

Poetry for Peltier

Various Authors

1997

For 22 years the doors of justice have been closed to Leonard Peltier. Now, the door may be opening a crack. A few months ago AIM activist Dennis Banks announced that Senator Ben Nighthorse Campbell, Chairman of the Senate Select Committee on Indian Affairs, had agreed to hold oversight hearings into the events leading to Peltier's arrest and conviction. Wounded Knee, the COINTELPRO programs against AIM, Peltier's illegal extradition from Canada, and the many irregularities in his trial will be among the issues brought to light.

The Northwest Leonard Peltier Support Network has announced an International Indigenous Peoples' Day March on the U.S./ Canadian Border for Justice for Leonard Peltier and the First Nations to take place on October 10–12, 1997. Events include a Rally for Justice at Olympia, the state capital, a caravan to the border, a "Run for Justice" and a mass meeting in Bellingham, Washington. The organizers need money and help. Contact them at POB 5464, Tacoma WA 98415–0464, tel. 253–3839108.

Here in Detroit, through the efforts of persistent Peltier supporter Mick Vranich and others, the annual Peltier benefit was held at the Cass Cafe in March to raise funds for Peltier and inform the local community of his situation. Emceed by storyteller and former FE staffer and White Panther political prisoner Pun Plamondon, the event featured readings from poets Alise Alousi, Mark Grafe, Chris Monhollen, Dennis Teichman, Chris Tysh, José L. Garza and FE staffer David Watson.

A literature and information table was supplied by Kevin Kamps and friends from the World Tree Peace Center (POB 50814, Kalamazoo MI 49005). Mick's musical/poetry ensemble, with musicians John Bardy, The Blackman, Jim Johnson, Akulahti and Eric Walworth accompanying his poetry, ended the evening with a powerful performance. The poems here were among those read for Peltier.

shanghai (poem from *Continuity Girl*)

broadened to include funereal piers

which is to say not the slit already suspect

that opens in the paddy fields but the camp

itself, unrelated to forgetting from soldier

to prisoner passing his hands from truckfloor to water without even a hint of what must be

told one day: the body that burns in advance
jams, at the skin, the shortwave crackle of these events
that it seek place on the rolled up scroll
as marker or history depends on the economy
of knowing. Slack motor across the compound.
Gangs, sentries and flies like a camouflage
matinee cut up before the squatting crowd
framed and separate from the letters of war
by a running fence, its barbed meaning
not yet trenchant nor plain
— Chris Tysh

Disorderly Conduct

(waiting for the Woodward bus because you took all my money, and the car keys, Detroit, Jan. 21, 1997)

Dazed and confused, tequila blues,
I tighten my belt a notch
because you said so, sentenced
to riding the *pinche** D.O.T. bus
in winterized, pulverized 1997.
Chasing this *pinche* puppy tail life around,
makes a person want to say
pinche all the time 'cause
you said so made it all come true.
Ambushed by Godzilla and Rodan imposters,
your *pinche* friends not mine.
One of these glorious, wondrous *pinche*
I am going to win *la pinche*
loteria, the million dollar lottery,
y despues I can afford without regrets

my own pinche book of poems
with only the word *pinche* in it;
repeated time and again
because you deemed it so,
flowing from the *pinche* tongue,
the pen, the *pinche* broken vida/heart
you so expertly, surgically removed
with your dull knife/knife of secret revel
Thank you so *pinche* much.

— José L. Garza

*pinche = damned, forsaken

Butterfly Effect

“May your feet imitate heaven.”

— Theodore Roethke

Not flailing
but dancing close in,
the orrery of the limbs
whispering
what the body wants.
Energy most fierce
inside the thin ribbon
of restraint,
movements small as seeds
or butterfly flap
igniting hurricanes.
The spine supple as a mast
at full sail
stretching from tap-root
to sky,
birds singing in the spars.
The hands of my beloved two whisps of cloud.

— David Watson

Stones

Wind-spewn acres
and a monstrous sun cradle vapors
of Indian ghosts dying over again
A woman stands weeping
her flesh obedient
her hunger a dialogue
her language is time
her cries extend the sea
Slender and golden
the moon marks a promise
the shadow haunts itself
I speak to you of madness
I speak to you of a violent stare
taking eyes to another form
I speak to you in a soft voice
with thickness of emotion
and the lightness of a body
walking from the night
the day is tangled in body salt
the sun resides in the wait
What burns inside you is melted
what is taken with you is yours
— Christine Monhollen, 3/97

fifth Estate

Various Authors
Poetry for Peltier
1997

<https://www.fiftheestate.org/archive/350-fall-1997/poetry-for-peltier>
Fifth Estate #350, Fall, 1997

[fiftheestate.anarchistlibraries.net](https://www.fiftheestate.org)