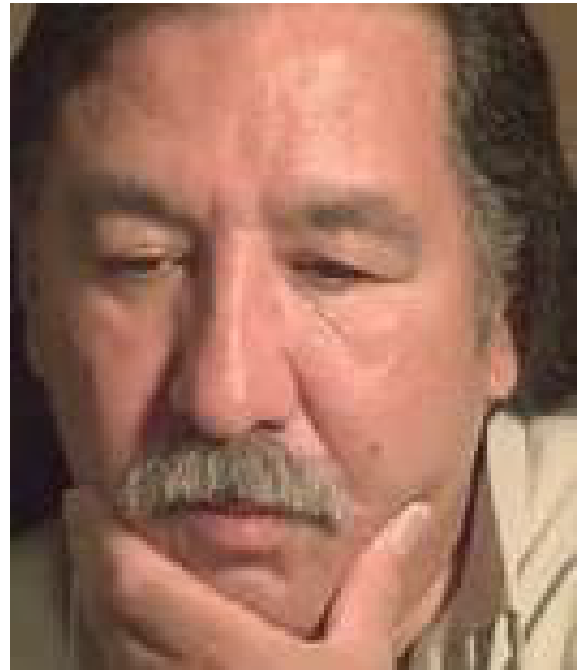


# The Lone Ranger's Revenge:

## How The U.S. Government "Got" Leonard Peltier

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Over the last several issues, we've introduced you to a number of individuals who have been classified by a variety of organizations, including Amnesty International, labor unions, celebrities and the heads of state of foreign governments, as **Political Prisoners** (those individuals who have been imprisoned **not** because of their having committed a crime but because of their political beliefs) held here in the Good Ole U. S. of A. Of course, the United States Government refuses to recognize them as Political Prisoners even as it excoriates other countries for their imprisonment of dissidents. In order to legitimize its treatment of individuals such as veteran Black Panthers **Geronimo JiJaga**, **Mumia Abu-Jamal** and **Marshall Eddie•Conway**, the government had to brand each of them as a menace to society, even if it meant fabricating evidence, instigating violent stand-offs or carrying out assassination plots (as in the case of **Fred Hampton** and **Mark Clark** in Chicago in 1969). The tool used to accomplish this destruction of much of the activist movement in America was dubbed **COINTELPRO**, the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) infamous Counter-Intelligence Program which, during its heyday from the 1960's through the 1970's, targeted first the Communist Party, then The Black Panthers and then the **American Indian Movement (AIM)**. Unsuccessful in its attempts to destroy AIM by eliminating its most active and famous leaders, **Russell Means** and **Dennis Banks**, the FBI and the U.S. Prosecutors Office turned its guns on another AIM activist, **LEONARD PELTIER**. We present to you a brief discussion of his case, of the treatment to which he has been subjected during his incarceration, and of efforts to win his freedom by support groups across the United States and around the world.

**W**here shall we begin? How far back do you want to go? One could start this and similar stories on the fateful date of October 12, 1492, when **Cristobal Colon** (Christopher Columbus) stumbled over what he would call Hispanola and began the genocide against indigenous peoples in the western hemisphere. One could begin with the **1868 Fort Laramie Treaty** which was signed by **Red Cloud's** Oglala Nation and the United States government, establishing an area in the Midwest covering much of Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Wyoming, Colorado and other states as the property of Indian people *forever*, a treaty which was broken before the ink was dry. Or, we could recount the December 29, 1890 massacre of over 300 Indians at **Wounded Knee Creek** who had been participating in



a spiritual rite known as "**the Ghost Dance**". All of these things and more led to the 1973 occupation of Wounded Knee by AIM in response to the pleas of Oglala Indians at the **Pine Ridge Reservation** (most of what was left of the original Fort Laramie Treaty territory). The tribal government of President **Dick Wilson**, long considered a pawn of the U.S. government, had organized a vigilante group known as the **Guardians Of the Oglala Nation** or "**GOONs**", who terrorized many of the elders and dissidents ("the traditionals") at Pine Ridge. Under Wilson's reign of terror, the annual murder rate at Pine Ridge, *using only documented political deaths*, between March 1, 1973 and March 1, 1976, had been **170 per 100,000**, as compared to that in the then-murder capital of the United States, Detroit, Michigan, which was **20.2 per 100,000** in 1974 [from **Ward Churchill** and **Jim Van Der Wall**, *Agents of Repression: The FBI's Secret War Against the Black Panther Party and the American Indian Movement*, South End Press 1990, p. 175].

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**KUMBA REPORT**

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AIM had been asked to help defend the traditionals from GOON violence.

### The Wounded Knee Siege, In Brief

The FBI had already begun its secret war against AIM. Things intensified when AIM occupied several buildings at Wounded Knee on the Pine Ridge Reservation. The goal was to stop the reign of terror by Wilson's GOONs and seek to reclaim Indian rights on the reservation by forcing the U.S. government to either wipe out the old people, women, children, and men ... [or] negotiate our demands. [from Peter Mathiessen, *In the Spirit of Crazy Horse*, Viking Press, New York, 1975] The FBI and the U.S. Army responded by invading Wounded Knee with a force that included 17 armored personnel carriers, 130,000 rounds of M-16 ammunition, 24,000 flares, 12 M-79 grenade launchers, 600 cases of CS-gas, 100 rounds of M-40 explosives, helicopters, Phantom jets, and personnel [from Churchill and Van Der Wall, *Agents of Repression*].

While that extraordinary military buildup would diminish later that year, the presence of the FBI at Pine Ridge would continue for years, and its efforts to provoke confrontations with AIM members would, in many ways, intensify. One such attempt led to the pursuit of Leonard Peltier, and is reviewed below.

### The "Cowboy Boot Caper"

On the afternoon of June 25, 1975, FBI special agents **Ronald Williams** and **Jack Coler** arrived at the compound owned by **Harry and Cecelia Jumping Bull** at which AIM had settled to defend the traditionals from GOON violence. The agents brought with them two suspected GOONs and an apparently-false claim that they had a warrant for a young AIM supporter named **Jimmy Eagle**. The charge was that Jimmy Eagle had taken a pair of cowboy boots from the feet of a White ranch hand as the result of a brawl. As Ward Churchill puts it in *Agents of Repression*, "Thus, with scores of unsolved murders clogging the investigative docket of the FBI on Pine Ridge--and the head of the Bureau's Rapid City office ... pleading 'lack of manpower' in pursuing those investigations--two agents had been dispatched to chase down a teenager who, at most, was guilty of stealing a pair of used cowboy boots."

After several warrantless searches and interrogations about the numbers of AIM members at the compound, the agents returned on the morning of June 26, allegedly in pursuit of a vehicle alternately described as a red pickup and a red-and-white van. The

agents parked their car in an open pasture west of the compound and drew weapons. An exchange of gunfire erupted from which, according to AIM members present, the agents could have easily retreated. Shortly thereafter other vehicles, including Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) police cars and vehicles driven by known GOONs, converged on the scene. It would turn out that a large force of GOONs, BIA Police, state troopers, U.S. Marshals and SWAT teams had been quietly converging on the general vicinity around the Jumping Bull compound since June 25 and probably earlier. (More on that later.) Coler and Williams evidently had returned to the compound expecting a handful of AIM members and supporters, but during that day word of the paramilitary buildup had spread so that up to 30 defenders had arrived at the Jumping Bull compound. The two agents, located in a clearing and having underestimated the number of defenders, were outnumbered and outgunned, the reinforcements arrived late due in part to the actions of AIM members, and the agents died in an exchange of gunfire they themselves had precipitated. Coler apparently died from a rifle bullet fired at long range, then Williams--after his repeated pleas for assistance from the FBI/BIA/SWAT reinforcements went unanswered, was also hit.

By that afternoon, various police agencies had surrounded the compound. Despite this, most of the AIM force managed to slip away from the compound while the remainder held the by-now-vast paramilitary force at bay. Finally, the authorities managed to enter the area of the compound to find the two agents, and AIM member Joe Stuntz Kissright, dead.

The following morning, the FBI launched a full-scale invasion of the Pine Ridge and adjoining Rosebud Reservations, using the by-then-typical 200-plus agents, U.S. Marshals, BIA police, GOONs, M-16s, armored personnel carriers, Huey helicopters and assorted White vigilantes, conducting a number of warrantless search-and-seizures, destruction of private property, physical intimidation, false arrest and other violations of human and civil rights.

The FBI narrowed its list of suspects in what they would call the RESMURS (Reservation Murders) investigation from their list of 30-plus to four--**Darrelle "Dino" Butler, Robert Robideau, James Theodore "Jimmy" Eagle, and Leonard Peltier.**

Jimmy Eagle turned himself in on July 9, 1976, while Dino Butler and Robert Robideau were captured on September 5 and 10, respectively. The trial of Butler and Robideau was held in 1976, and on July 16, 1976, the jury returned verdicts of not guilty of murdering the two agents because it was probable that they fired on the agents in self-defense. The history of FBI-sup-

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ported GOON violence on the Reservation, as well as certain implausibilities in both the way in which the entire incident had been conducted by the FBI and the degree of prosecutorial misconduct that occurred during the trial (fabricated evidence, questionable or intimidated witnesses for the prosecution) had figured heavily in their decision. The charges against Eagle were finally dropped so the full prosecutive weight of the Federal Government could be directed against Leonard Peltier [August 9, 1976 FBI memorandum, noted in *Agents of Repression*, p.304].

While the cases against first Eagle, then Robideau and Butler, and finally Peltier were pursued using the resources of the FBI and police to avenge the killing of the agents, no investigation was ever launched to find out who killed **Joe Stuntz Killwright**, the Indian activist who died in the incident. As one law enforcement officer reportedly said to Cecelia Jumping Bull when she inquired as to the identity of the victim, *"That's just an Indian."*

### The Trial of Leonard Peltier

While Jimmy Eagle, Dino Butler and Robert Robideau had remained in the United States, Peltier had fled to Canada on the advice of elders of the Oglala tribe. The FBI, through the use of fraudulent affidavits, located him and secured his extradition to the U.S. to stand trial. This time, the FBI and prosecutors' office would not repeat certain mistakes from the Butler/Robideau trial. For one, a trial judge who was openly hostile to AIM was secured--Paul Benson of Fargo, North Dakota. The trial was then moved to Fargo, where an atmosphere of tension was maintained by convincing the jurors and the townspeople that AIM terrorists were preparing to kill them. This, of course, served to prejudice the jury from the outset. Then Benson passed down a series of rulings that made Peltier's defense practically impossible:

- Evidence would be restricted almost entirely to the events of June 26, 1975, the day the agents died.
- The fraudulent affidavits used in Canada to secure Peltier were inadmissible as evidence.
- The history of violence at Pine Ridge, which had figured prominently in the self-defense determination by the Butler/Robideau jury, was inadmissible as evidence.
- All testimony at that trial was inadmissible, including inconsistent and directly contradictory testimony by several FBI agents that clearly indicated misconduct by the FBI on June 26, 1975 and led to the acquittals of Butler and Robideau.
- Objections by the U.S. Attorney were upheld at every turn, further hobbling Peltier's defense.

Ultimately, the flimsy evidence and suspect testimony that sought to connect Peltier with an act of premeditated murder got a shot in the arm from a surprise witness, a Lakota woman who many on the Reservation had concluded was imbalanced, Myrtle Poor Bear. Her testimony was that she had been Peltier's girlfriend and that he had bragged to her about killing the agents shortly after the incident. The fact that she had also been used to provide the exact same testimony about AIM member Richard Marshall, or that her eyewitness account of Peltier's confession conveniently filled all the holes in the prosecution's case, or the fact that she was produced without allowing the defense time to prepare for her appearance, didn't matter. Her testimony was entered into the record and believed by the jury. (Similar

tactics were used to convict Marshall Eddie Conway as well, when a jailhouse informant claimed that Eddie had confessed to killing a Baltimore City police officer while the two of them had been mysteriously double-celled just after Eddie's arrest--see last issue for more on that case.) Benson consistently overruled the defense attorneys and evidently omitted certain instructions to the jury that would have dealt with questionable testimony presented by the prosecution. Poor Bear's testimony was allowed to stand, other testimony that raised doubts about her credibility was not allowed and Peltier was convicted on April 18, 1977, after six hours of jury deliberation, of two counts of first degree murder. On June 1, Benson imposed two consecutive life terms as punishment, the harshest possible under the circumstances. Peltier was sent directly to the federal Super-Max prison at Marion, Illinois, one of the more infamous prisons in the country.

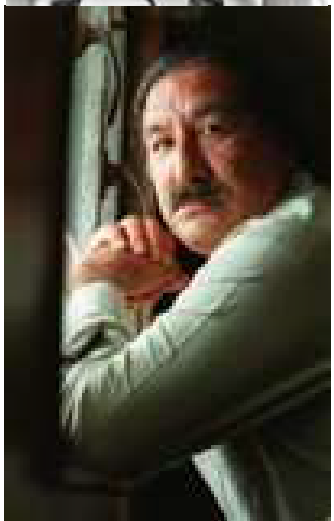
### The Real Reason for the Firefight

Why had the FBI agents provoked the shooting on June 26, 1975? Why had the Bureau dispatched two of its agents to the Jumping Bull Compound in search of a pair of used cowboy boots when its docket of unsolved murders was so large? And why was there evidence that the paramilitary buildup had been prepared *in advance* of the firefight?

The answer can be found by looking at what was happening at the same time as the FBI/police buildup and resultant firefight: on June 24, 1975, tribal president Dick Wilson was in the process of signing over to the U.S. government one-eighth (1/8) of the Pine Ridge Reservation to be mined for the rich uranium and molybdenum deposits on which it sat.

Apparently, the deposits had been identified by satellite surveys taken by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and the National Uranium Resource Evaluation (NURE) program during the early 1970's. [from *Agents of Repression*, p. 130, and J.P. Gries, *Status of Mineral Resource Information on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, S.D., 1976*]

Wilson's land transfer was carried out in violation of treaty provisions that required the consent of the tribal council as well as three-fourths (3/4) of the adult male Lakota population of Pine



Leonard Peltier's arrest (top); early days (second from top); at Leavenworth Penitentiary (bottom and second from bottom).

Ridge. As Churchill and Van Der Wall note in *Agents of Repression*, p. 131: This patently unconstitutional transfer of Lakota land to the U.S. Park Service--specifically to the Badlands National Monument--was quickly certified as legitimate by the House and Senate.

Thus, we see an occurrence that happens all too often in oppressed communities: An individual, placed in a position of authority over his/her own people, institutes hostile, oppressive measures while literally signing away the peoples rights to the oppressor. Often, the payoff for this individual takes the form of police protection, material riches and the establishment of a personal fiefdom supported by the State. Since this arrangement means access to normally sovereign lands for large multinational corporations to exploit (either for mineral wealth or simply to provide a convenient, out-of-the-way place to dump waste, or both), governmental bodies beholden to these corporations are often quick to sign off on such deals and look the other way.

Another reason for the buildup and firefght may have had to do with a congressional investigation being initiated by Senator Frank Church into the FBI's COINTELPRO and its use with regard to Native American struggles. The deaths of the two agents quickly put a stop to those hearings, and they apparently have never been resumed.

### Standing Deer & the Assassination Plot

Apparently simply incarcerating Peltier for double-life wasn't enough for some people--there were those who wanted him dead. The appeals effort that would be mounted over the years was a constant threat, and if Peltier were to suddenly disappear, perhaps his appeals, and the exposure those appeals might bring the FBI, would disappear as well.

**Robert Hugh Wilson**, aka **Standing Deer**, was doing time for a variety of charges: bank robberies, auto theft, the near-fatal assault on a police officer in Oklahoma City, seven felonies in all. Complicating matters was a degenerative spinal disease that rendered him dependent upon drugs and other special treatment to keep the pain from becoming debilitating. Being a large, powerfully-built man as well as having a reputation for violence made him very dangerous, being dependent on his handlers for medical attention made him vulnerable to manipulation and being an Indian made it easier for him to get close to Peltier.

He was approached by a high-ranking correctional official and a somewhat-mysterious man thought to be an FBI agent one day as he lay in an isolated cell suffering from his condition and was offered a deal: If he were to "neutralize" Peltier, his medical problems would be taken care of and a number of the charges he faced, including the assault on the police officer in Oklahoma City, would be dropped. If not, he would be denied medication, he would eventually be turned over to Oklahoma City authorities and his life would be very unpleasant *if* he survived at all. Standing Deer agreed to the arrangement and received treatment. Subsequently, several of the charges he faced were mysteriously dropped. But instead of moving forward in the assassination plot,

he chose to warn Peltier instead. This led to a failed escape attempt by Peltier and two others. Standing Deer filed several affidavits regarding the assassination plot which were reviewed by U.S. District Judge Robert Takasugi and were researched by a Los Angeles Times reporter working on another case, who suddenly found normally-open doors at the FBI slammed in his face. Even his own paper chose not to publish the result of his research. As of 1998, Standing Deer was still imprisoned and was viewed by many as a political prisoner. (See Churchill and Van Der Wall, *Agents of Repression*, for more detail.)

*[EDITOR'S NOTE: Several years later, Standing Deer was released on parole, but was subsequently murdered in his residence under suspicious circumstances.]*

### The Status of the Peltier Case

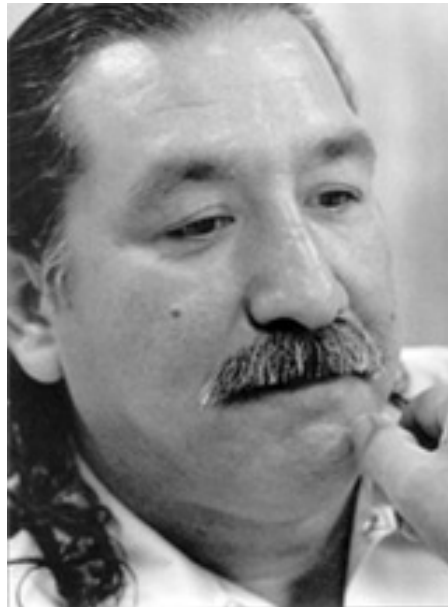
During a December 1995 parole hearing, according to the **Leonard Peltier Defense Committee (LPDC)**, U.S. prosecutor Lynn Crooks stated (not the first time he had done so) that the government did not have sufficient evidence to convict Peltier of murder and that, if he were retried, he would likely be acquitted. The Parole Board, however, has continuously chosen not to grant parole because he had not given a "factual and specific account of (his) actions ... consistent with the jury's verdict of guilt" and because he was the only one convicted. Apparently, his continued claim of innocence is the reason for his continued imprisonment, according to that statement. The reasoning is strikingly similar to that behind the continued imprisonment of Marshall "Eddie" Conway, who was denied parole several times because he failed to show remorse for a crime he did not commit.

Peltier's supporters have secured the release of about 15,000 pages of FBI documentation of his case, but another 6,000 pages were withheld, citing "national security".

*The following information comes from the announcement made at that time by the LPDC:*

"In 1993 we filed for Executive Clemency. Normally six to eight months elapse before a response from the president is given. It has now been nearly five years and we have heard nothing. Numerous resolutions from the European Parliament, the Belgium Parliament, the Canadian Parliament, tribal councils, local governments, Nobel Peace Prize winners etc. in support of Leonard have been passed, millions of people from here and abroad have written letters to Clinton and other government officials, and yet we have heard nothing. We must put pressure on government officials in every possible way to continue to fight for clemency.

"We are currently pushing for Senate hearings that would investigate and expose the role of the FBI in both the Peltier case and the Pine Ridge murders. These hearings are crucial to ensure that clemency for Peltier is granted. Other groups, such as the Black Panthers, who have political prisoners as the result of the FBI's COINTELPRO are also seeking similar hearings. The fight to release all political prisoners will be strengthened as the FBI's illegal interference in political



struggles is revealed.”

On May 4, 1998, a parole hearing, one of many to be held before and after this one, was held which the LPDC described thus:

“According to Leonard Peltier, the May 4<sup>th</sup> parole hearing was a complete set-up in which the decision had been made before he and his attorneys had even arrived. None of his attorneys were allowed to respond at the hearing and Leonard said they made some amazing statements such as, ‘We spoke with one of the agent’s wife and she wants you to die in here. You will not receive another parole hearing until 2008 then we’ll take it from there.’ ‘The government can’t prove who is responsible for the agents’ deaths, but someone has to pay.’”

### The Current State of Leonard Peltier’s Health

According to a report on Peltier’s continuing health condition from the LPDC:

“Leonard Peltier is currently suffering from complications of a previous maxilla-facial surgery which he underwent at the Springfield Medical Facility in 1996. Because of this, he is in excruciating pain everyday as the pain in his jaw never subsides.

“As a child Leonard stepped on a nail and got tetanus. This caused him to get lockjaw and he has had problems with his jaw ever since. He also broke his jaw once and it never healed correctly. This is why he was transferred to Springfield for surgery in 1996. During this surgery Leonard almost died and his jaw has been in even worse condition since.

“Leonard cannot open his mouth to bite his food. He also is unable to chew his food .... He also has abscessed teeth because he cannot properly care for them. Because the infection could travel to the rest of his body, it is life threatening. He has put in several requests to see an outside physician, and Doctor Keller, a renowned maxilla-facial surgeon from the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, has written the prison telling them that he is willing to treat Leonard, but prison officials have denied all requests ... The facility at Springfield has already stated that they do not have the staff and/or equipment to treat Leonard. It cannot be stressed enough that he cannot be transferred there again.

“We are also concerned with the amount of radiation that Leonard was receiving in the jaw area while he was there. It has been noted by an independent physician that that type of radiation is not normally used for correcting Leonard’s problem.

“Leonard also suffers from severe headaches, he has lost 80% vision in his left eye, and he has torn cartilage in his knee that has never been treated .... Needless to say Leonard’s suffering is a form of cruel and unusual punishment for a crime which he did not commit.”

### June 27, 1998: The Rally at the Ellipse

While the immediate effort is to obtain treatment for Peltier’s jaw and associated ailments, the appeals, peti-

tions and rallies continue in the effort to win his freedom. One such effort was the March on the ellipse in Washington, D.C. (Banneker City) to demand justice for Peltier. Hundreds of people, at various times during the day, gathered for a day of speeches, updates and song. Representatives from LPDC chapters from across the country came, as did **Pam Africa** of **MOVE**, former Attorney General and now Peltier supporter **Ramsey Clark**, and **Njingha Conway**, then-wife of Political Prisoner **Marshall “Eddie” Conway**.

While the crowd was small, the spirit was not. Since the original publication of this article, the LPDC was disbanded because of suspected improprieties of some of the involved organizers. Other marches, petition drives and appeals have been organized in the years since by his new Support Committee, the

**Leonard Peltier Defense-Offense Committee (LPDOC).**

### Conclusion: Why the Peltier Case Is Important

For this writer’s part, the whole Peltier case helps to crystallize the Political Prisoners Struggle simply because of its similarities to other cases: The identification of an organization of activists working in opposition to the system; the further identification of individual members targeted for elimination, the provocative actions of the FBI (or other police agency) to cause a disturbance, the death of an officer of the law (or two), the manhunt for a longtime COINTELPRO target who had shown signs of leadership, the intimidation of witnesses friendly to the defense, the fabrication of incriminating evidence, the suppression of evidence (“exculpatory evidence”) that would have indicated the innocence of the defendant, the appointment of a judge and jury hostile to the defense *from the start*, the predictable conviction of the defendant, the imposition of the maximum penalty (in the case of **Mumia Abu-Jamal**, the death penalty), an intensive propaganda campaign with the cooperation of the mass media to paint the picture of a “terrorist” or a “cold-blooded killer” in defiance of the facts, and the mistreatment of the prisoner

while incarcerated (sensory deprivation, brutal physical treatment by guards in “Control Units”, denial of legal materials and basic medical care). The Leonard Peltier case, and the history that led to it, are compelling enough for one more writer for one small newsletter to write about in an effort to inform the people, especially those of us who like to think of ourselves as dedicated to justice, dedicated to the rights of those who have been the most profoundly oppressed in the United States, as to *just how oppressed we have been and continue to be*. Just as the story of the American Indian’s oppression in this country continues to this day, so too does that of Afrikan people in America and around the world. We owe it to our ancestors who suffered and died for us to, at the very least, learn and remember, and do what we can to stop the oppression and suffering from being carried on into the next generation ... and the next ... and the next ....



# Kwame Ture's Visit to Tubman City

**F**RIDAY, FEBRUARY 13<sup>th</sup>, 1998, HARRIET TUBMAN CITY/BALTIMORE, MD: One of the foremost leaders of the Black Power Movement in America and the Pan-African Movement around the world, Baba Kwame Ture (once known as Stokely Carmichael) spoke about the continued need for Pan-Africanist Organizing at Coppin State College on behalf of his organization, the *All-Afrikan Peoples Revolutionary Party (A-APRP)*. Though battling ill health, Baba Kwame offered a vigorous, eloquent argument that Afrikans in America do not do nearly enough to organize for Afrikan Liberation.

## THE NEED FOR CONSTANT STRUGGLE

**“S**truggle is not a speed race,” he said. “Like Harriet Tubman, you must be prepared to take struggle to the grave. Freedom is a constant struggle .... Struggle is eternal. The American system will try to persuade you *from* struggle, to seek the easiest possible life.”

One way in which the American system seeks to persuade us from struggle, he explained, is to “make everything a commodity .... If you make your education a commodity,” a thing to be held selfishly in an effort to seek status and privilege, “you’ve betrayed your people.”

The conditions of Afrikan people in the United States and around the world are a testament to the effects of a lack of commitment to struggle: “We really have no more power now than when we came here as slaves .... Our people are brutalized everywhere. Why? *No power* .... We will not have power until we get organized and we will not become organized *until we organize ourselves*.”

## AFRIKAN-AMERICAN ATTITUDES

**P**art of the difficulty in organizing, especially around Pan-African ideals, rests in the attitudes of many Afrikan-Americans towards Afrika. “Europeans came here voluntarily; we were brought here in chains. Europeans remember their home; we forget ours .... We are taught to be ashamed of Afrika. Anyone with any knowledge of world history *must* appreciate Afrika. Anyone who does not is an ignorant person. We’re not proud of Afrika ... because we’re *ignorant* of Afrika.”

He pointed out that one’s choice of religion is no excuse for continued ignorance of Afrika. “Christians should appreciate Afrika because of its contributions to Christianity.” Referring to a young lady he once met who staunchly defended her picture of a White Jesus, he noted that “Jesus—peace be upon his name—never set foot in Europe.” Afrika, as represented by Ethiopia and Egypt (Alexandria), was “the first place mentioned in the Bible .... How can you say you’re a Christian if you don’t appreciate Afrika?”

During the question-and-answer session that followed his speech, he made the point that “the job of the enemy is to make

you believe (1) the history of America is your history and (2) the enemy of America is your enemy. ... Afrikans in Afrika are suffering from the same enemy as we are (U.S.-backed global White Supremacy). One of the problems we face in this country is that we think America is the world. Minister Farrakhan is showing that there’s a world outside of America and there are people out there who support our struggle. This gives us a more international perspective.

“Our culture is from Afrika; Afrika is thus more important. *This land belongs to the American Indian. The Indians sacrificed much. The Seminoles sacrificed their entire nation. But we shouldn’t think they don’t want their land back. We are a just people. Indians have sacrificed for us. We owe them the responsibility to help them get their land back.*”

## AFRIKA, UNITY, AND PROPAGANDA

**O**n the propaganda and oppression that still threaten Afrikan unity, he said: Afrika is the first continent that will be unified continent-wide. The most recognized map in the world is that of Afrika, due to the struggle of Afrikans around the world. This is why Afrika will be the first unified continent in the world.

“Today’s news implies that Afrika is the leader in fratricidal warfare. But Europe has had more than the whole rest of the world! They even take it outside Europe (to Trinidad, Baba Kwame’s birthplace).

“Today, European nations question European unity. Afrika is dominated today by the scum of our race, as they are neo-colonialist regimes who only seek to exploit our people. But not one of them will say they’re against Afrikan unity to their people.

“White domination in Afrika is over.” As for the prospect of Afrikan world domination, the great fear of the White Supremacist? “Just Afrika is enough for us.”

## THE ILLUSION OF POWER AND WORKING “THROUGH THE SYSTEM”

**B**aba Kwame related an anecdote about a discussion he had with a writer for a “mainstream” media publication. The writer had asked his opinion of General Colin Powell, an Afrikan-American who achieved fame and admiration by working “through the system”, and Baba Kwame expressed his opinion that, as far as Afrikan people were concerned, “I think he’s a traitor.” The writer responded that “it sounds like you’re jealous ... he has a lot of power.”

But General Powell had to obey the orders of his bosses whenever and wherever hostilities erupted: “When war broke out in Vietnam he was *sent* there, when fighting started in Grenada he was *sent* there, and during the Gulf War he was *sent* there .... It seems like the man with the power is the one who’s standing here today.”



Baba Kwame Ture as a young man (then Stokely Carmichael).

He sees struggling for Afrikan liberation as antithetical to "working within the system" that suppresses it: "You can only really think about something when you're involved in it. You can only really think about Afrikan unity when you're involved in bringing it about."

### INDIVIDUAL vs. GROUP WORK

“**A**frika is the richest continent on the face of the earth. Afrikans are the poorest people on the earth. Why? We're not politically organized.

“One person can't do it, otherwise we'd be free. Martin Luther King would've done it. *I* would've done it.

“Capitalism tries to confuse you that one person can do it. ... Superbad. ... Rambo.

“You can't do that [organize Afrikan people] on an individual basis.”

### ORGANIZATIONS ARE THE KEY

“**T**he enemy wants us (Afrikan people on a national and global scale) to be disorganized because once we get organized, it's finished for the enemy.

“To have an organization you need three things: principles, people, and people's faithfulness in the principles.” The need for all three of these characteristics is seen when Afrikan people band together in times of extreme crisis (e.g., lynchings, rebellions and marches) but fail to continue to organize after things quiet down and the *real* planning (such as follow-ups to the Million Man and Million Woman Marches, day-to-day organizing and nation building) must occur: “Our people often fight together but we don't *think* together.”

As Baba Kwame sees it, the United States has no shortage of organizations based on their principles, but lacks the people and their attendant faithfulness in the principles to accomplish their missions. “We have many organizations in the United States, but 97% of so-called Afrikans do not belong to an organization struggling for their people. ... I bet 97% of *you* belong to no organization struggling for our people. We will never be free this way. We will only be free when 100% of us belong to an organization.”

Referring to, among other things, police brutality, abuses in the (so-called) criminal-justice system and COINTELPRO, he finished his point: “This is a country where they shoot you in the back. You at least need someone to cover your back. ... If you've got no organization when you go to jail you're finished.”

### THE A-APRP AND ORGANIZED STRUGGLE

**B**aba Kwame describes his organization, the *All-Afrikan Peoples Revolutionary Party (A-APRP)* as “not a reformist party. We're not out to reform Capitalism, we're out to destroy it.”

On the A-APRP's commitment to Pan-Afrikanism, he is equally uncompromising: “Afrika is the most important thing in our lives. Afrika is more important than America anywhere, any day, anytime. We are Pan-Afrikanist. ... We are serious. We will sacrifice everything working for freedom for our people.

“You have a responsibility to make a commitment to our people's struggle. You should be in an organization. All-Afrikan People's Revolutionary Party, Nation of Islam, National Black United Front. If you don't see one you like, you should *create one*.”

The choice, Baba Kwame says, is actually relatively simple: “In life, you can do one of two things: you can live like an animal--come to life, eat, sleep, reproduce and pass on--or live like a human being by making a contribution, otherwise *no one will ever know you were here*.”

Baba Kwame concluded his speech thus: “When your people are oppressed, by your very inaction you are betraying your people. ... *Please* help Afrikan people. Thank you.”

With that, the assembled crowd erupted in applause. Baba Kwame later appeared at Mondawmin Mall to meet individual admirers, autograph reprinted copies of his 1967 book *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation* (co-authored with Charles V. Hamilton), and pose for photographs. A small dinner was held in his honor that evening courtesy of **Baba Attiba Nkrumah**, who at that time was serving as the President of the Baltimore Chapter, A-APRP.



# DEMOCRATIC TYRANNY

Column Written 5/2/98 by Mumia Abu-Jamal  
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A "freedom fighter" is one of your own people who fights for your independence. A "terrorist" is a foreigner who fights for independence for his people.

--Amos Kenan (Israeli Journalist), *The Nation*

**I**magine, if you will, a nation of secret trials, or one where evidence is a secret whisper that the defendant may never hear nor read, nor ever even hope to challenge. Imagine.

What nation comes to mind?

Peru, with her infamous hooded judges?

War-racked Bosnia-Herzegovina, with her concentration camps and death squads?

Imagine that this nation of secret proceedings sits neither in Latin America, nor in Eastern Europe; nor in Africa, nor in Asia.

It is the United States of America, where a man named **Nassir Ahmed** tries to fight a phantasm, a monstrous legal machinery that is the offspring of the so-called **Anti-Terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act of 1996 (AEDPA)**. This law, signed into the law books by President Clinton, a former professor of Constitutional Law, denies immigrants like



Ahmed the very fundament of a hearing; denial of the opportunity to hear and challenge evidence against a person.

Ahmed, who dared pray at the community mosque of the blind Sheikh Omar Abdul-Rahman, may be forced to leave his American home of the last eight years where his three daughters have lived all of their young lives. He faces deportation.

It should be deeply shocking to us all that secret, untranscribed trials are taking place in this country; it should be a source of great shame that a court rules on a person based upon such secret evidence; and it should stir us to outrage that courts deny these secrets to one's lawyers, urging them to file appeals to challenge evidence that they have never seen. In such context,

what can a "trial" mean? What of "evidence"?

For Mr. Ahmed, they must seem empty, English words, that actually mean nothing at all. How can any Constitutional scholar (not to mention, Rhodes Scholar) dare put his signature on any law that legalizes secret proceedings, secret evidence whispered to a judge, and untranscribed, unrecorded hearings? How can any judge dare to sit in such a proceeding?

How can we dare not raise our voices in protest at this outrage, if not for Nassir Ahmed, then for our very selves?

Such a "law" commits terrorism against the letter and spirit of the Constitution.

MAJ

## EDITOR'S COLUMN:

# REMEMBRANCES OF DR. JOHN HENRIK CLARKE

I think I will never forget the first time I saw **Dr. John Henrik Clarke**. It was a couple of years ago, in the auditorium of **Coppin State College** in Harriet Tubman City (Baltimore, Maryland), and a local law firm had sponsored his speech. As he entered the auditorium, the assembled drummers began to beat a fervent rhythm and his attendants/escorts/bodyguards walked him up to the podium on the stage. I was somewhat surprised at how this man, small, frail, well advanced in years, and blind, still exuded a commanding presence over an auditorium filled with people. And so it was a year later, in the auditorium of Frederick Douglass High School, as this giant of Afrikan history, who had been involved in much Afrikan history himself, took that stage to offer his wisdom to us again.

At Coppin as well as at Douglass, as he delivered his address, the crowd sat in rapt attention. He delivered scathing criticisms of the way we as a people foolishly accept things we are told as gospel and are so eager to follow the various "prophets" of our time that we do not examine their true intent. As he lambasted major religions, most especially Christianity and Islam, as quasi-governments and "murder cults", not a whimper of protest came from the audience, no doubt composed of many who call themselves Christians and quite a few Muslims (some are friends of mine). This Elder, who required assistance to go anywhere, whose voice was but a shadow of what it had been in his youth, was able to speak so frankly and brutally about a number of subjects *because we all knew that, on a basic level, he was right*. We also knew that he did not curse those of us who were Muslim, or Christian, or agnostic, or whatever, but more those established hierarchies that took spirituality and made it religion, just as they took the community and

made it The State. Dr. Clarke loved Afrikan people, he cared about Afrikan people, and he wanted to do what he could, at this late stage in his life, to help us free our minds.

After he finished his address, he would be led to a side room where admirers would line up to purchase autographed copies of his many books, ask him specific questions, or simply greet him and show their respect. After a while, he would be walked to a waiting limousine and spirited away, perhaps to another speaking engagement, perhaps home to a well-deserved rest.

For the past eight years or so, I have considered Dr. Clarke, **Dr. Chancellor Williams** (author of *The Destruction of Black Civilization* and *The Re-Birth of Afrikan Civilization*, who joined the Ancestors on December 7, 1990) and **Dr. Yosef Ben-Jochannon** (also author of many books, including *Black Man of the Nile and His Family* and, fortunately, still with us) the Big Three as far as Elder Afrikan History Scholars are concerned. It is a very sad thing for us that we have lost Dr. Clarke now to the Ancestors, but it is a very fortunate thing that we had the opportunity to feel his spirit and benefit from his

leadership for as long as we did. Too often we over-emphasize the things we see as flaws in our Elders and leaders, only to pine for their presence and spirit when they are cut down early in life. There certainly were critics of Dr. Clarke and of his views, most of them people whose deeds will probably never approach the magnitude of his. May we learn to honor the legacies of our departed leaders and Elders, and may we learn to appreciate those warriors and teachers among us while we have them here to help us find the way to liberation and wisdom.

