

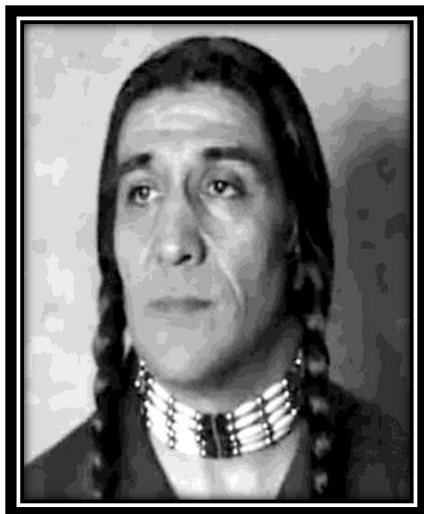
PROFILE OF RESISTANCE

LEHMAN BRIGHTMAN

professor, athlete, soldier

"...Just to raise a little goddamn hell. And I raised a hell of a lot of hell."

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Background Information

Born April 28th, 1930; Died June 18th, 2017

Lehman Brightman was a Sioux tribe member born on a reservation in South Dakota. Brightman played football as a running back at Oklahoma State University and earned a master's degree at UC Berkley. He taught history at Contra Costa College for decades. He served in the US Marine Corps during the Korean War and earned a Purple Heart for his braveryⁱ.

Lehman's Resistance

Brightman founded the United Native Americans (UNA) organization in 1974 to promote the general welfare of Native Americans. He testified at U.S. Senate hearings on the poor living conditions at Native American boarding schools and hospitalsⁱⁱ. He also established the first Native American studies program at UC Berkley to focus on Native American history and political influence. Brightman participated in several protests, including the occupation of Alcatraz Island (1973) and the protests at Wounded Knee (1973) and Mt. Rushmore (1970).

Brightman often faced the possibility of going to prison for his protest efforts. He invited other wanted activists, like Dennis Banks, into his home to delay his arrest for his activismⁱⁱⁱ. Lehman's activism was part of the larger Native Rights movement during the Civil Rights era of the 1960s and 1970s. The goal of the Native Rights Movement was to achieve the civil rights of Native Americans to fight against dispossession, racism, poverty, and violence, protecting the treaty rights of Native lands and recognizing Native tribes as full citizens. Solidarity between African Americans and Native Americans grew with the Black Power movement of the 1970s^{iv}. The coalition they built climaxed with the Longest Walk, a 3,600-mile protest march from San Francisco to Washington D.C. in 1978.

Achievements

Brightman was a key figure in the Native Rights Movement. He helped to spread awareness about challenges in Native American communities, and he educated the youth about the erasure of Native American identity in the United States.

Essential Questions

1. Lehman Brightman engaged in several protests and marches as an activist. What are other ways you can raise awareness about a social issue?

2. Lehman once hid Dennis Banks, an American Indian activist who was a fugitive, in his house, which is against the law. Should he have hid him or turned him over to the police? Why?

3. The Native Rights Movement worked alongside Black Power Movement. What are the benefits of working as a coalition with other groups? What are the risks?

4. ***“...Just to raise a little goddamn hell. And I raised a hell of a lot of hell.”***
 - a. This quote is in reference to Brighton’s decision to open the United Native Americans (UNA)^v organization in 1968. What ways can you “raise a little goddamn hell” for in the pursuit of social justice?

i Post, Oakland. “Former Native American CCC Professor, Lehman L. Brightman, Activist Dies.” Post News Group. 23 June 2017. Retrieved from <https://postnewsgroup.com/2017/06/23/former-ccc-professor-native-american-activist-dies/>. Accessed 29 October 2019.

ii “Civil Rights, Sovereign Rights.” Indivisible: African-Native American Lives in the Americas. Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian, 2019. Retrieved from https://americanindian.si.edu/exhibitions/indivisible/civil_rights.html. Accessed 29 October 2019.

iii “Obituary for Lehman Brightman.” Hunn, Black & Merritt Funeral Home. 2017. Retrieved from <https://www.hbmfuneralhome.com/obituaries/Lehman-Brightman-2/#!/Obituary>. Accessed 29 October 2019.

iv Amparo, Roxana. “Professor Remembered.” The Advocate, 2017. Retrieved from <https://cccadvocate.com/7205/news/professor-remembered/>. Accessed 29 October 2019.

v <https://globalvoices.org/2017/06/23/remembering-native-american-civil-rights-pioneer-lehman-brightman/>