

Editorial and Opinion Page

Editorially Speaking

Housing Monies for Lumbee Could be Lost in Fiasco Over Government Issue

The recent ruling by the North Carolina Court of Appeals in the controversy surrounding Lumbee tribal government has caused an interesting interpretation. The issue before the court was: Can LRDA be sued? The answer from the NC Court of Appeals was yes. It was that simple. The issue of who the tribal governmental body is remains a matter for the courts. LRDA has petitioned the NC Supreme Court asking them to hear their appeal. The chances of that court hearing anything relative to the issue is slim and none. There was a three judge panel on the Court of Appeals who ruled that the State of North Carolina does have jurisdiction in the case. It would be unusual for the Supreme Court to listen to a case with three appellate judges concurring. Nevertheless, the legal battle continues.

Editorially speaking, we are a little concerned about the double message our illustrious tribal chairman, Dr. Dalton Brooks seems to be sending. In the beginning, the tribal council, with Dr. Brooks, agreeing and signing off on the original law suit, said "let the courts decide the issue." However, not many weeks ago, Dr. Brooks issued an executive order which Ordered LRDA to come under the auspices of the Constitution. This Executive Order was not worth the paper it was written on because there is no enforcement power. Dr. Brooks should either let the courts decide or issue an executive order to stop the lawsuit and continue with his elected duties. We are sorry, Dr. Brooks, you cannot have it both ways. Either it is a matter for the courts or it is not. In any event, we expect to have the issue of our government tied up in the courts for many years.

In the meantime, Lumbee has an opportunity to apply for housing funds. The question arises: HUD: who is the government? While both sides claim to be the government, the tribal council and chairman have decided, as we stated before, to let the courts decide. HUD officials have said to both sides, to the newspaper, and any other interested Lumbee that if two housing plans are received, Lumbee will NOT receive any housing funds. Some of us who have no emotional attachment to either side have asked the elected members on both sides to reach a compromise and ensure that people who need the services have the opportunity to receive adequate and affordable housing. Seems like a reasonable request to us. However, there seems to be persons involved on both sides who are caught up in a power struggle and have adapted the attitude that "if we can't administer the funds, then nobody should." It would be amusing, if it were not so serious. And the time for submitting applications is running out. June 30 we understand!

We asked Dr. Brooks to issue an Executive Order that would endorse LRDA's housing plan with the exception of a tribal complex that they have proposed. His executive order, we requested, would authorize the NC Indian Housing Authority to administer the funds for a two year period. If Dr. Brooks had issued that order, the tribal council could veto it with two thirds of the council. Even if they had vetoed the order, it would have been a viable step towards resolution of the matter of housing funds. The worse that could have happened would have been a veto. This would have singled out the members of the tribal council by name who would have by their vote stated that they would not work towards housing monies for tribal members.

Instead of doing that, something constructive, or coming up with another alternative for the sake of housing funds, Dr. Brooks issued an order that could do nothing more than antagonize LRDA and further fan the flames of discord. It causes us to wonder if Dr. Brooks has joined the obsession that we have seen among some of the folks on the side of the tribal council. Some of them seem obsessed with destroying LRDA and nothing else is important. We would hope that Dr. Brooks would not be counted in that number. But his action leads us to wonder what he hoped to gain and if he is indeed serious about bringing housing funds into the community.

Editorially, we call on Chairman Brooks to work toward closure of an embarrassing situation. Dr. Brooks, you should lead the move to bring peace and harmony and YES closure to the issue. The very least that you could do is work toward a compromise that would ensure that much needed services come into the community. Maybe our idea of an Executive Order was not the answer. But yours, Dr. Brooks, certainly was not an either. As we see it, it was an attempt, as we see it, to "throw gasoline on a fire." We sincerely hope that Dr. Brooks has just misunderstood the seriousness of the issue of losing housing monies. We cannot believe that he has become cold, callous and unconcerned about those in need!

There are other ideas, Dr. Brooks. How about a local housing board comprised of members of both the tribal council and LRDA. Let them develop

a plan and the NC Housing Authority administer the funds while both entities accept applications? There are over 40,000 of us, and each of us, I'm sure have an idea about how to resolve the issue while providing services to those in need. It stands to reason that the only persons who would not be interested in housing monies for the tribe are those who already have houses. The idea,

Dr. Brooks, is that there is an answer. It really is just a problem and we should be working toward a solution that will provide services to people that both LRDA and the council purport to represent. Think about it, Dr. Brooks.

Think about it, LRDA board members. We submit to you, LRDA, that you all have spent enough monies in attorneys' fees to build several houses for some of our elderly. When is enough enough? We call on you, Rod Locklear, who has the reputation as a strategist, to devise a plan that will provide services to people. How about, if your interest is control, seven of your supporters running for the tribal council in August? There are as many ideas out there as there are stars in the sky. The question for both sides is: where do we the tribal members fall in either equation.

The entire scenario has definitely accomplished one thing for us. We are rethinking our position of electing preachers to decision making positions. In the first place, they are supposed to be peace makers and you cannot always play that role in the political arena. Secondly, the Bible instructs us to "As much as possible, be at peace with all men." Ministers we know take these instructions seriously, as well they should. But on the other hand, the Bible also teaches us that "there is a time for all things." The time for passive behavior and non-aggressive action has passed. We need a leader as tribal chairman who will be strong, forceful and aggressive when the occasion calls for it. Unfortunately, as much respect as we have for Dr. Brooks, he does not display any of these characteristics in his role as tribal chairman. He appears to be easily led by others and we cannot agree with the tribal council's attorney, Arlinda Locklear, that the monies should come to the tribal council or not come at all. We believe that Dr. Brooks by his inaction takes a position of agreement with the tribal council's attorney. We believe that the need of the Lumbee people takes precedence over both LRDA and the tribal council's personal agenda. We believe that the Lumbee people should not suffer the loss of one dollar in services while these two entities continue what appears to be a "power struggle." We hope that Dr. Brooks will re-think his position of inaction and come up with a reasonable solution to the problem that is before us as a people.

We hope that Adolph Blue, Chairman of the LRDA board, and the other elected board members as well as the elected tribal council, will sit down rationally, lay aside personal agendas, forget who did what to whom, eliminate certain dominate personalities and come to a speedy compromise on housing funds. Those of us who are simply members of the Lumbee Tribe have no alternative but to wait on the courts relative to the issue of government since our elected officials have decided that the courts should decide. In the meantime, we call on you all editorially to make sure that the people don't suffer the loss of housing funds while you all play a game of "government, government, who is the government?" And as Jesus told Judas: "What thou doest, do quickly!"

Following the election, Sheriff Glenn Maynor, fired Chief of Detectives Mark Locklear. Some of us were not surprised. We doubt seriously that Mark Locklear was surprised although he was quoted in the media as saying he was. The deputies of the Robeson County Sheriff's Department work at the pleasure of the Sheriff. He does not have to give us a reason and we have not asked for one. He is the sheriff. He knows whether Mark Locklear needed to be fired. Apparently, he felt that he did. And we accept that. We take exception with Bo Biggs, the columnist for the daily newspaper who speculates about whether Mark Locklear will run for sheriff in the year 2002. Well, Bo, Mark Locklear and others who supported Hubert Stone in the election, gathered 76 votes in Mark's home precinct of Prospect. That should tell you and Mark something. However, we can only assume that Mark Locklear will do what he seems to have always done in his young career, follow the instructions of ex-sheriff Hubert Stone. We would hope that he will get politically smarter as the years go by. But for the record, Bo, you nor Hubert Stone nor the two of you combined can dictate who the Indian population will support for sheriff.

If Bo Biggs insists in dealing in political rumors, let us remind him of the rumor that his wife, Gayla Biggs, will run for District Attorney in the year 2002. Well, Bo, how about that? Was that her reason for supporting Sheriff Glenn Maynor? Did she think, or did you advise her, that one way to interest Indians in your candidacy, would be to support Glenn Maynor?

Perspective on Housing Monies

Guest Editorial by Cynthia L. Hunt, Lumbee

In 1996, the "Native American Housing Assistance and Self-Determination" (NAHASDA) act was passed. The purpose of this act was to eliminate separate housing programs and replace them with a single block grant program. This act simplified the process of providing housing assistance to Native Americans. It also provides housing assistance in a manner that recognizes an Indian tribe's right to self-governance and self-determination. For the first time, state recognized tribes were included in this type of legislation. The Lumbee, Haliw-Saponi, Waccamaw-Siouan, Person County Indians, Coharie and the Meherrin will be eligible to apply for this assistance that will provide much needed funds to complete a variety of tasks in the area of housing. Such services as housing rehabilitation, construction of new housing, etc. to tribal members are possible.

In the past few months controversy has surfaced over this proposed housing money in the Lumbee community. There have been several issues raised concerning who is the proper entity to apply for and receive this money. The controversy has warranted correspondence with HUD officials regarding the tribe's position in the matter. It is the intent of this article to address some of these concerns.

The Act requires tribes who are eligible to draft a complete housing plan detailing how the funds will be expended. They must also identify an entity they wish to administer the funds. If the plan is approved, the tribe will receive housing monies. Plans must be submitted by June 30, 1998. In the case of Lumbee, there are currently two separate entities declaring to be the governing body of the tribe: the Tribal Council and LRDA. They are currently in court to have the matter decided. Each one feels their housing plan should be submitted, and they should be the ones to administer any monies appropriated to the tribe. However, officials from HUD have stated, if two plans are submitted they will not be the agency to decide which entity is the recognized government of the Lumbee people. The agency has stated this implicitly in an undated memo. "At the BIA recognition... we would need to get a decision from the appropriate state entity that establishes who the state recognizes as the appropriate representatives for a tribe." HUD will request the state to adjudge who the recognized government is for purposes of HUD funds. Leon Jacobs, tribal member and former director of HUD Office of Indian Programs has confirmed the agency's opinion in a letter dated, May 15, 1998. He states, "...in the case of a dispute as we have in Lumbee, HUD will rely on the state to determine who the recognized government is for purposes of HUD funds."

In reference to the state making a decision on this matter, meetings have been held with members of the Governor's staff to discuss the issue. Recently, a letter from Governor Jim Hunt stated he would not become involved in the conflict. It is likely this is the sentiment of the Attorney General's office as well. However, with the current level of controversy, one should not be surprised that a politician with aspirations of furthering that political career would put himself in such a precarious situation. According to the letter from Mr. Jacobs, "If the state chooses to not make such a determination, HUD can then choose to withhold the funds." This statement has also been corroborated by staff persons of HUD's Office of Indian Programs. The same memo referenced above states, "If a state chooses not to get involved in tribal disputes, we have no way of determining who the appropriate representative is and could not approve an IHP (Indian Housing Plan) or a grant."

Both sides purporting to represent the Lumbee have failed to advise tribal members of these issues. Further, while LRDA and the Tribal Council have been interested in requesting input as to what tribal members would like to see done with the money (i.e., LRDA taking pre-applications, Tribal Council distributing Needs Assessments), they have not felt the need to inform the tribe of an important aspect of this matter. There is no absolute guarantee Lumbee will receive any housing monies. These monies in question are not entitlement funds, but come through congressional appropriations. As Mr. Jacobs stated, "...these funds can be withdrawn from any Tribe whether state or federal." Further, one other issue of importance surrounding this legislation is the fact the Act could be amended at any time. Mr. Jacobs cautions everyone, "if

problems of state recognized Tribes become too time consuming to address, the Congress can quickly remove them from the Law and limit the funds to only federally recognized Tribes." This notion would suit many of those Tribes just fine as they did not want state Tribes included to start with.

Furthermore, neither LRDA nor the Tribal Council has addressed the possible problems existing Indian Housing Units could face, if the Tribe does not receive any housing monies. Currently there are 92 units in Cumberland County, 62 in Hoke County and 50 in Robeson County. The following statements were included in the letter from Mr. Jacobs regarding this matter. "If no plan is approved by HUD there will be no new funds available for upkeep of the existing housing units. The NC Indian Housing Authority has some funds in reserve, which could support their operation, but only for a short time frame." Either a private entity or a local housing authority would have to take over the operation of these Units.

In conclusion, there is a remedy to the current situation, and the end result would be the Lumbee Tribe receiving housing funds, as well as maintaining existing Units. The obvious solution is for both sides to come together and support one plan to be submitted to HUD with the administration to be managed by the NC State Indian Housing Authority. If the two groups cannot decide on one plan, then allow the NC State Indian Housing Authority to develop an independent plan to be reviewed by representation from both groups. However, there are those with other solutions. Tribal Council attorney, Arlinda Locklear, along with other tribal members, has made the statement they had rather the tribe not receive any housing monies than see it administered by LRDA. Others feel the loss of housing monies for the tribe may be the vehicle the tribe needs to bring closure to the entire conflict between the Tribal Council and LRDA. When one gives great thought to reality and what is at stake here, both sides of the controversy should get serious. Both sides should seriously consider compromising in order to accomplish what they purport they were elected to do: REPRESENT THE BEST INTEREST OF THE LUMBEE TRIBE.

Lastly, tribal members should strongly insist that each of their representatives on both sides, come together and work on a compromise. This is an important cause that all tribal members should rally behind. Not only those who need the services, but those of the business community who understand the huge economical significance of such sums of money being placed into the local economy. Tribal members of the business community such as Mr. Arnold Locklear, Chairman of the Lumbee bank, Mr. Larry Chavis, President of the Lumbee bank, along with all Lumbee board members, all Lumbee board members of First Union National Bank, as well as those of Progressive Savings and Loan, Mr. Dobbs Oxendine, Mr. Morris Oxendine, Mr. Ronald Hammonds, Mr. Charles Alton Maynor, owner and operator of Southern Interiors, Mr. Gurney Hunt, owner and operator of a large construction company, Mr. Redell Collins, Mr. Lonnie Locklear, owner of Native American Construction, Mr. Curt Locklear, owner and operator of Penbrooke Hardware, Mr. James "Big Boy" Thomas owner of Thomas Supply Company, and Mr. Earl Moore, owner of Moore's Cabinet Shop should certainly realize the importance of the

situation, and the prospective economical growth for the Lumbee Tribe. Tribal political figures such as, Paul Brooks, Chairman of the NC Commission of Indian Affairs, Mr. Jimmy Gouis, Mr. Tony Hunt, newly elected County Commissioner of Hoke County, Mr. Johnny Hunt, Chairman, Robeson County Board of Commissioners, Mr. Raymond Cummings and Mr. Noah Woods, both members of the Robeson County Board of Commissioners, Mr. Greg Cummings, Director of Economic Development for Robeson County, and Mr. Milton Hunt, Mayor of Pembroke, along with all members of the Pembroke Town Council should most definitely be concerned regarding the possible loss of such money coming into the county. The magnitude of the possible economical growth for the county and the Tribe is astronomical with such funds coming into the great State of Robeson. It is the leadership from persons like those named above that has helped the Tribe to experience the progress it does today. Again, the current situation with NAHASDA requires

Hand me the 'mote - Oprah's on!

Ranting and Raving



Garry Lewis Barton

A 'Peeping Tom' is a pathetic creature who invades folks' privacy by watching when they are most vulnerable - when their guard is down.

Most of us detest such behavior. But if the popularity of the daytime talk shows flooding the tv networks is any indication, far too many of us would tune in and be mesmerized as a 'Peeping Tom' told us about his dastardly deeds. And sexual pervers, and other dregs of society are regular guests on these shows.

Many guests are pitiful and pathetic excuses for human beings who would be more at home in a jail cell than in front of the cameras. Indeed, if one possesses a character flaw, he seems a prime candidate. To say the guests seem to be scraped from the bottom of society's blemished barrel would be putting it mildly.

And the most popular shows seem to feature the most wretched, vile and reprehensible folk imaginable. Apparently scum titlates.

A classic example was a show about daughters who are embarrassed by how their mothers dress. One of the mothers stands out in my mind. She looked like she might dress out somewhere in the neighborhood of 300 pounds. But it wasn't what she would dress out at that grabbed my attention. It was what she was dressed in, which was a skimpy, two-piece bikini that was 'busting' at the seams. Indeed, parts of that woman's body were hanging out she probably hadn't seen in years, and I wish I had never. It was about like putting eight pounds of taters in a five-pound sack.

Ofentimes wonder if the same criteria is used to choose hosts and guests. Practically all the hosts seem to think they are psychiatrists, sociologists, psychologists, or something. But they really are dangerous folk getting their kicks and big bucks for playing with other folks' minds, lives and emotions.

A classic example was the Jenny Jones Show that featured folk with secret admirers. One apparently straight man was shocked and embarrassed on national tv to discover his secret admirer was a gay man. In fact, he subsequently murdered the gay man.

Oprah Winfree has the most popular talk show. I'm sure she means well, but she blows my mind. If a guest is talking about being sexually abused as a child, for example, it seems you can actually see O' Oprah chomping at the bits, anxiously awaiting her turn to reveal to the world that she too was sexually abused as a child. Or, if the guest's daddy raped her, for example, Oprah will more times than not get all misty-eyed and claim her daddy did too. In fact, it doesn't seem to matter what the subject matter is, or who the guest is, Oprah always seems to have suffered a little bit worse. It's a wonder she isn't a walking, talking basket case. Indeed, it's a wonder she doesn't do a show about herself - well, actually I guess all of them are.

And Oprah's success seems to have infected a lot of the other hosts who seem willing to tell us whatever they think we might want to hear as long as we continue tuning in. They seem more concerned about the ratings of their show than how they rate as human beings or how their behavior might adversely affect others.

And Montel Williams (who hosts another popular show) seems to shed more tears on his show than the irritating Nicki does on the popular soap opera, 'The Young and the Ridiculous' - oops! I mean, 'Restless.'

I guess we are supposed to bond with ol' Montel and declare, "Bless his heart, he's such a caring and giving person." And I guess we'd be right. He probably does care. As long as the network continues to give him buckets full of money so he can cry all the way to the bank.

Let's face it, folk. These shows are twisted versions of televised tabloids, dishing out all the shocking filth, trash, vice and sex our sinful natures apparently crave. It's small wonder they are so popular. I guess you could say the shows exploit man's sinful nature.

The shows seem to spotlight and publicize and exploit failures and losers and oftentimes half-naked malcontents and misfits of society. And, sad to say, there seems to be an unlimited supply of guests and subject matter, although I must admit sometimes the producers seem a wee bit desperate to come up with something to titilate us with every day.

I once wondered where all these pathetic souls came from. Then it struck me like a bolt of lightning: I bet they used to have nothing better to do every day than to watch these pathetic shows. Then they were discovered and spotlighted wallowing in their own filth.

Indeed, it's enough to make one wonder if, perhaps, those of us watching and being titilated, including myself, don't need to get a life.

Hey, wait a minute. That sounds like an idea for one of the shows: "Folk who are hooked on daytime tv talk shows."

I wonder if I'd qualify to be a guest. Would you?
Nah! Surely not.
Well, I see by the ol' clock on the ways it's almost four.
Somebody hand me the 'mote. Oprah's on!
We'll talk again folk.

their leadership and expertise. Without it this matter may not be resolved.

There is a great need for all to understand. Lumbee as a Tribe is included in federal law for some services, which they have not had before. If the Tribe should lose these funds due to in house stupidity, it will be a sad day for all tribal members who deserve and need these funds for decent and affordable housing. It will also be a sad day for others who will allow the opportunity to see economical growth in the local Indian communities, the county and the state, pass us by.

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