



# DAVID SLATER

REMEMBERING WOUNDED KNEE



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Cover image: David Slater, *The Siege of Wounded Knee*, ca. 2020, Acrylic, mixed media on canvas

# DAVID SLATER

## REMEMBERING WOUNDED KNEE

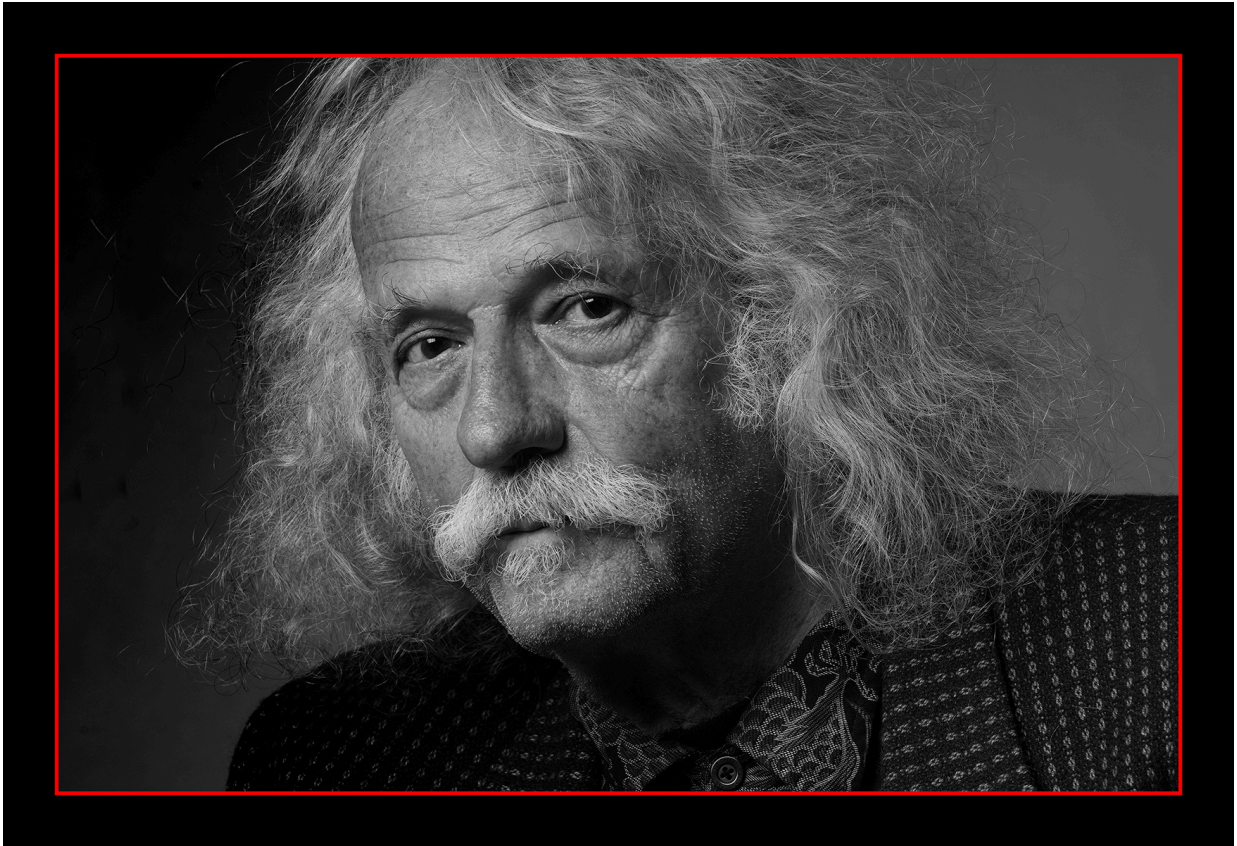
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Artwork by David Slater

Photography by Jonathan Morse

Pollock-Krasner House and Study Center

830 Springs Fireplace Rd, East Hampton, NY 11939



*David Slater*  
Photo by Jonathan Morse

# INTRODUCTION

MATTHEW K. WARD

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I first met David Slater in Jackson Pollock's and Lee Krasner's studio. As a docent, he has welcomed visitors into that space for nearly ten years, guiding them through its history with the reverence and wonder of one personally acquainted with its magic.

David has led a magical life. An artist for more than 70 years, he has lived, worked, and exhibited the world over. He received his undergraduate degree from the State University of New York at Buffalo and his Master's degree from the Rhode Island School of Design, where he would also go on to teach. While classically trained, David's work retains the immediacy, honesty, and playfulness of

one unrestrained by systems. School of Design, where he would also go on to teach. While classically trained, David's work retains the immediacy, honesty, and playfulness of one unrestrained by systems.

David's highly autobiographical and genre-defying works may be interpreted as diary entries of sorts. Narrative and visual art work symbiotically in these uniquely personal documents. Perhaps no series better encapsulates David as an artist and a human being as Wounded Knee.

Begun in 1982 and continuing through to this day, David's Wounded Knee paintings recall his

participation in the 1973 occupation of Wounded Knee on the Pine Ridge reservation in South Dakota.

For those unfamiliar, Wounded Knee creek was the site of one of the darkest episodes in American history, an 1890 massacre in which U.S. troops gunned down hundreds of Lakota men, women, and children. This was one of the final examples of armed resistance on the part of Indigenous peoples against the U.S. government's relocation program. By the 1930's, the U.S. had replaced traditional tribal law with federally sponsored tribal governments.

In 1973, protesters gathered at Wounded Knee in opposition to Richard "Dick" Wilson, then chairman of the Oglala Sioux tribe. Wilson was accused of running the reservation like a

dictatorship, using his private enforcers—the so-called GOON Squad—to intimidate opponents. Under Wilson's corrupt, Pine Ridge devolved into destitution. By returning to the hallowed ground of Wounded Knee, the protesters tied their own struggle to the unfinished story of broken promises and historical trauma.

Members of the American Indian Movement, or A.I.M., flocked to the Pine Ridge Reservation to lead an armed rebellion against Wilson and his GOON Squad. David Slater joined A.I.M. as a volunteer. Though an outsider, he related deeply with the struggles of the Pine Ridge residents – and still does to this day.

David Slater's Wounded Knee paintings reflect the artist's personal recollection of the event, his role in it, and the

extant characters involved. Just as Jackson Pollock incorporated the methodologies of the Navajo sand painter into his pour paintings, so does David synthesize the historic occupation of Wounded Knee into a mythology all his own.

Since first meeting David in the studio, I have come to know him as an artist in the truest sense of the word. One who must create, one who makes art from an overflow of the heart. Painting is David's way of processing his past and anticipating his future. Through his work, we not only gain insight into a fascinating individual, but we learn about the world around us through his lens.

David often quotes the Bukowski line, "find what you love and let it kill you."

Ironically, I have never met an artist who lives, and lives more vigorously, for what they love than David Slater.

# Holds Liabile ud

AP) — May a liable for fraud institutions it must it reim- of such fraud? y be a landmark S. District Court ered the State of \$20 million to 14- in a defunct sav- association. s say if the decl- could open the its seeking com- in the state for ted by persons that a state had was supposed to

A. Robson ruled of proper regu- cials "knowingly" permitted the ore than 70 per- of the former nd Loan Associ- resident was C.

zed City Savings e of unsound fi- es but allowed it years later.

the state de- titution again in, "the vultures e bones and left hose who ... had e savings" in the bson said in his ay.

is crystal clear State of Illinois, cers, agents and ily and utterly se the degree of e necessary to positors, Robson

of the relation- ty Savings, the l Assembly and cal Institutions eplete with evi- city and cooper- state of Illinois ly elected offi- rious scheme ated by C. Oran neines and cos- ledge said.

ever charged in the City Sav- 1971 he escaped minimum secur- Allentown, Pa., erving two five- in connection ud conviction in is still at large.

g on why Men- er officer of City ver indicted by ral authorities, "The record is of any evidence official . . . ever prosecuting agen- ormation neces- ensk to justice of fraud."

# la ground Truce

prus (AP) —

## Ancestor's Strategy —

# Wounded Knee Takeover Accomplished by Surprise

By F. RICHARD CICCONE

Associated Press Writer

WOUNDED KNEE (AP)

The takeover of Wounded Knee was accomplished by Oglala Sioux and militant Indians who copied a strategy their warrior ancestors used a century ago: total surprise.

But their stubborn defiance of the U.S. government made use of a contemporary skill: production of a melodrama which the mass media could not ignore.

"We counted on the press getting in here to get national opinion on our side," said Denis Banks, a leader of the demonstration.

The reason it happened at Wounded Knee can be traced to two dead Indians, a Miniconjou chief called Big Foot and a reservation Oglala named Raymond Yellow Thunder.

Big Foot led his followers to Wounded Knee during a December blizzard in 1890 and 146 Sioux men, women and children were killed by U.S. troops.

Raymond Yellow Thunder 51, died of a cerebral hemorrhage in the border town of Gordon, Neb., in February, 1972 and five white men were accused of beating and torturing him. His death gave the American Indian Movement the impetus to move into the Pine Ridge reservation, home of 11,000 Oglalas.

Pedro Bissonnette, leader of the Oglala civil rights group, explained, "Wounded Knee is one of our most important symbols ... it is a place that would be easy to take over and easy to defend."

AIM leaders turned to South Dakota early this year. The fatal stabbing of an Indian near Pine Ridge set off a series of protests.

Wyman Babby, area director of the Bureau of Indian Affairs in Pine Ridge, said, "There was an undercurrent through the reservation indicating AIM had something in mind ... But we did not try to contain the action of these people ... We expected something at the federal building, but the attack on Wounded Knee was unique in Indian history."

A tribal court ordered two AIM leaders, Russell Means, 33, an Oglala, and Banks, 38, a Minnesota Chippewa, to refrain from holding meetings for 30 days. "The order was hardly out ... before they violated it," Babby said.

Richard Wilson, Oglala tribal president, denounced AIM's tactics and called for federal marshals to defend the BIA building. Later he complained that the news media had not listened to his side of the dis-

27, in Calico Hall, a community center a mile from the BIA building. Camp told the chiefs, "Pine Ridge will be too difficult to take because of its size and the large number of police there." The discussion turned to Wounded Knee and AIM leaders spread the word that a decision-making meeting would be held in Porcupine, a village north of Wounded Knee.

The authorities knew about the gathering, but Babby said, "We had no reason to think they would take any action that night."

About 35 to 40 cars formed a caravan and headed east a dozen miles to the Big Foot trail which meanders north to Wounded Knee and on to Porcupine. The caravan decided to stop at Wounded Knee.

At 10 p.m. EST Feb. 27, Guy Fritze, 49, and his family were in their trailer watching Bonanza on television. Alma Clarke was visiting her sister, Agnes Gildersleeve, who, with her husband Clive, 71, has operated the one-story village trading post since 1923. The Rev. Paul Manhart of the Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Church was reading.

Wounded Knee sits in a basin surrounded by hills. From the bluff on which the church is located, observers can spot approaches for nearly two miles in any direction. Besides the Big Foot Trail from the south, there are two roads leading

northwest and northeast and two other dirt roads which join at the village.

On the flatland, a few hundred yards south of the church is the trading post. The Gildersleeve and Fritze homes and a few other dwellings are bunched opposite. North of the church is a federal housing project where most of the village's 200 Indians live.

An 18-man detail of Indians had been assigned to act as road guards, to check the high bluff where they thought police might be observing, to take over the residential enclave across from the trading post and to secure any weapons and ammunition from the post.

The rest of 200 Indians streamed into the store and began stripping shelves of the estimated \$150,000 worth of food and goods.

Fritze heard the noise and stepped outside. A shot whined over his head. Someone yelled, "Get back inside and you won't get hurt."

Two Indians went into the Gildersleeve home and announced: "You're political prisoners." Two more Indians tied up Father Manhart.

The Indians bivouaced in the churches and homes of their hostages. A crew was detailed to dig trenches and bunkers. The church basement became a mess kitchen.

There were problems within the village during the takeover,

however. Indian sentries haphazardly guarded the roadblocks. They continually had accidental misfirings.

At one point, a roadblock mistakenly was set up to keep the residents of the housing project from entering their own village. "Dammit," Means shouted, "tell those fools they are making our country smaller."

As the caravan was pulling into Wounded Knee, Aaron DeSersa, an AIM member and publisher of the Shannon County News, a weekly critical of Wilson, telephoned the news services and the television networks.

"You should send photographers and reporters to Wounded Knee in a couple of hours. It's very important." Three hours later, he called again. "Indians have taken Wounded Knee."

DeSersa led three television crews and several newsmen into Wounded Knee after the takeover. He acted as information officer, devising means of identifying the news media the Indians courted. Finally DeSersa announced that printed press cards would be distributed.

"This will get you into all the AIM demonstrations this year," he said. "No one who doesn't have one will be allowed in."

Before the telephone wires were cut, Mrs. Gildersleeve called BIA police in Pine Ridge to tell them of the takeover. Federal marshals and FBI agents blockaded Wounded Knee by dawn.

Means, who wears his black hair in twin braids, stated, "Massacre us or deal with us." The takeover leaders put on paint and held spiritual dances and purification rites in a "sweat lodge" designed by two Sioux medicine men. They built a Sioux tepee for talks with officials and accelerated their demands each time the government made a concession.

Citing the Interior Department's refusal to suspend the Oglala tribal government's operations, the Wounded Knee Indians declared themselves a sovereign nation that would not surrender until an 1868 treaty was honored.

They burned a federal peace proposal and one of the medicine men, Leonard Crow Dog, removed a bullet from one of the three Indians wounded in the sporadic firing between lawmen and Indians.

When the government temporarily withdrew roadblocks March 10, the Indians declared a victory and returned to rhetoric. "There still is a war in Washington state, there still is a war in Pawnee, Okla-

## Tribal Leader Wilson Caught in the Middle

By JAMES WILSON

PINE RIDGE, S.D. (AP) — Richard Wilson, the elected leader of the 11,000 Oglala Sioux Indians on the Pine Ridge Reservation, has been the man in the middle of the two-week-old siege at Wounded Knee.

He's been subjected to constant verbal abuse by the occupying American Indian Movement forces and ignored by the federal officials who have come from Washington to settle the dispute.

But Wilson, a 38-year-old plumber turned reservation politician, is adamant in his intention to remain as tribal president and seek re-election next year when his first two-year term expires.

"The night they took over that village," Wilson said in an interview, "I wanted to go in there with my men and get them out. But the federal government ordered me not to and

they term a "goon squad" with tribal funds to enforce order.

AIM leader Russell Means said he was beaten the day of the takeover by Wilson's men. "I've heard that," Wilson said, "but I don't know anything about it." He said tribal employees are "hired for their ability," but admits "some of my friends and relatives have jobs." He said his books are open to anyone who wants to look at how the \$366,000 annual tribal budget is spent.

"I don't know any bootleggers. Anyone who breaks a tribal law will be arrested. And, I don't have a goon squad," he said.

Wilson estimates only about 100 reservation residents either sympathize with or belong to AIM. The militant leaders claim a majority of the residents are on their side. Non-involved Indian residents refuse to reply to the question of who they favor.

# Security Sessions In Panam

PANAMA CITY — A series of history's great military feats, the session will be swamped with rhetoric and diplomacy at a U.N. Security Council session opening in Panama.

Scheduled for the morning session is a debate on Panama's strong military posture. Omar Torrijos, ambassador who has been Council president since 1974, will be followed by Afuillino Boyd, tary-General Kuri.

The morning session will be followed by a debate on the canal and a session with speakers from the American nation.

The Council will meet last week and in the white Ministry building across the street from the Panama Canal Zone is near the site of the American rioting.

The session is the first in Latin America since the fourth outside session in New York some years ago. General Assef was there and last week to Ethiopia.

Torrijos was spotlighted on when he spoke on the occasion of the centennial of the Cuban revolution. The Cubans are up a fuss about the base at Guantanamo. There will be speeches also on the independence of Panama. Chile will be a special case. A national day of mourning will be observed.

The session will be a fiery baptism of fire. Nixon's new chief of staff, Alexander Haig, the United Nations spokesman and Vice President Ford's assistant John S. Sununu, will be present. Wednesday night was a "very pleasant" session. Panama to make a statement. Nixon's evening session in this part of the world.

The United States has 550 square miles since 1903 under its control "in Panama, built by the United States, opened in 1914. The chief U.S. installations in Panama are located in the zone.

## Chicago

CHICAGO (AP) — A Butcher unsettled by the quoted Thursday. Eggs: issued a day and Friday.

## S.C. Liv

SIoux CITY (AP) — Hogs 4,500; bar- 50 higher; soy- 39.50-40.00; 250-2- 3-4 210-300 lb 3- 1-3 330-550 lb 35- 1-3 330-550 lb 35- 1-3 330-550 lb 35-



**Jim Mone, Associated Press, 1973**  
**A U.S. flag flies upside-down outside a church occupied by members of the American Indian Movement on March 3, 1973, on the site of the 1890 massacre at Wounded Knee, S.D..**

**Opposite: The Daily Republic, Mitchell, SD, Thursday, March 15, 1973, p 11.**

# Indians at Wounded Knee to get 'final offer'

WOUNDED KNEE, S.D. (UPI) — The government's chief negotiator returns here from Washington today with what could be a final offer to militant Indians to abandon their occupation of Wounded Knee.

In the background was the threat of another confrontation, this time between two Indian groups. The head of the Oglala Sioux Tribal Council threatened to begin sweeping through the reservation today picking up "undesirables" who are supporting the American Indian Movement (AIM), the militant Indian group behind the Wounded Knee occupation.

Harlington Wood, who has been representing the government in renewed talks with AIM leaders this week, left for Washington late Thursday for what a spokesman said was "a series of meetings with top officials of the Justice and Interior Departments."

Wood's departure brought claims from AIM leaders that the White House had become directly involved in negotiations to end the 17-day old occupation. But later, in Washington, White House Deputy Press Secretary Gerald L. Warren said the White House was not at all involved in negotiations, and that instructions to the negotiators on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation were coming

from the Justice and Interior Departments.

While the skirmish of words took place over purported White House intervention, Dick Wilson, president of the Oglala Sioux Tribal Council and the object of the AIM campaign, announced his warriors would begin their sweep of the reservation today picking up "undesirables."

Wilson said his chief target would be representatives of the National Council of Churches, who have been serving as liaison between the government and militant forces. Wilson said the council was actually aiding AIM militants, and accused one council of churches representative of arrogance.

AIM leaders are demanding the ouster of Wilson for his alleged mishandling of tribal finances, and had failed in formal impeachment proceedings of Wilson shortly before the takeover of Wounded Knee. About a week after the takeover, Wilson had threatened to clean out the armed militant Indians entrenched in the Oglala Sioux hamlet, saying he could not hold back nonmilitant Indians any longer and had 800 to 900 armed warriors ready. However, nothing ever came from the threat.

D:11 ...:11 1:f:

*Portage Daily Register, Portage, WI, March 16, 1973, p 4.*

# Bail bonds set for 19 arrested on reservation

Bonds for 19 persons, mostly from out of state, were set by U.S. Magistrate James Wilson in Rapid City Monday following their arrests earlier by federal marshals on the perimeter of Wounded Knee.

Thirteen, including two juveniles, had been arrested early Sunday morning on charge of obstructing or impeding law enforcement officers in the performance of their duties by attempting to take food, medical and other supplies in to those maintaining the blockade of the village.

The 11 young men ordered to post \$1,000 bail bonds each (obtainable at no more than 10 per cent or \$100) and stay out of Wounded Knee and South Dakota pending indictments by a federal grand jury or preliminary hearings except on order of U.S. District Court, included:

William J. Andres, Gerald Arthur Tindal and Daniel Guenther, all of Winona, Minn.

Jeffrey Erich Roy, Minneapolis.

Robert Charles Kleis and Lucas Neas, West LaFayette, Ind. Richard Nelson, a North Carolina native agreeing to abide in Washington, D.C., while under such bond.

Michael Patrick Shaughnessy and Danny O. Goodman, Indianapolis.

David Charles Slater, Providence, R. I.

David Lattier, Cincinnati.

The juveniles, one from Fort Thompson and the other from out-of-state, were released in custody of their parents on personal recognizance bonds.

Also ordered to post \$1,000 bail bonds, stay out of Wounded Knee and South Dakota pending indictments or preliminary hearings, expect on order of the court were Timothy Joseph Bitney and David Thoms Armtraage, both of Minneapolis. They said they were journalists attempting to get a story on the Wounded Knee occupation

for a University of Minnesota campus newspaper.

Released on personal recognizance bonds were Walter B. Delge Jr., LeCompton, Kan., charged with civil disorder and crossing a state line to cause a riot, and the following facing a single count of obstructing or impeding law enforcement officers:

Dale Wayne Jones, Marysville, Wash.

David Steven Vigil, Denver, Colo.

Viola Nichols, also known as Cheyenne, Pine Ridge.

Eugene F. Zbikowski, Minnetonka, Minn.

## Kennel club members show in six cities

Rapid City Kennel Club members have logged many miles in recent trips to Salina, Hutchinson and Wichita, Kan., Livonia, Mich., Louisville, Ky., and Denver, Colo., in their search for championship points and obedience "legs" for their dogs.

Sam and Marion Tuttle's Visla, Marisa of Lisuanda, won two points with a 189 obedience score in Denver. Teena and Lloyd Boothroyd's Gordon Setter, Ber Brough Sister Margaret, took one point at Salina and three at Livoni. Duane and Sally Peterson's Bassett, Musicland's Sweet Charity, added one point at Salina.

### Other local wins include:

Roger and Holli Jelkin's Great Pyrenees, Skeel's Basque Wind, first novice class at Salina, Wichita and Hutchinson; Gordon and Susan Armagost's Old English Sheepdog, Ragbear's Silver Belle first puppy bitch at Salina and Hutchinson, second puppy bitch at Wichita and Denver; Milton and Jan Dohn's Siberian Husky, Mandak's Sunka Bloka, first puppy dog in Salina and Wichita, third in Hutchinson, first bred by exhibitor in Denver; Dohn's Siberian Husky, Mandak's Sunka Yela, first puppy bitch; Salina, Wichita, Hutchinson, Denver; Dohn's Siberian Husky, Mandak's Itchon Paka, C.D., third open dog in Salina, fourth open dog in Wichita and Hutchinson.

Betty Ohlrogge's English Setter, Sunswift Cherokee, first puppy bitches (and RWB) in Salina, first in Wichita and Hutchinson; George and Sandy Geib's Afghan, Esfahan Brass Arielsif, second

*Rapid City Journal,  
Rapid City, SD, Tuesday  
April 24, 1973, p 17.*

*David Slater listed  
amongst the protesters  
arrested.*

# THE SIEGE OF WOUNDED KNEE

DAVID SLATER

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In my initial proposal to the Pollock-Krasner Foundation, I asked for funding to continue a series of paintings, begun in 1982, relating to my participation as a combatant during the Siege of Wounded Knee in 1973.

Wounded Knee Creek, located on South Dakota's Pine Ridge Reservation, has been a sacred site for the Lakota since 1890, when hundreds of Lakota men, women, and children were massacred by U.S. Army soldiers, partially as revenge for Custer's defeat in 1876. This was one of the last armed battles between Indian and American forces.

In 1934, the role of Indian chiefs was replaced by federal law. Tribal presidents were installed, as was a

governance based on the American model. The new model led to corruption across several reservations. In 1973, Dick Wilson, president of the Oglala Sioux Tribe at the Pine Ridge reservation, embezzled funds meant to build roads, schools, and hospitals. Soon, the Pine Ridge reservation became the poorest municipality in the United States. The average life expectancy for a male there was 43. Teen suicide rates were the highest in the nation.

Dick Wilson was backed a group of followers known as the Guardians of the Oglala Nation, or, the GOON Squad. These were mercenaries who would suppress any opposition with violence.

Over the years, the GOON Squad killed hundreds.

At one meeting of opponents to this ruthless reign of terror, a woman elder posed the question: “Where are our warriors to protect us?”

Russel Means, who was born on Pine Ridge and lived in Cleveland, attended this meeting. Means was a member of the American Indian Movement. A.I.M. was founded in Minneapolis, where a large population of Native Americans lived, and it consisted mainly of Lakota and Ojibway (Chippewa) dedicated to protecting against police brutality. Means would recruit A.I.M. to defend against the GOON Squad at Pine Ridge.

The GOON Squad prepared for the arrival of A.I.M. by establishing a machine gun

nest on the roof of a Pine Ridge municipal building. The armed “A.I.M.sters,” many of whom were Vietnam veterans, occupied a church in Pine Ridge, making it their headquarters. In response, the federal government surrounded Wounded Knee. They sent in U.S. Marshals in battle dress, Generals in civilian clothes, F.B.I. agents, and 15 armored personnel carriers. Thus began a 71 day siege. This included fire fights between A.I.M. occupants and federal forces. At least 250,000 rounds were fired. One would think this would have been national news. However, the government issued a press blackout. Today, the history of the siege is not known to most Americans.

Russel Means with Dennis Banks and Clyde Bellecourt were leaders inside Wounded

Knee. Means called for volunteers to come support the takeover. I responded.

I hitchhiked from Rhode Island to South Dakota. I arrived at a place called Crow Dog's Paradise. The Crow Dog family were from a line of Heyoka Medicine Men. Henry Crow Dog was there. His son, Leonard, was the Medicine Man inside Wounded Knee. The famous Heyoka Medicine Man Black Elk had been there too. Crow Dog's Paradise served as a support camp, organizing raids, recuperating wounded warriors, stockpiling food and supplies. Crow Dog's Paradise was, in fact, located on the Rosebud Reservation, which was next to Pine Ridge, and was not under martial law. When I arrived, I volunteered to go on a mission to bring food to the besieged occupants of Wounded Knee. The

government's strategy was to starve out the defenders.

Federal spies told the government about our mission and we were chased by GOON Squad members. We were arrested at gunpoint and charged with impeding federal Marshals, a felony.

In 1982, I decided to do a series of paintings documenting my experiences with A.I.M. and at Wounded Knee. Thus far, I have completed 9 paintings in this series. I plan to continue this series until I reach 13 paintings. My next work will portray the B-52 flown over Crow Dog at 900 feet to warn us to cease and desist or face total annihilation. completed 9 paintings in this series. I plan to continue this series until I reach 13 paintings. My next work will portray the B-52 flown over Crow Dog at 900

feet to warn us to cease and desist or face total annihilation.

I wish to thank the Pollock-Krasner House and Study Center for giving me the opportunity to bring this major historical event unto the public eye.



David Slater, *The Siege of Wounded Knee*, ca. 2020, Acrylic, mixed media on canvas



David Slater, *Crow Dog's Paradise*, ca. 2019,  
Acrylic, mixed media on canvas



David Slater, *The Sacred Hoop*, ca. 2019, Acrylic, mixed media on canvas



David Slater, *Wounded Knee Offense/Defense Committee; The Funeral of Frank Clearwater*, ca. 1982/83, Oil on canvas



David Slater, *You are an Old One; Oscar Berrunner Guards the Tee-Pee*, ca. 1983/84, Oil on canvas



David Slater, *Easter Eve*, ca. 1985, Oil on canvas

**K**

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**P**