

# R. Mangaliso Davis

## *Community activist and fighter for Camden, N.J.*

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R. Mangaliso Davis, a lifelong resident of Camden, New Jersey, is well-known activist, advocate for social change and photographer. He is the proud father of a son, Kwesi Davis. His distinctive name, **Mangaliso**, is a Xhosa word from South Africa meaning, **“one who does magical or wonderful things.”**

For more than two decades, Mangaliso has been on the front lines of community based efforts to improve the quality of life for Camden residents. He has fought for jobs, better housing, a healthy environment, a just international order, and expanded recreational and cultural opportunities and for the removal of the cancer of drugs from our communities.

Brother Davis diligently worked to get the City’s affirmative action ordinance approved, performed yeoman’s work to bring the Regional Food Distribution Center and its thousands of jobs to Camden and helped to organize Black contractors to get a bigger piece of the contracting pie.

Mangaliso has been a leading housing advocate for many years. He was a co-founder of the pioneering Camden Citizens Housing and Community Development Corporation (CCHCDC) and the New Camden Rehabilitation Corporation (NCRC). These community based organizations funneled nearly four million into housing and housing related services in the Bergen-Lanning Square area. They fought resolutely to stop the displacement of low and moderate income people and minorities from the neighborhoods. Brother Davis also organized tenants for better living conditions in the city’s public housing projects and at the Royal Court Townhouses.

Mangaliso understands that illegal drugs are destroying our communities. He was an active participant in the Coordinating Committee for a Drug-Free Life.

However, Mangaliso understands that all work and no play are not good for you. He was an organizer of the three city-wide Unity Days from 1981-1983 that not only provided entertainment, but also unified the city. He initiated the “Saturday Morning Movies Program” at NCRC when Camden didn’t have a movie theatre. Brother Davis is a patron of the arts, who promotes African-American classical music, i.e. jazz performances through his participation with Open Productions. He has been a staunch supporter and active volunteer with the Walt Whitman Center for the Arts and Humanities.

As a photographer, Brother Davis has captured on film both the hope and despair of Camden. He started out in fashion photography, but has expanded his photographic interests. His photographs have graced Philadelphia International album covers of and appeared in the AFRICAN VOICE magazine. He is also the co-producer and cinematographer of “Petty’s Island: The Untold Story

Mangaliso is currently working with the Lanning Square Advisory Group and the Northgate II Association. He remains committed to independent politics and is unbought and unbossed. **He is tough and like the city of his birth and tell it like it is.**

### Some of his memberships and affiliations past and present

- Camden County- Youth Center Board of Trustees
- City of Camden- Affirmative Action Review Council
- Camden County- Human Relations Commission Commissioner
- Camden City Zoning Board of Adjustment
- Mayor Advisory Committee of the Blockbuster/ Sony Music Entertainment Center
- South Jersey Environmental Justice Alliance Founder and Trustee
- Camden’s Coordinating Committee for a Drug Free Life, Inc.- Board Member
- Leadership & Research Association of the Million Man March- Vice Chairman
- Vice Chair of Lanning Square West Neighborhood Corporation Homes for the 21st Century
- African-American Advisory Commission- Founder/Chairman/Commissioner
- Interfaith Pilgrimage of the Middle Passage Camden Committee Chairman
- South Jersey Environmental Justice Alliance Founding Member & Board of Trustees
- Unity Community Center of S.J. Inc. Executive Advisory Board Member
- Camden Zoning Board of Adjustments Official & member
- Camden Juneteenth Celebration Founder and Chairman
- Camden City Human Relation Commission Acting Chairman
- African Elections Observation Missions International Observer