

PODCAST 23 LUMBEE'S ROUT THE KLAN/ HISTORICAL MARKER

Welcome to 30 Brave Minutes, a podcast of the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of North Carolina at Pembroke. In 30 Brave Minutes we'll give you something interesting to think about. Joining Jeff Frederick, the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences and the Director of the Museum of the Southeast American Indian, Nancy Fields; Professor of History Dr. Jaime Martinez, and two students, Chris Hunt and Katie Sonnen, who worked with Professor Martinez to create an historical marker commemorating the Battle of Hayes Pond. Get ready for 30 Brave Minutes.

FREDERICK: For many, reminiscences about the 1950's harken to images of nuclear families, baby boomers entering post-World War II America at a record pace, a bustling economy converting from military to industrial and consumer product manufacturing, and idealized small towns where doors need not be locked, local schools featured saddle-shoe wearing young girls and letterman's sweater wearing young men, and all was right and safe and sensible. For much of the South, however, many experienced a much different mid-century.

In the late 1940's both major league baseball and the armed forces were integrated, beginning any number of transition points placing America's cultural institutions on a pathway to reflecting the equality promised so long ago in Thomas Jefferson's *Declaration of Independence*. In 1954 and then again in 1955, the Supreme Court in two separate *Brown v. Board of Education* decisions, struck down segregation in schools and asked the states to rectify the matter with "all deliberate speed." Over the next couple of years, the nation watched the Montgomery Bus Boycott, the integration of Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas, and the simultaneous development and engagement of many local, state, and national organizations

dedicated to redeeming and fulfilling the promise of the 14th Amendment: citizenship, due process, and equal protection for all.

For all the unleashing of protest movements including students, women, and people of color, including American Indians, African-Americans, and Hispanic farm workers, among others, not everyone else was energized by the hope of change. Plenty were energized by other hopes as well. Across the South, Citizens Councils—organizations dedicated to the perpetuation of segregation and the furtherance of white supremacy—popped up and grew in number and in reach. One hundred and one congressmen and senators from the South signed a document known as the Southern Manifesto, decrying the court’s anti-segregation decisions. “This unwarranted exercise of power by the Court,” the text of the document reads, “contrary to the Constitution, is creating chaos and confusion in the States principally affected. It is destroying the amicable relations between the white and Negro races that have been created through 90 years of patient effort by the good people of both races. Despite the language, obviously, relations between all of the races and ethnicities in the South had been anything but amicable, and efforts to ensure equality were no longer going to be patient. While the citizen’s councils and the elected politicians mostly stayed within the legal system that they had created to defend segregation, other groups, namely the Ku Klux Klan, did not. The Klan was not a new organization—it was founded immediately after the Civil War, revived in an era around the 1920’s, and then surged again in the midst of the Civil Rights Movements. In the Border Belt area of the Carolinas, James “Catfish” Cole, a veteran and a traveling preacher, was a key figure in Klan activity which he directed against blacks and Indian groups. Cole denigrated Native-Americans and in particular Lumbees with hateful language, threats, cross-burnings, and convoys of Klansmen traveling backcountry roads. He recruited and organized Klansmen

with word-of-mouth, mail campaigns, handbills, and public events, including a call for a rally in Maxton at Hayes Pond, to be held January 18, 1958.

What Cole, his wife, and his Klan associates found at Hayes Pond was something they didn't expect and never over came. After being routed at the Battle of Hayes Pond by Lumbee Indians, Cole was publicly humiliated and twelve days later, Governor Luther Hodges denounced the Klan actions as "an assault on peace and good order, and a slur on the name of our State." The governor thanked the "citizens of Robeson County," though he did not refer to the Lumbee Indians by name, though anyone who read Life Magazine soon knew the rest of the story. A year later, Cole was in prison; a decade later he was dead.

Our topic for today: the Battle of Hayes Pond and the great work by UNC Pembroke faculty, staff, and students to remember and memorialize the event. Joining me today are Professor Jaime Martinez, Nancy Fields the Director of the Museum of the Southeast American Indian, and two students who worked on a project to create a historical marker commemorating the Battle of Hayes Pond, Chris Hunt and Katie Sonnen. Welcome everybody!

ALL: Thank you.

FREDERICK: Lumbee people faced a number of challenges living in a tri-racial community in the segregated South. Talk about the economic and political realities that Lumbee Indians faced in 1958.

FIELDS: Economically we had to follow the color lines of Jim Crow, which meant that you could not shop in certain stores. You could not eat in certain places or restaurants. You weren't allowed to navigate the streets in certain ways and so that disadvantage also fell in terms of, to a certain degree, owning a business or

thriving in certain markets. Lumbee people were very savvy, particularly in Pembroke, North Carolina, creating their own town that provided every essential need that a person would require. There was a saying that started, even in the 1900s and Pembroke became more and more native, well into the 1960s, "Anything that you need, you can get in Pembroke." As Melinda Maynor Lowry writes in her book *Lumbee Indians in the Jim Crow South*, there were some ways in which Lumbee people created an economy of their own. Lumbee people, essentially, and other native people that were around were the clients and the shoppers for those businesses. But outside of that area it was dangerous. It was almost impossible and in it was terrifying, so everything had this part of fear surrounding shopping, or being a patron of a certain business. Those are the tenants of Jim Crow. Those are the realities of those color lines, but then you also have the other side of the agricultural economic factor, where native people in this region were profound farmers. There was a thriving share-cropping industry, and by virtue of being a tri-racial community, all of the economy - white business needed native people for tobacco and cotton and those types of things. It was a very unique situation in terms of what this part of the south looked like and it was a little bit different perhaps than other parts, but not insular and a complete anomaly because you see this in Mississippi, with the Choctaws; you see it in Louisiana with the Huma, and other tribes like that. It is just an under-represented and almost untold story.

SONNEN: I wanted to also point out that I think one of the main reasons why the Lumbee community became so thriving for that time was because it was also a way for them to preserve their culture and to educate their children with their culture. With the very large share-cropping industry around here at the time, also

American Indians still weren't allowed in the University of North Carolina system, so that is why we had the school of Pembroke.

FREDERICK: In the midst of multiple realities here in an agricultural part of the Deep South, you have a clear segregation line requiring obedience enforced not only through the law, but through extra-legal intimidation. The Lumbee Indians, as well as other minority groups are dealing with that, while at the same time carving out their own agency and holding on to their own culture, making sure that they are pulling together economically, socially, tribally, and culturally.

MARTINEZ: One of the things that I heard from people was that there was some discussion of yes, everything you needed was here in Pembroke and you could go to Indian-run businesses and be with other American Indians, but if you wanted to go to Lumberton and go to a movie theatre, the movie theatre had a two-way segregation system and so American Indians had to sit in the section that African-Americans also sat in. That was dis-serving to Lumbee people because so often they were dismissed as being half-black, as not being real Indians, and in the context, as well, of the federal government denying them full recognition, to have a local economic structure that sometimes denied their Indian-ness, was also troubling to them.

FREDERICK: So the prevailing segregated culture was literally pitting different people of color against each other and African Americans and Native Americans end up almost competing for themselves to get to second-class status and avoid third-class status in a situation where economic and political power was still predominately held by whites. Within all of this culture that is being held on to, the role of military service has a long-standing tradition for Lumbee Indians. And I

think it is a part of the nice context of what happened at Hayes Pond. Why is the importance of military service so woven into Lumbee culture?

HUNT: I would have to say that would take us back to the Lumbee people participating in the Indian War, the War of 1812. All they know is to fight and protect what is theirs. So, when they heard that the KKK were coming into their land, I feel like that's all they knew was to fight and protect what was theirs near home.

MARTINEZ: I also had the experience with a different class doing a project where they look at some photographs by the university photographer in the 1940s, 50s, 60s, and 70s, and the recurring use of the American flag, of various southern denominations and Indian motifs, and at first Pan-Indian, but then deliberate southeastern Indians. Things like the Lumbee parades, the Little Miss Lumbee contest, and things like that, that really point to this emphasis on their identity being American Indian, Southern, and American. All of those things fitting together. It certainly fits within a broader pattern of defending your country, defending your community, defending your state, and all of those things wrapped into one, that we see being more prevalent among southerners often throughout this country's history. I think that is part of Lumbee people's identity as southerners, as well.

FREDERICK: I totally agree. I also think there is a really interesting context because less than two years before what happens at Hayes Pond, the federal government produces the Lumbee Act, which essentially identifies Lumbee Indians as a separate and sovereign group, yet fails to provide the kinds of benefits and status that would be there. So for all of the military service historically noted

as Chris suggested, Lumbee Indians didn't necessarily get the same return of thanks and appreciation from the Federal government.

SONNEN: To comment on the military aspect, I think another big factor of it is our geographical location. We do have Fort Bragg really close by and there is a link on the UNCP page that has a wonderful oral history of Lumbee Indian veterans and a couple of them were paratroopers out of the 82nd. It is a part of their home.

FREDERICK: So let's build on that sense of home and that sense of service and pulling together in self-defense, as Chris noted, and standing up for what is yours. Take us back on into that January night in 1958. What is happening? How does word of the Klan rally circulate among different groups of Indians in west Robeson County? Take our listeners right into the event of how they are rallying up and descending on this group of Klan activities.

FIELDS: So at the museum we have recently been interviewing folks that participated that evening, and it has been fascinating as you mentioned in your introduction how well James "Catfish" Cole advertised. He and the Klan were extremely organized and they marketed very well and so they passed out the flyers and he was on the radio. I've also heard that there was a car that went up and down the main streets of Pembroke with a loud-speaker announcing when the rally would be happening and so, I'm sure he was trying to recruit white participants to come to the rally, and it was also a warning and a scare tactic. In doing these things there was a sensational event or series of events that had happened just across the line in South Carolina that had also served as a warning. Saying okay, we're going to hold a rally. Just know the Klan is present in the community. We are garnering support through white participants, but be on the lookout because fire and fury is

coming. That was not remiss on Lumbee people and so our response was to go out and secure every bullet and shell that was available in Robeson County and everybody armed up. From what I understand, (they were) organized, but organized in a way of word of mouth, word on the street was "let's come to this rally. We are going to stop this rally from happening." The fear was that their house would be burned. Ms. Bertie Locklear told a wonderful story about what was happening in South Carolina, where people's houses were being burned. She and her husband had recently acquired their home and they said, "Our house is not going to be burned. They are not going to take our house. They are not going to take our family's homes. They are not going to destroy our way of life." Everyone that we have talked to has said they went to Hayes Pond knowing they could lose their life. They were willing to fight for what was theirs and they understood the risk that was there but there was just so much energy surrounding going down to Hayes Pond and of course by the time they all were there, that energy was just at a height. So I think that when Catfish Cole took the stage, and before he even got to utter a word, someone shot out the light, and a very visceral fight happened and it was shock and awe because the Klan was not expecting a response in that way. I'll let other folks jump in, but that was kind of the energy that built up to it.

HUNT: Some other aspects that happened a couple of days prior to the event were crosses were burned in front of American Indian houses of women who were dating white men. One of Catfish Cole's biggest reasons for this was race-mixing and how he was so against race-mixing and how it is going to destroy the south. When he got caught by surprise by the thousand Lumbee and other surrounding American Indians that showed up, he abandoned his wife. He left her and took off, trying to save his own self.

FREDERICK: You know I think he seemed to particularly animated by a particular couple in St. Pauls, who sort of drove the fury to get this raid or rally going. That sort of continued to build. The context of the late 1950s is those mores and cultural things are beginning to change and those people who are really opposed to the change are thinking the traditional ways of preventing that will work. That sort of puts him into his thought process, but I'm really interested by the local response that "my house will not be taken from me," and "my land and my culture may not be taken from me. I may not be able to change all of the other forces and factors that are here, but on these matters, we will organize and we will work."

MARTINEZ: That is something that we heard over and over from people. They weren't making a big political statement. They were just standing up for themselves and their families and were kind of surprised afterwards that everyone took notice around the country. It became a thing and it became the "Battle of Hayes Pond" and "the night the Klan died in North Carolina." That was not necessarily their intent. After-the-fact media interest surprised a lot of people.

FIELDS: That was generational. This was one episode in many episodes of racial tension even going back to the 1800s. Look at the Lowry Wars. Look at the disenfranchisement of people of color in the 1830s. This was ingrained in us. You stand up and fight for what is yours. You stand up and fight for your life and your people. It is what you have to do because what do you have to lose if you don't?

HUNT: I would also add there, Nancy, that takes us back to just standing up for what we stand for. I think the Klan wasn't expecting the Native Americans that were there that night to fight back. It surprised them.

FREDERICK: Yes, I think the organization and the collective unity among the Lumbee Indians who descended that night on Hayes Pond was vastly superior to the level of organization and unity among the Klansmen. We sometimes carry on the sense that the Klan is marching in lockstep and they all know what they are doing and it is all the superiority of the organizational effort of the Lumbee Indians, really, that caused the reaction that Katie mentioned in terms of the people just saying, "We've got to get out of here!" It is also true that in the middle of the country in 1958, when you turn out the one lightbulb that is there, and not all of the headlights of the vehicles are going, it is dark. The level of uncertainty about what is happening? Who all is out there? Is it hundreds? Is it thousands? Who all is here? It sort of revealed the fact that maybe the Klansmen had a sense of what they believed in, but when push came to shove, they weren't necessarily going to stay there to defend what they purportedly believed in. Certainly not the same way that the Lumbees were there to defend to the last ounce what they believed in. So we know the reaction here. The Klan is routed, and they are driven out. We know that soon Cole will be investigated and that other incidences around southeast North Carolina that didn't go as well as he planned. The larger story here is that self-defense is an absolutely critical part of the civil right story, and we have a good example of it. Focusing on the Lumbees here, the next 50 years are not all magical. There are plenty of hard challenges and difficulties. How do local folk internalize the great success of standing up for themselves at Hayes Pond to help them get through some of the rough times that come in 70s, 80s, 90s, and beyond.

FIELDS: One example of a person who speaks to that is Lacy Maynor. Not a lot of folks talk about Lacey Maynor and his role in bringing justice, if you will, to the aftermath of the event and Catfish Cole. Lacey Maynor was a barber. He was an active community member. He was actually part of the group that went up and

rallied for federal recognition just a couple of years prior and like most Lumbee people, had a huge sense of purpose and justice and all of those things. He was also the magistrate in Pembroke and by virtue of being the magistrate he was the judge that tried Catfish Cole for acts of domestic terrorism. I'd like to talk about not only did they get a swift kick of justice at Hayes Pond, but there was a second round that came from a native judge who sentenced him to I think it was a year or two in the state jail. He didn't have enough weight in the court system, so it was a suspended or dismissed sentence. But he had to sit in the courtroom in front of an Indian judge who tried him on acts of domestic terrorism against Indian people in I think this happened in later 1958. That is tremendous. It is those types of actions that native people created these unique roles, finding these unique loopholes to bring justice and equality and opportunity. UNCP is a perfect example of that in those subsequent 50 years moving forward and it is that kind of savvy, I think, attitude, or can do attitude towards living in life, I think, in this continuation of this journey that we are on that really has given us the tools and the skills to address situations as they arise.

FREDERICK: I think this goes to the ongoing story of how different groups, particularly in this part of the state. Lumbees worked outside of the system to protect their rights and their culture and their preferences, but also worked within the system, where it could be. You mentioned the word savvy. There is this really interesting story, this strategic and operational story of different groups, how they are protecting their interests from both inside and outside of the system.

SONNEN: One think I would like to say is Lumbee people are very prideful people. As they should be. They fought very hard to be where they are today, and as I stated earlier, the UNC system didn't let American Indians into any of their schools, and that is why we had the school of Pembroke. Now Pembroke is one of

the UNC schools. It is just a matter of well if you put me down, I am going to come right back up.

GAY: We'll return to our program in just a moment. UNCP and the College of Arts and Sciences are changing lives through education. To learn more about our sixteen departments, college highlights and news, explore our website. You can also support our department programs by clicking on the donate button. Additional news and events may be found by following us on Facebook at UNCP College of Arts and Sciences. Now, you can subscribe to Thirty Brave Minutes on Podbean and iTunes. Remember, wherever you hope to go, whatever you plan to do, you can get there from here.

FREDERICK: Jaime, when did you get the idea to work toward a historical marker? What were the steps? How did you weave that into some of the classes you are working on?

MARTINEZ: Well, it came from a couple of different places. One is, the very first time I did an introduction to public history class here at UNCP, I gave students as a final exam project the assignment that they should either propose a new marker or monument or propose revisions to an existing marker or monument and they could pick something that they felt was an under-represented event or an under-represented population. We actually brought in a number of different faculty, including you, Jeff, and some other members of the community, including Alesha, who works at the museum, to evaluate. I kind of gave them an imaginary budget and said tell me who in this group deserves funding for their project. I will take that into consideration when I am grading them. One of the students did, in fact, propose the state historic marker for the Battle of Hayes Pond. The question that came up in response to his proposal was does this meet the criteria for a state

historic marker, because the primary criteria is that the event or person or place being commemorated has to have significance to the entire state of North Carolina, and not just one region or community. We realized that was going to be the challenge, in part because of how the local community had always framed what had happened here as being this moment of great importance to us, but it was really about us standing up for ourselves and not about a bigger project anywhere. So, on some level it was easier for me as a professional historian, but an outsider, and for a group of students, some of whom were Lumbee, some of whom were not to take the big picture view and say, "how do we connect this into strains of other events and other movements going on in the state of North Carolina?" as opposed to having it be something being so engrained in us as being part of our community that we couldn't look at it from an outside perspective. The idea was already percolating in my head a little bit, and then, when I was invited to actually serve on the state historic marker board, which is a group of ten historians from around the state. If you are a faculty member around the state of North Carolina and your work intersects with North Carolina in any way, you are probably going to be asked to be on it at some point. When I was asked to be on the board, the administrator who runs the program, Ansley Wagner, said, "I've been questioning and putting out feelers for a while to see if someone will do the proposal for a Hayes Pond marker. I think because you know how historians think, you'll be able to put together a good proposal." I thought that I didn't want it to just be me. It would be much more interesting if we could turn it into a class project. And so, that is what we did.

FREDERICK: What did you guys do, once the work started, in terms of working towards this goal? How did you and your peers attack this?

SONNEN: The class was separated between graduate and undergraduate students. I was on the graduate portion and Chris was on the undergrad portion. We had different tasks throughout the entire semester. Gathering primary sources, secondary sources, doing the research, going out to Hayes Pond, looking at the area, figuring out where we wanted to put the sign, how do we want to word it, specific numbering for how many letters. It was just very overwhelming at first, especially when we were getting into the idea of public history, oral history, and learning these new types and ways of researching history. Oral history, for me, was probably the hardest to really address in the situation, because you have memories that you are working off of, and public participation, which can sometimes be very hard for us. We had a night at the museum, when we invited the public to come in and talk to us and look at our proposal. We had a little participation, but not as much as we wanted. You really get to see how hard it is to get your community involved even though it is something that is talked about from generation to generation. It was definitely a new perspective in becoming an historian.

FREDERICK: What were you seeing Chris?

HUNT: As Katie said, it was very overwhelming at first. I was like, "I don't want to talk to the people." I'm from the community. I knew a little bit about what actually happened. I have an uncle who was actually there that night. So I talked to him and tried to get information. I wanted to go in and I felt like everyone in the class would be like, "Well, you're from here, you should know what is going on." But we also stepped outside that, once we started gathering information. It wasn't just about what happened here. We actually had to go back to the civil rights movement of what happened in other places. I remember one of my assignments was to read what happened at the Chapel Hill campus. We also read about what happened at the Greensboro campus. So, it wasn't just about the Lumbee, but

trying to find the state significance. We had to go outside the community to other parts of the state to really find out what was going on.

FREDERICK: Jaime, how did you get them to agree on a sentence or two in such a limited amount of space?

MARTINEZ: It was a challenge and we spent a lot of time working as a group. Honestly, it was one of the most fun classes I've ever taught because so much of the time I didn't have to do anything. I would just give them a set of questions and everyone - sometimes it was grad students working on it or sometimes undergrads, sometimes I mixed up the groups, sometimes it was one-to-one - and they would have to take their argument, based on what they saw in the material, and hear what everyone else had to say and then put them all together. We did this three or four times over the semester in order to get down to, "what is the key point that we want to put on the sign?" The signs are so brief. They really are just a very quick description. We came up with what we wanted and then, as the process evolved... At the time we put in the proposal, but then as the proposal was being approved and the marker was being prepared, we got more input from the Lumbee tribe that we were sort of delayed a little bit in that process. We got their input and that shifted what the wording was and that shifted some of the final decisions. It was great that we were able to bring everyone together and come up with an answer that everyone was happy with. In addition to what is on the sign, we had to write a four or five paragraph essay that would go on the website. In that, also, they (the students) had to take a semesters worth of work and boil it down to four or five paragraphs, which is hugely difficult. That is key part of public history. Someone is walking through a museum, or looking at an exhibit, or looking at a website. A lot of people are going to read the first sentence and then move on. If you are lucky they might read a whole paragraph, so you somehow have to take the thirty books

you've read and boil it down to one paragraph. That is not an easy task, but I was really impressed with how well this group of students did that. They were good at listening to all of the voices in the room. There were some people who were much more forceful and much more committed to their position, but those people also took the time to listen to what other people had to say. That ultimately created a project that was really the product of consensus.

FREDERICK: A masterful work by you. All historians, at whatever level, we tend to be - breaking news - a little wordy anyway, and wanting all of the details and all of the context in there. What did the final statement on the sign say?

MARTINEZ: The title is "The Battle of Hayes Pond." That is in quotation marks because military historians would say this doesn't actually qualify as a battle, but that is what the event is locally known as. The text says, The Lumbee and other American Indians ousted the Ku Klux Klan from Maxton January 18, 1958 at rally one-half mile west. So it is very much a description of what happened. If you want the context you have to go to the website, but that is the case with every North Carolina state historic highway marker. They are all very brief. They are designed to be read while driving.

FREDERICK: The sign includes some interesting context in the sense that Indian tribes could be divided against each other on one or more issues. So it is an interesting phenomenon that there is this unity of purpose. How do you all hope that this marker and this additional text on the website will be used by groups, local, non-local, Indian, non-Indian? How do you hope people will take advantage of what you have built here?

SONNEN: I, being a first year 7th grade history teacher, definitely would like it to be taught in our school classrooms, not just inside Robeson County, but outside of Robeson County, as well, because it teaches our children "This is actually what happened in North Carolina where you live. It shows a sense of pride and it should teach equality.

MARTINEZ: I know that they would want me to mention this. Katie, it is something that you might not be aware of, but one of the things the North Carolina Historical Marker program does is, if you go to their website, is they have some activities that you can do with students at different levels in your classrooms. If you are in a different state you can certainly apply it to the markers that exist in your state, too.

HUNT: Also to add to that, you can tie that into, again, the civil rights movement. This happened here, just like they teach what happened in Chapel Hill, Greensboro, and different parts of our state and different states.

SONNEN: I want it to teach our kids that segregation and civil rights wasn't just a binary separation of people. There were other minorities and other cultures that were being affected by the civil rights movement and Jim Crow.

FREDERICK: The marker is a wonderful addition to the good work that is being done by the museum, by the tribe, by our students, and by our historians to make sure that this history and the force of it, as well as the memory continues to echo down the generations. Thank you all for a fascinating discussion on the Battle of Hayes Pond. We also thank our listeners and hope you will tune in next time for an edition of 30 Brave Minutes.

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