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The Unquiet Grave: The FBI and the Struggle for the Soul of Indian Country - A Book Review by Robert Robideau

Book Review By Robert Robideau Co-Director of the Leonard Peltier Defense Committee

The Unquiet Grave: The FBI and the Struggle for the Soul of Indian Country by Steve Hendricks

Steve Hendrick's new book *The Unquiet Grave: The FBI and the Struggle for the Soul of Indian Country* is focused on the 1976 execution style killing of Anna Mae Aquash, a Mic Mac from Nova Scotia, Canada.

Anna Mae Aquash was a leading member of the American Indian Movement (AIM) from 1970 to the time of her death and although known for taking part in the 1973 occupation of Wounded Knee, South Dakota, she is best known for her involvement with Dennis Banks and Leonard Peltier during the aftermath of the June 26, 1975 Oglala shoot out with the FBI on the Pine Ridge reservation.

Because of her important role in AIM, she became a target of the FBI's Counterintelligence program ("COINTELPRO"). After the exposure of FBI informant Douglas Durham in the summer of 1974 the FBI began to spread rumors that she too was an informant. This effort to discredit her and divide our movement is known as "badjacketing" in the language of the FBI, lead to her death.

I met Anna Mae for the first time in June of 1975 during an AIM convention in Farmington, New Mexico when I and others had been asked by leadership to discern whether or not she was an informant. We reported that we believed she was not an informant. In the passage of 30 years there has not been any evidence to disprove us.

Several books have been written about AIM and the FBI. Twenty six years ago, I was privileged to meet and work with noted author Peter Matthiessen. Peter Matthiessen's *In the Spirit of Crazy Horse* became the first important book written about events involving the federal government and Native Americans that took place between 1972 and 1976.

Peter Matthiessen called Hendrick's book, "An impressive and important book." Peter also said in a phone conversation with me that there was "nothing new in the book," I would disagree with Peter, I found new information, some revealing, while other skewed and unacceptable.

Hendrick's book exposed further critical information about the FBI's long and continuing war against the American Indian Movement, bringing into sharp focus the outrageous illegal actions of the FBI. He does not seriously explore the FBI's cointelpro activities

creating the suspicions in AIM that Anna Mae could be an informant, but instead condemns the AIM for the act. It is believed in AIM that FBI's informer and provocateur Douglas Durham played a large role that led to the killing of Anna Mae Aquash.

Hendricks has shared with the LPDC, the complex web of information ingeniously taken by him through the Freedom Information Act. His efforts have exposed hundreds of documents from the FBI's investigation: memorandums, reports and teletypes, follow movements of Anna Mae Aquash prior to her death, which the LPDC has been unable to get access to. One very important revelation is that these *documents confirm that the FBI knew 30 years ago who the shooters were.*

The investigation leads Hendricks into both camps as he goes from one FBI agent to the next and to members of AIM prying obvious lies and half truths and emotionally charged expressions that reveal their feelings for each other.

Although, the interplay of word games exposes that there are deep dark secrets being kept by both the American Indian Movement leadership and the FBI. It is clear that Anna Mae Aquash, a Canadian citizen, was threatened and abused by the FBI. She was found shot to death and her body dumped in a ravine.

An FBI-ordered autopsy failed to reveal the bullet wound in the back of her head, leading to more criticism of the FBI and suspicions that they might have played a role in the killing is not seriously explored by Hendricks.

The indictment of two individuals, John "Boy" Graham and Arlo Looking Cloud 30 years later, when the FBI had gathered sufficient evidence to have brought the case to trial in the 1970's has renewed suspicions of foul play by those in AIM and Native American communities close to the events.

Arlo Looking Cloud was convicted and sentenced to life imprisonment despite a deal made with the Feds for his cooperation. The trial, felt by many to be a sham, and disguise to cover up the FBI's real purpose of retrying Leonard Peltier for the killing of their dead agents after the federal prosecutors had made public that they could not prove Peltier shot and killed the agents.

The sensational trial testimony of Kamook Banks Ecoffey, that Leonard Peltier had confessed to the killing of agents Coler and Williams, was skewed by the \$42,000 in "moving expenses" the FBI had paid nevertheless made headline news for months to follow.

Kamook Banks later married Robert Ecoffey an ex goon, who became an investigator in the case undoubtedly introduced both Kamook Banks and another AIM member, since expelled after turning informant, John Trudell, to the FBI.

On an hour-long interview by host Mike McCormick on [KEXP 90.3 FM](#), Seattle, Washington, Steve Hendricks made the outrageous and ridiculous charge that the reason why the “FBI, who had the names of Anna Mae’s killers 30 years ago did not prosecute because they feared that their informant David Hill may have been too close to the murder.”

Steve Hendricks, unoriginal accusations that David Hill became an FBI informant after being arrested and released for the Mount Rushmore Bombings were first lauded by John Trudell twenty-six years ago, then adopted by Paul DeMain, Editor of News From Indian Country. Without proof these are unacceptable and dangerous accusations to be throwing around. This behavior, on the part of Hendricks, is irresponsible, under other circumstances he, himself describes in his book, would easily be interpreted as the activities of a provocateur.

It put me on my guard when Hendricks ask that we believe an FBI’s story that they rejected David Hill as an informant because he “knew nothing.” There is more than ample evidence to show otherwise and also that his actions in the 1970s were completely loyal to our struggle. If he had been an informant, arrest would have come much earlier than they did. Those of us in AIM who knew David Hill best are not buying these regurgitated stories and false accusations.

Much of Hendrick’s information about David Hill undoubtedly came from FBI informant John Trudell, who has labeled many individuals in the American Indian Movement and associates as informants. For many years Trudell’s behavior has been that of provocateur.

In disregard for the Reign of Terror, accelerated by the counter intelligent activities of the FBI to destroy AIM from 1973 to 1976 resulting in 60 murders, Trudell, in a interview with Indian Country Today recently charged that it was “...The explosion of militancy [of AIM] surging from many sources. In that summer of 1975, you had the shootout in Oglala, the killing of Joe Stuntz, the killing of the two FBI agents, you had the bombing at Mount Rushmore , there was a series of bombings at Pine Ridge in the fall. And the operative in my mind, as I consider it, was mostly in that group, hyping up the violence. Annie Mae had gravitated to that most active group and as the government tracked them, she was amongst the people that were accused of doing these things.”

SEE: <http://www.leonardpeltier.net/reignofterror.htm>

Despite Hendrick’s admission that Paul DeMain, “... will not disclose his sources,” he still regurgitates and validates DeMain’s accusations that attempt to condemn David Hill of being in a house where it is alleged the order to kill Anna Mae came. If DeMain’s sources are so good why weren’t they called to testify at the Looking Cloud trial?

SEE: <http://www.leonardpeltier.net/peeledapple.htm>

There has been an ongoing effort for the past 30 years, without success, to get congress to investigate the Reign of Terror and culpability of the FBI as sanctioned in a memo

entitled "Para military activity in Indian Country" which was issued because of the 1973 Wounded Knee confrontation with the United States government.

Thirty years of investigations by the Leonard Peltier Defense Committee has contributed much to exposing criminal activities of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) who, under the Nixon administration, was given Presidential authority to destroy the American Indian Movement and others dissent groups through the counter intelligence program (COINTELPRO) a precursor to today's Patriot Act.

Hendricks references, but does not explore the importance of the FBI's domestic Conintelpro period to that of President Bush's Patriot Act.

The Leonard Peltier and Anna Mae Aquash cases have inspired two other books to be written by Ward Churchill and Jim Vanderwall, Agents of Repression and The COINTELPRO PAPERS.

It is evident that Hendricks agrees with the FBI's condemnation that Peltier shot the agents, but says that Peltier should be freed because he has served 30 years in prison and the illegal methods used by the FBI to gain the conviction. Then Hendricks says that if he were to 'met Leonard Peltier that he knew that he would not like him.' The pronouncements left me wondering about Hendricks motivation for writing the book.

Steve Hendricks has not just written a book with a single purpose in mind. His web site, <http://www.stevhendricks.org/>, is indicative of a plan to create a long time career from the tribulations, sufferings, sacrifices and struggles of our past and continuing wars with the United States. I would hope that this is not true.

Hendrick's the Unquiet Grave, despite its coverage of much information already written in other books and its short comings, deserves to be read by all who have an interest in learning the dynamics of this story and how it has played a significant role in exposing the United States government, its legal institutions and agencies originally intended for, but does not protect you under the law.

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