases are black, while only 25% of those in powder cocaine cases are black. Mandatory minimum sentences for possession of five grams or more of crack are five years, while "to get the same sentence for [possession of] powder you have to have 100 times as much," Davis said.

"There is a concealed racialization process going on here," she charged, and called for an end to the war on drugs and "the insane proliferation of jails." The US prison population doubled in the 1980s, and more new jails were built in a spree reminiscent of the anti-crime hysteria of Jacksonian America (1820s and 1830s). At least four million American citizens, a disproportionate number of them African American or Latino, do not have the right to vote because they are prisoners or on parole. Only three states, including Massachusetts, allow those involved in the "criminal justice system" to vote. "Dr. Elders has had the courage to place the issue of decriminalization of drugs on the political agenda - the one reasoned solution to this

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## Colin Powell and the politics of identity

"We can no longer assume there is a monolithic force against whom we must position ourselves," Davis advised. "It's not just the white establishment. The corporate and political establishments are becoming more integrated." She dismissed "talk of Colin Powell as our - whose? - first serious presidential candidate" as evidence of the folly of uncritical identity politics - the support for someone simply because they are black, lesbian, or the member of some other historically disenfranchised group. The human liberation activist also decried "the extent to which the erasure of race [as an issue] by the 'New Democrats' mirrors arguments by neoconservatives," and pointed to this as evidence that "neoconservatism and neoliberalism are coming dangerously close together."

"We can no longer ignore the ways we end up reproducing the very forms of domination we attribute to someone else," she warned. "For example, saying 'She ain't black - she doesn't even look black!' or 'She's too black - she talks like a preacher more than a professor!' or 'Her work isn't really about black women - she's only interested in lesbians.'"

"We must stop assuming that the masses of black women are to be defined according to the status of victim," Davis said, but also warned against holding up "successful" black women as examples, while disassociating oneself from poor women, and then claiming victimization while all the while benefiting from a system that victimizes and exploits others. Davis said that an example of this was [Supreme Court Justice] Clarence Thomas's claim that he was the victim of a "high-tech lynching".

Davis concluded with a call for help, especially from young people (Davis turns 50 this year), to "figure out how to make our resistance dramatic" and effective in the 1990s.

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"The radiation research on citizens unaware of the dangers is only the most recent revelation about our government's willingness to extend extraordinary freedom to scientists."

An assistant professor of journalism: B1

"If it had happened during the day with classes in session, it could have resulted in thousands of deaths."

An official at California State U. at Northridge, on the earthquake: A20

"I think tenure allows people who are not performing to continue in their job."

A trustee at the College of the Ozarks, which abolished its tenure system: A18

"People will mark time from before and after this conference."

A law professor at Emory U., on a meeting at MIT of black, female scholars: A17

"We need to stop encouraging ambiguous sexual encounters, treating them as though they are not potentially life-threatening. They are."

A senior and a former student, on Antioch's sexual-offense policy: B3

"It's going to cause a firestorm when people get around to reading it."

A professor of management science, on a controversial economic analysis of the AIDS epidemic: A9

"For the students, this has opened an unexpected window on the world."

A professor in Moscow, on a pilot project to bring distance learning to Russia: A41

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## Biggest-Yet Gathering of Black, Female Scholars: A17

DIANE WILTSHIRE MAKES A POINT AT MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

# This Week in The Chronicle

January 26, 1994

## THE COVER

### A Gathering of Black Women From Academe

More than 2,000 met at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where they celebrated their scholarship and aired their grievances: A17

## OTHER HIGHLIGHTS

### Campuses Hit Hard in California Quake

California State University at Northridge (*right*) and four community colleges were severely damaged in the strong earthquake that jolted the Los Angeles area: A20



DOUG MAZZAPICA, BLACK STAR

### Obtaining 'Informed Consent'

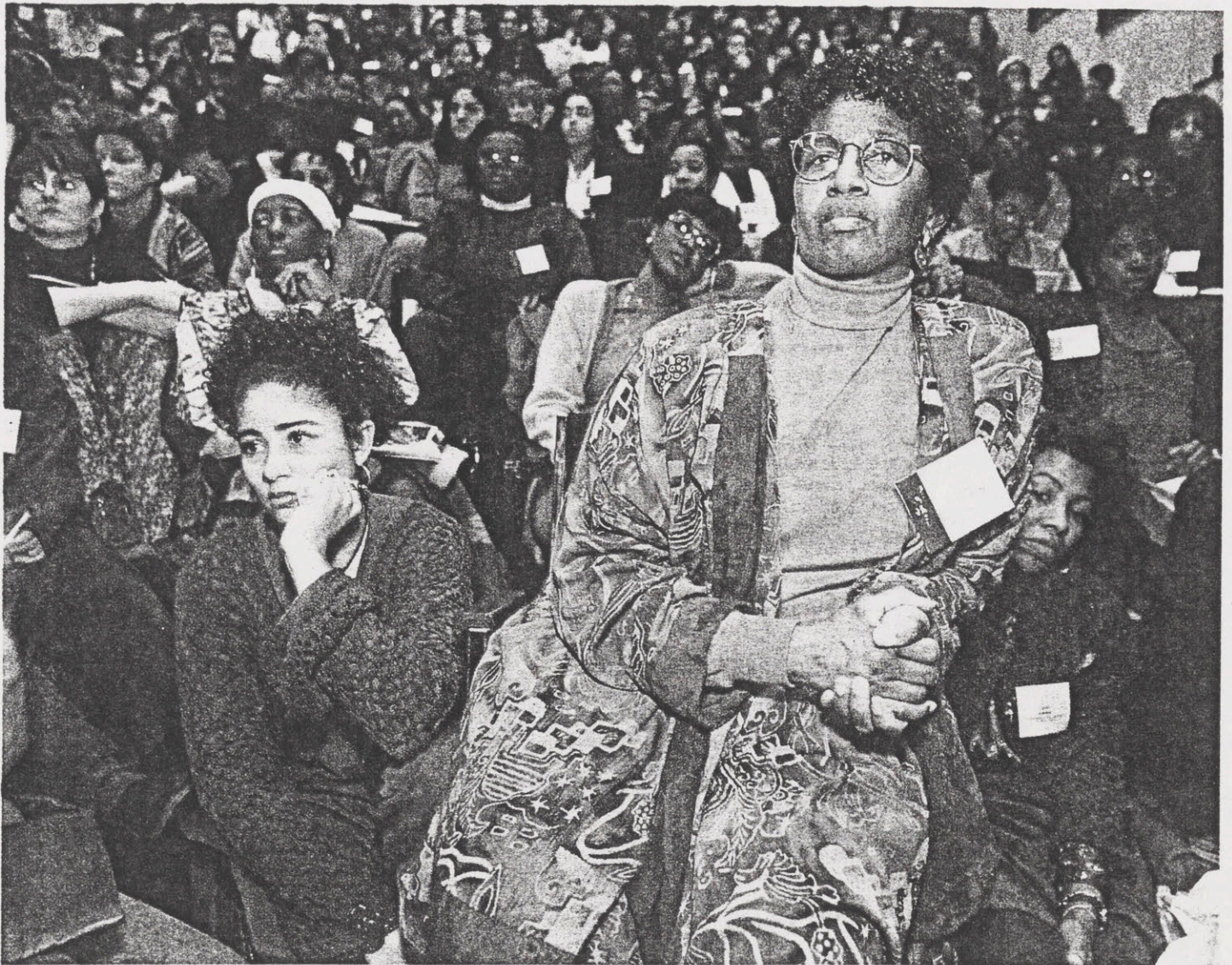
The controversy over decades-old radiation experiments has raised new questions about how today's scientists deal with the people they study: A8

### Whither Desegregation After Court's 1992 Ruling?

Much of what educators and legal experts predicted would happen in the wake of the Court's action on college desegregation has not taken place: A33

## Personal & Professional

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MARILYN HUMPHRIES, IMPACT VISUALS, FOR THE CHRONICLE

The organizers of a conference at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology on black women in academe initially planned for 500 attendees. More than 2,000 showed up.

# *Black Women in Academe*

More than 2,000 gather for what one says could be 'the event of the century'

By Courtney Leatherman

CAMBRIDGE, MASS. **T**HE Massachusetts Institute of Technology had never seen so many black, female scholars on its campus.

That was the wry comment going around a three-day conference here that attracted more than 2,000 academics—most of them black women.

But then, MIT is not alone.

"No institution of higher education has seen this kind of conference," said Nellie Y. McKay, a professor of American and Afro-American history at the University of Wisconsin at Madison. Like others here, Ms. McKay referred to the conference as a historic event, if not "the event of the century."

"People will mark time from before and after this conference," said Kathleen Neal Cleaver, a civil-rights activist in the 1960's who is now a law professor at Emory University.

Two of the three black women on MIT's 940-member faculty organized the event, "Black Women in the Academy: Defending our Name."

That defense took various forms at the conference, which was aimed at highlight-

ing the scholarship of black women and the ways in which, the participants said, it had been undervalued or ignored in the academy.

## COMMISERATING AND CONSOLING

The conference included much commiserating and consoling as participants shared their feelings of isolation on their campuses and in their disciplines. Women spoke of the "double bind" of racism and sexism and of the burdens of serving as mentors to black female students when black women professors are so few in number.

The conference also offered a range of scholarship on everything from the history of black women to their health care.

"Events such as this are affairs of the mind and affairs of the heart," Charles M. Vest, MIT's president, noted during his opening remarks.

But it was current events that spurred the idea for the conference, said its two organizers, Evelyn M. Hammonds and Robin Kilson.

Ms. Hammonds, an assistant professor of the history of science, said she was concerned about negative stereotyping of

black women by politicians and news organizations during recent debates over such issues as welfare reform. She also pointed to the "public humiliation" of two black female scholars, Anita Hill and Lani Guinier.

Ms. Guinier, a law professor at the University of Pennsylvania, gave the first keynote speech of the conference. In keeping with the tone of the meeting, she spoke of her experience as a black female law student at Yale University, where she felt her presence was ignored, and of her experience as an unsuccessful nominee for the Justice Department's top civil-rights post in Washington, where she felt her scholarship had been willfully misinterpreted.

## 'IMPORTANCE OF OUR SCHOLARSHIP'

Ms. Hammonds said that many of the proposed papers that scholars submitted for the conference referred to Ms. Hill and Ms. Guinier. Many women, she said, viewed the controversies around the two as reasons why now, more than ever, female scholars needed "to account for the importance of our scholarship to the lives

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