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Subject:

CLEMENCY CALL FOR LEONARD PELTIER

December 22, 2024

White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave
Washington D.C. 20500

Dear Dr. Jill Biden,

My name is Anita Wills and I am calling for the clemency of Brother Leonard Peltier after 48 grueling years of harsh incarceration. I am a Prison Activist, and afro/indigenous Griot genealogist making the ancestral connections of the survival of the African and Indigenous peoples of this land, I am a member of the federally recognized Monacan Indian Nation in Amherst County Virginia and I am also a member of the Daughter's of the American Revolution (DAR) through my Virginia Ancestors. I am the Author of 7 books in which I researched and documented my family history and the history of our country. One of my books, Notes and Documents of Free Persons of Color, is housed at the Smithsonian Museum in Washington, DC. I work with professionals of all walks of life whom I have consulted in the writing of this letter but I speak most compassionately as a loving mother of an incarcerated son of over twenty years and as a grandmother who has lost a grandchild to violence. Mr. Peltier is a member of Lakota, Dakota, and Anishnaabe descent. He is brother to me and to all life. He will be free.

As a teacher, you know all too well the shameful legacy of the Indian Boarding Schools. President Biden was the first president to formally apologize for what was recognized as officially sanctioned genocide through the violent denial of a people to exercise their culture. My own maternal grandfather avoided an Indian Boarding School by attending a Quaker School in the early 1900s. At age 9, Brother Leonard was forcibly removed to the Wahpeton Indian School where he was beaten for any expression of his culture in order to "save the man, kill the Indian." Many have whispered in President Biden's ear to ask for clemency for Leonard Peltier. It is now time for the President to cement his legacy with the Indian peoples. From the root of the word, his legacy will literally tie him with genocide or with healing. It is part of the historical record. These letters are part of the letters and communications for archival submission to the Brown University Archives of Mass Incarceration. Leonard and Joe are brothers. They are connected in life. The time for healing is now and the chance for healing is now. One man, one piece of paper, one signature. Clemency heals. Healing is the greatest form of teaching. It is the women who have whispered the healings in the ears of our men. It is time to whisper of our love of all our elder brothers and sisters who suffer the burden of elder abuse in the institutions that enrage them. I work with people of all walks of life and all professions to tell a story of resilient love. Those are Brother Leonard's teachings. It is time now for him to feel the loving touch of family, the smell of grass, the sounds of birds.... In physical freedom.

Brother Leonard is one of less than a hundred so-called "old law" prisoners who fall under the cruel regime of the notorious U.S. Parole Commission to oversee the paroles of prisoner accused of crimes before 1987. The Commission was legislatively to be abolished in 1992 and survives to this day because of repeated acts of Congress that extends their life and gives them unchecked power to seal the fate of our most infirm elders. The Parole Commission now consists of only two members, the Acting Chairman since 2002 and the Commissioner since 2012, with three vacancies. Brother Leonard came to them with the love and support of Peoples all over the world. They knew that Pope Francis, Saint Mother Teresa, Nelson Mandela, the Dalai Lama, Coretta Scott King, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and Indigenous and faith leaders around the world had called for his humanitarian release. They knew that Judge Heaney, who authored the decision denying a new trial, has since voiced firm support for Mr. Peltier's release, stating that the FBI used improper tactics to convict Mr. Peltier, the FBI was equally responsible for the shoot-out, and that Mr. Peltier's release would promote healing with Native Americans. They also knew that a former prosecutor involved in the case called for his release in the best interest of justice as well as a former FBI agent.

This is a cruel form of psychological torture and perpetuates abuse. Leonard has the right to defend his truth and his people. His release would not promote a disrespect for the law but rather his continued incarceration would promote a disrespect for the law.

The legal team was able to assure the presence of Leonard's chosen medical consultant in the parole hearings this past July. This physician had access to medical consultation that included a Professor of Medicine who is a pre-eminent leader in trauma-informed care and director of the Center For the The Advancement of Trauma-Informed Care. His physician documented the impact of the combination of his insulin dependent diabetes, his crippling arthritis, near blindness, the harsh conditions of lockdown, the failure to meet proper standards of care and monitoring and even to provide a cell with an electric outlet for his medically prescribed oxygen mask. Medical testimony was essential so that the two person commission clearly understood that the severity of Brother Leonard's medical condition meant a parole denial was effectively a sentence of death by incarceration.

I believe clemency will go a long way to healing our Indigenous Community. Mr. Peltier is a brother, father, a grandfather and, at 80 years old, no threat to society. His health is severely compromised and he suffers harsh lockdowns that prevent him from getting the proper standards of care. He is a sovereign man of a sovereign nation and the world sees him as free. It will cause great harm to him and to our nation if he continues to be tortured. He is a respected elder. To deny him clemency comes at a great cost to the trust of not just the sovereign Indian peoples and all US citizens but to all life. Brother Leonard is not a possession of the United States. He belongs to all of us. He will heal in the love of family.

I cannot be sure that this letter will reach you. I know that you must balance the harsh demands of public life with holding the center of loving support in your family. I am taking the liberty to share this letter with diverse professional organizations including the entire leadership of the American Geriatric Society and the American Psychological Association who are part of the new generation of professionals providing trauma-informed care that so many women in diverse professions have championed into the our laws, policies, position papers, and professional institutions. No matter how much of a model prisoner he is, his parole has been continually denied and his only hope for clemency lies with President Biden. One man, one document, one signature. It will serve no purpose to allow him to suffer and die in prison and send his dead body home to his family and community. I cheered when President Biden pardoned Hunter and felt that his prosecution was politically motivated. I feel the same about my brother Leonard Peltier whose children and grandchildren have grown up without him. It would be a great first if he could be released through clemency to go home and spend his last years in the community where he was born.

Sending well wishes and the hopes for you and your family to have a wonderful blessed Holiday Season.

Sincerely

DocuSigned by:
Anita Wills
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Anita L. Wills

CC:

Diverse Professional Leadership

American Geriatric Society

American Psychiatric Association

American Psychological Association- President and Board

National Association of Social Workers

National Educators Association- /President/Board

American Federation of Teachers-

American Pediatric Association

American Medical Students Association