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ROY S. JOHNSON

A  SPORTS BLOG

[Roy S. Johnson Blog](#)

Fri Dec 11, 2009 10:22 am EST

[Some Sioux want to save their mascot, but Native American nicknames still should be banned](#)

By [Roy S. Johnson](#)



They're almost gone, those insipid, demeaning Native American caricatures permeating sports.

In 2005, the NCAA told 18 colleges (two others were later added) they might be prevented from wearing their colors and displaying their logo at NCAA championship events if they did not eliminate offending logos and mascots. (Unfortunately, pro sports commissioners have not shown the guts to demand that owners such as Dan Snyder of the [Washington Redskins](#) or Paul Dolan of the Cleveland Indians shed franchise nicknames stuck in another era.)

One tribe is actually fighting to *save* its portrayal as the mascot of the University of North Dakota. The New York Times recently chronicled the efforts of members of a Sioux tribe in the state which [sued to prevent UND from dropping the name](#).

Why? Because it made them feel proud.

"I am full blood and I grew up on this reservation," one 57-year-old Sioux was quoted as saying. "I have to tell you: I am very, very honored that they would use the name."

On Wednesday, a North Dakota district-court judge heard both sides in the dispute and said he would rule before Christmas.

Any merits or unique passions the Sioux might offer in their argument still do not justify the Neanderthal use of Native American names or likenesses as sports nicknames or mascots — use that "celebrates" entire nations with tired stereotypes. That won't change even if the Sioux gain a victory their case.

The Fighting Sioux of UND may be portrayed in a manner the suing Sioux deem to be uplifting. But every time I see a tomahawk chop or hear a stadium roar in a faux-Indian chant or see someone ride out on the field dressed in an Native American-inspired outfit while donning "war paint," my stomach turns a bit.

For all the progress we've made in this nation, such trivial displays once again remind me that perhaps we haven't come very far at all.

I attended a school that years ago called itself the Indians. Yes, everyone associated with Stanford at that time was "proud" of the mascot and imagery. But saner minds prevailed long ago and now we're a color: the Cardinal. Not the bird, for those who didn't know (and may have wondered now that a Cardinal, Toby Gerhart, is a Heisman finalist), but the color. (Our mascot is a tree, not a crayon.)

But we're just as proud, and we cheer just as loudly, as previous generations did for the Indians.

The world did not stop spinning on its axis when the school changed its nickname. Nor will it when some of the universities and franchises which so staunchly hold on to their "tradition" abandon the insulting imagery.

Right now, we're raising another generation that believes it's OK to use a tomahawk chop as a rallying gesture, instead of teaching them of the truly proud people who were here before any of us and who deserve to be better remembered and celebrated.

Photo courtesy University of North Dakota

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1. *1. Posted by [kswann2007](#) Fri Dec 11, 2009 11:16 am EST*

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this whole issue is stupid



2. *2. Posted by [aaroniscool](#) Fri Dec 11, 2009 11:18 am EST*

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HA! HA! That's a good one.



3. *3. Posted by [MIND](#) Fri Dec 11, 2009 11:19 am EST*

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sigh



4. *4. Posted by [William M](#) Fri Dec 11, 2009 11:23 am EST*

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PCness run amok. I demand the Packers, Patriots, Red Raiders, Pirates, et al all change their names too. What a bone head.



5. *5. Posted by [ryan p](#) Fri Dec 11, 2009 11:23 am EST*

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The world won't stop turning if they don't change their names either. It's a good thing that there's nothing really wrong with the world and we can focus our outrage here, where it's deserved.



6. *6. Posted by [Steve M](#) Fri Dec 11, 2009 11:23 am EST*

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far more important things in this world to worry about. we have it too good here if this stuff is an issue.



7. *7. Posted by [Timothy E](#) Fri Dec 11, 2009 11:24 am EST*

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Essentially you're saying that you know what's best for these people and they don't. If the Sioux want to keep their name on the UND team, then we have no business interfering. We have no right to be offended for people who aren't themselves offended. And yes I realize many Native Americans are against the practice. So it should certainly be addressed instance by instance. In the case of UND, they should do what the Sioux themselves want and keep the name.



8. *8. Posted by [Greg B](#) Fri Dec 11, 2009 11:24 am EST*

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I'm going on the assumption that you are in no way Native American. Why do you care so much? This issue is stupid. Most of the Native Americans are fine with this, and its just stupid white people that are fighting this "atrocitiy". If they are fine with it, why shouldn't you be? Shut up Now the Washington Redskins, however, is a different matter since the name is considered a slur. They should, in fact, at least change the name, if not the mascot altogether.



9. *9. Posted by [Jonathan](#) Fri Dec 11, 2009 11:25 am EST*

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Geez, learn how to construct a logical argument.

A series of emotional assertions doesn't count. Especially when none of your assertions have any supporting arguments--at least none that are found in this article.

10. 

10. Posted by [Ryan H](#) Fri Dec 11, 2009 11:25 am EST

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yes it is kswann. I can see how a stupid mascot running around acting like a native american would be offensive, I understand that completely. But a nickname? Nicknames are given out of respect and something they see as intimidating, and like the guy said in the article, it gives them pride. Unless of course you get a dumb mascot or whatever. Just do what the Utah Utes do, have your nickname be a native american, get an ugly bird mascot that can act stupid on the field. Problem solved

11. 

11. Posted by [Rick G](#) Fri Dec 11, 2009 11:27 am EST

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PC crap. There is nothing wrong with the use of these mascots. But if removing will shut with PC idiots like RSJ, then perhaps they should go.

12. 

12. Posted by [MJ](#) Fri Dec 11, 2009 11:28 am EST

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Teams that carry the Native American nicknames do it out of respect. If anyone thinks differently than your ignorant.

13. 

13. Posted by [P T](#) Fri Dec 11, 2009 11:29 am EST

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Another white guy trying to take up for people who don't need or even want his support...I agree stupid. I am glad the tribe is fighting to keep the name in North Dakota. The portrayals are not meant to be demeaning...if anything they are meant to honor the Native American people of this country. Come to think of it, I don't really like the Patriot used on New England's helmets...hmmm, maybe I should sue them because I am a citizen of this country and it offends me. Next comes the Animal rights groups fighting to eliminate such demeaning names as the Cardinals, Jaguars, or Dolphins...This kind of reporting is a complete waste of time. Do something useful and find some real news to report.

14. 

14. Posted by [dparadicecasino](#) Fri Dec 11, 2009 11:30 am EST

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No. We are raising a generation of over sensitive people who obviously have nothing better to do than whine & complain about silly issues. Roy, does your stomach turn when the "Fighting Irish" take the field? What about the Celtics taking the floor, or the Vikings in Minnesota? I would believe the answer is "no" so this isn't about anything other than a small group of oversensitive people. These names brought honor...the Indians in Cleveland and the Redskins in Washington....maybe those who are whining should do some research and see why these names were chosen, who approved them, and stop dishonoring their own ancestors who felt honored by the choice of team name.

15. 

15. Posted by [Stephen](#) Fri Dec 11, 2009 11:31 am EST

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If it was in a bad way then yes lose the name, in a good way then keep it.
Can not believe we are talking about this still

16. 

16. Posted by [neo duke](#) Fri Dec 11, 2009 11:31 am EST

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Roy, you're an idiot!

17. 

17. Posted by [Superwoman](#) Fri Dec 11, 2009 11:33 am EST

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I'm looking forward to Mr. Johnson's future blogs about how other mascots are caricatures of ethnic culture - like the Cowboys, for example. Then we need to change the Boilermakers & Packers (can't stereotype a working class like that!). We probably need to change the Buccaneers before those - talk about a stereotype! How about the Giants, really, do tall people want to be mocked like that? We could go on and on. And don't even get me started with the Fighting Irish! Point is, it isn't an insult, it is an honor. And schools like UND and FSU, which team up with tribes to show their history in a prideful and honorable way are actually helping those tribes carry on a cultural heritage with honor and respect. That an enthusiastic fan might not get that cultural heritage is beside the point. Which is why the Sioux are fighting again as a proud nation to keep this sign of respect for their heritage and what it contributed to the ND region.

18. 

18. Posted by [Curt](#) Fri Dec 11, 2009 11:34 am EST

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Wow, maybe the napkins at your local coffee shop are the wrong color, or your neighbor tragically labeled the store clerk as being Mexican, instead of Hispanic. Talk about drama, there are real issues in life that need attention, this does not qualify on any level as an issue.

19. 

19. Posted by [Jizzy](#) Fri Dec 11, 2009 11:35 am EST

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Would we tolerate a team called the Los Angeles Wetbacks? Why do we tolerate the Washington Redskins (in our nation's capital, no less)?

20. 

20. Posted by [Pirate77](#) Fri Dec 11, 2009 11:37 am EST

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The Little Irish guy at Notre Dame really bothers me...I am Irish....The Viking in Minnesota...How demeaning for those of Norse heritage.....!.....Please lets all worry about something that actually makes a difference in someones life....

21. 

21. Posted by [Darand B](#) Fri Dec 11, 2009 11:37 am EST

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"Political Correctness is a doctrine, fostered by a delusional, illogical minority, and rabidly promoted by an unscrupulous mainstream media," (that's you Roy S. Johnson) " which holds forth the proposition that it is entirely possible to pick up a turd by the clean end."

I have relation who are proud of their Native American heritage, as I am I. As long as these displays are handled with respect, I see no issue with them. And yes the war paint, the headdresses, the horses, they're all for the most part respectful (and accurate). If you're in doubt, go to a tribal celebration or gathering. Oh wait, on second thought, I maybe there enjoying the performances or even participating. I wouldn't want your stomach "to turn a bit" and ruin what is a magical and extremely spiritual moment of celebration.

Let us determine for ourselves if we're offended. The strongest form of protest is to vote with your dollar. If you don't like the product your team is producing, don't buy the jerseys, don't attend the events, don't give to the coffers, don't participate. Economics are possibly the greatest correction vehicle.

Go back to your PC hole and stay there. Putz.

22. 

22. Posted by [David Faustino](#) Fri Dec 11, 2009 11:37 am EST

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so long as native americans are "fighting" to keep their likenesses as mascots then this is an issue that won't be resolved any time soon. it's arrogant and selfish to try and erase all mention of native americans throughout sports when some native americans want to be represented that way. would everyone be making this big of a fuss if people of nordic or Norwegian descent requested the Viking be removed as a mascot?

23. 

23. Posted by [Monty](#) Fri Dec 11, 2009 11:38 am EST

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#4, you can't use 'Run Amok' anymore, the Amok tribe of Alaska has trademarked Amok. They even forced the Fairbank A & M team to change it's name from the Fairbanks Amoks, to the Fairbanks Dolphins.

Totally Onionated here, before anyone thinks of looking these factz up.

24. 

24. Posted by [DJ](#) Fri Dec 11, 2009 11:39 am EST

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My college was the Braves....now they are the Wolves.....
guess why?

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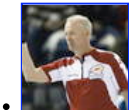
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