

79 years old. Mother Earth has taken one more journey around the sun. Babies have taken their first breath. People have lived, loved, and died. Seeds have been planted and sent their roots deep into the earth to find the ashes of our ancestors.

Time has twisted one more year out of me. A year that has been a moment. A year that has been a lifetime.

Year after year, I have encouraged you to live your best lives. I see things in here. Even buried in concrete and steel, I see things.

I see a reawakening of an ancient American Indian pride that does my heart good.

I may leave this place in a box. That is a cold truth. I have put my heart and soul into making this earth a better place.

I need to know that the spirit warriors coming up behind me have the heart and soul to fight exploitation, to fight racism and oppression, to fight policy that will strip our earth bare to benefit a few.

The fact that I have been caged almost five decades on evidence that has been proven to be fabricated alarms and bewilders me.

My alarm is for what that means for you. They seek to destroy us, still. A true spirit warrior stands up to oppression with every waking breath.

I pray. I ask the Creator to set my path before me. I then walk that path, even when it costs. When you ask the Creator to set your path before you, you walk that path. Even if the path is difficult. It will become difficult.

You walk the path because it is the right thing to do. I have said, "Believe in something – even if it costs you everything."

Believing that we have the right to exist, to thrive, has cost me. I will never back down from that belief, no matter the cost.

We are the true children of Mother Earth. Hold tight to that truth. When they come for your land, your water, your children, remember who you are.

They continue to imprison me as an example. An example of simply standing up to oppression. We were looking at the extermination of our people. I was simply someone who stood in the way.

What does that mean for you?

I hide my suffering behind laughter. I long to turn my face to the sun. In my concrete cage, I am denied that simple pleasure. If I allow those things to break me, they win. I take comfort in knowing who I am, and in laughter. They cannot take my laughter.

Will you be able to hide your suffering, in this nation that casually strips us of our rights, our dignity?

As I said, I am bewildered. An Attorney General, my lead prosecutor, people in the FBI have come forth and said I am here because I am an American Indian, who was in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Human rights organizations the world over have said that my case is the greatest miscarriage of justice in modern history. The United Nations demanded my release in a 17-page statement that clearly spelled out the Constitutional violations, the crimes carried out by the United States government.

I know there are those who stand with me, who work around the clock for my freedom. I have been blessed, to have such friends.

What bewilders me is that people are not standing up as one and saying, "This is wrong, and we must end it. Now."

What hope do any of us have when this government, supposed to be for the people, by the people, accountable to the people, openly says, "We will do as we want and will not be accountable to anyone?"

It is easy to see that I am running out of time. I hope to breathe free air before I die. That is another thing they cannot take – hope. Hope is a hard thing, but I will not allow them to take it.

If you look a just a bit past my case, you will see that we, as a people, are running out of time.

All oppressed peoples. Are running out of time. By standing by while they make examples of people who stand up to oppressors, our civil rights are becoming sand taken by the wind. When they are gone, they are gone for good.

I love you. I worry for you. I pray for you.

I ask the Creator for guidance and take that next step. When you ask the Creator to set your path in front of you, take a step. Then another. My path has become steep and jagged, but I do not quit when it becomes hard.

I remain undestroyed.

Are you willing to struggle for your freedom?

We are circling back to where this began.

In the 1970s the FBI stated that "They [the Indians] are a conquered nation, and when you are conquered, the people you are conquered by dictate your future. . . . The FBI must function as a colonial police force."

Our Constitution was amended to stop the federal government from acting as a colonial police force.

If we, the people, continue to allow this, there will be no “we the people”.

In the Spirit of Crazy Horse,

Doksha,

Leonard Peltier