

JUST WHEN YOU THINK ALL THE artists in the cultural pockets of world music have been rounded up and driven into urban areas to serve either as plugged-in, techno-ed up disco slaves or as ground up spices for the likes of Paul Simon's bland pop band, a medicine man comes along and gets a record contract. His cure is to hold up a mirror in which you can see both your reflection and his, standing side-by-side, while an electric blues guitar and poetry of pain and healing swirl 'round your heads like smoke from a peace pipe.

The healer's name is John Trudell, poet, actor and activist. He has a new disc out — *AKA Graffiti Man* — and is in two new films, *Incident at Oglala* and *Thunderheart*. Both movies — the first a documentary and the second a fictionalized account — are about Leonard Peltier, who is currently serving two life sentences in the federal prison at Leavenworth, Kansas, for the 1975 murder of two FBI agents on the Pine Ridge reservation in South Dakota.

Peltier says he didn't do it. Amnesty International and most of the rest of the world believe him. But the powers in America have refused to look at the Peltier case, choosing instead to continue the suppression of indigenous Americans.

The oppression and slaughter of Native Americans is an old story to Trudell, for he has lived it most of his 46 years. Born in Omaha to a Santee father and Mexican mother, he grew up on and around the Santee Sioux reservation. His mother died when he was six, and at 17 Trudell left home and went to Viet Nam with the Navy. He returned to fight on his own soil at Alcatraz Island, which the Indians of All Tribes occupied in 1971. Trudell was their spokesperson, and from 1973 to 1979 he was the national chairman of the American Indian Movement, racking up along the way a 17,000-page FBI file.

Then, on February 11, 1979, Trudell burned an American flag in front of the FBI headquarters in Washington, DC. He said he did it because the flag had been desecrated by injustice and racism. A few hours later an arsonist set fire to his home on the Shoshone Paiute reservation in Nevada, burning Trudell's wife, three children and mother-in-law to death. Calling it an accident, the FBI refused to investigate the fire.

After this tragedy Trudell withdrew from activism and went inside himself, eventually writing the pain out in poems he published in a book, *Living in Reality*, in 1981. Then in 1985 he met guitarist/composer Jesse Ed Davis, an Oklahoma Kiowa, and the two began to collaborate. But back then, before cross-cultural music, aka world music, was making cash registers ring, no one was interested in Trudell and Davis' groundbreaking mix of Native American chants and drums and rockin' blues.

"We took the original *Graffiti Man* around to all the major companies and some of the independents, and basically they told us people weren't ready for this and wouldn't listen to it," Trudell said in an interview. "They gave us this line of excuses so we went on to make the music and released it ourselves."

That creative path is the one that now gives voice to Trudell's politics. He says it's not a softening from his days as the leader of AIM but a new way to approach the same struggle. "What I see is that the consciousness continues, but the form changes," he explained. "So rather than have national political structures that are too easy to attack and destroy, you go more autonomous. Maybe you go through less political structures; you go through more cultural and artistic ones. But the consciousness lives and it's active, the forms change out of necessity."

Trudell gave the keynote speech at the New Music Seminar this year, talking about music as an instrument for change, so you know he'll be on college radio. He's also been getting a lot of press, and says his band will be touring the Northwest later this year.

But having Trudell work in the creative arena, whether in films or music, is bigger than his personal successes. It's a good sign that we are, perhaps, waking up to the Native American perspective. That ancient culture is all around us, not to be exploited by trendy, male drumming sessions and touchy-feely healing marathons in the desert, but to offer truths that transcend the personal and fuse the political to a universal spirituality. John Trudell's music opens the door to that vision, and he invites us to walk through.



MUSIC IS MEDICINE

In 1975, on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota, random murders, beatings and unexplained and often fatal "accidents" were the norm. The violence instigated by U.S. government-backed tribal leader Richard Wilson, was aimed at destroying the leaders of the American Indian Movement (AIM) whom traditional Lakota people had summoned for protection.

It was in this environment that, on June 26, 1975, two FBI agents drove onto the Pine Ridge reservation allegedly following a red pickup truck. A shoot-out occurred, leaving both agents and a Native American dead. The death of the agents led to one of the biggest man-hunts in FBI history.

Of the four men eventually indicted for the murder of the agents, one was released due to "weak" evidence. Two others were acquitted in July, 1976 when a jury concluded that although they had fired at the agents, they had done so in self defense.

Leonard Peltier was indicted on the very same charges, but not tried until the following year, after a questionable extradition from Canada. Government prosecutors admitted in 1985 that the affidavits used in the extradition hearings were fabricated.

The witness who signed the affidavits said she was coerced by the FBI into signing them.

Peltier was convicted on two counts of murder in the first degree and is in his 16th year in prison for a crime he steadfastly maintains he did not commit.

The Justice Department has admitted they do not know who killed the agents. For "reasons of national security," the FBI still refuses to release to Peltier's defense team over 6000 documents related to the case.

Since Peltier's conviction in 1977, the courts have rejected four appeals for a new trial. In 1985, some 55 Members of Congress filed an Amicus Brief in support of Peltier receiving a new trial.

Sen. Daniel Inouye, chairman of the U.S. Senate Select Committee on Indian Affairs and Cong. Don Edwards, chairman of the House Judiciary Committee Subcommittee on Civil and Constitutional Rights have led the fight for Peltier on Capitol Hill. Currently, Sen. Inouye awaits a response to a request to meet with President Bush to discuss executive intervention in the Peltier case.

A 6th appeal for a new trial, filed on March 23, 1992, is currently before the U.S. Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals.

WRITE TO SENATOR INOUE AND CONGRESSMAN EDWARDS TO EXPRESS YOUR SUPPORT FOR THEIR EFFORTS ON BEHALF OF LEONARD PELTIER.

Sen. Daniel Inouye, Chairman Select Comm. on Indian Affairs 838 Hart Office Bldg. Washington, D.C. 20510	Cong. Don Edwards, Chairman Civil & Const. Rights Subcommittee 2307 Rayburn House Off. Bldg. Washington, D.C. 20515
---	--

MOST IMPORTANT: WRITE TO PRESIDENT BUSH NOW!

Pres. George Bush
 The White House
 1600 Pennsylvania Ave.
 Washington, D.C. 20500

SHARE WITH PRESIDENT BUSH YOUR SUPPORT FOR A COMMUTATION OF MR. PELTIER'S SENTENCE OR A PRESIDENTIAL PARDON

Dear President Bush,

I believe that Leonard Peltier did not receive a fair trial, and I urge you to consider a commutation of Mr. Peltier's sentence or a Presidential pardon. I respectfully await your reply.

 Name _____
 Address _____
 City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Everybody's Threatened by Homophobia

JIFFREY NICKEL

"Do I hate my brother because he reminds me of myself, or do I hate my brother because he reminds me of someone who is 'not' myself? Whom do I hate; the one who is me, or the one who is anything but me?" —Elie Wiesel

The answer is both. But knowing that would seem to be of little help. Our brothers are hated; sisters, too. We're right to tell America of the horrors that hatred visits upon us; of the humiliation, the isolation, and even the killings perpetuated, all in the name of heterosexual hegemony. These should be enough to convince this country that it's been terribly wrong about who we are. But there's more to the story. We can also tell about what homophobia—perhaps surprisingly—does to others; those who are perceived to be gay, those who are afraid they might be, and everyone else who clearly isn't but is nevertheless forced to feel bigotry's nasty bite. This is a lot of people—close to everyone, really. If only they could understand these things, too; maybe they would see.

As Allen Ginsberg wrote, "They can! They can! They can!" Practically every school child in America knows that a "faggot" is the worst thing they could be. How many wonder to themselves, is that me? Kids do have the vague perception that there are people in the world called homosexuals, though that's about all they know. How many boys who don't yet "like" girls think homosexuality is the explanation, when in fact for them, it's not? If gay weren't "bad" in their minds, they would feel no more anguish than that experienced by a child who discovers she's left-handed. But gay is bad in the country's consciousness, so children do worry a hell of a lot about being it. The "late-bloomer" thinks constantly of what might be "wrong" with him. Because the mere possibility that some of our children will be gay isn't even entertained, children who, in a freer society, would be relieved by that plausible conclusion are instead shut off from even thinking (much less talking) about it. It is awful that so many young gay people attempt, and often succeed in, killing themselves because of who they are. It's just as awful that so many straight kids try and die for what they mistakenly think. How refreshing it would be for

young people to be able to discover their sexuality without fear. But right now, that's only a fantasy. Kids in this country must not only be straight; they must make absolutely sure that they are not gay. They shouldn't have to make sure.

A straight friend of mine whom I came out to when I was seventeen confided in me that he occasionally had gay thoughts and dreams. I told him there was no cause to worry; that virtually all people have same-sex (and other-sex) fantasies to some degree or another. But as enlightened as he truly was about homosexuality, these thoughts still bothered him deeply. What would it be like for someone who believed the worst things about homosexuality? I know what it is to be gay and feel the guilt, but I have a hard time imagining what it's like to really be straight and feel it. As a gay person I've had the "coming out process" to sort out all the meanings, but what do straight people have? It doesn't lessen the pain of the gay person's coming-to-terms to admit that these feelings are probably excruciating for many heterosexuals as well. And as is true in our case too, it's all for nothing.

I remember, especially in boyhood, the amazing level of paranoia that surrounded any form of male-to-male physical contact—aside perhaps from sports—as well as any kind of inter-male emotional experience. Males can hardly touch each other in this culture, except, as always, by lashing out. Susan Trausch of the *Boston Globe* put it well when she said that many men (and boys too) are fighting desperately to continue breathing what she called "100 percent pure macho air." They wish to be super-men; super-aggressive, super-obnoxious, and super-ignorant. Their mentality has the dual disadvantage of making automatons of men, and figurines of women. A lot of this mentality is attributable to self and other-directed homophobia. Men practically have to go to counseling just to be able to talk to each other in real ways. What a pointless chasm we've created, just to make sure that closeness isn't "misconstrued."

I hadn't thought much about how homophobia hurts heterosexuals until I saw a piece on the TV show *20/20* about two or three years ago. They had fascinating stories about several straight people who were actually attacked—physically—because others thought they were gay. One heterosexual couple holding hands walking down the street was beaten repeatedly. It seems the woman's short hair made it seem from the back that they were two men. What an awful education

in bigotry it must have been for these poor people. It's interesting to contemplate how these bigots reacted to the knowledge that they were pummeling a wife and her husband: "Oh—we're very sorry to have broken your bones, but we mistook you for someone else."

A similar event took place in Lewes, Delaware just last year. A man walking down the street with his arm around the shoulder of his (male) friend was struck and seriously injured by a pickup truck, after the driver yelled "faggot" at him. A second man in the truck then hit him in the head with a beer bottle. Then, the driver backed the truck over a curb and onto the sidewalk where the man was standing, crushing the man's legs between the rear of the truck and three metal mailboxes. He then put the truck in reverse once again in order to run over this man a second time, apparently in order to finish him off. He was prevented from doing so only because he couldn't gain the necessary momentum in the space available to jump the curb. The man's legs were so severely injured that the doctors had to graft muscles, tendons, and skin from other parts of his body in order to repair them. During the entire incident the men on the sidewalk were pleading with their attackers: "We're just buddies; we're not gay." One of the men attacked was a married, heterosexual father. But it didn't matter.

And this year, three Pensacola teenagers who said they were out to beat up a gay person in order to get beer money, did so with a lead pipe, fatally, to a man named John Braun, who was a married (straight) father of four. It's incredible: Heterosexuals have actually died because of homophobia.

For John Braun and many others, it's too late to understand their stake in eliminating prejudice against gay people. It's too late for him to join P-FLAG and march on Gay Pride Day. But for most people, it isn't too late. Before their children kill themselves far from home; before they lie bleeding, mistaken, and prone; before their brothers die slowly alone; if we talk about it, they can understand. They can! They can! They can! □

"Where ever they burn books they will also, in the end, burn human beings." Heine 1823

Cultivating our Aesthetic Sense
Margi Curtis

Aesthetic, is a word difficult to spell, and just about as hard to say or define. Webster lists it as an adjective "relating to the principles of beauty and taste and of art." Today the concept of aesthetics has far deeper significance than mere superficial ideas of what is tasteful. We are, as a culture in danger of losing our individual aesthetic sense via the clever and not always obvious manipulation of our values by the mass media/Madison Avenue.

The colors we surround ourselves with, the shapes we live in, the way we spend our lives and the relationships we have with the natural world all relate to our aesthetic sense. Is it any wonder then to see the life of the common wage slave as a compromise with average to non-existent beauty in physical surroundings and the tragic lack of time to appreciate the natural world? Time is spent working long hours to get more stuff.

The most fearful aspect of our loss of aesthetic sense is the specter of children whose main values gravitate toward what money will buy, toward the ideas and concepts propagated through television as opposed to real human interaction and experience.

We, as human beings, deserve to eat at the table of beauty, creativity, uniqueness and quality of everyday existence - not swallowing meals of cleverly marketed, cheap, non-nutritious fast food.

Here are some ideas which might encourage the individual rediscovery of a personal sense of aesthetics, and model this to children.

*Limit the amount of time spent watching television. Cut a show and take a child outside to watch the sunset.

*Spend a little more money to buy something solid and handmade.

*Surround yourself with colors, sound, people and ideas which appeal to the joyful part of your inner self.

*Look long and hard at a flower, a wild animal, the lines and colors on the horizon, let the beauty of the natural world creep into your soul, this also takes time.

Could it be that we might change the world wonderfully if we consistently connected to our innermost aesthetic sense? What would you add to this list? The time is ripe. □

Castle Carpet Cleaning
 DONALD THOM
 P.O. BOX 773
 CANNON BEACH OR 97110
 1-800-300-3465
 436-1114

BLACK CAT
 ANTIQUES
 COLLECTIBLES • BOOKS
 • JUNK •
 1145 COMMERCIAL
 ASTORIA, OR.

