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"Standing Silent Nation" screens April 6-7 at Columbia College prior to premiere on PBS' "POV"



Alex White Plume in "Standing Silent Nation"

Suree Towfighnia first visited the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota in August, 2002 to film Alex White Plume's hemp harvest for her documentary "Standing Silent Nation."

"Alex said, 'call me when you get to the Badlands,'" Towfighnia recalled. "We arrived 10 minutes after the DEA had put a restraining order on his third attempt to grow hemp."

When we saw what the reality of life was on the reservation, our focus shifted from industrial hemp to Native American sovereignty, which was much more compelling for us."

"Standing Silent Nation" screens April 6 and 7 at Columbia College, in advance of its broadcast premiere during the 20th anniversary season of the national PBS series "P.O.V./The American Documentary" on July 3.

Director Towfighnia and producer Courtney Hermann followed White Plume and his family for the next four years, as they battled federal authorities in court for the right to develop an industry for their impoverished community that they argue is more economically sustainable than casinos and more environmentally friendly than most agricultural products.

"The native people have a treaty that allows them sovereignty to use their land as they see fit," Towfighnia said. "They're angry at the lack of respect that's given to the treaty. They're one of the few groups in this country that are protecting the land and creating sustainable infrastructure. Hemp is one way to do that."



The White Plume family in "Standing Silent Nation"

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