

Lumbees On The Move In Reno At NIEA Conference

EDITOR'S NOTE: This article was written by Sandy Lucas Tevis of Tucson, Arizona as a tribute to two of her good Lumbee friends-Rosa Winfree and Dr. Dean Chavers.

I recently had the pleasure of attending the National Indian Education Conference in Reno, Nevada. This conference was sponsored by NIEA the National Indian Education Association.

Yes, this was definitely a Thanksgiving to remember, for I spent part of my holidays with Lumbees on the move in Reno. Two of those special Lumbees are Mrs. Rosa Winfree and Dr. Dean Chavers.

It was a great feeling being at a conference with some 2000 participants and so many Lumbees present. It almost felt like Robeson instead of Reno. The only thing missing was the collards.

The thing that I am especially proud of regarding this event is that two of the fifteen NIEA Board members for 1986 are Lumbees. Because Rosa Winfree and Dr. Dean Chavers have done such a terrific job in giving of their time and talents to the Indian people at a national level, during the past few years, I would like to submit this article in honor of them. They have served out their elected terms for NIEA with much earned respect from Indians all over the United States and Canada.

Winfree and Chavers made a great team on the NIEA board. Personally, I think such an opportunity is a valuable experience. Betty Mangum and I served on the board in 1980. Unfortunately, there aren't any Lumbees on the board for 1987. But with another conference and election coming up in a year, hopefully that status will change. This conference took place a couple of days before Thanksgiving. I thought of the Pilgrims and Indian stories that go along with this holiday. I also thought of how thankful I am for so many things that I have been blessed with. One of the many things that I am thankful for is to be Lumbee from Robeson and feel it an honor to be associated with a tribe of people who have made tremendous progress since the Pilgrim days. Such progress has taken place among our people because there are individuals who have given generously of their time and hearts with commitment and dedication, not only at the local level, but nationally as well. Two such people are Rosa Winfree and Dr. Dean Chavers.

ROSA REVELS WINFREE

I remember meeting Rosa about 1978 in Albuquerque at NIEA. I recalled that she was this beautiful Lumbee from Pembroke who had a sense of pride and was proud of who she was and loved working with Indian education. She was intently taking notes at the workshops. She introduced herself to me and she was so friendly, caring and genuine. I was excited to see someone from back home for I was far away from Pembroke. I was at that conference representing Brigham Young University, we displayed a booth.

Since that time Rosa and I have bumped into each other at various NIEA conferences. She works with the Mecklenburg County schools in the Charlotte area with Indian students. She is always interested in how she can help provide opportunities to Indian students. For example, she assisted Candy Locklear with getting accepted into a minority summer program at the University of Arizona a couple of years ago. (LEAD, leadership, education and development program). This one month program is offered at 16 universities nationally. At the time, I was on the board for this program and told Rosa I would like to see Indians participate in the program. She acted. Candy was the first Lumbee to participate in LEAD. This year, Rosa and her boss presented a workshop at the NIEA conference entitled "Education, a family affair."

This workshop was very well presented, well-attended and the handout materials were most impressive. One of the participants to this workshop was Rosa's husband Frank, who understands Rosa's work and supports her efforts.

Rosa and Dean are not ashamed to speak up for their people. At the Reno conference, the Lumbees weren't able to acquire a meeting room for their caucus, so they held their meeting in the MGM Grand Hotel lobby with Rosa conducting. (You could hear slot machines left and right in the background, but when Rosa took the floor, the machines faded out.)

It was great, some 35 Lumbees gathered discussing educational issues and before I knew it the group was getting larger and larger, for people passing by would stop and listen in...A "passer-by" commented, "Those Lumbees sure have their stuff together." A Tlingit Indian from Alaska said she had never seen such a thing. A tribe that had our unbelievable amount of unity. She said, "I have never seen such a happy people. You are always smiling and are of good cheer, you don't look distressed like other groups I know. You are all kind of people, intelligent and witty. This looks like the National Lumbee Convention instead of NIEA."

That Rosa sure is a strong willed lady and very determined. Although she has encountered some health problems, she has bounced back and is doing beautifully and is batting and swinging for Indian education. You can't keep a good Lum down."

DR. DEAN CHAVERS

My first acquaintance with Dean was also at an NIEA conference. At that time, he was the president of Bacone College in Oklahoma. I thought, "Wha...a Lumbee president, our people are going places." Dr. Chavers is the 2nd Indian to get a Ph.D. from Stanford.

Dr. Dean Chavers currently resides in Albuquerque, N.M. He is president of his own consulting firm, MANAGE, Inc. (Management Assistance for Native American Governments & Enterprises Inc.) He provided a workshop at the NIEA conference, entitled, "50 ways to raise money." This is only one of the many areas which he is an expert in.

He is well-known, successful and competent. I have had friends go out of town for a meeting or conference and they would come back and say, "hey, do you know Dr. Chavers?" Of course, being proud, I would say, "I sure do." He gets around, from Oklahoma to D.C. to N.M., and everywhere there are Indians. If you don't know Dean, he is a three-piece suit short fellow, who is as tall as any business person I know. He has the credentials and professionalism that makes anyone look up to him.

When I worked with the BIA in DC, summer of 1980, I discovered a lot of people back there respected Dean, especially our own people who were working there ie, Helen Sherbeck, Tom Oxendine, J.W. Strickland, Jo Hunt and the honorable Brantley Blue, Arlinda Locklear; just to name a few who I have had the pleasure of getting to know.

In October, I bumped into Dean in Phoenix at NCAI (National Congress of American Indian) conference. Although he was in the middle of a hearing, he made time to chat over lunch. His time is valuable at such conferences, for he is constantly being sought for advice and counsel, but he takes time to visit with the Lums. Wherever I see Dean, he always has that warm Lumbee smile that gives you that "down-home" feeling.

Arriving At The Conference

I recall arriving at the conference in Reno. It was about 6 p.m., after a long day at the office. I was in the

lobby of the MGM Grand Hotel and before I even registered, I saw familiar faces and friends. Dr. Chavers, with his welcoming hug and smile was first. Seconds later Rosa and her husband and Dr. James Chavis greeted me with arms opened, then after that, the LRDA folks appeared. It was like Lumbee Heaven. I loved it, we all felt at home. There were Indians from Cumberland County Indian Education, Hoke County Indian Education, LRDA, Robeson County Indian Education and teachers and parents from the three counties. I mean southeastern North Carolina was well represent-

ed. There were Lumbees from Michigan and Janice Jones Schroeder (sister of Bruce Jones) was visiting from Oklahoma. There must have been about 40 in attendance. It is obvious Lumbees take their education seriously. There were principals, teachers, parents, university and educational administrators represented. Hats off to all those from "back home" who took time to attend this four-day national conference. It wouldn't have been the same without you. Yep, those Lumbees were on the move in Reno, at NIEA...for a good cause...with good people...like Rosa Winfree and Dr. Dean Chavers.



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