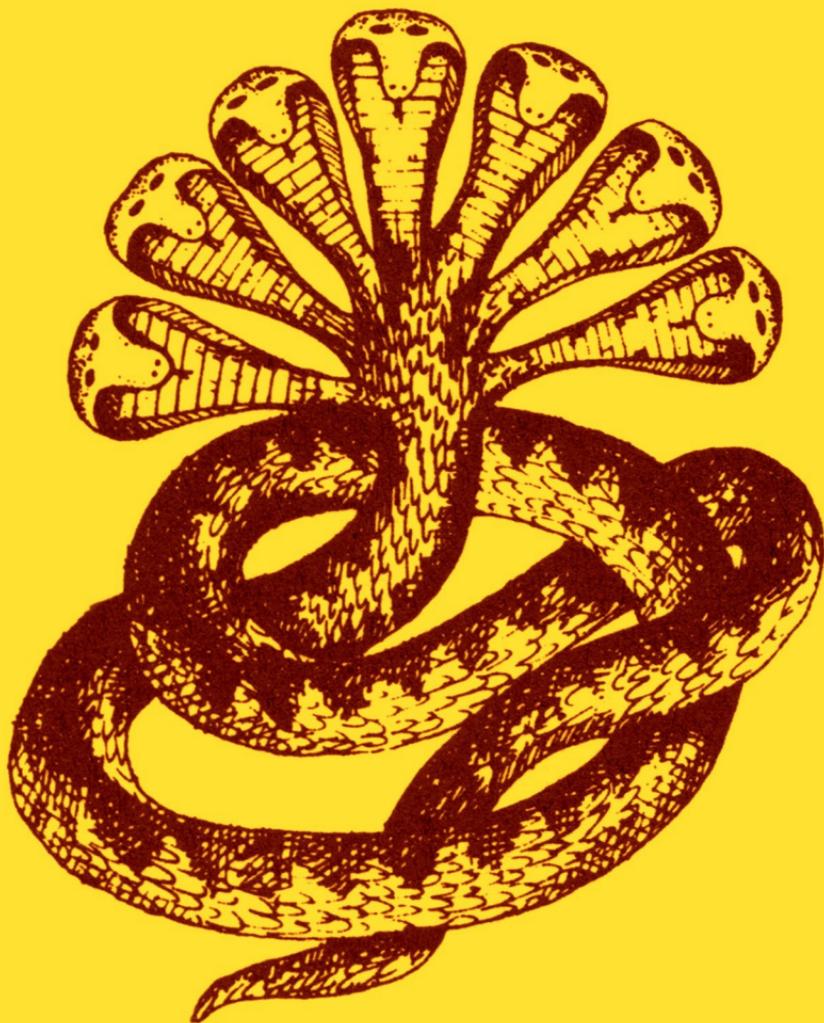


**DEATH TO
THE FASCIST INSECT**



SYMBIONESE LIBERATION ARMY

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FASCIST INSECT**

EDITED BY JOHN BRIAN KING

SPURL EDITIONS

PREFACE

“The long run aim of the SLA was to work toward the annihilation of U.S. imperialism and the culture and institutions that support it. The building of a people’s army wasn’t seen as an end, but as a means to achieve popular freedom to build a society that was free of racism, sexism and classism; a society where there were no elites, no oppressive bureaucracy. The SLA wanted to remain relatively small, develop their skills, set up networks in various west coast cities and gradually refine their political perspective as conditions changed. They would test out their theories through guerrilla action, probing the enemy’s weak spots, analyze the attitudes of people in their communities as to what would be acceptable actions to take, and check their ultimate response in order to refine tactics, techniques and overall strategy.” – SLA member William Harris, “The Last SLA Statement,” July 1976

They met in California under circumstances that were typical for Bay Area leftists in the early 1970s: at Fruity Rudy’s, a juice stand on Telegraph Avenue in Berkeley, buying and selling drugs; at a Safeway supermarket in Oakland, registering voters for Bobby Seale’s mayoral run and passing out leaflets for Cesar Chavez; at a community theater in Berkeley, participating in a production of Ibsen’s *Hedda Gabler*; at “Peking House,” a commune in north Oakland, hanging out and discussing Chairman Mao and Lenin; and at UC Berkeley, working on an Afro-American Studies term paper that led to field trips to the nearby California Medical Facility at Vacaville to tutor black prisoners.

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There was *Angela Atwood*, daughter of a Teamster boss, on the board of the Catholic Youth Organization as a teenager, who worked as a waitress at the Great Electric Underground restaurant in San Francisco's Transamerica Building; *Camilla Hall*, daughter of Christian missionaries, lesbian poet and artist, who worked as a gardener; *Emily Harris* (born Emily Schwartz), graduate with a BA in English from Indiana University, who worked as a typist at UC Berkeley; Emily's husband *William Harris*, Vietnam War veteran, actor in college theater with an MA in urban education, who worked at the Berkeley post office; *Russell Little*, son of a Florida electronics mechanic, who took some electrical engineering classes at the University of Florida before moving into Peking House; *Nancy Ling Perry*, daughter of a furniture store owner in Santa Rosa, wife of an African-American jazz musician and a graduate of UC Berkeley, who worked as a topless blackjack dealer in the North Beach neighborhood of San Francisco; *Joseph Remiro*, son of an Italian mother and Mexican father who was raised in the Sunset District of San Francisco, veteran of the Vietnam War from 1966 to 1968; *Patricia Mizmoon Soltysik* ("Mizmoon" was the nickname given to her by her former lover Camilla Hall that she legally added to her name), her father a pharmacist and her mother a Belgian who escaped the Nazis during World War II, high school treasurer and honors student; and *William Wolfe*, son of an anesthesiologist, prep school graduate and National Merit Scholar finalist, who was finishing his studies at UC Berkeley.

This was the core of the Symbionese Liberation Army (SLA): overwhelmingly white and young, some poor but most from upper-middle-class upbringings. A few of the women were lesbian

or bisexual, while the men were decidedly, emphatically heterosexual.

But one of them did not fit the mold, and he ended up being the leader of the SLA: *Donald DeFreeze*. He was the high school drop-out, the fuck-up raised in poverty who got arrested for the first time at the age of sixteen busting open a parking meter in Buffalo – the first of many arrests and convictions that often resulted from his infatuation with bombs and guns.

DeFreeze was the oldest member of the SLA, and he was the only African-American. He had been at Vacaville for a year and a half when he met his future followers on their visits to the prison. With the assistance of the prison's Black Cultural Association and its "outside coordinator" Colston Westbrook (a black linguistics professor with ties to the CIA and their assassination program during the Vietnam War), DeFreeze was transformed from an uneducated minor-league convict into a learned revolutionary "general."

The SLA began in earnest in the summer of 1973, after DeFreeze's escape from Soledad State Prison (a prison escape in which, oddly, no one chased after him). DeFreeze and his two lovers, Patricia Mizmoon Soltysik and Nancy Ling Perry, lived together in Berkeley and created the political structure of the SLA – their name, their politics, their plan of action.

The others later joined the SLA willingly, except for one: *Patricia Hearst*, who was first their victim (kidnapped on February 4, 1974), and later their comrade "Tania" (taking off her blindfold on March 31, 1974).

The life of Patricia Hearst, and specifically her "brainwashing" by the SLA, has been covered exhaustively. What can be

noted here, however, is that she shared many traits with the other members of the SLA – she was wealthy, educated, and white; a sophomore at UC Berkeley studying art history, she enjoyed making her conservative parents uncomfortable (she began dating her twenty-three-year-old math teacher, Steven Weed, when she was seventeen), and she even knew how to expertly shoot a gun (her father taught her at the age of twelve so they could hunt ducks together).

The kidnapping of Patricia Hearst was brilliant political theater, reminiscent of Antonin Artaud's "Theater of Cruelty" or, closer to home, of the late 1960s Bay Area "community anarchists" The Diggers. The SLA committed other crimes – the assassination of Dr. Marcus Foster and the Hibernia Bank robbery, for instance – but would they be remembered at all, and have been hunted at the time with such vigor, if they had not kidnapped a rich white daughter of a media baron and made her into one of their own? The cassette tapes and typewriter "communiques" they dropped off at radio stations, underground newspapers, and phone booths were a constant media *drip-drip-drip* that would have been the envy of any 1970s conceptual or performance artist. The theater of the tapes often crossed into the absurd, for the white SLA women usually affected African-American "jive" voices in their recorded political monologues; and to visually record their performances as "guerrilla revolutionaries," wearing wigs and carrying machine guns, the SLA specifically robbed one of the few banks that was newly outfitted with black-and-white-film security cameras.

And the ideology of the SLA? Their most direct influence was Venceremos, a group of left-wing California radicals who

organized in 1970 in the Palo Alto area (after the murder of a prison guard during an escape, however, one of the leaders became a state informant and many of the Venceremos members had fled or been jailed by 1973). But the members of the SLA were mainly influenced by what they read, cheap paperbacks that were often found on the cinderblock-and-plank shelves of progressives and college students in the early 1970s: *Blood in My Eye* by the murdered African-American convict George Jackson; *Manual of the Urban Guerrilla* by the Brazilian guerrilla fighter Carlos Marighella; *Revolution in the Revolution?* by the French philosopher Régis Debray; *The Wretched of the Earth* by the post-colonial theorist Frantz Fanon; and the assorted writings of Marx, Lenin, Chairman Mao, and Che Guevara.

Yet the SLA was contemptuous of what they called “armchair revolutionaries”; they thought they were either “cowards afraid of revolutionary violence because it is a direct threat to their personal security and comfort, or they are opportunists who have personal gains in allowing the enemy to enslave or oppress and tranquilize the people” (p. 101).

The Symbionese Liberation Army wanted *praxis*, not academic or political theory. And in their search for praxis, they believed in a leader – Donald DeFreeze, aka “Field Marshal Cinque” – who fetishized violence with very little thought regarding his actions and their consequences. It is clear his followers in the SLA were complicit in their own madness – the media-driven narrative of Cinque as an evil Pied Piper of white innocents is false – yet they thought they needed racial authenticity in their political struggle, and they were willing to avidly listen to an African-American escaped convict because he made their quest for revolution real

and valid, even if many of his ideas contributed to their ideological confusion, downfall, and violent deaths.

“The SLA made many mistakes but we must accept mistakes as the price we must pay for our apprenticeship as revolutionaries. These mistakes have to be made now and learned from before the lives of many become dependent on direct and effective action. Those who allowed subjective political prejudices to blind them from seeing the SLA’s victories as well as their mistakes have missed a valuable learning experience. Successful revolutionary struggles don’t fall from the sky or jump out of books. The value of the lessons learned from the SLA will be felt through the actions of revolutionaries who have their feet planted firmly in reality. People who act like they’ve never made a mistake are either lying or sitting on their pompous theoretical asses.” – SLA member Joseph Remiro, “The Last SLA Statement,” July 1976

Editor’s note: This book is presented in two parts, each arranged in chronological order: 1) the main works of the SLA, with a supporting timeline of events, and 2) an appendix of letters, newspaper articles, and other responses related to the SLA. All the tapes recorded by the SLA were transcribed by me; I kept the misspellings and other errors of the written communiqués and letters intact.

JOHN BRIAN KING

THE SEVEN-HEADED COBRA

UNDATED

The emblem of the Symbionese Liberation Army is 170,000 years old, and it is one of the first symbols used by people to signify god and life. The two bottom heads on each side of the Cobra represent the four principles of life: the sun, the moon, the earth, and the water. The three center heads represent god and the universe, and are called the god head. The number seven as embracing all the universal forces of god and life can be traced to the Egyptian temples and their seven pillars, to the seven candles of the pre-Zionist, North African religions, to the Buddhist and Hindu religions, and to the North and South American Indian religions. This is because the seven principles explain the inter-relationships of life, of the family and the state, of the human anatomy and the universe. And because the basic principle behind any kind of union and series of relationships must be equally accessible to all concerned, we see why the seven heads of the cobra have but one body. The thoughts and purpose in each of the seven heads of the cobra penetrates its common body and soul, and from this we see how the source of the cobra's survival lies not in any individual head, but rather in the relationship and unity of all the heads to each other.

The Symbionese Liberation Army has selected the Seven-Headed Cobra as our emblem because we realize that an army is

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Death to the Fascist Insect

Many of us have been bold enough to intellectualize about revolution, but far too chickenshit to get down and help make it. . . . We have fooled ourselves into believing that Madison Avenue piggery will bring us eternal bourgeois happiness. . . . We know we have a long way to go to purify our minds of the many bourgeois poisons, but we also know that this isn't done through bullshitting and ego tripping, it is done by fighting and, as the comrade has taught us, by stalking the pig, seizing him by the tusks, and riding his pig ass into his grave. It is done by unleashing the most devastating revolutionary violence ever imagined, by proving that all races and groups of people can unite and fight together for the true freedom of us all.

edited by John Brian King

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