

**Birmingham Civil Rights Institute
Statement by the Board of Directors**

Chronology

This statement is intended to explain the imperfect circumstances under which the Reverend Fred L. Shuttlesworth Human Rights Award was bestowed upon Dr. Angela Y. Davis and then rescinded. The Board of Directors offers this in the hopes that the entirety of the Birmingham community can understand the situation which the Board decision created, and heal.

At the end of our board meeting on September 18, 2018, BCRI President and CEO Andrea L. Taylor announced Dr. Davis as the 2018 Shuttlesworth Award recipient. The nomination had already been agreed upon by both the Executive Committee and the Development Committee. Ms. Taylor asked if the traditional November event date of the Award could be moved to February 2019 to accommodate Dr. Davis' schedule, and the board agreed. Ms. Taylor also noted that Dr. Davis was a child of Birmingham and that she was in fact now globally known and her papers were now at Harvard University, which was notable. A news release announcing the Award was issued locally and nationally on Monday, October 8 by BCRI.

Toward the end of 2018, several members of the Board began receiving messages of concern from various segments in the Birmingham community. The messages strongly opposed Dr. Davis' views on a variety of issues and also expressed strong opposition to the BCRI for nominating her. Additionally, public articles and newsletters were circulated opposing the BCRI Award decision.

A special meeting of the Board was convened on January 3, 2019, at which time all the Board members who were present were informed of the opposition to Dr. Davis' receipt of the Shuttlesworth Award. Many heard of this issue for the first time. In addition to the pain that was conveyed by those opposed to giving Dr. Davis the Shuttlesworth Award, impassioned views were expressed by Board members who view Dr. Davis as a brave "shero." The board voted to have a meeting on the following Monday to hear opponents and proponents and to make no other changes until dialogue was facilitated. It was also suggested by a Board member that the BCRI's affinity group, comprised of young voices in the community, be brought into the conversation. Board members and staff worked on talking points and prepared for Monday's dialogue.

Absent from the January 3rd meeting was the Board's chair. When he returned to town the next day, he convened another special meeting of the Board on January 4, 2019. At that January 4th meeting, board members reported on discussions they had with various members of the community that expressed opposition towards giving Dr. Davis the award due to her lack of vocal opposition to violence. The Board voted 9 to 2 (the two *ex-officio* or non-voting members were not present) to rescind the Award based on new input from the community, a decision made by a diverse group of Board members.

While some members of the board recommended to keep the decision confidential and first hear the community, there was a sense of urgency to announce this decision by a majority of board members. The next day, Dr. Davis was informed of the Board's decision, and the Board issued a statement on social media and its website.

On January 9, 2019, three Board members/officers decided to resign. They issued a statement with their rationale. On the morning of January 11, 2019, the board began a series of conversations with interested persons in the Birmingham community who have views on this crisis. Those conversations will continue. Mayor Woodfin also wrote the Board and requested that each person decide whether to resign or act "with the pace of crisis" to restore the public's trust. This written request followed a meeting earlier in the day with remaining board members where the mayor described his disappointment.

The board issued a public apology on January 14th.

The board, under the leadership of its interim Chair, is devoting itself to learning from all these developments. Part of that learning includes a refinement of our internal processes and governance, including how award selections are made and extended. It also includes the strongest desire possible to listen, participate and help facilitate public discussion on key issues that the BCRI has been silent about for too long. We invite all positive and beneficial dialog that can help the Institute once again lead the way in its unending mission. We promise to communicate about steps the board is taking in the weeks ahead.