

# The Destruction Of Lumbee People May Be At Hand

by Dr. Michael Brooks

If things continue on their present course, I predict that the historic Lumbee people will cease to exist. Our destruction as a people will not come from outside, it will be the result of circumstances that we, for the most part, have brought upon ourselves.

It is quite true that our people have been oppressed, taken advantage of, belittled, lied to, and exploited by the majority racial group that conquered this country following Columbus and other explorers from Europe. Untold and unimaginable atrocities have been perpetrated on our people, other Native Americans, and other minority racial groups by the dominant Caucasian peoples who made themselves at home here in the new world. Columbus and the subsequent Europeans that came to this land didn't really discover America, they invaded it. But even when these factors are fully accounted for and given full weight in the overall picture of our social, moral, and economic situation, it must be acknowledged that this is not our main, nor our most important, problem.

Our most acute problem is ourselves. Our community has been flooded with illegal, person-destroying drugs. Whether we consider illegal "street" drugs such as marijuana and cocaine or the illegal sale and use of prescription drugs such as oxycontin and xanax, the use of these substances is arguably our most pressing current social problem. It would be impossible to estimate the number of people in our community who use illegal drugs on a regular, even daily, basis. And it would defy any attempt to calculate the toll it has taken on productivity, wages, and community resources. But without question, the greatest loss to our community because of drugs is the destruction of the soul of our people. People's lives are being destroyed, their minds are being gutted, and they are left with only a shell and shadow of the person they were prior to being enslaved by this scourge we call drugs. The faces of our young people tell the sad story. Looking into their eyes is like looking into a deep empty well.

The saddest and most bitter aspect of this problem is that it is our own people who are responsible for bringing the bulk of these drugs into our community. It represents quick, easy money and apparently the drug business is extremely lucrative. Some of our people have made hundreds of thousands, and probably even millions, of dollars in this evil trade. They have hidden the money away in foreign bank accounts and safety deposit boxes. Or, what seems to be quite common, they are laundering it in otherwise legitimate businesses. With the new buildings and services they bring to the community, some of these businesses have the appearance of actually being good for the community. But when one considers that every dollar that is made from the sale of illegal drugs represents a young life that has been destroyed, or a family that has been torn apart, or the life of one of our people that has been snuffed out, it is easy to understand that all of the new businesses funded by drug money and all of the apparent enrichment of our community is really a tremendous loss and just another sham perpetrated on our people.

Those involved in this filthy enterprise aren't thinking about the betterment of our community anyway. Obviously, the only consideration they have is how to benefit themselves and make more money. The fact that they are destroying the Lumbee people as they do so does not concern them. All their talk about how they want to see our people improve their social status and see the Lumbee finally get some of the good things in life is just a ruse. We are being exploited again, only this time not by the white man but by fellow Lumbees. We are about to do to ourselves that which hundreds of years of oppression and prejudice could not do - destroy the Lumbee people.

If illegal drugs were our only problem, it would be bad enough but we have other serious problems that are nearly as threatening as the dope dealers.

We as a people are becoming more and more dependent upon the government for benefits. Instead of self-reliance, we have become reliant upon the federal and state government for aid in a multitude of ways. While it would be a reasonable thing for the government to do something for our people in light of the way we have been cheated out of our land and resources in the past, we cannot depend upon this as a means of support. There may be times when we need a helping hand to get through an especially difficult period but overall, we

would be better off to accept as little aid from the government as possible. The more money and benefits we accept from the government, the more we lose our very soul.

Let's not kid ourselves. If they give us money, they will end up calling the shots. But far worse than that, the more government aid we accept, the more our people will lose their motivation, initiative, drive, and imagination. This would be a high price to pay in exchange for a little more Medicaid or a few more food stamps. In the extreme, we would become a helpless invalid, sitting by the road like a beggar, waiting for Uncle Sam to throw us another quarter. We are a people of tremendous talent, vision, and strength. To imagine us reduced to the status of being dependent on the government for our daily bread is sad indeed.

I have no doubt that there are some who would like for us to be dependent on handouts and entitlements instead of working for and earning what we have. If the passion for life that is in us dies, we will become a non-people and easily manipulated by the majority group that is in power. This is exactly the situation that those who seek to dominate and exploit us want us to be in.

But there is an even more sinister factor in taking money and benefits from the government. There are those among us, our own people, who want to see a great deal of money given to our community because we are Native Americans. They want this money to be given to our community, not because they care about our people, but because they have plans to hijack most of the money into some secret bank account or otherwise shunt it away from those it is intended for and use it for themselves. I believe the proper word to describe it would be theft. Don't be misled, many of the people who so loudly say we need this federal money are already ordering their next big car, or boat, or funding their children's extravagant trust fund. There would be nothing wrong with these things if the money was theirs but it isn't, it should belong to the people. It is my guess that much of the money that has been given to our people in the form of grants or funds that were intended for aid have never reached them. And if the amount of money that other Native American communities have gotten (say from gambling casinos, etc.) is someday realized here in our community, my prediction is that much less than half of the money would ever see the light of day in Robeson County. A few dishonest people would get very rich while the vast majority of our community would still be waiting to see the first dollar from it.

There are other problems that we face as well. We haven't even touched on the subjects of the decline and near dissolution of our family structure, the unbelievable extent of immorality that is taking place, and the frightening rise in teen suicides. We have all but lost a respect for and belief in God and have replaced it with a thoroughly secular and hedonistic lifestyle accompanied by a pervasive loss of the sense of the sacredness of life and the practice of basic human dignities.

What is it that is going to be the undoing of our culture and destroy the Lumbee people? It will be a few of the same culprits that have been leveling cultures and civilizations for years - Greed, Selfishness, Anger, and Apathy.

In Part I, I tried to outline some of the most severe and pressing problems that our people are currently facing as I see it. In this final part of my article, things take on a dramatically improved tone because we will be dealing with the solution for the problems. Please be mindful that I am not writing these things as some disinterested bystander. I am one with you. These are my people that are being destroyed and my heart breaks because of what is happening. Some of these very problems have made inroads into the lives of my family and loved ones. I am saying these things because I weep and ache for what appears to be the certain destruction and loss of a higher and better way of life that our people once knew. I am afraid that way of life may be gone and gone forever if we do not immediately, certainly, and drastically change our present course. May God help us!

We often speak of the terrible ways our people have been treated in the past by the white people. However, if the tables had been turned and it would have been us on top with the power, we would have exploited and abused them the same way they did us. How do I know this? Because we are doing it to ourselves. If we will lie to, cheat, and undermine our neighbor and one of our own people, we certainly would have done the same to others if we had

the opportunity.

The fundamental problem is not race, or culture, or being privileged or disadvantaged. The real problem is not skin but sin! The problem is inside each and every one of us - it is a sinful heart. The solution

will not be found in social programs or grant money or retribution. The solution is repentance toward God and accepting His forgiveness. There is one God and one mediator between God and man - Jesus Christ, His Son.

Jesus isn't just the white man's God. He is the only God. The Bible says that every knee is going to bow to God, and that every tongue is going to confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. Notice, it said every knee. That's the black knee, the white knee, the red knee, the American knee, the European knee, the wounded knee - Every Knee.

God offers complete and full forgiveness for sin in the Person of His Son. Jesus paid the debt that sin had incurred by laying down His life at the cross. God says that if we will trust His Son as Savior and Lord, we will be forgiven and we will be restored to a right relationship with Him.

Those who die without Christ will stand before God and they will answer for every deed done during life. God is keeping a perfect record. No one is going to get away with anything. He knows exactly who has caused the suffering of our children. He knows every lie, every misdeed, every atrocity, every dope deal, and every cruelty that was ever done. Dear reader of this little tract, please know that God knows everything about you. You will meet Him one day. The only way to meet Him in peace is to be forgiven now in this life by receiving Christ as your Savior.

The Bible states that today is the day of salvation. God offers to every man, woman, and child full and free forgiveness of sins. Salvation is free not because it is cheap but because it is paid for. God can forgive even the vilest and worst of sinners because Christ took our guilt upon Himself and was our substitute when He was hanging on the cross.

The judgment and wrath of God against sin was poured out on Jesus Christ at Calvary. And there during those hours of darkness the amazing transaction took place. Jesus took our sins and made them His very own. When Jesus cried, "It is finished!" all that needed to be done to secure salvation for an entire world of offenders had been completed. Now, on the basis of the work that Christ finished on the cross, God offers complete and free redemption to all those who will receive it.

There is something that you must keep in mind, however, about this message. It is a limited time offer. You have only until you take your last breath on earth to respond. If you choose to reject the offer, you will meet Christ at the judgment bar of God. In that day, you will not know Him as a wonderful, forgiving Savior, but He will be an unimaginably Holy God and Judge. In the day that men and women stand before God to give an account of the things done during life, there won't be any plea bargains or payoffs. There won't be any deals or bribes. The only factors that will be considered in that day are truth and justice. If you hope to know the grace and mercy of God, you must do so today.

I have said some strong things about the condition of our people and our community because these things need to be said. It grieves my heart to see our people degraded and destroyed by drugs and immoral living. But it grieves the heart of God much more. He really loves you individually and He loves our people. He created the peoples of the earth and has a plan and purpose for each one of them. His plan for our people does not include drug addiction, crack houses, corruption of public officials, violence, or dependency on government handouts.

I want to ask all people of good will who are God-fearing and who know how to pray to ask God to help us stop these things that are destroying our people and change the downward course we are on. I believe that God can and will grant us a recovery if we repent, turn from our evil practices, and once again seek to follow His word. If we do not turn to God both as individuals and as a community, it is certain that even worse times will soon overtake us. If you wish to get in touch with me, you may do so at the following address:

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If you would like for us to visit your church, we would be very glad to speak on this matter and on other things from God's word.