

Who is Leonard Peltier?

Leonard Peltier is a Native American political prisoner serving two consecutive life sentences for a crime he was set up for - the killing of two FBI agents. Peltier's status as a political prisoner has even been recognized by Amnesty International and the Robert Kennedy Memorial Center for Human Rights.

In the early 70's, traditional Native Americans on the Pine Ridge Reservation were assaulted and murdered by a group of vigilantes, calling themselves "the GOONS". The group was hired by the Tribal Chairman, Dick Wilson, to intimidate his opposition within the tribe. The Tribal Chief was supported by the Bureau of Indian Affairs who turned a blind eye to the brutality. The traditional folks looked towards the American Indian Movement (AIM) for help.

AIM is an organization that struggles for indigenous rights in North America. Responding to the request, in the spring of 1973, the organization came onto the reservation to assist the Indian people. Hundreds of AIM members and their hosts occupied the village of Wounded Knee on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota. They demanded an end to the U.S. government-backed murder and intimidation of American Indian Movement (AIM) supporters and traditionalists on the reservation.

AIM demanded the end of the government-backed brutality and demanded that treaties signed by the U.S. be honored that gave the Lakota people (also known as the Sioux) the right to self-rule and to the land surrounding the Black Hills.

Federal authorities surrounded them with an army of over 300, which included the U.S. Army, FBI, Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) agents, U.S. Marshals and state police. The Indians refused to back down. They used weapons to defend themselves and held off the government forces for 73 days. The courage and militancy of the fighters at Wounded Knee



grabbed the attention of people all over the world and helped build powerful support for the struggle of Native peoples. Wounded Knee—the site of the massacre of 300 Sioux men, women and children in 1890—became a symbol of renewed Indian struggle and resistance.

After this siege, the U.S. government unleashed an intense, murderous repression against the people of Pine Ridge. They wanted to eliminate AIM's influence and terrorize the traditional people in order to carry out their plans to steal Lakota land, which is rich in uranium, coal and oil. With Federal authorities providing information, beatings and murders escalated targeting both the AIM activists and traditional Native Americans.

In April of 1975, Leonard Peltier came to the Pine Ridge Reservation. He and a few other AIM members set up camp with Harry Jumping Bull in the village of Oglala. Peltier came to protect the village from the GOON squads and their brutality.

Incident at Oglala

On July 26, 1975, two FBI agents Jack Coler and Ronald Williams drove at full speed in unmarked cars onto the property of Harry Jumping Bull. The FBI agents were allegedly chasing a red pickup truck that they believed was carrying a man named Jimmy Eagle, wanted

in connection to stealing a pair of used cowboy boots.

A firefight erupted between the AIM activists and the intruding unidentified agent. Within minutes, scores of FBI agents, U.S. Marshals and BIA police surrounded the property. Many of them had been in place at least 20 minutes before, according to FBI reports.

During the fierce hours-long firefight, the two original FBI agents and one AIM activist, Joe Stuntz Killright were killed. Leonard Peltier and more than two-dozen others managed to flee the property and escape.

Later it is discovered that the Tribal Chairman, Dick Wilson, had signed a secret agreement transferring one-eighth of the Pine Ridge Reservation to the federal government. It is believed by many that this was the reason for the June 26th attack against the AIM activists, in hopes of creating a diversion.

Leonard managed to escape to Canada and lived with the First Nation people in the Rocky Mountains.

In September of 1975, after a flurry of unexplained murders of AIM members, the FBI raided the home of Leonard Crow Dog, arrested him, Darrel 'Dino' Butler and Anna Mae Aquash. The FBI threatened Anna Mae with death if she did not give false testimony against Peltier and other AIM members. She refused. Bob Robideau was picked up five days later.

In November, Butler, Robideau, Peltier and Jimmy Eagle were indicted for the alleged role in the deaths of the two agents. Peltier was arrested in Canada three months later.

In February 1976, Anna Mae Aquash's body was discovered in a gully on Pine Ridge. She was shot in the back of the head at close range. One month later, police used pictures of her dead body to threaten Myrtle Poor Bear, stating if she did not cooperate she would face a similar fate. Under duress, she signed a statement stating she was his girlfriend – though she never met him – and also claimed she saw him shoot the agents – though, as the FBI knew, she was never there.

This statement and other fabricated evidence was enough to convince the Canadian courts to extradite Peltier.

Dino Butler and Bob Robideau were acquitted on murder charges after pleading innocent by reason of self-defense. Charges against Jimmy Eagle were dropped so the government could focus on Peltier's conviction.

Peltier was charged with double murder. The government ensured that the conditions were right for a conviction, transferring the trial to a region known for anti-Indian sentiment, limiting the evidence to only include the events of the day and not permitting Peltier to claim self defense.

With the fabricated evidence, combined with these conditions, it was easy for the all-white jury to convict Peltier just after eight hours. He was sentenced to two consecutive life terms in federal prison.

In July 1979, after receiving a tip of an assassination attempt, Leonard Peltier and two other Native American prisoners attempted to escape from USP Lompoc in California. One of the other prisoners was shot in the back and killed. The other prisoner was quickly captured. Peltier eluded capture for five days before being captured in a farmer's field. Later it was discovered that the tip was just an attempt to give the guards a reason to shoot him. The next year the other prisoner that escaped and was captured with Peltier was found dead in an alleged suicide.

Since his imprisonment, Leonard Peltier has continued to appeal his conviction. His defense committee has also been trying to get the thousands of FBI and police files regarding Peltier. Some of the FBI files have indicated that there were attempts made by the FBI to infiltrate Peltier's defense team. Despite the government claiming they have provided all files pertaining to Peltier, it is believed that there are over 18,000 pages still missing.

In 2007, Peltier was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize.

Free Leonard Peltier

To contact Leonard Peltier, write to:

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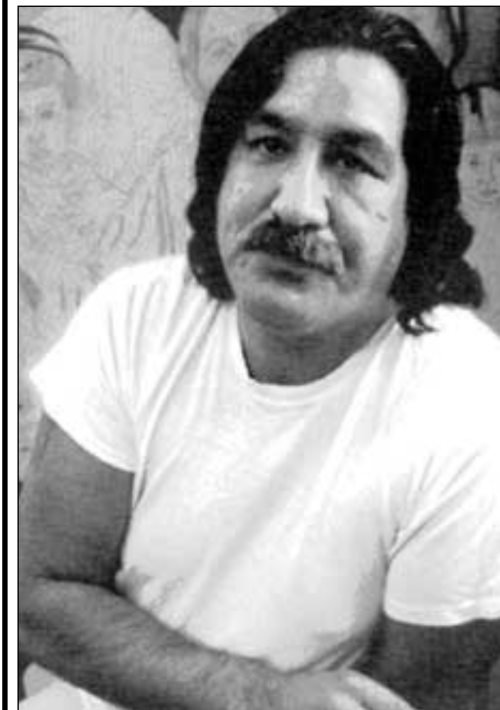
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YOU CAN HELP BY GIVING POLITICAL
PRISONERS A VOICE AND VISIBILITY

THE TRUTH CAN SET THEM FREE!

Leonard Peltier



**AMERICAN INDIAN MOVEMENT
MEMBER SERVING TWO LIFE
SENTENCES IN PRISON**

