

*Issue Hate names*

# Terrorists From the '60s Are Celebrated Today

There is a perverse time warp in the case of Sara Jane Olson — known as Kathleen Soliah in the days of the Symbionese Liberation Army (SLA) — and even more in the grotesque adventures of Bill Ayers and his wife, the lovely Bernardine Dohrn, celebrity radicals from the antique days of Vietnam rage. The moral in the recent public gyrations of this trio is how shallow and arrogant the domestic terrorists of the 1960s were and how transparent they have become since Sept. 11.

Olson a few days ago copped a plea, whining all the while, to felony charges of attempted murder for plotting to bomb two Los Angeles police cars 26 years ago — an attempted bombing that was to be in retaliation for the death of six members of the SLA two weeks earlier during a shootout with police in the City of Angels. The SLA was, of course, the group that kidnapped Patty Hearst.

Olson first uttered a guilty plea in court and then promptly told reporters, "I'm pleading guilty to something to which I'm not guilty." The annoyed judge ordered her back to court and admonished her: Was she pleading guilty or not? She conceded she did want to enter a guilty plea; the terror attack on the World Trade Center, she mewled, would have a "negative effect" on her trial.

The one-time radical spent nearly a quarter of a century on the lam, marrying a Minnesota doctor and living the life of a bourgeois housewife — which must have seemed the utmost humiliation to the putative revolutionary of the 1960s. Whatever the case, sentencing is to be in early December and Sara Jane probably will have to serve five years in prison, though the California Parole Board evidently can keep her penned up longer — much longer, it is to be hoped. It also is possible that she could face trial for a bank robbery and murder that occurred before the bomb plot in which she was charged.

In the aftermath of the mass slaughters in New York City and Washington, however, what is striking is Olson's defiant proclamation that "I'm still the same person I was then. ... I don't have any regrets."

Unrepentant as she was, the SLA moll sounded mild compared to a fellow radical from the 1960s, the aforesaid Bill Ayers. His memoirs recounting his years as a big cheese in the Weather Underground and its terror bombings (including an explosive detonated in the Pentagon and one in the U.S. Capitol Building in 1971) recently were celebrated in the *New York Times*. In the book he preened and asserted that he, too, regretted nothing. In fact, he trilled, he and his pals hadn't done enough during their terroristic years.

Asked by a *New York Times* reporter if he would consider terror bombings again, Ayers replied, "I don't want to discount the possibility." The extensive *New York Times* inter-

view with Ayers was published the morning of Sept. 11.

As mesmerizing as his callous assertion, however, was the limpid admiration of the *Times*' interviewer who wrote that "Ayers retains the ebullient manner, the apparently intense interest in other people, that made him a charismatic figure in the radical student movement." (A few days later there was a long wet-kiss profile of Ayers in the newspaper's Sunday magazine.) The list of bombings which Ayers said he planned and helped execute also charmed the *Times* writer, who found them "daring acts."

Ayers was not prosecuted for his various forays in terror; charges were dropped for alleged lack of evidence. In the years since, this privileged child of upper-middle-class America has not paid a farthing for his now-declared sins.

Indeed, he holds the title of "distinguished" professor of education at the University of Illinois at Chicago. Ah, the lucky young men and women sitting at his feet. ... And, as of Nov. 6, according to the *Wall Street Journal*, Ayers was continuing publicly to promote his book.

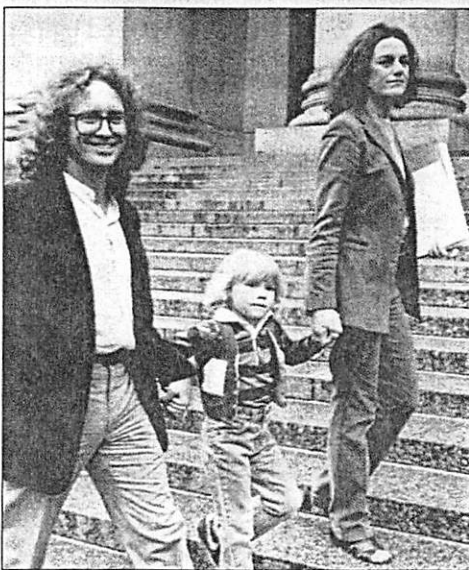
This tale isn't over yet, however. Bernardine Dohrn was a revolutionary comrade of Ayers (they now are married). After 10 years underground, Dohrn in 1980 pleaded guilty to an aggravated battery charge and for jumping bail, and was fined \$1,500. Two years later, she served seven months for criminal contempt after she refused to testify before a grand jury about a 1981 Brinks robbery in New York in which the Black Liberation Army killed two police officers.

And how has fate treated this Passionaria of the Vietnik years who once was on the FBI's "most-wanted"

list? Well, for the past decade she's been a faculty member of Northwestern University's law school. Dohrn directs the Northwestern Legal Clinic's Children and Justice Center. Since her husband's unrepentant, indeed smirky, memoir and the renewed focus on her years as a fugitive and her association with the Weather Underground, however, there have been murmurings about her faculty status by a few Northwestern alums and benefactors.

The law-school dean airily dismissed the complaints about Dohrn, calling her "terrific" in her job, and assuring that "she's told me she abhors violence, past, present or future." Presumably she and her hubby have agreed to disagree on whether bombs might still be an efficacious device of reform.

What a country! And yet, with nearly 5,000 civilians vaporized in New York City and Washington, these clowns from the counterculture era still are regarded as worthy of celebration by the *New York Times* and hefty paychecks from institutions of higher learning.



**The way they were:** Bill Ayers, left, remains unrepentant while Bernardine Dohrn claims to have moderated.

WOODY WEST IS AN ASSOCIATE EDITOR FOR *Insight*.