

Confusion Over Angela 'Gag'

By Carolyn Anspacher

A miasma settled over the Angela Davis proceedings in San Jose yesterday as Santa Clara county authorities and all principals in the case attempted to determine whether the black militant is or is not to be allowed future press interviews.

The confusion began at the onset of the morning pretrial session when Superior Court Judge Richard Arnason announced in court that he had vacated his order of last July under which Miss Davis was to be allowed one interview a week.

This, in effect, cast Miss Davis into the jurisdiction of Santa Clara county whose sheriff, James Geary, was effectively gagged Monday by Superior Court Judge James Scott and prohibited from mentioning Miss Davis' name.

STATEMENT

Sheriff Geary reacted to the vacating order by issuing this statement, in writing: "It is the policy of the sheriff's office to permit, consistent with security requirements, media interviews of inmates upon written request of the inmate and the inmate's attorney.

"This practice will continue, subject to any orders issued by the court, and the security requirements of the installation."

There was widespread speculation that Judge Scott might, at some point, issue an order limiting Miss Davis' availability to the media.

Miss Davis' attorneys recoiled with visible anger when Judge Arnason issued his vacating order.

Leo Branton Jr., almost shaking with fury, declared the order an "ex parte maneuver," and termed the "gag rule" on both the sheriff and Miss Davis "shocking."

"Who's running this case anyway, Judge Scott or Judge Arnason?" he asked.

Judge Arnason, assigned to preside over the Davis

murder - kidnap - conspiracy trial, listened impassively to Branton's angry tirade.

It was followed by an equally bitter denunciation by Miss Davis' chief counsel, Howard Moore Jr., who linked the order to Monday night's hour-long televised conversation between the 28-year-old defendant and her spiritual adviser, the Rev. Cecil Williams.

UPSET

He declared Assistant Attorney General Albert Harris Jr. had seen a preview of the film last Friday and was "visibly upset."

"They want Angela Davis' image to be that of a big-mouthed firebrand with nappy hair, and she was shown in the film to be sensible and thoughtful. Besides, she is proud of her hair."

He said anyone who says anything good of Miss Davis is confronted with a "gag rule" and Judge Arnason's order "prevents her from speaking."

Harris denied emphatically he had sought the order, and in fact, had no knowledge of it until he entered court.

Harris acknowledged he had not liked the television program, but declared it was not his function to act as censor.

Assistant County Counsel Byron Athan said after court that Sheriff Geary had not requested the Arnason order. He declared he knew of no court order, at the present time, limiting interviews with Miss Davis.