

Letter from Stanley Benally

To my respectful teacher, a teacher of wisdom and knowledge.

My brother, we have never confronted each other in a non-academic setting and deeply discuss the philosophical aspect of nature. Therefore, I would like to address myself, for I speak from my heart which is pure with deep respect for all living and non-living things in this world.

We ask ourselves, "How can there be a man without a heart, or a prayer," yet every tree, every blade of leaf has its prayer and a power of being alive. Our belief portrays a profound understanding that every natural object is animated by interior spirit that can be addressed through prayer and whose power can be obtained for spiritual and physical strength.

I have seen the whiteman searching for answers to their psychological problems, but never to stop one minute to offer thanksgiving to the Great Spirit. I saw that whenever a student sits at a dining table for dinners will never stop to thank the giver of life, nor thank the Great Spirit for the water we drink which, as we all know, is extremely essential to sustain our lives. For without this vital fluid, we can not survive. I saw this happening while being in close contact with this society.

My heart is heavy with sadness for I have violated one of the most sacred beliefs of my people. I have altered a mind by inflicting pain and I have altered nature. As you know, my brother, I was once studying to be a medicine man which among my people is considered a noble profession. But unfortunately I was dragged off to a white man's school. I felt like a dog being dragged off to be shot because he was a threat to the community. Mind you that it was done against the will of the dog. Here I saw the ways of the white people. I found their life style to be different from ours. I found their world to be very puzzling and hard to understand.

My honorable teacher, I call you 'my teacher' because you are wise and knowledgable about your specialized field. You are a man of wisdom with time I have yet to see. For time has made you a wise man. I saw that many Wesleyan students take for granted to learn from such great men as you yourself. Nevertheless, I saw that other students showed respect and gratitude for their teachers.

As days go, by we will realize that what we experienced today will

never be experienced again, but to continue experiencing the things we wish to experience.

I write this letter to inform you that because of my deep respect for living creatures, both small or large, has caused me to drop the tutorial session and the laboratory discussion to ease the suffering that I'm presently experiencing. Yesterday (Oct. 20) I received a letter from home indicating that my suffering is the result of my exposure and altering nature. I must abide by my traditional beliefs and teachings to keep things found in nature undisturbed. I was taught to seek and live peacefully by the laws of nature. It is the story of all life that is holy and is good to tell, and of us two-leggeds sharing in it with the four-leggeds and the wings of the air and all green life, for these are children of one mother and their father is one spirit.

My brother, my words are like the stars in the heavens that never change for I speak from my heart. My teacher, I'm not saying that your ways of obtaining knowledge is bad but to seek a greater understanding of yourself and your surrounding. You are engaged in an honorable work that will someday be used to stop the killings, wars and discontent among the human race. Because of your work I know your heart. Even though I have never asked but I know your heart is strong because you want to help humanity. I deeply respect your determination to find an answer to aggressive behavior. A determination to bring into the world a knowledge that will greatly benefit mankind from destroying themselves.

My honorable teacher, my want to know often over-rides my deep reverence for nature causing disharmony. I must, at the end of the spring semester, return to the reservation to start studying to become a medicine man. To return to my rightful place where my heart is strong and where I find inner peace and harmony to my existence.

Please respect my decision for I in turn have deep respect for you because you are wise and highly knowledgeable. You are a great teacher of hidden wisdoms. You have taught me much about the things I was blinded to. For my people this is learning, far more than turning in papers. I thank you for what I learned from you. For your teachings will find a rightful place in this world.

I have spoken from my heart.

Stan