

national lawyers guild

"An organization of lawyers, law students, legal workers, and jailhouse lawyers... in the service of the people, to the end that human rights shall be regarded as more sacred than property interests." Preamble to the NLG Constitution

December 6, 2016

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

I write on behalf of the National Lawyers Guild, the nation's oldest and largest progressive bar association, as well as its first racially integrated one, to ask that you pardon or commute the sentences of **Leonard Peltier, Oscar López Rivera, Veronza Bowers** and **Dr. Mutulu Shakur** prior to leaving office. These prisoners have collectively served nearly 150 years in jail and all continue to serve federal sentences for their political views and actions, making them by definition political prisoners. There is a long history of Presidents exercising their presidential power of pardon, including former President Thomas Jefferson who employed the power to eliminate the sentences of those convicted under the shameful Alien and Sedition Acts. In that rich tradition, I ask you to release these prisoners.

Leonard Peltier has been in prison for over four decades, while Oscar López Rivera has been imprisoned for 35 years, Dr. Mutulu Shakur for more than 30 years and Veronza Bowers for 43 years despite having been given mandatory parole over a decade ago. These elders represent the liberation struggles of indigenous peoples, Puertorriqueños and African Americans, respectively. By commuting these severely long sentences you have an opportunity to help heal the wounds left by COINTELPRO and other illegal government actions against movements for civil and human rights.

Last August at our annual convention, our entire membership called for the release of these and many other federal political prisoners and unanimously [passed several resolutions](#) to that end.

I respectfully request their release, which will become part of your legacy for relieving incarcerated individuals of the burdens of disproportionate sentences, which I and the civil rights community applaud you for. I strongly urge you bring these individuals home where they can live out the remainder of their years with their families and communities.

Best,

Natasha Lycia Ora Bannan
President, National Lawyers Guild

75 Years of Law for the People