

Minute concerning the release from prison of Leonard Peltier

Friends have a long-standing concern for prisons and those who have been unjustly imprisoned. We are called by God to act with integrity, and out of this grows a concern for justice. We have historic ties with Native American Nations and hold a concern that Native American individuals and Nations receive justice within our governmental systems. We feel led by the Spirit to call for the release of Leonard Peltier because we are led to speak truth to power. If we remain silent, we fail to take action when we feel called to do so. Our conscience requires it of us and our Spirit moves us to act. We join the international community in calling for his release.

In Leonard Peltier's own words:

The Message

Silence, they say, is the voice of complicity.
But silence is impossible.
Silence screams.
Silence is a message,
just as doing nothing is an act.

Let who you are ring out & resonate
in every word & deed.
Yes, become who you are.
There's no sidestepping your own being
or your own responsibility.

What you do is who you are.
You are your own comeuppance.
You become your own message.

You are the message.

In the Spirit of Crazy Horse,
Leonard Peltier

New York Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends calls for the release from prison of Leonard Peltier in accordance with the plan drawn up by the National Congress of American Indians. Leonard Peltier is elderly and in ill health. We ask that he be allowed to rejoin his family and live his last days in peace.

The clerk of NYYM is requested to forward this minute to Barack Obama while he is in office, and to our Senators and Congressional Representatives.

Additionally, the clerk is requested to write to Leonard Peltier personally to inform him of our action and support, as well as the National Council of American Indians, which formulated the plan for his release; the International Leonard Peltier Defense Committee, *Indian Country Today*; and all North American Yearly Meetings. Individual members of New York Yearly Meeting are also encouraged to express individual support for release of Leonard Peltier as led.

Approved at NYYM Fall Sessions, 11/16/14

Background: ¹

A plan has been drafted that will call for his release to the custody of the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians or to have him released on house arrest.

Leonard Peltier is now 67, and is in poor health. He suffers from diabetes, hypertension, and

¹ Background Information revised and Amnesty Int'l statement added on 11/15/14

has shown symptoms of cancer. Many of these issues have been directly caused by lack of medical treatment and poor nutrition during his imprisonment, and thus his health is further at risk due to the prison environment in which he lives. He is a grandfather and great-grandfather who wants to return to his family and live the rest of his life in peace. National and international human rights organizations have called for his release. Amnesty International states that “AI understands that he is not eligible for consideration for parole again until 2024. Given that all available legal remedies have been exhausted and that that Leonard Peltier has now spent over 36 years in prison and is in poor health, AI believes that in the context of these ongoing concerns, the US authorities should order Leonard Peltier’s release from prison on humanitarian grounds and in the interests of justice.”

Leonard Peltier was convicted and sentenced to two consecutive life terms in connection with the shooting of two FBI agents at Wounded Knee in 1975.

Appellate courts have repeatedly acknowledged governmental misconduct in connection with the arrest and trial of Leonard Peltier, including false statements in court, forcing witnesses to lie, and concealing ballistic evidence. No one knows who fired the fatal shots, yet Leonard Peltier has remained in prison, and has been denied parole despite the fact that he has fulfilled his federal sentencing guideline and maintained a clean prison record for over 15 years.

While in prison, Leonard Peltier has become an accomplished writer and artist, and has received many awards:

Human Rights Commission of Spain International Human Rights Prize 1986

North Star Frederick Douglas Award 1993

Federation of Labour Humanist of the Year Award (Ontario, Canada) 2003

Silver Arrow Award for Lifetime Achievement 2004

First Red Nation Humanitarian Award 2009

Kwame Ture Lifetime Achievement Award 2010

Fighters for Justice Award 2010

Mario Benedetti Foundation First Intl Human Rights Prize (Uruguay) 2011

He was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 2009 for the 6th consecutive year.

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