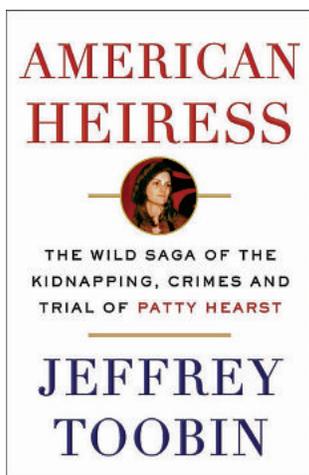


# A 70'S FLASHBACK



Jeffrey Toobin's latest release is on Patty Hearst.

*After the success of his bestselling book about O.J. Simpson, readers are eager to read Toobin's account of the Patty Hearst saga.*



Jeffrey Toobin has quite a reputation for recounting tales of celebrity justice. A TV miniseries based on his bestselling book about the O. J. Simpson murder trial captivated audiences this past summer. Meanwhile, Toobin's latest book, "American Heiress: The Wild Saga of the Kidnapping, Crimes and Trial of Patty Hearst," tells the riveting saga of a young woman of privilege turned kidnapping victim and later, convicted bank robber. Intrigue seeps from every page as Toobin describes the then 19-year-old's 1974 kidnapping from her apartment in Berkeley, Calif., by a band of revolutionaries known as the Symbionese Liberation Army.

During months of captivity, Hearst is drawn into the causes of the SLA and joins them in committing a bank robbery and other crimes. In her subsequent trial, defense attorneys paint her as a helpless victim brainwashed by the SLA and forced to participate in their violent crime spree.

Hearst, whose prison sentence was commuted by President Jimmy Carter, declined to be interviewed for the book. "One of the ironies of the whole Hearst story is she has led the life she was destined to live," Toobin says. "She's become a socialite."

#### **LN: What will readers learn from "American Heiress?"**

It's a story about the madness of the 1970s, which is not much acknowledged today. People find it hard to believe there were 1,000 political bombings a year in the middle and early 1970s. That tells us that this was a tough society in deep crisis that's largely forgotten today. The other thing is it's a mystery, about what makes us do what we do – why Patricia Hearst became a terrorist and whether she did in fact become a terrorist. That is a subject of great enduring interest and controversy.

It just shows that in high-profile cases, what goes on in the courtroom is never the whole story. These cases take place in the context of big developments in society, such as the relationships between African-Americans and the police, as it was in the Simpson case. Here, it's the story of the radicalization of young people.

#### **What got you interested in Patty Hearst?**

I wrote a story for The New Yorker about a gang that took over a jail in Baltimore. I got interested in the Black Guerilla Family, which was founded by a prisoner named George Jackson. That led to my interest in the history of prison activism, especially in California. SLA came out of that world.

#### **What do you make of the renewed interest the O.J. Simpson case?**

It combines everything that obsesses the American people: sex, violence, race, Hollywood, sports. And the only eyewitness was a dog. The filmmakers of the documentary ["O.J.: Made in America"] did a fantastic job. I didn't know all the stuff in the documentary.

*Jeffrey Toobin appears at the Book Festival of the Marcus Jewish Community Center of Atlanta. Nov. 18, 8 p.m. »*