

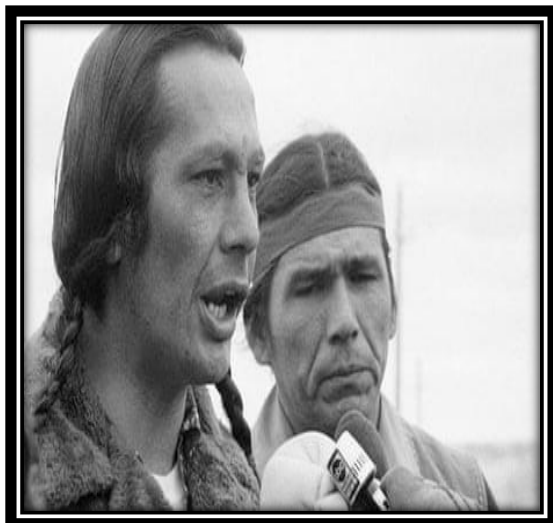
PROFILE OF RESISTANCE

Russell Means

organizer, activist, writer

"I do not want to be civilized. I want to be liberated."

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Background Information

Born: November 10, 1939; died: October 22, 2012.

Means' birth name was Wanbli Ohitika, which means "Brave Eagle" in the Lakota language. Means was born in Porcupine, South Dakota on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. Means graduated high school in California. He attended four colleges, but he did not graduate from any of them. He had a difficult childhood with a father who was an alcoholic. Means himself was living as a criminal until he found his purpose in the American Indian Movement in Minneapolis, Minnesota.¹

Means' Resistance

Means joined the American Indian Movement in 1968, and helped plan protests against the mistreatment of Native Americans. He became the first national director of this movement. As national director, he had an important role in the Wounded Knee protests, where 200 followers of the American Indian Movement took over the town of Wounded Knee, South Dakota to protest the U.S. government. This protest was shown on the news, and it strengthened Native Americans in their fight for their rights.

Means also became active in politics and even attempted to run for President of the United States. He worked hard to improve the lives of Native Americans by showing the world the mistreatment that they faced. Outside of his activism, he also had a career as an actor and a writer that helped him receive more attention for the cause.²

Achievements

Means founded the first radio station on his reservation as well as the first independent health clinic. He was also a founder of the International Treaty Council, which was responsible for the United Nations Declaration of Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

¹ Stark, J. (2007). Activist Russell Means to offer insight, experience. Retrieved November 10, 2019, from <http://news.rice.edu/2007/11/14/activist-russell-means-to-offer-insight-experience/>

² Bender, A. (2012, December 11). The passing of Russell Means was a loss for the world. Retrieved November 10, 2019, from People's World website: <https://www.peoplesworld.org/article/the-passing-of-russell-means-was-a-loss-for-the-world/>

Essential Questions

1. Russell Means had many different roles in life. Which role do you think made the biggest difference changing creating social change for American Indians and why?
2. Why do you think the media is an effective platform for talking about injustices against groups like American Indians?
3. ***“I do not want to be civilized. I want to be liberated.”***
 - a. What do you think he means by this quote?
 - b. Do you agree with this statement? Can one be civilized *and* liberated or either or?