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# INDIAN CENTER NEWS

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## A PLEA

By Lydia Johnson  
(Nez Perce & Cayuse)

To our Indian Friends, to those others who truly love us, and to those in whose hands lies our Destiny:

Like most Indians in America whose security is threatened by the word "Termination", we, in the Northwest, are concerned about our homelands. Many of us could live comfortably under termination at home (the country once a reservation) or in the city, but we realize that our brother tribesmen would soon be bereft of all their earthly belongings-- because they were persuaded with green cash to sell, because they had no idea of how to make out a tax form (they'd cheat themselves blind, because many Indians refuse to keep track of every penny they spend), or simply because they signed a paper they did not understand. Before we all "assume complete responsibility", as many non-Indians are so anxious for us to do immediately (while covetously eyeing our possessions), we must be taught how our families are to manage their affairs, even if, hopefully, we are allowed to keep our Reservations.

We are gradually learning the white man's ways, but, typically, we refuse to be rushed.

If, however, termination is forced on us prematurely, the result may well be an exaggeration of what the public seems to notice on Skid Row or a repeat of the dissolution of the Indians who lived close to the city in the early days of the west. (Somehow, the average non-Indian seldom recognizes an Indian in the University or College, or in a responsible position in industry and business--thus, such a one is forced to explain, "I'M an American Indian--not from India," or "No, I'm not Hawaiian, Filipino, or Mexican.") It is a sad but true fact that we are not recognized as American Indians unless we are adorned in tribal regalia, obviously dressed in western gear, preferably with a feather tucked somewhere, or in a tavern on Skid Row.

Our ancestors lived close to good Mother Earth. They took their cue for survival from the wild, sensitive animals and also became sensitive to the beauties and cruelties of their surroundings. We Indians, even those of us who have lived more than a few years in the city, seem to have inherited a bit of the wildness of the untameable coyote and the pheasant and the cautious nature of all animals that never reconcile themselves to captivity. But, our ancestors also believed in a power greater than themselves, Tah-man-ous, which helped them in spirit, yet kept them from becoming too proud when life was good. We must then learn and do the worthwhile things, as did our ancestors--respect our elders, hospitality to our neighbor (but not so much that he becomes too dependent for his own good), retain the custom of thanksgivings (feasts) to the Giver-Of-All-Things, and above all, respect others, while respecting ourselves--never allowing our own person or spirit to be degraded.

Everyone of us is passionately American. Rightly are we concerned about our future. We do not know how we will be vanquished this time, (TV Westerns do not help matters) but we have fearful suspicions. And the public wonders why we withdraw into ourselves, seek refuge in alcohol, or become ill with tuberculosis and diabetes. Seldom are we aggressive in our behavior anymore, except those of us who are called "hostile" and feel compelled to live up to the name. But there is hope. Armed with faith in a spiritual power greater than ourselves, the philosophy of our beloved ancestors, and a genuine concern for our own race, we must now earnestly resolve to learn all about how to live in these unstable times. Even though the slow wheels of justice have preserved portions of our Treaties, experience tells us that often untold suffering occurs while the wheels are turning. Therefore, we must be prepared to retain the lands of our Reservations for our descendants until all peoples of the world belong to the human race, and justice is dispensed only for justice's sake.

The forces of injustice and greed, not unlike the con man, work fast so that only favorable aspects of their plans will be noticed at once; the unfavorable or unjust overlooked, and then approved by those in power. We are uneasily aware that eventually being placed on the welfare rolls will not make us more confident, self-respecting citizens. We know that it is an insult to our heritage and to our dignity as human beings to be treated

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as though we would be satisfied to be cared for like so many bleating sheep. It is true that some of us feel that free Medical care, clothing, and food are our due, but the ones who expect that "the world owes me a living" may have never had the privilege of working and enjoying the fruits of their work. The poor we will always have with us, and perhaps these constitute some of our poor. Some were never taught to work or came from areas in our country where all the work was taken over by machinery, replaced with nothing but boredom and misery. However, it is ridiculous to expect an Indian to be content (in many cases) with an assembly line job so different from the individualistic creativity Indians are familiar with. Understandably, we feel inadequate if we did not finish grade or high school. Sometimes it causes only a vague dissatisfaction, but it does affect our ability to get and keep a job. Few Indians want money for money's sake. They only want it for what it provides. Wampum (medium of exchange) to Indians was always expendable for a rarer good. Plains Indians traded for shells and Coast Indians traded for Buffalo robes. Perhaps some cities would not exist today if the Indians had not spent all their money and furs for beads, wool felts, silk ribbons, buggies, and bacon.

Relocation to the city will not be an answer until the Indian is prepared mentally and emotionally for his job and life in the city. Adult education classes would give new motivation and inspiration to adult Indians in their 20's and 30's who now realize they need at least a high school diploma these days to get along. They might even farm their own lands instead of renting them, venture to find their own jobs in construction or in the city, or continue with their schooling. We must avail ourselves of all the education that it is possible for us to acquire. We must love our children by helping them to become independent of us and responsible for their own families. In these fast moving times, it is no longer feasible for several families to live together, yet we have survived because of our strong family bonds. Affection for our families was our saving grace, so of course, we must continue it.

When we get a job in the city, we must "stick with it" until we have enough experience to apply for a better job. We can no longer drop everything to go to a celebration (like we used to) if we are to be called dependable. Farmers used to prefer Indian laborers. Let's make them need us again. Young men must learn carpentry, plumbing, and landscaping—all our homes need fixing—some of us need, and can almost afford new homes. We must continue that beautiful leatherwork, beadwork, costume making, emphasizing beauty, artistry, and good workmanship. Our young athletes must stop dissapating so that they can be recognized as was Jim Thorpe and Jack Dempsey. We must know our non-Indian neighbors and allow them to know us, because, unless they know us, they can not love us, nor can we love them unless we understand them. If we become successful in business or tribal affairs, we must not become pompous, succumb to flattery, revel in vain glory, nor must we ever betray our creator, our country, or our people.

Therefore, laws passed or presented "for the good of the Indian" NOW must be a kind that will inform us, teach us, and help us to help ourselves be confident, dignified, self respecting human beings, proudly American, holding our heads up again as members of a noble race.



## SEATTLE GOLDEN GLOVES

The annual Post Intelligencer newspapers Golden Gloves (amateur boxing) was held at the Civic Auditorium in Seattle January 25-26.

At this annual event many aspiring young boxers come from all parts of the Northwest to try their luck and take home the trophies.

Four young Indian men appeared on the bill, appearing in the preliminaries.

- |                 |       |                    |
|-----------------|-------|--------------------|
| Bobbie Capps    | _____ | Burns, Oregon      |
| Keith Capps     | _____ | Burns, Oregon      |
| Lloyd Louie     | _____ | Burns, Oregon      |
| Howard Oldchief | _____ | Yakima, Washington |

*MMor*

EMPLOYER: "What we want is a night watchman that will be alert and ready, listening for the slightest noise, somebody that can sleep with one eye and both ears open and not afraid to tackle anything."

RELOCATEE: "Keep the job open. I'll send my wife around."