

# Open Letter to President Clinton by John Trudell

"This is our time. Let us embrace it. There is nothing wrong with America that can not be cured by what is right with America." Inauguration Day, 1993

To the indigenous people of America (Tribal Nations) the phrase what is right with America can and does have many meanings. A great many of the situations faced by the tribes are connected to America's policies of ambiguity between rhetoric and definition. For example, the treaties between America and the tribes. To the tribes and the international community, treaties are laws. Laws reflecting the legitimacy of nations and between nations. To the American government, they have been pieces of paper to be manipulated at will. In America, a nation of laws, the tribes still are in constant struggle to survive the genocide of assimilation.

The Americanization of the northern western hemisphere has reduced tribal populations to the smallest minority surrounded in majority rule concepts of democracy.

All the tribes have to defend themselves with are the treaties recognized as law and cultural voices which are strong but lost to the noise of the majority.

In this generation while the young people of America were challenging the policies of war (Vietnam), of ecology, of sexism and racism (sic), the tribes were engaged in their own struggles to have American government honor (respect) the law of treaty and the laws of America.

We are writing this letter to you on a matter of urgency and importance. Over the years, after contact with attorneys, affected persons, access to limited FBI and countless court documents, we have become increasingly aware and concerned at the illegal and apparently ruthless conduct of the FBI and other intelligence agencies in the suppression of native people's treaty and

civil rights movements in the United States. It is equally disturbing and frightening that despite the existence of clear and substantial evidence of such improprieties, various responsible committees and subcommittees of the US Congress have repeatedly refused to investigate these matters. No one has been held accountable nor any efforts taken to prevent a reoccurrence. This not only has prevented redress of grievances, but threatens the very fabric of First Amendment and treaty rights.

Government documents obtained through various court cases and the Freedom of Information Act reveal that beginning at least by 1970, the FBI and other federal agencies began a campaign of infiltration and disruption of tribal treaty and civil rights organizations, most notably the American Indian Movement (AIM). By 1973, this effort expanded to the use of the paramilitary forces of the US Marshal's service and the FBI to attempt to crush the occupation of Wounded Knee on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, the site of the 1890 massacre of nearly 400 men, women and children of the Lakota (Sioux) Nation. The demonstrations began as a protest to the repeated violations of the Fort Laramie Treaty (law) of 1868 between the Lakota, the Arapaho and the United States, and the U.S. Government's support for a corrupt tribal administration which violently suppressed dissent. The 71-day siege ended with the agreement of the U.S. Government to investigate and redress a century of wrongs. However, after the occupiers were arrested, the Nixon administration ignored its promises to Native People.

Judge Gerald Heaney of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit recently wrote (in) a letter supporting the growing support of Executive Clemency for A.I.M. leader Leonard Peltier, addressed to Senator Daniel Inouye:

"The United States Government

overreacted at Wounded Knee. Instead of carefully considering the legitimate grievances of the Native Peoples, the response was essentially a military one which culminated in a deadly firefight on June 26, 1975, between the Native Peoples and the F.B.I. agents and the United States Marshals."

In addition to military force, F.B.I. documents show the government then attempted to utilize the criminal justice system as a means of crushing the movement. In 1981, Amnesty International, citing the Peltier case, recommended an independent inquiry into the use of the American Criminal Justice System for political purposes by the F.B.I. and other intelligence agencies in the United States. Since 1981, despite repeated requests, Congress has refused to conduct such an investigation. In 1975, the Senate Intelligence Committee, chaired by Senator Frank Church, investigated political and illegal operations of the F.B.I., limiting its investigation to F.B.I. activities through the very early 1970's.

F.B.I. documents and other evidence shows that governmental behavior included massive and specious criminal prosecution (most of the over 500 indictments of Wounded Knee activists were dismissed by Federal Courts due to illegal use of the U.S. military), the F.B.I. began to arm and equip a paramilitary group on the Pine Ridge Reservation loyal to the tribal administration. Substantial documented evidence shows this group murdered and wounded hundreds of traditional people on the reservation (out of a population of 11,000), which created a climate of fear and intimidation. This climate lead directly to the firefight on June 26, 1975, between members of A.I.M. and the F.B.I., leaving three people dead. A June 23, 1975, decision to investigate evidence of F.B.I. criminal activities against A.I.M. was quashed by the Church Committee, the day

after the firefight and because of the firefight. The Pine Ridge Reservation was subjected to a military-style occupation by the F.B.I. that lasted months. Petitions by the U.S. Commission on civil rights for a congressional investigation into the propriety and constitutionality of these F.B.I. paramilitary operations and other conduct were also ignored.

We are calling upon you to appoint an Executive Branch Independent Commission to investigate the F.B.I. and related intelligence activities against the American Indian Movement from 1970 to present.

There is growing evidence that the U.S. Government used the F.B.I. and other agencies in a more concentrated attack against A.I.M.; after A.I.M. embarrassed the Nixon Administration by occupying the National Headquarters of the Bureau of Indian Affairs in Washington, D.C. during the 1972 national elections. Therefore, we would like this investigation's focal points to be in the following areas and wherever they may lead:

- The role of the F.B.I. on the Pine Ridge Reservation starting December 1972 through the present. The reality is that the levels and means of violence and killings escalated with the arrival of the F.B.I. on the Pine Ridge Reservation in January 1973. They did not decrease.
- The apparent governmental complicity in politically motivated murders and sponsored armed violence on and off the Pine Ridge Reservation within South Dakota in the early to mid-1970's, including the ambush murder of Oglala Sioux Civil Rights Organization leader Pedro Bissonette, the execution of A.I.M. member Anna Mae Pictou (a.k.a.: Anna Mae Aquash) and the numerous assassination attempts against A.I.M. leader Russell Means.

• The arson murders of the family of A.I.M. Chairman John Trudell, including his pregnant wife Tina Manning Trudell, her mother, Leah Hicks Manning, and the Trudell children, Ricarda Star (age 5), Sunshine (age 3) and Eli Changing Sun (age 15 months) on February 12, 1979, on the Duck Valley Indian Reservation in Nevada.

• The continued unlawful imprisonment of Leonard Peltier and the Government's use of the criminal justice system for political purposes against native dissidents and activists. Mr. Peltier's efforts for a new trial have been supported by over 50 members of Congress, 60 members of the Canadian Parliament, Amnesty International, the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Reverend Jesse Jackson and other people throughout the world. The courts have, to date, been reluctant to provide relief.

We do not expect an investigation of these realities to bring justice. This is no longer about justice; the dead cannot be given back their lives, their families cannot forget their grief and, after more than 17 years of wrongful (illegal) imprisonment, Leonard Peltier cannot be given those years back.

This is about truth. Truth should be known. Truth can help make a wrong less wrong.

America should not be a country where government violence and manipulation of the justice system will be used to suppress individuals and organizations who speak out against wrongs and seek redress of legitimate grievances.

We pray you understand.

Peace to you,

John Trudell  
The Society of People Struggling to be Free  
12439 Magnolia Boulevard, Suite 296  
North Hollywood, California 91607

## Leonard Peltier Update

Leonard Peltier, Native American political prisoner, and his supporters are still awaiting the decision from his November 9, 1992, Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals Hearing. This appeal for a new trial is based on the denial of due process in Leonard's 1976 trial for the murder of two FBI agents in the 1975 shoot-out between the FBI and members of the American Indian Movement on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota. The Leonard Peltier Defense Committee in Lawrence, Kansas states that if a decision is not forthcoming by the end of July, 1993, Leonard's attorneys will file a Writ of Mandamus with the court in an effort to get a decision.

On May 3, 1993, Leavenworth Federal Penitentiary, where Leonard is currently imprisoned, put its "Monitoring High Escape Risk Prisoners Program" into effect. This plan required prisoners who were designated as high escape risks by the staff to sign in every two hours. Leonard, along with ten others, refused, and they were put into solitary confinement, known to prison officials as "under administrative action". He was acting on the advice of his attorneys, Ramsey Clark and Bill Kunstler, who felt that by signing a form which labels him a high risk inmate, Leonard could hurt his chances for freedom at a clemency or parole hearing. His attorneys also advised the prison that with some revision to the form Leonard would agree to sign. By 7pm that night everyone was out of solitary and Leonard now does sign in every two hours. The prison has yet to explain how it determined which prisoners to put on this program, and why Leonard was selected.

To learn more about Leonard's case and about the American Indian Movement buy a copy of the book "In the Spirit of Crazy Horse" by Peter Matthiessen, or rent the video "Incident at Oglala." To donate towards Leonard's defense or to subscribe to Spirit of Crazy Horse, the Defense Committee newsletter contact them at: The Leonard Peltier Defense Committee, PO Box 583, Lawrence KS 66044.

The San Francisco AIM office is conducting a national letter writing campaign to convince President Bill Clinton to grant executive clemency to Leonard and set him free. They want executive clemency, because even if Leonard gets a retrial for his murder conviction and is found innocent, he could still be tried for attempted escape from Lumpoc Prison in California, even though he was there on false charges. Send your clemency request letters to President Bill Clinton, 1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW, Washington DC 20500.

I love the idea of God tempering the wind to the shorn lamb, but I'd hate to have to sell it to an American Indian. Mignon McLaughlin



Silkscreened  
T-Shirts  
Native American Influenced  
Original Designs

**El Mundo for Women** Natural Fiber Clothing

3556 SE Hawthorne • 239-4605  
N Hemlock • Cannon Beach • 436-1572

JOHN TRUDELL  
PHOTO BY BETH HERRIN



**Bruce E. Nims, P.C.**  
CERTIFIED PUBLIC ACCOUNTANT

Accounting - Income Tax Service  
Management & Accounting Advisory Services  
Individuals - Partnerships - Corporations - Trusts & Estates

ASTORIA - 98 10th Street 325-0494 FAX: (503) 795-3075  
SEASIDE - P.O. Box 807 738-0247  
WHEELER - 33 Gregory P.O. Box 71 368-6821 FAX: 368-6821

Wes Lawson  
**Organic Gardening  
& Maintenance**

436-0223

P.O. Box 800  
Tolovana Park, OR 97145  
Licensed & Bonded  
#89168

**ROSALIND CUSACK**  
LICENSED MASSAGE THERAPIST  
OREGON & WASHINGTON

P.O. BOX 1224  
CANNON BEACH, OR 97110  
(503) 436-2425

**STOP THE OCA!**  
Join with the Oregon Hate-Free Association Political Action Committee (OHFA-PAC) in stopping the OCA's attempt to legalize discrimination and hate in Oregon's cities, counties and statewide.

Mail to: OHFA-PAC, 1951 W Burnside #1516, Portland OR 97209

I want to help stop the OCA! Here is what I can do:

Here is my donation for: \$100 \$50 \$25 Other  
I want to pledge \$\_\_\_\_\_ monthly to stop the OCA!  
 I want to volunteer, please give me more information!

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation \_\_\_\_\_

Note: This information is required by Oregon Election Law for reporting purposes only. Authorized by OHFA-PAC.

Hanson & Holmes, Booksellers

**QUALITY USED BOOKS**  
Bought & Sold

Steve Hanson  
503-223-7610

814 NW 23rd Ave.  
Portland, OR. 97210

UPPER LEFT EDGE AUGUST 1993 13