

# COINTELPRO, Leonard Peltier and the Limits of Resistance

Global Research News Hour Episode 130. A Conversation with Ward Churchill

By [Michael Welch](#)

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[Intelligence](#), [Police State & Civil Rights](#)

*"In a way, their interest is served by it being known that he was flat-out railroaded, falsely convicted, that they orchestrated this as a consequence for basically standing on his rights and not equivocating. And the message is... "if you make yourself aware of your rights and you refuse to relinquish them when you're instructed to do so, there are consequences....if you don't want to end up like Leonard Peltier, do what you're told." -Ward Churchill (from this week's interview)*

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Saturday February 6 marks the fortieth year of Leonard Peltier's imprisonment on the charge of murdering two FBI agents.

Peltier was an activist with the American Indian Movement in the mid-1970s. He had been called into a community to try to restore peace and security on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota at a time when politically motivated violence on the territory was in proportionate terms rivalling the death count in post-Allende Chile. A firefight which erupted on the Jumping Bull ranch claimed the lives of FBI agents Jack Coler and Ron Williams as well as a young native man named Joe Stuntz.

The FBI set about trying to implicate Peltier and two other AIM members by fair means or foul. Despite a number of legal irregularities and demonstrably fabricated evidence, Leonard Peltier was charged with the murder and continues to serve two consecutive life sentences.

Numerous individuals and groups have rallied to the cause of justice for Peltier. These include Nobel Laureates Jose Ramos Horta, the late Nelson Mandela, the Dalai Lama, Angela Davis, Former Attorney General Ramsey Clark, The National Association of Criminal Justice Lawyers, the National Lawyers Guild, the Parliaments of Belgium, Europe and Italy, Jane Fonda, Peter Coyote, Whoopi Goldberg, Danny Glover, Harry Belafonte, and Robert Redford and dozens of Native American and Tribal leaders, representatives of the religious and faith

communities, civil rights organizations, scholars, artists and celebrities.

It is widely believed that the arrest and lengthy incarceration of Peltier had to do with the desire of US authorities to contain the burgeoning American Indian Movement. The central instrument used against the AIM leadership was a program known as COINTELPRO (COunter-INTelligence-PROgram.)

COINTELPRO was the latest variation of a strategy used by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and its antecedents to control popular resistance movements.

On this installment of the Global Research News Hour, the last of a trilogy of stories dedicated to American political prisoners, we speak with **Ward Churchill**.

*Churchill is an author, academic and political activist. He is the author of several books including [Agents of Repression: The FBI's Secret Wars Against the Black Panther Party and the American Indian Movement](#) which he co-authored with Jim Vander Wall, as well as his controversial 2003 work [On the Justice of Roosting Chickens: Reflections on the Consequences of U. S. Imperial Arrogance and Criminality](#)*

In this interview, Churchill discusses the history of Counterintelligence activities in the United States leading up to the COINTELPRO program of the 1960s, the involvement of the American Indian Movement in Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, and the case of Leonard Peltier who he argues has been unjustly arrested and incarcerated.

*Peltier has been diagnosed recently with Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm which is posing a threat to his life. For more details and updates please visit [www.whoisleonardpeltier.info](http://www.whoisleonardpeltier.info)*

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