‘Keep Fighting’: Leonard Peltier’s message to supporters on 48 years since arrest

written by Leonard Peltier
February 9, 2024

Leonard Peltier has been unjustly imprisoned for 48 years on Feb. 6. In this letter, he reflects on the anniversary of his incarceration and calls upon all to “keep

fighting.”

As NDN Collective works in coalition with others on the release of Leonard Peltier, we are in close communication with our dear elder and relative Leonard. He shared this letter with NDN Collective and has given permission to share on our platforms.

From Leonard Peltier:

February 6, 2024

My life was taken 48 years ago, at 11:00 am. The sweater that my adoptive mother Ethel and her daughter Donna placed on my shoulders as I was taken in the bitter cold of Canada was a kindness that I still remember.

I could not foresee that 48 years later I would be entombed in a lockdown nightmare. I live in lockdown, for no reason other than that they can get away with it.

If I had been tried with the others, I would be a free man. They were rightly found not guilty by reason of self-defense. We were under attack. We were facing the extermination of our people.

Justice never came for those they killed. I was chosen to be the sacrifice to cover up the crimes committed on that reservation. I am not here because I committed a crime. I am here because I stood in the way of their greed and corruption.

…no one can break the spirit of a Sundancer.

James Reynolds, the State Attorney who supervised my prosecution, has admitted that they could not prove I committed any crime. He stated, “We were not able to prove that Mr. Peltier himself committed any offense on the Pine Ridge Reservation.”

Time has become so twisted with these lockdowns that night blurs into day, a miasma of time that has no sense to it. All hours are the small hours of the night. Life itself is suspended. We wait for a brief glimpse of what life looks like. We exist in cold, filthy cells, and we wait. The voices of those murdered on Pine Ridge Reservation are a constant echo in my mind.

Time has become a weapon they use to try and annihilate the essence of who I am. They have done their best to break me. They started by holding me in a lightless cell block in Canada, telling me that I was awaiting my execution, to try and force a confession.

But no one can break the spirit of a Sundancer.

I have fought for my freedom every single day of these past 48 years.

You, my people, my supporters, my family in a very real way, lift my spirit and enable me to hold fast to the beliefs they want me to denounce. You get me through these hours that last for days or years.

NDN collective protest at the White House, photo: Willi White for NDN Collective.

Keep fighting. Fight the parasitical influence of colonialism. Fight the lies, the greed, the corruption of the oppressor. Fight for the survival of our people.

The greed and corruption of the colonizers is infectious. My own Committee, which has stood behind me and been a training ground for activists for over four decades, was lost to the parasite of greed and corruption the colonizers infected us with.

The very greed and corruption that imprisons me will be the undoing of those who take too much. Power arises from truth, from the willingness to give voice to that truth, from lifting the voices of your brothers and sisters when they speak their truth. Truth is power. That is why they try to silence us, you know. You also know

they are losing their ability to silence us.

I know you are out there, my relations, my friends, my supporters.

Take care, my relations. Ask the Creator to set your path before you. Live in ceremony. When I choose my actions, I watch carefully to make sure those actions come from spirit, not ego. Sometimes the greatest enemy we will face comes from within. At times I want to lose myself to rage. The rage of being unlawfully imprisoned, the rage that drifts through the air here, a haze you can almost see, that arises from men caged in conditions that would be illegal for dogs.

If I allow that rage to take me, I may never come back. That is not who I am. I know who I am. That is why I am still here – I will not lie, I will not grovel, I will not beg. I will not denounce my beliefs. I will not betray myself.

I know you are out there, my relations, my friends, my supporters. You know the meaning of Mitakuye Oyasin. You give me the courage to stay strong and face these eternal twilight hours of lockdown. I know you are fighting for me, fighting with me, fighting for an end to the oppression and tyranny that take so many of us, in so many ways.

I have heard of a new cry going out. NOT ONE MORE YEAR. It has been said that I am a common man who stood up to an uncommon enemy.

Let this be the year that America learns to live up to its own principles.

People think of me as a symbol. I suppose I am, but I am a man. A man who wants to go home to his family.

Cuban children call for Leonard Peltier’s release. Photo: Bill Hackwell

Let this be the year that common sense prevails. Let this be the year that “liberty and justice for all” are not words that ring hollow. Let this be the year that America learns to live up to its own principles.

We will prevail. Our children will know who they are and know they are cherished. All of them, not just a privileged few, while the rest go hungry and lose their connection to Mother Earth. That connection is everything.

Never, ever forget who you are. Mother Earth births us. She fires the blood that runs through our veins. She takes us back to her womb when our journey ends.

We will prevail. I can see a world that is not powered by lies, manipulation, greed. This will not happen by magic. We must come together, my brothers and sisters in solidarity, and let our truth illuminate the dark recesses of society.

It is time.

In the Spirit of Crazy Horse.

Doksha,

Leonard Peltier

Source: NDN Collective