

Solitary Watch

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://solitarywatch.org/2011/07/19/native-american-activist-leonard-peltier-in-the-hellhole-of-solitary-confinement/>

Campaign and Advocacy

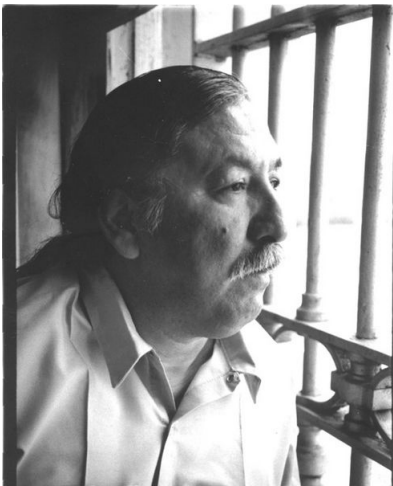
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by [Sal Rodriguez](#) | July 19, 2011



American Indian Movement activist Leonard Peltier has been removed from general population and [placed into solitary confinement](#) at USP Lewisburg since June 27th. The 66-year old inmate has been ordered to spend 6 months in solitary stemming from various petty infractions, according to his attorney, Robert R. Bryan.

Peltier, in a letter to his attorney, described the cell as a cement steel hotbox with little ventilation (a 1.5 inch slot under the door is the primary source of cool air). Due to the lack of suitable ventilation coupled with the heat of the summer, he has been drenched in hot sweat and indicated he had to stop many times while writing the letter due to difficulty concentrating in the cell. My client has been put in the hellhole, said Bryan.

Allotted five one-hour periods of exercise, Peltier spends 23 hours in a cell five days a week. The exercise is in a cage where water isn't allowed. On Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, he is allowed to shower. For the other two days, he is in his cell 24 hours. He is not allowed any personal visits.

According to a note that Peltier had written at the time, he had been preparing to eat breakfast the morning of June 27th when guards entered his cell and began disrespecting my religious items and threatened to lock me into solitary.

According to the prisons [first incident report](#), dated 06/27/2011:

[T]his officer reviewed a letter being sent by inmate Peltier. In this letter, inmate Peltier has enclosed a bank note of 20 pounds, in Scottish currency. In the enclosed letter, inmate admits to receiving the bank note in the mail. It is obvious that inmate Peltier was in possession of money that was not authorized.

Peltier received a letter the previous day from a supporter in Scotland that contained a 20-pound note and had been inspected by the mailroom. Peltier had asked the mailroom to send back the enclosed money, but this request wasn't followed up. He then addressed a letter to a friend and enclosed the note so as to send the money out of his cell and out of the prison, knowing that possession of unauthorized money was a violation of prison rules. This letter was intercepted at 8:00 a.m., prompting guards to search his cell at 9:45 a.m.

According to a [second prison incident report](#), written the same day by a guard who searched Peltier's cell:

[W]hile performing a search I observed two wires protruding approximately 2 inches from the wall of the cell. The wires were located on the wall above the corner post of the upper bunk. I attempted to pull the wires out of the wall. As I attempted to pull the wire out of the wall my grip failed, my fingers slipped on the wire and contacted the bare ends of the wire. At that time I received an electrical shock

through my right hand and forearm.

Peltier was deemed guilty of destroying, altering or damaging government property having a value in excess of \$100. Peltier, however, did not sleep on the top bunk and the wiring was manipulated by a former cellmate. In addition, because of the guards decision to attempt to pull the wires out of the wall, Peltier was found to have engaged in conduct which disrupts or interferes with security or orderly running of the institution (Most Like) *assaulting any person*. Most Like is a provision in the Federal Bureau of Prisons [Program Statement](#) that reads: This charge is to be used only when another charge of greatest severity is not accurate. The offending conduct must be charged as most like one of the listed greatest severity prohibited acts.

Prison officials deemed Peltier responsible for the shock the guard received while pulling out the exposed wires, and deemed it an act most like an act of assault committed by Peltier. This is a greatest severity level violation, meaning an inmate can be placed into segregation for up to a year. The charge of destruction of property is a high severity level act which can result in up to six months in segregation, and the possession of unauthorized money is a moderate severity level violation and could result in up to three months in segregation.

Peltiers punishment for possessing money he had refused and attempted to send away, for being deemed guilty for the actions of a prior cellmate, and for assaulting a guard who chose to touch live wires is only the latest of the injustices that Peltier has faced.

Peltier was convicted of the 1975 killing of two FBI agents during a shootout on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota, which took place at the height of the [American Indian Movements efforts](#) to gain public attention regarding the plight of Native American tribes, the abuses of the United States government against Native Americans, and a wave of unsolved murders in tribal territories. The subject of a [1992 documentary](#) and a European Parliament [resolution of support](#), Peltier has always maintained his innocence. Critics have raised serious questions about the fairness of his trial, and he is considered by many to be a [political prisoner](#).

The United States Penitentiary at Lewisburg is the oldest prison in the federal system, and one of the most notorious. Since 2009, it has also been one of the most heavily locked-down. In the words of the [Bureau of Prisons](#), Lewisburg is now being run entirely as a Special Management Unit (SMU) institution to operate as a more controlled and restrictive environment for managing the most aggressive and disruptive inmates from USP general population. Peltier was sent there in 2008 not for any disciplinary infractions, but because he was the victim of a beating by younger prisoners at another federal facility. Theyre hoping hell die there, that hell be forgotten there, maintains his attorney.

Peltier has been in poor health in recent years, suffering from hypertension, diabetes, and exhibiting symptoms of cancer. This is of particular concern given the vast literature pointing to [significant detrimental effects](#) of solitary confinement on both psychological and physical health, particularly when there are pre-existing conditions.

Peltiers attorney has indicated that the placement into solitary confinement has slowed correspondence. A legal call has been delayed for several days and the prison has been slow to providing Peltier with the instruments necessary to write and send letters necessary for his legal proceedings.

Says attorney Bryan: Prison officials are using this as an excuse to punish and torture my 66-year-old client. His health is poor because of decades of imprisonment. He needs to be placed back into the general population.

More information on Leonard Peltier can be found on the [Facebook page](#) run by Peltier attorney Robert R. Bryan.



Sal Rodriguez was Solitary Watch's first and most prolific intern. Based in Los Angeles, he served as an editorial writer and columnist for the Orange County Register and the Press-Enterprise, and is now the opinion editor for the Southern California News Group.

Accurate information and authentic storytelling can serve as powerful antidotes to ignorance and injustice. We have helped generate public awareness, mainstream media attention, and informed policymaking on what was once an invisible domestic human rights crisis.

Only with your support can we continue this groundbreaking work, shining light into the darkest corners of the U.S. criminal punishment system.

by [Juan Moreno Haines](#)

October 25, 2022

by [Solitary Watch Guest Author](#)

October 13, 2022

by [Vaidya Gullapalli](#)

September 29, 2022

Solitary Watch encourages comments and welcomes a range of ideas, opinions, debates, and respectful disagreement. We do not allow name-calling, bullying, cursing, or personal attacks of any kind. Any embedded links should be to information relevant to the conversation. Comments that violate these guidelines will be removed, and repeat offenders will be blocked. Thank you for your cooperation.

I have just seen the movie about Ogala. It seems the government's case has enough holes to drive a tank through. Should there not be enough witnesses available to say the man didn't do the crime? Can we extrapolate that the obvious manipulation of Mrs Poor Bear

extended into all of the evidence? The manipulated shell round casing? If he is deemed a political prisoner by Amnesty international and recognized by other organizations should he not get an opportunity at a new trial? Considering the obvious level of bias at the time of conviction, would it not be fair to look at this through a fresh lens? If the government obviously falsified data at any point can we assume that any of the evidence is valid? With the public outcry, perhaps the powers have become more entrenched. It is the first time I have read on Mr. Peltier and I find he is being tortured.

I wish that I could do more than hope that justice would find this man. One assumes that the truth will always win; until it doesn't win for you. It's only when caught in the fight that the slight of hand, the illusion, is seen. The story is with me now; a lesson on the fragility of civil liberties.

parole the guy already. Enough, is enough!

DAY OF THE YEAR 12 SEPTEMBER, the BIRTHDAY OF LEONARD PELTIER.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mee-cdSXu34&feature=share>

Rik the DutchFluteplayer.

DAY OF THE YEAR, MONDAY 12 SEPTEMBER, The Birthday of Leonard peltier, join the Event

<http://www.facebook.com/event.php?eid=212073685494819>

Greetings and Thanks Rik the DutchFluteplayer

Here is my Flutesong for the Birthday of Leonard Peltier on 12 September. Rik the DutchFluteplayer.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k_TdyMkKV00&feature=share

DISGUSTING freeeeeeee him!!!!!!

The Case of Leonard Peltier will never go away America oh thou Great Pretender Strange Fruit still hanging in those lynching trees: Geronimo Pratt, Leonard Peltier, Mumia abu Jamal all framed as crazy killers even though the facts of their cases prove they could not have done it magic bullets they call it. FIE!!! In China they don't hang em with a pack of lies, they just hang em! All pretending to DEMOCRACY!!! Oh yez!!! I mean: OH NO!!! Happy Danish and European me WE DO NOT HAVE POLITICAL PRISONERS!! But in sub-democratic lands such as China & America they do! -: Just follow the news about He that Leads the People Leonard Peltier. To Him we send our love that he may endure and this time too reemerge from the Hull ready to write his next book.

And lost of respect to you folks on Solitary Watch

What a travesty. I have been following the case since it began. This man deserves the help of all of us who value the truth.

Dear Sal:

for your information: the European Parliament has adopted two resolutions in support of Leonard Peltier (in 1994 & 1999); the Belgian Parliament also adopted two resolutions (in 1997 & 2000); and the Italian Parliament (in 1998) adopted one. See:

<http://users.skynet.be/kola/resolutions.html>

No Words..Its Terrible!

I do all that I can, on Facebook and Youtube, watch my videos, Greetings from the Netherlands, Rik the DutchFluteplayer.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ki2wXW4aT68&feature=share>

Bush, Cheney et al should be in his place.

Amendment 8 Cruel and Unusual Punishment. Ratified 12/15/1791.

Excessive bail shall not be required, nor excessive fines imposed, nor cruel and unusual punishments inflicted.

If The Constitution of The United States of American still meant anything at all then Mr. Peltier would not be enduring this hell on earth punishment, which is surely cruel and unusual, excessive and capricious, by ANY standard.

This is such a tragic mark in our human history when people are mistreated, abused and further oppressed without just cause Mr. Peltier deserves better treatment, clemency would be most appropriate, considering his innocence Please urge those in power to show compassion and care about doing the right thing in stead of doing the thing right He is only guilty of being an Indian, Indigenous and rightful owner of this country

P.O. Box 11374

Washington, DC 20008

info@solitarywatch.org

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Solitary Watch News

