

# THE FORCE OF LIFE

RED STAR  
SINGERS



PAREDON P-1023

## RED STAR SINGERS

The Red Star Singers was formed out of the needs of four individuals to unify, share, and socialize our personal experiences as musicians and revolutionaries. A couple of months before our formation in the spring of 1971, we started jamming together. A little later we decided to play for an alternative 4th of July celebration in Berkeley's Ho Chi Minh Park. We rehearsed a little and then went out into the park and sang and played loosely for a couple of hours one afternoon, a couple of more hours the next. We felt good about being together, and other people who heard us and saw us seemed to feel good too. So we decided to be a group: to rehearse, to talk, to perform, and now to make this record.

From then to now has taken us through a broad arena of social and musical experiences: like the political science class we played for at the University of Washington; the County Jail outside of Portland, Oregon where we played for about twenty women inmates; the all-night vigil outside of the Federal Building in San Francisco waiting for the Vietnamese peace treaty to be signed; the victory party for Pat Chenoweth who was acquitted of charges of naval sabotage; and the frequent benefits and demonstrations in the Bay Area and San Jose and Palo Alto to give support to sisters and brothers in their local struggles.

There were disappointments too. Like traveling to Vacaville Prison only to find out that our performance for the inmates had been cancelled; like playing a concert for an audience of thirty in a hall that seats 500; and the benefit concerts and dances that seemed to barely break even--and sometimes cost more to put on than they earned. Some of these uncertainties were balanced out by our regular performances at Bishop's Coffee House in downtown Oakland where we could feel both the excitement and comfort of playing in very familiar surroundings.

## ABOUT THE SONGS

We've found that making our songs a collective statement has involved a variety of processes. We want our songs to be a reflection of what we, as a group, accept as shared perceptions. Our current version of "Belly of The Monster" was written in a few brainstorming sessions where we tried to hammer it out together. Originally we performed the song with music by David Garber and words written by one of us. We found ourselves getting criticism that underlined our dissatisfaction with some of the songs' weaknesses. We all wanted the song rewritten but none of us felt prepared to undertake writing such a statement individually. The poetry writing sessions were both frustrating and rewarding. We felt good about what we finally came up with but it was clear that all the stories we want our songs to tell couldn't be written like that, even if we could find the patience to do it again.

Eventually we found a way of dealing with collectivizing our words which is considerably less painful, although the process has a way of generating tension. First, one of us presents a song that he or she has written, rewritten, or found, and we decide as a group if the song is worth working on. Before the musical arrangement is finished we study the words individually and then have a group session for criticism. Then we try to make it a group responsibility to rewrite any details that any one of us finds unacceptable. The song isn't completed until the four of us feel pretty good about it.

"Pig Nixon" is a song that we prepare for performance by discussing the issues we want to relate to and then assigning ourselves topics for verses. Sometimes someone will write an incomplete verse and bring it to the group for completion. The verses change according to what's going on in the world and the kind of event we're singing at.

All the songs on this record that Bonnie sings lead on were written by her.

"The Force Of Life" was written by a friend of ours named Peter Kessler, who wrote the verses and the chorus as they appear on the record, with a few changes by us. The middle section of the song is a sometimes improvised, mostly worked out, series of comments which we try to keep applicable to the event we're performing.

In May, 1972, we were contacted by David Mikesell, a man who had worked in the Sunshine Silver Mine in Kellogg, Idaho and had moved to Berkeley. He had just returned from burying some friends and relatives who were killed in a mine disaster there and he wanted to express his anger through a song so that people would hear his story. Gary got together with him and worked on a poem David had written and put it to music. The process between David and Gary was similar to the group process of criticism and revision until both of them felt good about the song, "Sunshine Silver Mine."

We heard "Vietnam Will Win!" on a tape from New York made by Mike Stout. We liked it but we wanted to rework parts of it. Gary rewrote some of the words and added a verse and Michael made some changes in the music. All this was done without Mike Stout ever hearing it. When we finally contacted him to let him know we changed the song and wanted to use it he was (fortunately) very pleased.

#### ABOUT THE RECORDING

It took us nearly a year of considering the idea before we finally came to the decision to make a record. It wasn't that our reservations vanished. We still experience some fears about producing an artifact out of music and ideas that are bound to change as we ourselves change, and therefore the possibility of a musical statement that might permanently define our political stance was seen with some ambivalence. We also had misgivings about taking so much time away from working on new material and performing it. Nonetheless we all had to admit we take a lot of pleasure from recorded music and it's clearly a good way to reach a wider audience. So we decided

to record, working with Paredon because this friendly and noncommercial operation allowed us to avoid the competitive, and often fruitless, wheeling and dealing faced by people trying to record.

Once we were in the studio we had a lot to learn. It was exciting working with sixteen track equipment. This meant we could isolate each voice and instrument on a separate track of the tape, so that when there was an objectionable mistake only that track on which the mistake appeared would need to be re-recorded. It also gave us the freedom of playing only one role at a time, that is, we could play our instruments and sing our parts at different times if necessary to improve our performances. All this was accompanied by various levels of nervousness, anxiety, and intimidation bred by our ignorance of the equipment we were working with and by our having to perform our songs in a most sterile environment. Someone said that hearing yourself recorded is like seeing yourself under a microscope, and it didn't help us to relax knowing that every minute detail of everything we were doing was being set down for us and anyone else to judge and criticize. We've always felt that the real joy of our work lies in the rapport between us and the people we play for. There wasn't much to remind us of the spirit of those people in the spaceship atmosphere of all that thousand dollar equipment. We found we could counter all this a bit by asking some friends to come into the studio to help us create a more concert-like atmosphere, at which time we recorded "The Force Of Life" and "Pig Nixon," two of the songs we felt were most dependent upon spirited participation. It took most of the night for any of us to feel near comfortable in that unusual situation, but everyone was patient and after several renditions of each, we got versions we liked of the two songs we wanted.

Eventually, with the help of a communicative engineer, we learned a little about the equipment we were using, and by the time we were mixing (adjusting relative volume levels and adding effects like echo to simulate the acoustics of a

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SIDE I BAND 1  
STILL AIN'T SATISFIED

words and music  
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Red Star Singers

<sup>Dm</sup>  
Well they got women on TV,  
but I still ain't satisfied,  
'Cause co-optation's all I see  
but I still ain't satisfied.

<sup>A7</sup> <sup>Dm</sup>  
They call me Ms., they sell me blue jeans,

<sup>A7</sup> <sup>Dm</sup>  
They call it "Women's Lib," they make it sound obscene.

CHORUS: And I still ain't

<sup>G</sup>  
Woa they lied

And I still ain't

<sup>Dm</sup> <sup>G</sup>  
Woa they lied

And I still ain't

<sup>Dm</sup> <sup>G</sup>  
Woa they lied

<sup>Dm</sup> <sup>G</sup> <sup>Dm</sup>  
And I still ain't satisfied.

Well they got women prison guards,  
but I still ain't satisfied  
With so many still behind bars  
I still ain't satisfied.  
I don't plead guilt, I don't want no bum deal,  
I ain't askin' for crumbs, I want the whole meal.

They liberalized abortion,  
but I still ain't satisfied  
'Cause it still costs a fortune,  
and I still ain't satisfied.  
I'm singin' about control of my own womb,  
And no reform is gonna change my tune.

They give out pennies here and there,  
but I still ain't satisfied  
To set up centers for child care  
and I still ain't satisfied.  
And while we work at slave wages  
They brainwash our kids at tender ages.

I got some pride, and I won't be lied to.  
I did decide that half way won't do.



Karen Garrison





LNS

5. The union and the company their handshake well-concealed  
Led the miners to oblivion a rotten deal is now revealed;  
And the big city reporters came and their eyes did lust for blood;  
They kept pushing the miners' families around, just like the folks were mud.
6. Gouging their microphones in a miner widow's face,  
Askin' how many kids is she left with, how's she gonna keep the pace.  
Her sufferin' was helping those newshounds get their pay,  
And they pocket more in an hour's time than a miner ever made in a day.
7. Well the government mine inspector passed with a badge on his chest;  
I grabbed him by the arm, he said "Go on get outta here you pest."  
I got so mad till I thought my heart would burst inside my breast,  
And I said "Where you been all the years before these miners got laid to rest."
8. One of these mornings the day shift's gonna come,  
And all the miners are gonna be there, but no mining will be done.  
Yes the miners they'll be there to carry out the prophecy:  
The so-called meek shall inherit the earth as we struggle to be free.

1. He <sup>D</sup>asked me to come and go with him

To <sup>G</sup>do what he had to <sup>D</sup>do,

<sup>D</sup>Asked me to stay by his side for a while and <sup>A</sup>smile;

Said "C'mon and be what I am, and let me know that I'm <sup>D</sup>real,

And <sup>D</sup>order my <sup>G</sup>confusion like a <sup>A</sup>recipe <sup>D</sup>file."

CHORUS: Woa <sup>A</sup>no, I <sup>D</sup>WON'T GO,

I <sup>D</sup>been that way before and it just won't <sup>E A</sup>do;

I gotta <sup>D</sup>go where my own feet take me

You know we don't wear the same size <sup>D</sup>shoe,

And I'm not about to get myself <sup>G A D</sup>confused with you.

2. Well I ain't nobody's mama  
My daddy's head is turnin' grey  
My brother and I never did get on so great;  
You know the family fence is falling  
The past creaks like a rusty gate,  
And the maps in your glove compartment are out of date.
3. I'd rather live in my own apartment  
Though I hate this city life  
Than to be in a country kitchen with a hungry man;  
'Cause you smell those old roles burnin'  
You go runnin' for the water can,  
And you know that's the kind of fire I'm bound to fan.
4. Sometimes I'm disconnected  
Sometimes I'm discontent  
Like the bad times are comin' and the good times been and went;  
But I know there's turns I can take now  
From a dead end passive past,  
And I'm thinkin' my life's about to begin at last.

SIDE I BAND 4  
CAN'T BE FREE 'TILL EVERYBODY ELSE IS

words and music  
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$E^7(E_m)$   $A^7$   $E^7(E_m)$   $A^7$   
I can't be free 'till everybody else is.

$E^7(E_m)$   $A^7$   
And sometimes it tends to make me feel pissed

$E^7(E_m)$   $A^7$   
The way we're taught to kiss our chains

$E^7(E_m)$   $A^7$   $E^7(E_m)$   $A^7$   
Hide the pain and feign to be happy,

$E^7(E_m)$   
Dress up snappy,

$A^7$   
And drive in fancy cars,

$E^7(E_m)$   
While breathing fumes

$A^7$   $E^7(E_m)$   
And wearing wounds and scars.

Well some smile and say "See me, I'm free,"  
You know I'm not  
'Cause sometimes I need what I ain't got.  
I need a ride not rape when I stick out my thumb,  
A nutritious meal, clear skies, and a home without a landlord.  
I need love  
I can afford to feel  
And a smile on the street  
That's for real, not some business deal.

I'm tired of feeling like some foreign spy in my own town.  
Feelin' forced to fib really brings me down.  
I don't like to lie about who I love and the way I live  
Just to keep alive and eating.  
I don't like to dress to  
Please no boss,  
To file and flash a smile  
When I feel cross.

There ain't no more myths that can keep me from feeling strong.  
'Cause a myth that maims me has got to be wrong.  
Ain't no evil Eve with no serpent tongue,  
No sexless angel with no halo crown, no man's dream.  
And I ain't gonna live  
Without the power  
To find out  
What my life's about no more.



SIDE I BAND 5  
VIETNAM WILL WIN!

words and music by Mike Stout  
additional words ©1974 Paredon Records for  
Red Star Singers

*Em* *Cm*  
1. They came for the pride and glory of the western man

*Em* *Cm*  
They came with swords and guns and bibles waving in their hands

*Em Bm Am<sup>b</sup> C*  
Like a storm they took command

*Em Bm Am<sup>b</sup> C*  
Like the locusts they covered the land

*Em Bm Am<sup>b</sup> C*  
Like so many others who came to Vietnam

*Am<sup>7</sup> Bm*  
They invaded again.

2. They came for power and for fortune like the aggressors before  
They packed the people into hamlets, they called it "special war"  
And in their pathway they brought sorrow along  
They burned and bombed and raped and rifled towns  
They told the people that their culture was wrong  
They called them "Viet Cong."

*C D Em*  
CHORUS: Let the struggle and resistance begin

*C D Em*  
Like a fire being spread by the wind

*C D Em*  
While the peasants lead the people again

*C D Em*  
Behind the guns of the Vietminh

*C D Em*  
One people from Saigon to Hanoi

*C D Em*  
Reunifying what could not be destroyed

*C D Em*  
Like the songs that the people sing

*C D Em*  
Like the flags that they wave in the wind

*C D Em*  
Let the thunder and the echo ring

*C D Em*  
VIETNAM WILL WIN!

3. They changed the color of the corpses, Vietnamized the war  
They filled the countryside with craters, they urbanized the poor  
They jailed and tortured young and old alike  
They mined the harbors and they bombed the dykes  
And they left cripples and orphans behind  
When they brought their genocide.
4. And when their allies turned against them, they had to save their face  
And when their puppet troops deserted, they had to hide their disgrace  
When their own soldiers could not be relied upon  
And indignation swept their people at home  
And they won no victory with all their bombs  
They promised to go home.

SIDE II Band 1  
BELLY OF THE MONSTER

music by David Garber  
words © 1974 Paredon Records for  
Red Star Singers

1. <sup>Dm</sup>We're in the belly of the monster was what <sup>Bb</sup>Che Guevara said,  
  
<sup>C</sup>The monster breathed its poisoned breath now <sup>Dm</sup>brother Che's lyin' dead;  
  
His life gives us a vision of the things we've got to do, <sup>Bb</sup>  
  
<sup>F</sup>When you're living in a monster, <sup>C</sup>the monster becomes a part of you.

CHORUS I: <sup>Dm</sup>Changes, we got to go through changes, <sup>Bb</sup>changes every day,  
  
<sup>C</sup>I know we're getting stronger 'til the monster we will slay; <sup>Dm</sup>  
  
<sup>Bb</sup>With our sisters and our brothers we struggle to fight the beast,  
  
<sup>C</sup>With the weapon of our unity we shall be released. <sup>Dm</sup>

2. Now Ho Chi Minh had a vision, you know what he saw:  
One united Vietnam with its people forever free from war;  
Whatever privilege he could have had Ho gave up to fight the beast,  
And for the victory in Vietnam we inside this monster must be released.

CHORUS II: Struggle, we got to learn to struggle, struggle every day,  
Choose life in our struggle, don't try to run away;  
Within us and without us we've all got to fight the beast,  
My sisters and brothers, we shall be released.

3. In Ireland, in Cambodia, in Brazil and Mozambique,  
The wretched of the earth are rising, throwing the shackles from off their feet;  
And here in the belly of Babylon where people suffer too,  
We're choking to death with poisoned breath, we're gonna do what we know we  
got to do.

4. Every day our energies get all twisted in a vise  
Of lies to make us like our foes and ourselves despise;  
But as we learn to help each other from the grip of private fears,  
In love and rage we begin the fight that's gonna last us a whole lot of years.
  
5. Here in the monster's belly just to stay alive,  
We're hustling to support ourselves, conniving to survive;  
We can end our life's lonely labor and create something new,  
Our strength is in our numbers, when we unite there's nothing in the world  
we can't do.
  
6. Now throughout this land of ours, people are tryin' to find their way,  
But if we don't support each other's struggles, it's ourselves  
that we betray;  
We share a vision, will you believe us when we speak:  
We got to make revolutionaries out of folks like you and me.



SIDE II BAND 2

A WOMEN'S HEALTH SONG

words and music

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Red Star Singers

D<sup>7</sup> G<sup>7</sup>  
1. Well I ain't cute and I ain't clean

D<sup>7</sup> G<sup>7</sup>  
But I can't sing what I don't mean

D<sup>7</sup> G<sup>7</sup> D<sup>7</sup>  
No--- I can't.

A<sup>7</sup>  
'Cause I'm a human being

G<sup>7</sup> D<sup>7</sup> A<sup>7</sup>  
I ain't no vegetable plant.

2. Something's wrong let me explain,  
I know all kinds of sisters in all kinds of pain  
All over the map,  
With botched-up abortions, trichomonas, and clap.
3. Sometimes I can't chant om, my horoscope looks bad,  
But I know when I've been had  
And I still want to sing,  
But it ain't always gonna be about the most pleasant thing.
4. I've had a hundred diseases only women can get  
I've been to hundreds of doctors, I ain't been cured yet,  
You know something just ain't right,  
And then they got the nerve to tell you "you're not sick, you're just uptight."
5. Oh well if you hate vice and you hate crime  
I think we'd better seize the time  
We got to do some justice to these thugs,  
These hospital hustlers gettin' rich off dangerous drugs.

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(continued from page 3)

concert hall) we began to feel more confident about operating some of the controls ourselves. There's a lot of power in all those knobs and buttons, enough to give anyone's imagination a good ride.

It felt good to de-mystify the recording process a bit and catch a glimpse of how it might be used to help strengthen and support the movement towards revolution in our country.

SIDE II BAND 3

PIG NIXON

words and music

© 1974 Paredon Records  
for Red Star Singers

In the '60's a lot of spirituals and rock 'n' roll songs were overhauled to become freedom songs for civil rights demonstrators. "Pig Nixon" comes from "Oh Wallace," ('you're never gonna jail us all') which people sang in Alabama. We use "Pig Nixon" as an all-purpose song, writing verses for the occasion, each verse about a current issue.

1. We're singin' for you people, it's a very simple song

Makin' words up is easy, we know you're all gonna sing along

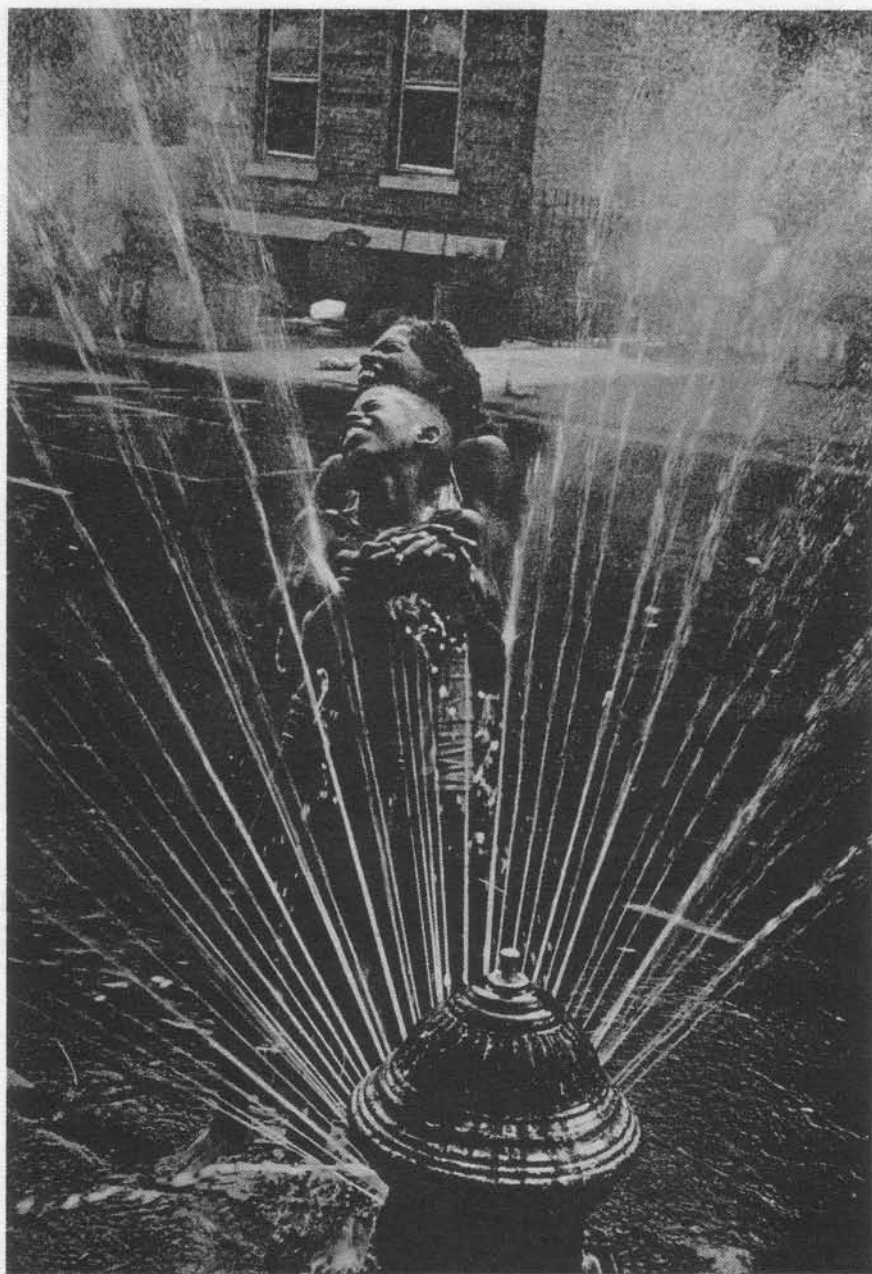
And to our nation's leader the chorus will be aimed

We're gonna sing all his praises, you're all familiar with his name.

CHORUS: PIG NIXON, you're never gonna kill us all

PIG NIXON, your genocide is bound to fall.

2. In school they taught us bullshit, you see a flag and your heart skips a beat  
They said the U.S. fights for freedom and never suffered a defeat  
We thank the Indochinese people for proving that's just jive  
They're gonna keep on fightin', and their freedom will survive
3. The only thing, my sisters, we done wrong  
Stayed at home and kept some other body's house a little bit too long  
But now you know I feel it, yeah, all my sisters gettin' on  
And when we do, pig power can't last too long
4. From New York to California jobs are pretty scarce  
Welfare payments gettin' lower, the cost of livin's rising fast  
Now Nixon says it's gettin' better, but the people know the score  
'Cause with inflation, war, and Watergate, he just can't fool us anymore
5. Well now this song is over, we hope you like the tune  
We hope you like the message, 'cause we don't sing of doom  
Now there is still tomorrow, and we got lots of work to do  
So the hell with Richard Nixon and his sidekick Agnew



Leonard Freed (LNS)

SIDE II BAND 4

THE FORCE OF LIFE

words and music by Peter Kessler  
additional words © 1974 Paredon Records for  
Red Star Singers

1. It was <sup>A</sup> way down in the city on a <sup>D</sup> crowded street

I heard some <sup>A</sup> poets making <sup>D</sup> music,

<sup>A</sup> Strumming on their guitars they made <sup>D</sup> rhythms flow,

They made <sup>A</sup> beauty out of life's <sup>D</sup> confusion.

CHORUS: <sup>Bm</sup> It sure seems funny to me now and then <sup>F#m</sup>

<sup>D</sup> When I think about this world we live in, <sup>A</sup>

<sup>Bm</sup> There's people struggling everywhere <sup>F#m</sup>

<sup>D</sup> And the Force of Life don't give in. <sup>E</sup>

2. Way down in the subway I saw flowers grow

Out of the rubbish and the ashes,

It seemed to me I heard a baby's cry

Right in the middle of life's disasters

I saw a garden in a young child's smile

And paradise in his laughter,

I heard the beating of the pulse of life

It's beating now and forever after.

3. I'm goin' to the city when the stars are bright

To sing my song among the masses,

And when it's real late and all the stars go out

Well I'm goin', I'm gonna be there

I'm gonna go right now, I'm gonna let down my hair,

It's all right, we're tryin' to make it all right...

...we got The Force of Life now...

...the Power of the People is The Force of Life....



Gary Lapow

Bonnie Lockhart

Ron Rosenbaum

Mike Margulis

Peter Ober

### THE RED STAR SINGERS

Bonnie Lockhart: lead vocals, backup vocals, percussion  
Gary Lapow: lead vocals, backup vocals, acoustic guitar  
Mike Margulis: backup vocals, acoustic bass, French horn  
Ron Rosenbaum: backup vocals, acoustic guitar

#### Recording engineers:

Bob deSousa, Sierra Sound Labs, Berkeley  
John Vieira, Different Fur Trading Co., San Francisco

Mixdown engineer: Bob deSousa

Production assistance: Richard Cohen

Cover art and design: Jane Norling

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