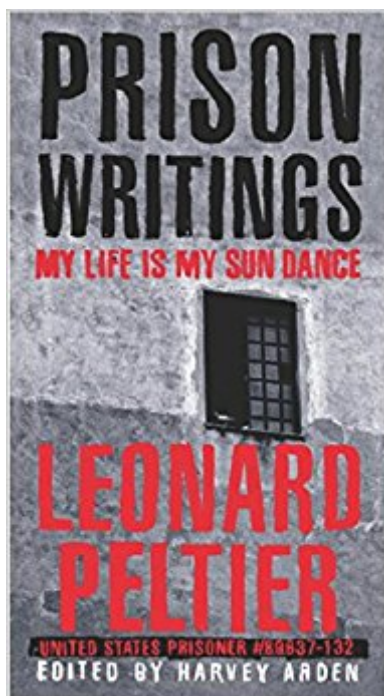


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# Prison Writings: My Life Is My Sun Dance



## Synopsis

Edited by Harvey Arden, with an Introduction by Chief Arvol Looking Horse, and a Preface by former Attorney General Ramsey Clark. In 1977, Leonard Peltier received a life sentence for the murder of two FBI agents. He has affirmed his innocence ever since--his case was made fully and famously in Peter Matthiessen's bestselling *In the Spirit of Crazy Horse*--and many remain convinced he was wrongly convicted. *Prison Writings* is a wise and unsettling book, both memoir and manifesto, chronicling his life in Leavenworth Prison in Kansas. Invoking the Sun Dance, in which pain leads one to a transcendent reality, Peltier explores his suffering and the insights it has borne him. He also locates his experience within the history of the American Indian peoples and their struggles to overcome the federal government's injustices.

## Book Information

Paperback: 272 pages

Publisher: St. Martin's Griffin; 1st edition (June 16, 2000)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0312263805

ISBN-13: 978-0312263805

Product Dimensions: 5 x 18.3 x 9.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 12.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars 102 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #53,497 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #35 in Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Ethnic & National > Native American #100 in Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Social Sciences > Specific Demographics > Native American Studies #134 in Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Specific Groups > Crime & Criminals

## Customer Reviews

American Indian Movement (AIM) activist Peltier, arrested more than two decades ago on charges stemming from conflict with the FBI on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota, has become a symbol of the oppression of Indians and other indigenous people. Indeed, he is perhaps the most famous inmate in the U.S., regarded by many as a political prisoner, with Robert Redford, author Peter Mathiesson, former U.S. attorney general Ramsey Clark, and others calling for his release. He remains incarcerated, often in horrific conditions. As if engaged in the sun dance, in which apparently unendurable sufferings are embraced as a spiritual testimony, Peltier writes of his life, before and behind bars, with anger but not rancor. Since his youth as a warrior, he has become a

spiritual elder whose words offer much to Indians and non-Indians alike. "We don't need more prisons," he writes. "We need more compassion. That compassion is our own highest possibility." His own simple, eloquent compassion for his captors as well as himself makes this a remarkable and moving book. Patricia Monaghan --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Part manifesto, part memoir, a standout collection by the celebrated, long-imprisoned American Indian Movement co-founder and activist. Peltier, a Sioux Indian, has been in federal prison since 1977, convicted of killing two FBI agents during the 1973 siege at Wounded Knee, S.D. Peltier asserts that he did not commit these murders, writing simply, Innocence has a single voice that can only say over and over, I didnt do it. Guilt has a thousand voices, all of them lies. (In his preface, former attorney general Ramsey Clark makes a compelling argument for why we should believe Peltier, a case also made by Peter Matthiessen in his much-litigated book *In the Spirit of Crazy Horse*). In this anthology, Peltier charts the course of his activism, describing his evolution from a young man on a South Dakota reservation who wanted what other young men in his circumstances wanted a car, a job to a political organizer keenly aware of the injustices visited past and present on Americas indigenous peoples. Although he too easily falls into sloganeering (We are the voices of the earth. We speak for those who are not yet born. When you exclude us, you exclude your own conscience. We are your conscience!), Peltier has much to say about American Indian politics, a dauntingly complex set of issues; among other things, he insists that the US government follow a Canadian model in offering reparations for historical wrongs. He also advances the plausible view that the siege at Wounded Knee was a sideshow meant to disguise a deal through which a uranium-rich portion of the Pine Ridge Sioux reservation was ceded to the federal government. Writing more personally, Peltier recounts the intricacies of living behind bars. As a houseguest in hell, he writes, you learn that the devil has many mansions, and you keep shuttling between them for no known reason. An important contribution to Native American letters, sure to stir both controversy and renewed attention for Peltiers ongoing quest for freedom. -- Copyright ©1999, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

I LIVED IN NEBRASKA WHEN "INCIDENT AT OGLALLA" RESERVATION IN S.DAKOTA HAPPENED. (SEE THE DVD).HUNDREDS OF INDIANS KILLED- MEN,WOMEN,CHILDREN,BABIES . AND, WE KNEW IF THAT REZ WASN'T SITTING ON ONE

OF THE LARGEST URANIUM DEPOSITS IN THE U.S., THEY COULD HAVE LIVED IN PEACE. THEN 2 CIA AGENTS GET KILLED, MAYBE BY THEIR OWN OPERATIVES. THREE INDIANS CHARGED..JURY IN IOWA FOUND TWO INNOCENT OF ALL CHARGES. SO THEY MOVED THE PELTIER TRIAL TO THE MOST HOSTILE OF ENVIRONMENTS, GAVE FALSE EVIDENCE, THREATENED WITNESSES, BLATANTLY LIED UNDER OATH... AND FOUND A CLEARLY INNOCENT MAN GUILTY-- OF STANDING UP FOR INDIAN'S RIGHTS AGAINST "THE MACHINE OF THE MAN" THE CIA. TEARS READING OF THE TORTURE AND TREATMENT IN PRISON. MORE TEARS WHEN I REALIZED HE IS STILL ALIVE; MOVED AGAIN AND AGAIN-- LATEST TO ONE OF THE MOST CORRUPT AND ABUSIVE FEDERAL PRISONS IN AMERICA. MAY GOD HAVE MERCY ON OUR SOULS FOR ALLOWING THIS FOR OVER 40 YEARS AND COUNTING.

There is NO doubt whatsoever, that Leonard Peltier has been imprisoned falsely. Even A District Court Judge who reviewed the evidence several yrs ago, ruled that the evidence against him didn't hold up, circumstantial AND contrived. It is within the power of the President to give Leonard Peltier a Presidential pardon. There is a Petition online that one can sign and send to Obama. Whether or not it will do any good remains to be seen. This is a travesty and Justice was denied AND continues to be. He's in his 70's and ill. He needs to be released NOW and should have been decades ago because He Did Not Kill the two Agents. From what can be learned from reading in Peltier's own words (as the man who was there!) it is even more possible that the two agents were killed by what the military calls "friendly fire," but rather than own up, they pinned the deaths on the man they most wanted imprisoned: Leonard Peltier, and they got away with it.

I cannot emphasize enough that what we, as a nation, have done in the name of, so-called, progress is atrocious and abominable. I mean we decry what other countries do in terms of policies and prisoners, but when it comes to our own national priorities, we can do no wrongs. Unfortunately as this book exquisitely expresses, we're no better than, say, South Africa during apartheid. We just dress it up in different terms and don't even acknowledge such when it goes on, despite the many attempts to open up our shadowy government policies to civilian viewing and oversight. Everyone should read this book, in my opinion, because it underscores the gross negligence of the US government toward the native peoples of this country.

Throughout American history, there has been a need to expand and control Native Americans. Most

individuals believe that America is the home of the free, but that did not apply to everyone. The government wanted to control Native Americans any way they could. They forced Native Americans off of their land in 1838 and 1839, this was known as the "Trail of Tears." If taking away their land was not enough the government introduced the Dawes Act in 1887. The Dawes Act forced all Native Americans onto reservations and forced them to adopt the "American Lifestyle." For example, they had to stop hunting buffalo and start farming. Also, they had to stop worshipping multiple spirits and convert to Christianity. The prejudice towards Native Americans continued for many years. In fact, approximately 100 years later Native American, Leonard Peltier found himself accused and convicted of a crime he did not commit. In 1999, the book, *Prison Writings, My Life is My Sun Dance*, written by Leonard Peltier, United States Prisoner #89637-132, was published to tell Peltier's side of the story. His book was edited by Harvey Arden for St. Martin's Griffin located in New York. The book contains 217 pages plus notes by the editor. Peltier discusses his life in prison and the events leading up to the Pine Ridge Shootout. *Prison Writings, My life is My Sun Dance*, begins with Peltier's current life. He describes how he stays out of trouble and the events he has missed while being in prison. He then goes back in time and starts to explain his life before his imprisonment. He goes through his childhood, discussing the difficult of being a Native American. The prejudice he faced throughout his life. Eventually, Peltier had enough with the hatred shown to him, so he joined AIM, the American Indian Movement. He wanted to fight for his people. However, this desire to fight for his people caused his imprisonment. Peltier was involved in the Pine Ridge Shootout in 1975. Four men were accused, including Peltier, for killing two FBI agents. Fearing for his life Peltier escaped to Canada, unfortunately the government found him and brought him back for his trial. Peltier and the other three accused were put onto trial for murder. Peltier was given a life sentence and is still serving it today. Throughout the entire book are poems that Peltier has written during his imprisonment. These poems show more Peltier's emotions. They provide a break from the details of the story that Peltier is telling. Also, it always the reader to see that Peltier is still a human-being. He is able to express his feelings into something other than hatred. He describes the various emotions that he has felt during this time in Prison. He describes the angry of his wrongful imprisonment. The acceptance he has been able to achieve, he knows that he will stay a prisoner the rest of his life and has found a way to accept this fact. This poems are a way for the reader to see Leonard Peltier for who he really is. An innocent man, who has accepted and embraced his fate. While this is not a book I would have chosen to read, I am glad I did. I would recommend this book to mature readers, who have an interest in the treatment in Native Americans. Leonard Peltier kept a positive attitude

throughout the writing of his book. He accepted his fate, and did not falsely accuse others to get out of the crime. Finally, he never forgot his Native American roots. He stayed true to himself and his beliefs, no matter what people told him.

This is one of the saddest stories you will hear, oh hell there are many sad stories which is why everyone says my poetry is so sad. The point here is this guy was part of AIM or American Indian Movement and although all the evidence against him was circumstantial he was convicted and they threw away the key. Watch the movie "Incident At Ogala" to learn more. The entire case is very similar to the case against Hurricane Carter who was arrested and sent to jail for a murder of a white woman which he too did not commit. The difference was these Canadian lawyers started working on his case and freed him, then the white Canadian Lawyer married him. But this guy, Leonard Peltier, has been sitting in jail for 39 years for a crime he didn't commit. Free Leonard Peltier!

Leonard Peltier is a Political Prisoner. He is a Native American poet, artist and activist. His fight for Native American rights has continued from behind prison walls. He is considered a political prisoner by Amnesty International and even the late Nelson Mandela asked for his freedom. I have followed his story since his incarceration. I recommend this book to anyone interested in Native American political issues.

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