

Interview: Floyd Red Crow Westerman October 8, 2001 8.30am on Alcatraz

International day of solidarity W/ Indigenous peoples.

Sunrise Ceremony

Unedited transcript copy to Carla and Floyd at 9am Oct.10.01 via E-mail

Stefan:

We met a few days before Sept.11. 2001 at our friend Robby in order for you to brief me on your documentary titled: "America's War on Indian Nations". We are meeting here on Alcatraz today which is Columbus day to speak about this project. How do you see your project now, after the horrific terror attack on America?

Floyd:

First of all I'm sorry about Tragedy changed all mankind maybe forever
 Well I thought it was ironic, that we should be talking about this just a few days before it happened. I am reminded that terrorism is a word America only uses on those who are against it, against America. But I think America must look within itself, to find where terrorism began. 1492, as marked today, is when Columbus discovered America. But we know that within half an hour, after his arrival, he had Indians in chains in the bottom of his boat. He was ordered to come here to look for gold, not to come as a friend. And I think we have learned in the five hundred years that followed, that people came here only to take from us, and imprison Indians into concentration camps, to burn the villages down, to kill the parents, steal the children. We were subjected to a concentration camp lifestyle. It went on to where the concentration camp lifestyle meant that generations later most Indians would have diabetes. Before Columbus Indians had a perfect diet and plenty of exercise. They hunted and rode horses and the food they consisted of fresh fish, buffalo, and vegetables. When Indians were forced to reservations, they were forced to eat white flour, white rice, lard, commodity cheese, sugar and salt. And they had nothing that was good, they were not allowed to hunt any more, or speak the languages any more, or do the dances any more, or do their ceremonies. We were not allowed to practice our religion any more, so we now know that a **holocaust** was truly put upon us, ever since Columbus.

Stefan:

How many Indians lived in the United States before Columbus discovered America?

Floyd:

You know there are many different estimates, as to how many Indian people were here. The one institutional estimate is that there were 16 million. We believe that there were much more than 20 million. I still believe that this is a low estimate. Because no one

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knows how many people were in the whole hemisphere let alone, how many were just in America.

Stefan:

And how many are living today?

Floyd:

Before Columbus we were approximately 20 million. By the end of the second WW in 1945, there were only five hundred thousand Indian people in America.

Stefan:

Were these millions of Indians killed or did they die from illnesses?

Floyd:

There was a system in how this happened. It started with the contact of the Indians with the Europeans. This contact brought many new diseases and just by contact the Indians died. The Europeans knew this, they knew the Indians would die. The contact brought death by influenza, cholera, and diphtheria. So thousands and millions of Indians died just by contact not by the bullet. This contact included the giving of blankets infected with small pox. Blankets are a traditional gift among Indians. The Europeans gave small pox blankets to Indian people knowing they would accept them as a gift. This was a form of biological warfare on Indian people.

Stefan:

What do you think about the outpouring of patriotism and flag waving and patriotic thinking after the event of September 11.

Floyd:

Well let me just say that patriotism is the quickest thing to go through for people to react. It is used for people to build a reaction against anything. Patriotism is a word that is kind of used to manipulate people's thinking. In this case flag waving and singing the song "God bless America" is kind of a closed in attitude about the world. America only thinks of America in times of trouble. In actuality what we should all be thinking of is that God should be blessing all people in the world. Because all people are effected by this horrific incident. All people's children are affected, so America has to go outside the boundaries of its own country in order to understand this. America keeps its mentality within the boundaries of its own country, it doesn't go outside, it has a limited view on how to bring about a mutual respect in the world. This is the basic problem, what happens is that this mutual respect among all people is lost.

Stefan:

Why are the Americans hated by so many people on the planet?

What do you think is the main reason for that?

Floyd:

America being the most powerful country can write history the way they want to. They wrote the history about us the way they wanted to. In America Indian people are portrayed in the movies as the terrorists. Americans go out into the world and use the word freedom and democracy. Americans want to establish freedom and democracy all over the world. This is not a true democracy here, it is not a true democracy at all. It is just one form of the use of the word democracy and freedom doesn't ring here at all and it is going to ring less from now on. Because of what happened it is going to turn into more of a police state. I think this is kind of what they are working towards, they wanted it this way so they can control everybody and they can control dissent this way. They will go after people of any organization all the way to the unions, people who speak out. They will try to organize people in a more exuded way. I think America tends to use the words freedom and democracy just for its own means and its own interest. I think what we are really all about is OIL. The Gulf-war was about oil. It was an oil-war and this too is an oil-war. Exploiting other countries and other lands for this energy, oil. I think behind all of this we are using terrorism as a reason to clamp down and put a kind of police state on all people.

Stefan:

Yesterday America started the war on terrorism by bombing Afghanistan; do you think that it will stop attacks on the western civilization or what should be done to stop it?

Floyd:

Jesse Jackson was the first person to publicly mention peace as a means of coming together with a different end to this situation. War is about death, peace is about life. Peace is a hard thing to attain. Peace is a hard thing to reach for but we must cut that one end of war and just think about peace alone. I think we would start thinking about a whole different set of values. We should start thinking about the children, we should start thinking about woman. I think the Indian point of view as we have it, is a circle of life that we have created. This morning should say something to America. I think America has to listen to the Indian point of view about how to live on earth. We have instructions about how to live on earth; we need to take it to the world. I think many societies are so oppressive against women like the Taliban who make the women cover up their entire face and they can't get any education. In the Indian point of view everything is governed by the women. There are matriarchal societies where the women have the last decision. The men have to take their decisions to the women and the women will approve it. If half the senate and half the congress would be women I think we would have a better

outcome. You probably would not even have wars, because the women give birth to the children. The women feed the children and they feed us. I think the outcome would be different. So I think that women need to be empowered to have a voice in the world.

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Here is part 2
A NEW QUESTION AND ANSWER FLOYD ADDED.....

STEFAN:

How do you see the future from the Indian point of view?

FLOYD:

ALL PEOPLES HAVE SOME MESSAGE OR PROPECY. THE LAST HOLY MAN BLACK ELK, SHORTLY BEFORE HE DIED IN 1950 SAID, "OUR CHILDREN WILL CRY AND DIE BESIDE GREY HOUSES. IT WILL BE A TIME OF THE END OF LIVING AND THE BEGINNING OF SURVIVAL. " WE KNOW THERE WILL BE EVOLUTIONARY TIMES THAT WE WILL EXPERIENCE. THE HORRIFIC INCIDENT ON SEPT 11 CAUSES PEOPLE TO HAVE A SENSE OF HELPLESSNESS AND TAKE POSITIONS OF ARGUMENT. ONE AURGUMENT IS FOR PEACE AND THE OTHER IS FOR WAR. THIS IS THE EVOLUTIONARY TIME WE ARE GOING THROUGH. WE CAN DECIDE FOR EVOLUTIONARY PEACE OR TERMINATING WAR. WHAT WE WILL ALL BECOME ARE VICTIMS IF OUR LEADERSHIP DOES NOT MAKE THE RIGHT DECISION. THE RIGHT DECISION WILL BE HOW OUR CHILDREN WILL SURVIVE AND DIE. IN ONE SENSE THIS WHOLE PRESENT DAY ARGUMENT ABOUT WAR IS ABOUT ONE RIGHT WING FUNDAMENTALIST LEADERSHIP ARGUING AND FIGHTING WITH ANOTHER RIGHT WING FUNDAMENTALIST KIND OF LEADERSHIP. THERE IS NO DOUBT BUT THAT OUR ANGUISH SHOULD SEEK JUSTICE. BUT WE SHOULDN'T LET OUR LEADERSHIP BE AT THE CONTROLS. FOR EXAMPLE, THE NEWS SAYS THEY WANT TO BOMB ANDTHEY NEED AIRSPACE TO BOMB, AND THAT THEY ALSO WANT AIRSPACE TO FLY IN FOOD FOR THE AFGHAN HUNGRY. THE REASON TO FLY IN FOOD IS A SMOKESCREEN TO OBTAIN MORE AIRSPACE FOR BOMBING. THE INDIAN POINT OF VIEW AS IN THE DAKOTA/LAKOTA LANGUAGE WE BEGIN AND END ALL PRAYERS WITH ONE LINE "MITA KUYE OYASIN", THIS MEANS "FOR ALL OUR RELATIONS". FOR ALL OF THE 2 LEGGED RELATIONS AND ALL THE REST OF LIFE.

How do American Indians react towards the Bush administration:

Floyd:

The Bush administration is just another ongoing part of America, which is basically the "right" side of America. It is only interested in its economy, its corporations and the betterment of these two. Nothing else, it has never cared about Indian people. We are at the bottom of consideration for any assistance from the government. We have mass diabetes because we have been forced to live on a concentration camp diet. Most of our people are dying from diabetes. We are receiving less health care, and less consideration for help.

Stefan:

You are the leader and founder of the Eyapaha Institute, what is the main goal of that institute?

Floyd:

"Eyapaha Institute" means the messenger, the voice. The institute was created basically give Indians a voice in America. Eyapaha first intends to develop quality programming for TV, as with the Holocaust series, and with animation stories created from traditional coyote stories, life lesson stories, and a talk show. We want to develop a pilot talk show to discuss issues with different Indian experts in the world who can give answers to all people. Eyapaha is putting fourth the Indian point of view so the world will understand. There are some answers that America has not even looked into. The Indian point of view is that we have four teachings to live by on earth. If we would use these teachings we would not need laws. The first teaching is to protect the children, very important. The second one is to respect womanhood. The third one is to respect the elders, and the fourth one is to respect Mother Earth. Its all about respect. That's how you build mutual respect, to understand the other person. America is the one country that has least understood any cultures. It does not understand or know about Indian people. People in Europe know about Indians more than Americans do. They know more about our history and what took place. Americans where fed this " feel good history" for so many generations, that they began to believe this mass disinformation that has been put out.

Stefan:

The "America's War on Indian Nations" is a project, which will not be very much liked by the mass media in the United States because of what reason you think?

Floyd:

Because it deals with the rewriting of history. Americans will not tolerate history any other way than it is written now. When you document what has happened we come up with a different story.

Stefan:

Did you ever try to find funds for your project from one of the main media?

Floyd:

Yes we did. PBS is interested but we didn't want to give them any options on this because what I just found out in time was that PBS might take options on a project but

than refused to show it for several years. If it's not in the guidelines of American thinking they would shelf it.

Stefan:

Do you believe that the general American public knows the truth about what happened to American Indians in the past, and what kind of life they live now?

Floyd:

We still live in economic concentration camps, where there are no jobs, with up to 90% unemployment on reservations. The diet is still a concentration camp diet so we are on the bottom of the economic ladder in America.

Stefan:

Give us a picture of the American Indian life of today.

Floyd:

Our lifestyle means joblessness and joblessness means high alcoholism. Alcoholism as a matter of fact is manipulated by the government, just like drugs. Drugs are brought in, and they bring in alcohol to, so they can bring in more police to control. One is related to the other as a means of control. The reservations live under this kind of "gun control".

Stefan:

And coming back to the government's current reaction towards Afghanistan, are there any similarities to what happened to the Indigenous peoples of America?

Floyd:

First of all the people of Afghanistan are all tribal people. Indians were all tribal people and the way people take control of other people is simply by enforcing a governmental control on all the tribes. The government made tribal councils follow the regulations and guidelines of American control. There is a larger power that is trying to take over all these tribal areas of Afghanistan. Afghanistan is not even a country. It is a group of many tribes which have never been acknowledged as a country but they happen to occupy this land.

Stefan:

How much of the Indian culture and tradition is left in the USA?

Floyd:

I would say about 20% of the culture is left. We have tribal colleges that place language as the primary cultural connector. Languages validate the culture. Along with the spiritual and traditional ceremonies, languages are very important. They go hand in hand language and traditional teachings. Ceremonies and spiritual beliefs like what we have today (Alcatraz). I know the turnout is small but this is because Christianity was forced onto Indian people through missionary work. The Muslims don't want Christians teaching in their land. We feel the same way about the missionaries. But the Catholic Pope ordered this oppression on all Indian people. The Pope of Rome said "all champions of the Christian faith to search, seek out and vanquish all citizens and pagans who so ever placed and to subject their lives to perpetual slavery." This was the Pope of Rome who participated in this mass genocide of Indian people.

Stefan:

How do you see your documentary being received by the public when it is finished and tells the truth?

Floyd:

I think in the long run the truth will heal all people. The truth has a way of healing especially if people are ignorant of the truth. It becomes a healing point to continue on. We as Indian people will heal, I think the documentary once it is put out into the world will have a great effect on America, a good effect. America in order to go forward into the future first must accept its past. The reason why children are shooting themselves is because of this violence that exists in America today. They try to act as though this violence is controllable; it is not controllable unless we develop a respect for all people. This is a very mixed country now with many people. We have to develop this mutual respect for each other. Our children are in their homes and they hear their parents say, I don't like those black people, I don't like those Jewish people, I don't like those Indian people or those Mexican people. Then when they go to school they get angry, get a gun and express the feelings of the parents. They learn these intolerances from the parents and the media. The Hollywood movies developed the kind of attitude about life that you know the way to express and deal with your anger is to use a gun. There is a kind of a frontier mentality still prevalent today, and if you heard President Bush when he spoke about Ben Ladin "there is a sign out west, dead or alive". For a President of the United States to use words like that made me feel ashamed of our leadership. We are so bankrupt for this kind of moral leadership that's why I think that Indian people have to stand up with our teachings of respect on how to live on earth and start bringing it to American society.

Stefan:

Thanks for the interview.