

Jose Betances
Prof. Goetz
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Emory Douglas

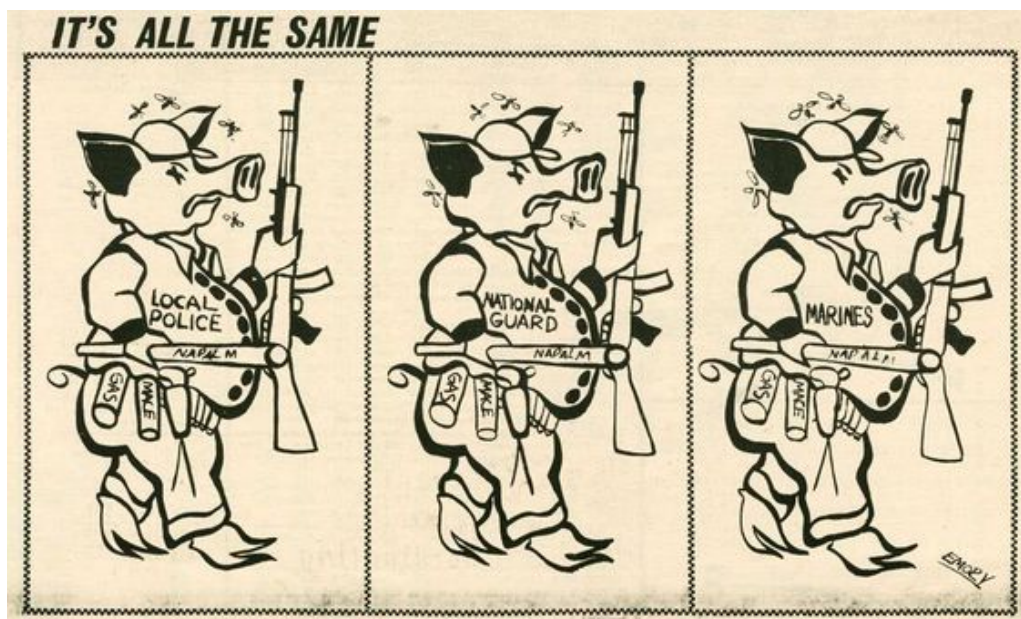
In this paper, my main focus will be on the life of *Emory Douglas*, who was an American graphic designer. *Emory Douglas* was born in Grand Rapids, Michigan, in 1943. His family moved to the bay area because a doctor recommended that the climate there would ease his asthma. Art and design were not something that *Douglas* had in his mind at all. *During* his teen years, *Douglas* was going down the wrong path, which caused him to spend some time in the Youth Training School in Ontario, California.

Douglas was in the Youth Training School in Ontario, California, for 15 months. That is where *Douglas* would first learn about typography, illustration, and logo design. Shortly after *Douglas* left the Youth Training School, he was encouraged to enroll in commercial art classes at the city college of San Francisco. These classes gave him the basis of combining art and message. *Douglas* said that “without that foundation, I wouldn’t have been able to do anything I did for the party.”

At City College, *Douglas* admired the artworks of Charles White, Aaron Douglas, and Elizabeth Catlett and became active in the Black Arts Movement. One day in 1967 when *Douglas* was working on props for Amiri Baraka’s theater workshop. Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale, the founders of the formed party called the Black Panthers, arrived for a meeting to discuss the security for an upcoming visit by Betty Shabazz (Malcolm X wife). After the meeting,

Douglas reached out to both Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale and told them that he would like to join the party.

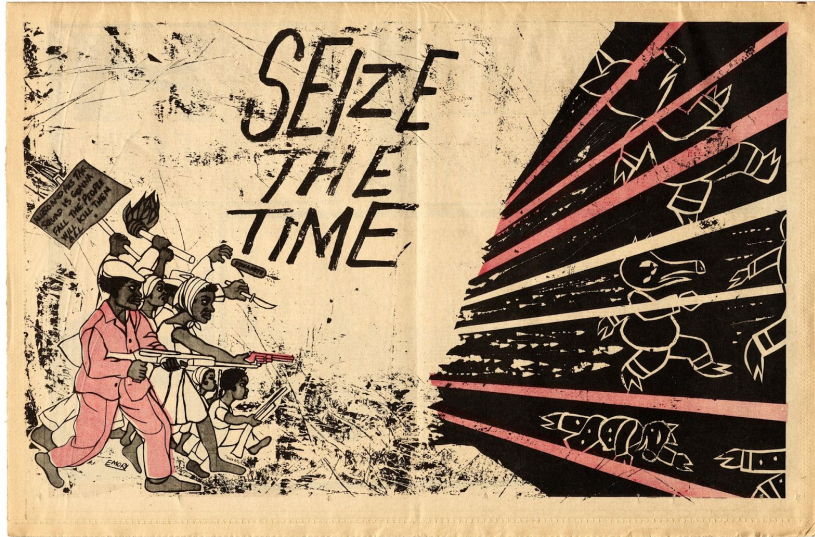
The Black Panther Party was founded by Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale back in 1966. The purpose of the party was to patrol African American neighborhoods and protect them from police brutality. The party would eventually turn into a Marxist Revolutionary group that would call for the arming of all [African Americans](#), the exemption of African Americans from the draft, and all sanctions of so-called white America and many more things. Douglas joined the Black Panther party right after it was founded, so he quickly became the party's Minister of culture and Revolutionary art. Douglas's role involved communicating the party's message to a community with low literacy rates and little formal political experience. He illustrated and laid out the Black Panther newspaper, drawing images of empowered black folk and representations of their oppressors, The Pig, an animal that stood for everyone from the local police to the President.



Design by *Emory Douglas*

Image Taken from <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/572520171353210027/>

At the time that all of this was going, the African-American community didn't have a high reading level, so Douglas included a lot of visuals that they could identify themselves with.



Douglas depicted those who abused their power as pigs and rats, as stated before. On the other hand, black people were shown as proud revolutionaries, defending their rights to exist. The strategy that the Black Panthers were trying

Design by *Emory Douglas*

Image from: <https://letterformarchive.org/news/emory-douglas-and-the-black-panther>

to project a sharp Black visual image to become “visible” and convey strength contradicting the deep-seated stereotypes understood and accepted as “truth” by most of the dominant society. Misinterpreting the meaning of Black signs, White authorities and the public understood the message in the context of the traditional dichotomy of “Sambo” or “Brute.” Because of these conflicting interpretations, African-Americans were seen as a threat; this caused a violent backlash against the black community.

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