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Bye, Bye Heidi, *no return* Hello Angela

A Commentary
By Nicholas von Hoffman

"Bye Bye Miss American Pie
Drove my Chevy to the levy
But the levy was dry.
Them good old boys were drinking whiskey and rye
Singing, 'This'll be the day that I'll die.'"

—Don McLean

Compare the recent history of two women, only five years apart in age. One is a convicted murderess, and the other is in jail waiting to stand trial for murder. One killed a cop, and the other is accused of killing a judge.

One is Angela Davis and the other is Heidi Ann Fletcher, a 22-year-old white girl who pleaded guilty last December to 10 counts of first degree murder, armed robbery, robbery and illegal possession of dangerous weapons. It is unlikely, however, that Fletcher will spend as much time in jail for having committed her crime as Davis will have spent in the tank before she gets to trial. The difference, you see, is that Heidi Fletcher is Miss American Pie.

What did she do? She was the wheelman in a \$7,900 robbery of a savings and loan association last May. In the course of her crime, a Washington, D.C., policeman was murdered.

From here on in, to follow the story you must remember that Miss American Pie is the white daughter of the former white Deputy Mayor of the District of Columbia, Thomas W. Fletcher. Mr. Fletcher is currently the city manager of San Jose, Calif. He also has enough bread to hire Edward Bennett Williams. If you ever kill someone, hire Williams, if you can afford it.

Davis' lawyers are now in court asking that the state pick up the tab for their indigent client's legal fees. If the judge rules against her, she will be completely dependent on whimpy little fund raisers. Ever since Tom Wolfe put the blast on the Bernsteins, raising dough for the likes of Davis has been radical alright but not very chic.

In August of last year Miss American Pie was released into the custody of a high District of Columbia official who is also an old pal of Heidi's father. The amount of the bail? None. None whatsoever. It was mere stipulated that she should be in by ten and get a job.

The situation with Davis is somewhat different. She has been in jail for 15 months. She has repeatedly asked for bail and just as often she has been turned down, turned down even by one judge who said in open court

she would be a good bail risk.

The probation report on her recommended that she be released on \$100,000 bail, which is a lot tougher to raise than it is to get home by ten every night. Even the administrator of Marin County where Davis is alleged to have committed her crime has urged she be bailed. He got so indignant about it he quit his job, saying, "I must say I am happy to remove myself from an establishment of which the judicial branch has not yet found a way to release Angela Davis on bail."

What happened next with Miss American Pie is more wondrous and it shows how a good mouthpiece is worth his money. Eight days before Fletcher turned 22, he pleaded her guilty. The reason is that if he had waited until her birthday she could not be sentenced under the Youth Correction Act. As a normal murderess, Heidi might have pulled life or even the electric chair, but under the Youth Correction Act she can be accorded understanding, sympathy and great leniency. That's what she got. A maximum sentence of nine years and the possibility of release at any time before then. If Davis is acquitted, she may still have served longer for not killing that judge than Miss American Pie will have put in the joint for having killed her cop.

The next astonishing turn in Heidi's case is that sentence was passed on her the same day she pleaded guilty. Most unusual. Ordinarily it takes weeks for probationary reports and recommendations to the judge. That's what the prosecution wanted, but if that advice had been followed the Youth Correction Act wouldn't have applied.

During Heidi's pre-sentence hearing, there was much emotion with the redoubtable Edward Bennett Williams explaining to the court that Fletcher was starved for love, "a young girl . . . an indigent in some if the necessities of life as any monetarily indigent defendant." What would Williams have said of Davis' indigency?

There was also an expensive shrink to tell the judge that the Fletchers are "a family of strangers, unable, for whatever the dice of fates were, to give her the kind of life she needed." So it was averred that this young woman had developed a very excessive dependence on "a certain type of parental figure" and that's why she did it. Imagine the complexes you could think up for a sensitive black woman like Angela Davis if you were a clever shrink in a courtroom. That's what Angela should do. Plead guilty and cop out on a race psychosis.

Then she might get the one last measure of mercy the court showed Heidi Fletcher. Instead of being sent to the women's correctional facility at Alderson, W.Va., which is a lot closer to Washington, she was sentenced to prison in Los Angeles because the psychiatrist said it would be better if Heidi were closer to her family, and besides, the warden there says, "We have palm trees all over the place."

Don't be bitter. Lt. Calley was convicted of murdering 22 people and he hasn't gone to jail yet. He's simply under house arrest. But you must understand, Davis is both black and red. Calley and Fletcher worked within the system, the one obeying Army orders and the other killing for money. Davis did it, if she did it, for conviction, so bye, bye, Miss American Pie.