



Handout 1 - *Diablo Canyon*, John Trudell (Santee Dakota)

John Trudell (1946-2015) was a poet and activist. He participated and became the spokesperson for the United Indians of All Tribes' nine-month occupation of Alcatraz island. From 1973-1979, he served as the chairman of the American Indian Movement (AIM). In 1979, Trudell's pregnant wife, three children, and mother-in-law died in a house fire that occurred shortly after Trudell held a protest in Washington, D.C.

In addition to writing poetry, Trudell became involved with music, working and recording albums with Kiowa guitarist Jesse Ed Davis, composer Tony Hymas, A Tribe Called Red, and his own band, Bad Dog.

In the poem below, Trudell recounts his experience protesting the construction of a nuclear power plant in 1981. The protest resulted in the arrest of 1,900 activists, including musician/activist Jackson Browne.

Today I challenged the nukes
The soldiers of the state
Placed me in captivity
Or so they thought
They bound my wrists in their
Plastic handcuffs
Surrounding me with their
Plastic minds and faces
They ridiculed me
But I could see through
To the ridicule they brought
On themselves
They told me squat over there
By the trash
They left a soldier to guard me
I was the Vietcong
I was Crazy Horse

Little did they understand
Squatting down in the earth
They placed me with my power
My power to laugh
Laugh at their righteous wrong
Their sneers and their taunts
Gave me clarity
To see their powerlessness

It was in the way they dressed
And in the way they acted
They viewed me as an enemy
A threat to their rationalizations
I felt pity for them
Knowing they will never be free

I was their captive
But my heart was racing
Through the generations
The memories of eternity

It was beyond their reach
I would be brought to the
Internment camp
To share my time with allies

This time I almost wanted to believe you
When you spoke of peace and love and
Caring and duty and god and destiny
But somehow the death in your eyes and
Your bombs and your taxes and you
Greed and your face-life told me

This time I cannot afford to believe you