

**April 2, 2013**

**RE: Against HB 3397, SB 215, SB 501 (bills to void Oregon's Indian mascot ban)**

**Dear Oregon House Committee on Education**

I participated heavily in last spring's work to ban Indian mascots in Oregon public schools. I admire the detailed, transparent work of the State Board of Education and the ODE that began in 2006 and finally produced the ban.

The hearings were patient and fair last spring. The State Board heard everyone who wished to testify. The State Board clearly based the ban on factual input from professional educators and psychologists; the body of work that proves Indian mascot stereotypes are harmful and racist continues to grow.

**Please let that work done by professionals working to ensure the best education for EVERY STUDENT stand. Oregon's stated mission is to raise the standards for every racial group; if you void the mascot ban you will be responsible for leaving racist stereotypes in place which have been proven to impede the success of not just Native Americans but all minorities.**

As a taxpayer in the Molalla River School District I abhor paying to a District that clings to a racist Indian and that fails to inform the community and especially the youth about the civil rights issues connected to Indian mascots. Here are three testimonies I delivered in favor of the ban:

**April 27, 2012 Testimony to State Board of Education in FAVOR of mascot ban:**

Dear Oregon State Board of Education,

I am in favor of banning Indian mascots in Oregon public schools.

I am heartsick, given the facts and the long opportunity for schools to make voluntary changes, that we are here today debating this issue. I am very upset that my taxes go to support an education system that has failed to respect the civil rights of Native Americans. It is hurtful that we would allow Native Americans to be turned into objects, per the definition of mascot, that represent lucky charms often used to market and advertise products. What a hurtful message that sends.

I have reviewed the reports filed by a myriad of educational and psychological experts. The Civil Rights Commission called for an end to "Indian" mascots in 1991 noting that mascots are "particularly inappropriate and insensitive in light of the long history of forced assimilation that American Indian people have endured in this country." I hope every member of this Board has taken the time to carefully read those compelling professional and legal documents? Those reports all say that Native American mascots are harmful to the Native American students, that they are racist and sexist. These

mascots trap Native Americans in the 16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. They are all male images and generally represent warriors. They are historically inaccurate. They reduce a proud culture and a race of people to cartoon stereotypes. They fail to honor Native Americans for their current high contributions as contemporary Americans.

I live in the Molalla River School District where Che Butler's family was subjected to that horrible mascot display. I was inspired by Mr. Butler's powerpoint. I called Molalla High School Principal Randy Dalton two weeks ago to find out what changes had been made by Molalla. Dalton said he believed the mascot would have to go but had done nothing to help the students and their parents understand the issues. No attempts have been made to use curriculum that the Grand Ronde Tribes have told me they have available to teach the true history of their Tribes.

Superintendent Wayne Kostur told me that all new uniforms were supposed to have had "Indian" removed but that some basketball shorts had "just slipped through". Kostur also indicated that the auditorium floor, which features a large image of the Indian mascot with the war bonnet, would soon need to be refinished and that it would be easy to sand out the image.

Obviously, both the High School Principal and the Superintendent of Molalla Schools realize there is a need for change. Yet, the Superintendent and the Molalla School Board have completely failed to inform the community about the civil rights issues connected to the cartoon Indian mascot. So we now have the angry community blowback about saving the war bonnet Plains Indian mascot. Why wasn't education about needed mascot change mandated back when this issue first came up in 2006?

I checked the local newspaper archives to see what the paper had been printing. In the past year headlines had phrases including:

Hammer Molalla Indians  
Can't hide Indian pride  
Indians skid  
Indians conquer  
Indians crush  
Indians run over  
Indians claw  
Indians kept digging  
Molalla Indians pounded  
Indians execution was sloppy, their energy was lacking  
Indians fall to Indians  
1234 Indians add one more

To add more insult, the word Indian has been morphed into Indianettes for the school's dance team.

The Molalla Indians boys' soccer schedule appeared in the paper with an image of a giant arrow shaft. The complete sports schedule prominently featured the Indian in a war bonnet mascot in color.

The High School auditorium has the large Indian wearing a war bonnet on the floor. How can it be right for students to run over, drip sweat on, and dribble balls on top of that image of the Indian the school is supposedly honoring?

The MRSD had a hazing case a few years ago and 5 students went to jail for sexual abuse of another athlete. A MRSD high school teacher is currently awaiting trial for allegedly sexually abusing a student. We have anti-bullying campaigns; we have serious behavior problems in schools, so how can we ignore this important civil rights issue which could add to problems? If schools couldn't follow the gentle ask to have changed these racist mascots by now, we certainly can't trust them to do it voluntarily. The Board should demand immediate compliance – these schools already had over 5 years to change.

Small towns should not be teaching the children that these race based mascots are acceptable, only to have the children grow up and go out into the greater world and learn it wasn't acceptable. Aren't the small towns actually limiting their futures and their children's' future's by presenting and trying to protect this kind of disrespect of Native Americans, when most places and institutions have abandoned race based mascots?

I reject any cost factor as a reason for ending Native American mascots. The same false arguments are made every time civil rights issues arise, including access for handicapped. The cost of compliance has no bearing in civil rights. I would imagine failing to implement a ban will leave the schools and the State Board highly vulnerable to civil rights law suits which could be far more costly than producing new mascots.

I count among my most inspiring and touching learning experiences the stories and factual historical accounts the members of the Grand Ronde Tribes presented in recent years in Oregon City. The Molalla area was used for thousands of years by amazing people, who tended the wild, lived sustainably and loved mother earth. Their offspring, who are our fellow Oregonians today, aren't honored by being objectified as lucky charms for children. They aren't honored as contemporary Americans because their civil rights are being violated. We need to truly honor our Native American fellow Oregonians by immediately abandoning all race based mascots in Oregon.

Thank you for considering my concerns.

Sincerely,  
Susan Hansen  
PO Box 50  
Molalla Oregon

**May 17, 2012 Testimony to State Board of Education in favor of mascot ban:**

Dear State Board of Education,

I strongly endorse the proposal to ban “Indian” mascots. I embrace the myriad of professionals who have outlined how harmful it is for Native Americans to be the only race in our nation stereotyped as cartoon lucky charm mascots. I embrace the 1991 Civil Rights statement and the letter the ACLU submitted.

Molalla and other Districts are trying to play the white majority privilege card to keep their “Indian” mascots. On April 27, Molalla School Board member Ralph Gierke, noting the Che Butler complaint, told you *“I could have shot the administrators who never told us about it. It never came to the School Board. Had it come to me I would have gone frankly ballistic.”*

If MRSD was serious about doing something about racism and civil rights, wouldn’t the District be eager to educate our community? In fact, the opposite has happened. A scheduled community meeting on public school choices was informed that the District would not participate unless we agreed not to bring up the mascot. In a public information request, the District could not verify potential costs, provide the number of Native American students or document the claimed approval of the mascot by the last chief, let alone any contact with Tribes. Uninformed Board member Gierke actually said to you that Hispanic mascots would be endangered if we banned “Indian” mascots.

The ways Molalla stereotypes and disrespects Native Americans are endless, including rows of Indian heads with war bonnets spray painted on lockers, advertising sign Indians, a totem pole, a teepee, a metal Indian head with war bonnet, orange foam finger Indians and clothes with slogans like Fear the Indians and How About Them Indians. Internet sites sell items like Molalla Indian car floor mats and cell phone covers. The entire “Indian” mascot culture is dishonorable, historically inaccurate and smacks of playing “Indians” at a 1950’s summer camp for white kids.

Molalla’s Gierke acknowledged on April 27<sup>th</sup> that *“there is prejudice and lack of respect...”* but immediately began to complain about the cost to change the mascot.

Yesterday, the Molalla Pioneer published this letter from Kirk Gilbertson, *Molalla*

(quote) *“My son is one-fourth African American and has mentioned to me that he gets called all kinds of names around Molalla because of it. I kind of thought, “right,” this is 2012; I am sure there can not be that much racism here.*

*My son ran home yesterday as a group of eight or so white teenagers probably around 15 years old called him the “N” word and yelled they were going to hang him. . . I went outside to see this group of teenagers looking to harm my son because of his skin color.*

*The group was so brazen they actually asked if my son would come out and talk to them. I yelled at the kids, stating, "Do you realize how illegal your actions are?" and (told them) to leave. We called the police and filed a report.*

*It is sad to see this in today's society and makes me wonder about living in Molalla." (end quote)*

Molalla clearly has problems with racism and has a growing Hispanic population that exceeds 15%. Children would be fearful of exposing bullies and of challenging a School District on civil rights. We heard on April 27 that even high school "leaders" were not being taught about civil rights. Students are potentially subject to cover-ups and secrecy like we experience in Molalla. Americans are mobile and no one Tribe can represent the interests of all Native Americans so I reject waivers.

We can't ever put a cost on protecting civil rights and white majority wishes can't be a factor. Why would we dare to keep racist "Indian" mascots when we know they are potential civil rights flash points and are destructive to the self image of Native American students? In light of the volumes of expert testimony about how harmful these racist cartoon images are, I urge you to protect all our children and to honor our contemporary Native American fellow Oregonians with a universal ban on "Indian" mascots.

Susan Hansen  
PO Box 50,  
Molalla Oregon 97038

### **March 28, 2013 Oregon Senate Testimony against SB 215 and SB 501:**

Last night at Reed College I attended an amazing seminar called Native American Appropriations designed to explore how popular culture has stolen sacred Native American icons. We were treated to inspiring performances by a variety of young Native Americans in full traditional regalia dancing to a drum circle. I wish everyone in this room could have experienced the pride those youth had for their cultural heritage. A tiny boy only a year and a half old joined the final group dance. Even at that young age he danced fearlessly in front of a huge crowd, imbued with the spirit of the drums and the chants. We learned that those children from the Native American Youth and Family Center in Portland are taught the respectful care of their dance regalia, the meaning of the icons and that their cultural heritage is sacred and unique. The seminar went on to feature a discussion about the horrible ways American Indian art and cultural icons have been hijacked and the hard work contemporary Native Americans are doing to regain control and respect for their culture.

I drove back to my home in rural Molalla thinking how mortified I would be if any of those committed, protective and passionate Native Americans came Molalla and saw the racist, tacky ways Molalla has appropriated Indian symbols, starting with the lurid orange clip art Indian cartoon mascot it clings to in spite of the ban. Molalla High School has rows of lockers stenciled with the heads of Indian chiefs, a giant scoreboard

that is a softball with an Indian chief head on top and a soccer meet teepee ceremony. The cheap clip art Indian chief head is used all over town to advertise the local phone company. Students dance, sweat and dribble balls on the head of the Indian chief cartoon embedded on the floor of the gym. A pseudo- Indian ceremony is acted out when school starts at the High School. There is nothing honorable about the use of these symbols in Molalla. Molalla has instituted a culture that's a 1950's version of a Walt Disney summer camp for white kids. I am profoundly ashamed to be a taxpayer in the Molalla River School District.

I have spent over a year trying to inform Molalla about the need to move on and abandon the clip art cartoon Indian mascot, so I left that seminar both inspired and dismayed. I have learned how professional educators and psychologists have found Indian mascots to be destructive to the self image of Native American children because those stereotypes limit their vision of what they can become in contemporary American society. I participated in two hearings last spring before the extremely professional and patient State School Board. The April 27<sup>th</sup> hearing more than convinced me that all the districts with Indian mascots are failing to teach about the need to respect diversity and civil rights.

A racist 2006 half time display in Molalla featuring a half naked pretend Indian with a target on his chest triggered the the ODE to ask that Districts voluntarily replace Indian mascots by the end of 2011 and yet virtually none did anything to honor that ask. I begged the Molalla school superintendent, high school principal and school board well before the start of the hearings to inform the community about the issues that would surely lead to a ban and my district did nothing. I have written endless published letters and used social media to tell all I was learning about the need to abandon the cartoon lucky charm Indian mascot.

But today, Molalla is still in full denial, not only about the Indian mascot, but also about its deeply entrenched bullying and racial harassment problems. Molalla recently refused free diversity training. The white power privilege thrust in Molalla has gone from using the excuse that it is too expensive to get a new mascot to a school board member recently circulating a poll asking how much the community would be willing to have the district spend to sue the ODE to keep the Indian mascot.

I firmly believe that only by giving the ODE the ability to impose sanctions will we eliminate these horrific racist stereotypes from our public schools. The history and professional testimony about mascots is online at the ODE site and accessible to anyone willing to learn the facts. But I am old enough to have witnessed the denial that accompanies the need for social change, including the struggle in the 60's for civil rights, the struggle for women's rights, the fight over Title 9, fights over handicapped access, mainstreaming and the current struggles for Latino rights.

The bills before you would perpetuate racism and would do a huge disservice to all students in districts that cling to racist symbols. There can be no excuse for trolling to find an acceptable level of racism in our public schools. I believe all students should by

now have been taught about the contemporary Native American work to gain control and respect for their cultural icons. We should not be sending students out in the world from these isolated districts believing it is morally acceptable to use our smallest racial minority as their cartoon lucky charms. If you pass these bills, you will be trashing six years of carefully considered work produced by our excellent State DOE; they are the experts we need to trust to provide universal educational opportunities and to protect the civil rights of all students.

I am very proud that the ODE and State Board did the difficult but necessary work to protect vulnerable Native American students and that we are leading the nation in the need to respect Native American cultural icons. Please don't undo that important legacy just because a handful of districts cling to racist symbols and refuse to accept the need to address 21<sup>st</sup> Century inclusion and diversity issues.

Susan Hansen  
PO Box 50  
Molalla Oregon  
foxglovefarm@inbox.com

April 2, 2013

RE: Opposing HB 3397, SB 215, SB 501

Dear House Committee on Education,

There is a growing body of evidence about the civil rights violation that occurs when Native Americans, our smallest racial minority, are used as public school mascots. The State Board of Education gathered a great deal of evidence about that to produce the ban in May 2012. However the "ask" to get rid of racist Indian mascots goes back to the US Civil Rights Commission declaration of 1991 which I post at the end of this document.

After the Oregon Board of Education produced the ban, the State of Washington followed with its ban. Now, the State of Michigan is going to the Federal level regarding the civil rights violation presented by stereotyping Native Americans. I interviewed Mr. Levy, the Michigan Civil Rights lawyer who wrote the brief now under consideration at Federal level, on the phone yesterday.

Mr. Levy said his state is so aware of the bullying and harassment that can befall students who have complained about Indian mascots that they will not release the names to the Federal Civil Rights investigation. That speaks to how difficult it is for our children to face bullying, racism and harassment by speaking out against it. Mr. Levy noted that as in Oregon several Michigan Tribes support banning Indian mascots and he sent me their resolutions against being stereotyped.

**It is up to you to vote NO on these bills which seek to take away the protection the mascot ban was designed to produce.**

Michigan's brief (linked and quoted below) explains that studies show that not only Native American students suffer lower self-esteem when faced with racist Indian mascots but the *"consequence of exposure to the American Indian mascot is increased stereotyping of other racial minorities."*

I do not believe my elected officials have the professional depth of knowledge to reverse the strong body of evidence posted by our ODE. **With Rudy Crew's stated goal to bring all segments of our school population to higher success rates, you clearly would do a great deal of damage to racial minorities if you void the ban.** I support vigorous civil rights protection for all segments of Oregon's society.

**Please vote NO on HB 3397, SB 215 and SB 501.**

Please read the compelling excerpt below from the Michigan brief - it outlines the harm done to all minorities and questions how The stereotyping of any racial, ethnic, religious or other groups when promoted by our public educational institutions, teach all students that stereotyping of minority groups is acceptable, a dangerous lesson in a diverse



society. any responsible School Districts could continue to support these racist symbols in the face of the body of research.

Then consider the 1991 US Civil Rights resolution regarding ending Indian mascots also posted below which states in part: *“The stereotyping of any racial, ethnic, religious or other groups when promoted by our public educational institutions, teach all students that stereotyping of minority groups is acceptable, a dangerous lesson in a diverse society.”* Given that 1991 Civil Rights Commission resolution, Oregon is actually over 20 years behind the times on the Indian mascot civil rights issue.

Sincerely,  
Susan Hansen  
PO Box 50, Molalla Oregon 97038

**Link to Michigan’s brief:**

[http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mdcr/MDCR\\_2\\_8\\_13\\_Supporting\\_Argument\\_410857\\_7.pdf](http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mdcr/MDCR_2_8_13_Supporting_Argument_410857_7.pdf)

Excerpt from brief:

“That the use of American Indian mascots and imagery causes actual and disproportionate harm to American Indian students should be a sufficient basis for finding that it is discriminatory and must not be permitted to continue. However, OCR need not base a finding of discrimination solely on the disparate impact the mascots have. **When a school continues to use American Indian mascots knowing that they “have (1) negative psychological consequences for American Indians, (2) positive Psychological consequences for European Americans, and (3) negative effects on race relations” there is a sufficient basis for OCR to impute bad intent or at least deliberate indifference.**

How profound is the effect of mascots on self-esteem? At least one study found that being exposed to American Indian mascots lowered the self-esteem of American Indian High school students significantly more than exposure to negative stereotypes like alcoholism, dropout rates and suicide.

While not related to the disparate effect, there has also been significant research concerning the effects of exposure to mascots on non-American Indian students. A stereotypic portrayal has negative effects on those who are not targets of the stereotype and can have the effect of creating a racially hostile educational environment for all students. **Even where the intention of the depiction may have been to honor a particular tribe, the consequence of exposure to the American Indian mascot is increased stereotyping of other racial minorities.**

The study by Kim-Prieto found that individuals who are exposed to American Indian mascots and stereotypic portrayals will heighten their stereotyping of Asian Americans. **Racial priming via the American Indian mascots increases the tendency to endorse stereotypes about other minority groups.** Furthermore, increased exposure to stereotypes results in greater reliance on those stereotypes when making interpersonal evaluations in work and academic settings.

Reliance on any stereotype appears to increase along with exposure to stereotypes, regardless of whom the stereotype is portraying. Although this particular harm affects all students and thus does not increase the equal opportunity gap between them, it is still indicative of a schools indifference to the negative consequences of the mascots use

American Indian mascots go beyond being merely offensive. The use of American Indian mascots has been demonstrated to cause actual psychological harm to American Indian students. Persistent racial stereotyping also has the effect of decreasing academic performance in members of a targeted racial group. **When using American Indian mascots, educational institutions are abandoning their obligation to American Indian students by failing to provide them an equal opportunity to participate in or benefit from the educational services and activities being provided.**" End quoted material

## **2001 NEWS RELEASES, PRESS ADVISORIES AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS**

### **STATEMENT OF U.S. COMMISSION ON CIVIL RIGHTS ON THE USE OF NATIVE AMERICAN IMAGES AND NICKNAMES AS SPORTS SYMBOLS**

The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights calls for an end to the use of Native American images and team names by non-Native schools. The Commission deeply respects the rights of all Americans to freedom of expression under the First Amendment and in no way would attempt to prescribe how people can express themselves. However, the Commission believes that the use of Native American images and nicknames in school is insensitive and should be avoided. In addition, some Native American and civil rights advocates maintain that these mascots may violate anti-discrimination laws. These references, whether mascots and their performances, logos, or names, are disrespectful and offensive to American Indians and others who are offended by such stereotyping. They are particularly inappropriate and insensitive in light of the long history of forced assimilation that American Indian people have endured in this country.

Since the civil rights movement of the 1960s many overtly derogatory symbols and images offensive to African-Americans have been eliminated. However, many secondary schools, post-secondary institutions, and a number of professional sports teams continue to use Native American nicknames and imagery. Since the 1970s, American Indian leaders and organizations have vigorously voiced their opposition to these mascots and team names because they mock and trivialize Native American religion and culture.

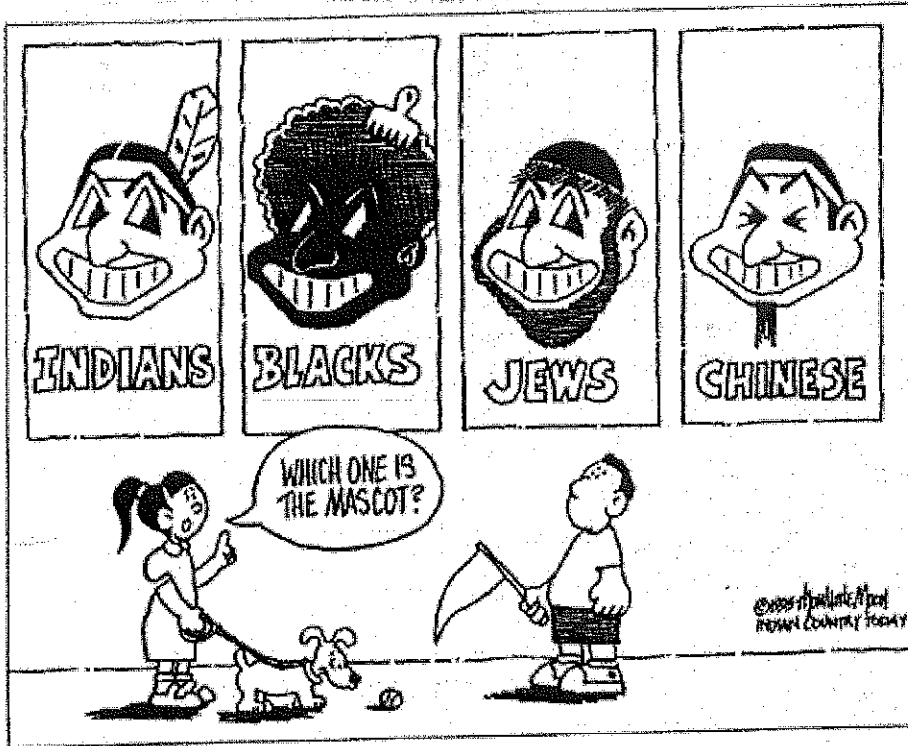
It is particularly disturbing that Native American references are still to be found in educational institutions, whether elementary, secondary or post-secondary. Schools are places where diverse groups of people come together to learn not only the "Three Rs," but also how to interact respectfully with people from different cultures. The use of stereotypical images of Native Americans by educational institutions has the potential to create a racially hostile educational environment that may be intimidating to Indian students. American Indians have the lowest high school graduation rates in the nation and even lower college attendance and graduation rates. The perpetuation of harmful stereotypes may exacerbate these problems.

The stereotyping of any racial, ethnic, religious or other groups when promoted by our public educational institutions, teach all students that stereotyping of minority groups is acceptable, a dangerous lesson in a diverse society. Schools have a responsibility to educate their students; they should not use their influence to perpetuate misrepresentations of any culture or people. Children at the elementary and secondary level usually have no choice about which school they attend. Further, the assumption that a college student may freely choose another educational institution if she feels uncomfortable around Indian-based imagery is a false one. Many factors, from educational programs to financial aid to proximity to home, limit a college student's choices. It is particularly onerous if the student must also consider whether or not the institution is maintaining a racially hostile environment for Indian students.

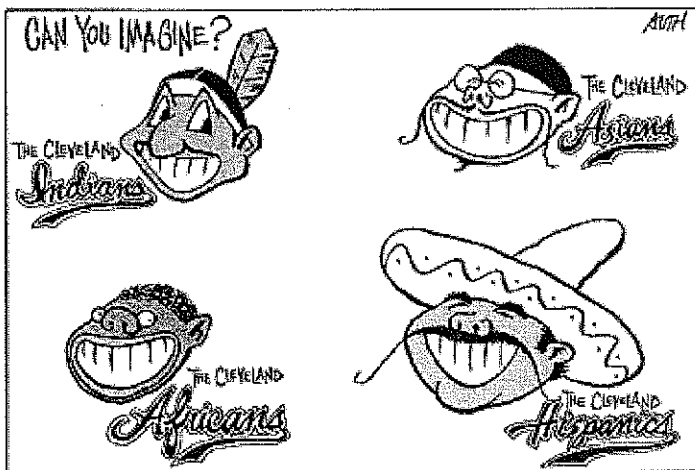
Schools that continue to use Indian imagery and references claim that their use stimulates interest in Native American culture and honors Native Americans. These institutions have simply failed to listen to the Native groups, religious leaders, and civil rights organizations that oppose these symbols. These Indian-based symbols and team names are not accurate representations of Native Americans. Even those that purport to be positive are romantic stereotypes that give a distorted view of the past. These false portrayals prevent non-Native Americans from understanding the true historical and cultural experiences of American Indians. Sadly, they also encourage biases and prejudices that have a negative effect on contemporary Indian people. These references may encourage interest in mythical "Indians" created by the dominant culture, but they block genuine understanding of contemporary Native people as fellow Americans.

The Commission assumes that when Indian imagery was first adopted for sports mascots it was not to offend Native Americans. However, the use of the imagery and traditions, no matter how popular, should end when they are offensive. We applaud those who have been leading the fight to educate the public and the institutions that have voluntarily discontinued the use of insulting mascots. Dialogue and education are the roads to understanding. The use of American Indian mascots is not a trivial matter. The Commission has a firm understanding of the problems of poverty, education, housing, and health care that face many Native Americans. The fight to eliminate Indian nicknames and images in sports is only one front of the larger battle to eliminate obstacles that confront American Indians. The elimination of Native American nicknames and images as sports mascots will benefit not only Native Americans, but all Americans. The elimination of stereotypes will make room for education about real

Indian people, current Native American issues, and the rich variety of American Indian cultures in our country.

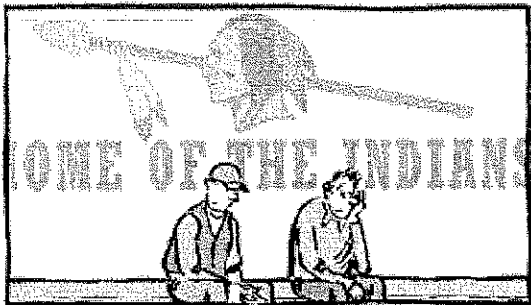
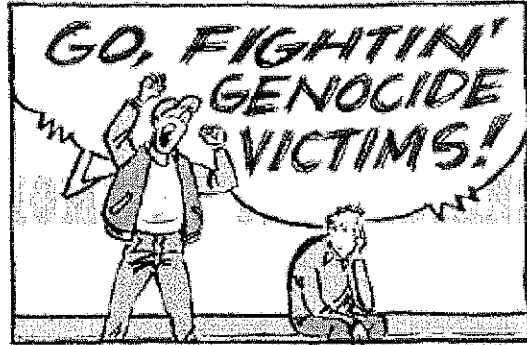
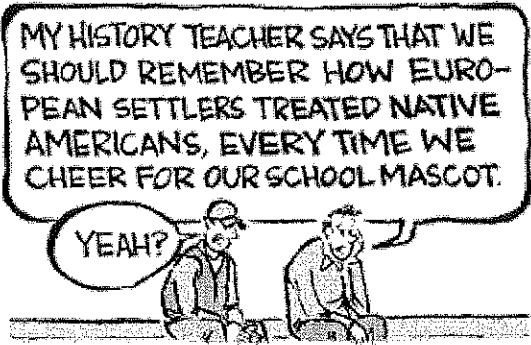


Thom Little Moon / Indian Country Today



A-12-15 THE CLEVELAND INDIAN... WHICH ONE IS THE MASCOT?

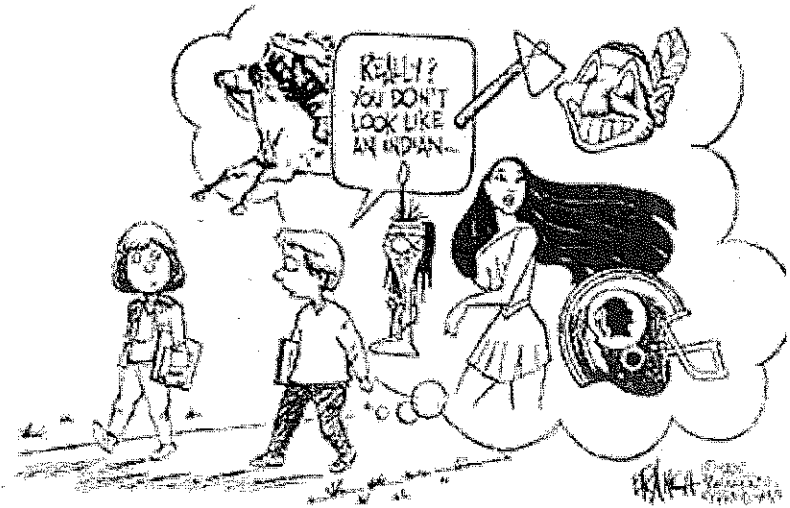




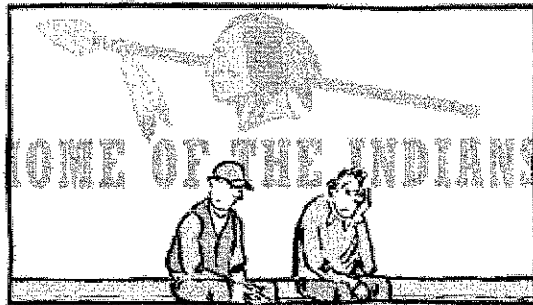
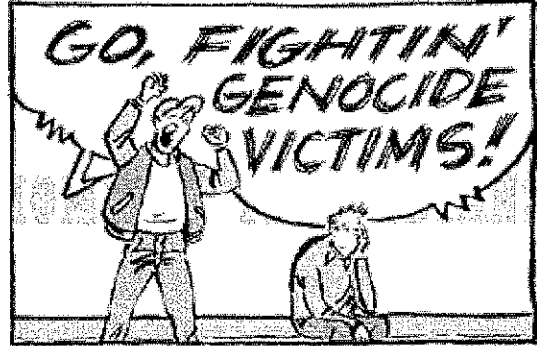
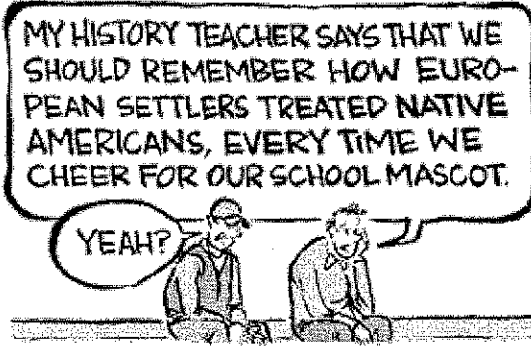
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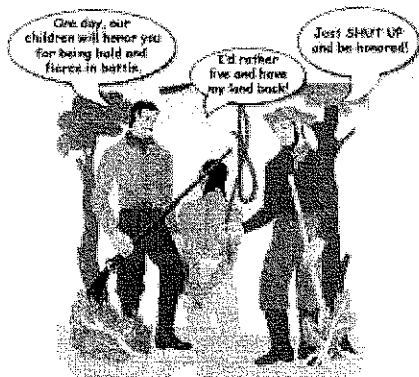
Origins of the Indian Mascot



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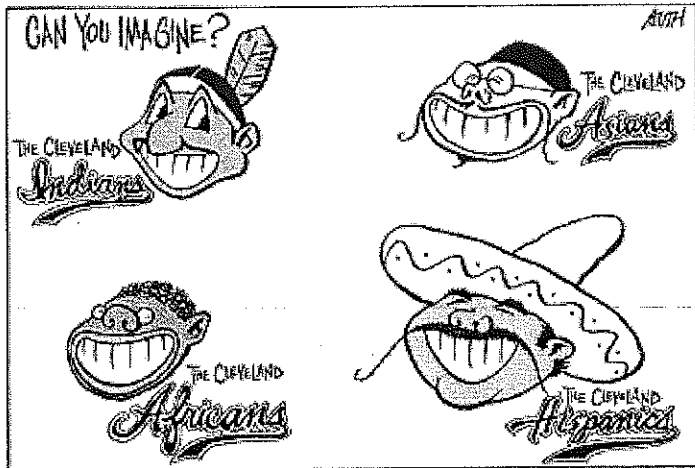


Origins of the Indian Mascot

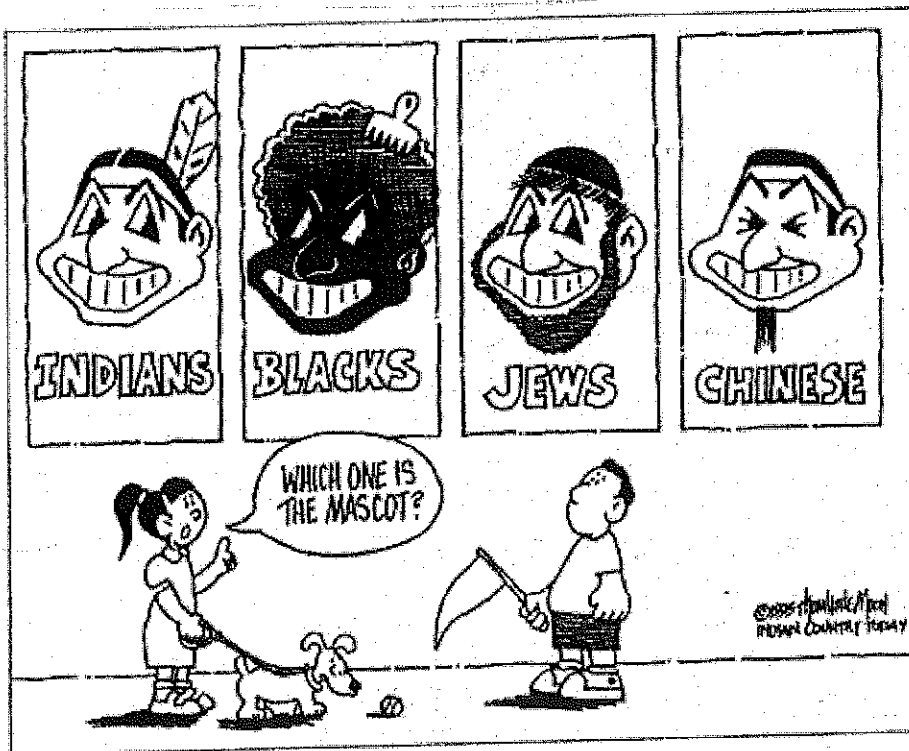




# INDIAN MASCOTS ARE DISCRIMINATORY!

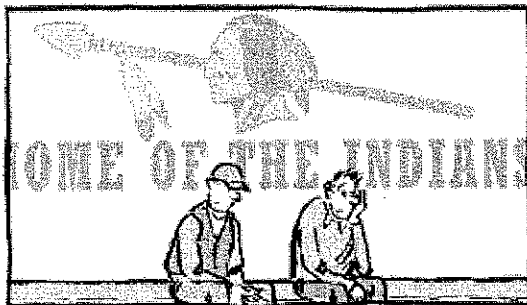
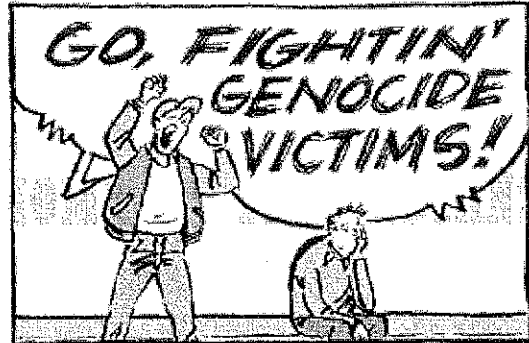
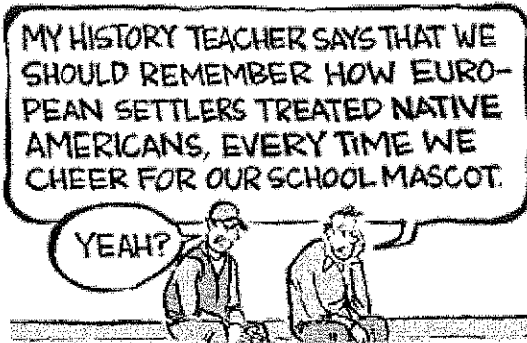


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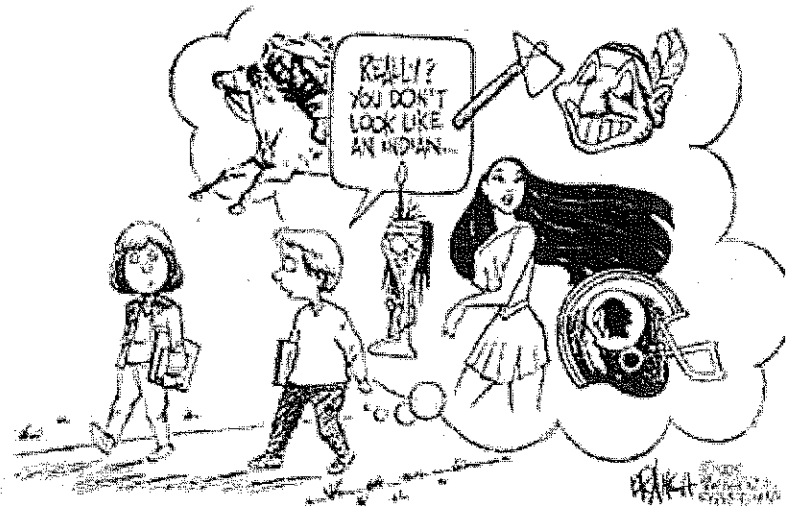




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Origins of the Indian Mascot



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