



# Pan-Tribal Confederacy of Indigenous Tribal Nations

The Only Multi-Racial Worldwide Indigenous Confederacy In Existence

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## BATWA People of Uganda - and the repercussions of reckless conservation

*Wednesday, May 20, 2009*

"The world has either failed to understand or the world is not informed about our suffering". That is a direct quote from my Batwa brother from Uganda, we met in Alaska at the first Global Indigenous Conference on Climate Change that we attended, I had heard him speak passionately about his people, and later invited him to join the Pan-Tribal Confederacy - which he accepted.

The Batwa were forcibly removed from their traditional lands in the forests of Uganda in 1991 by the then government of Uganda, all in the name of foreign conceptualised 'National parks for the Gorillas'; so the Gorillas were protected and the Batwa were evicted. The Government had no contingency plan for the Batwa, they had to find a way to survive in an alien urban environment, fighting for crumbs as the landless and the homeless.

Before their world was destroyed the Batwa were hunter-gatherers, and they used to depend on the forest for survival - including medicinal herbs. since the eviction the Batwa have become beggars, scattered and marginalised, frequently discriminated against, they cannot socially interact with others. Health care is often denied to them, education is limited to non-existent, and the Batwa rarely get an honest wage for their labour in comparison to other Ugandans.

Deplorable housing, poor sanitation, low self-confidence, no representation in Ugandan society, insufficient food, and no rights in any areas including Judicially. It is no wonder then that the few Batwa Children who DO become enrolled in school drop out at an early age due to all the above mitigating factors, and Batwa girls tend to get married at an unnecessarily young age; generally at the onset of puberty in many instances. Lack of clothing also contributes to the discrimination they face in the urban context. To make matters worse - due to their severe poverty non-Batwa peoples use this state of desperation to employ Batwa workers and pay them less than anyone else; or simply give them a little food for their hard work. It has reached the sad state today - that Batwa have resorted to dancing and begging in the cities and towns to be able to obtain sustenance.

Perhaps, the members of the esteemed boards of directors of the many noble conservation organisations of the world - should give a thought to the human tragedies that may result from their well intentioned, but clearly inadequately enacted (in this case) projects in areas with indigenous populations. Alas, it is too late to erase the grief the Batwa have endured in the haste to protect the Gorillas at all costs, we can only hope now that his Excellency President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, will use his tremendous power and influence, to right this terrible wrong inflicted on the Batwa, and show the world that the new progressive government of Uganda under his able leadership - is fully compliant with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and the International Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination; and CAN give hope, dignity and justice back to the Indigenous Batwa People of Uganda.

*Damon Gerard Corrie*

*President of the Pan-Tribal Confederacy of Indigenous Tribal Nations*

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*e-mail [damoncorrie@yahoo.com](mailto:damoncorrie@yahoo.com)*