The Color of Culture

Caucasians have a peach-like skin color. African-Americans have a brown like skin color. Asians, Aboriginals, Europeans, Hawaiians, all just different shades of melanin-based skin. No one is truly white, black, yellow, red, or any other color in which they are called. Why therefore, should calling someone or an entire professional sports team a redskin, be changed? Although many small studies have been conducted to ask Native Americans whether they deem the word offensive, these studies have not considered many factors, and the Washington Redskins should change their name because of the magnitude of varying Native Americans in North America, the history of the word, and it’s influence and impact in the USA.

Firstly, before stating why it is offensive, it must be considered if it offensive in the first place. Many studies have been conducted that states anywhere from 9 in 10 Native Americans have taken no offence to the word, to 70 percent of 504 Native Americans did not consider it offensive (Indian Country Today). However, these studies were conducted with not nearly the amount of proper research done over the 5 million currently inhabiting Native Americans in the USA. Although interviews in communities around Washington have said otherwise, there are numerous different Aboriginal groups all over North America who consider the word offensive, according to James Fenelon of California State University who conducted a study contributing tribes all over the US, 67 percent found the word offensive (Indian Country Today).

Secondly, where redskin differs from black, white, or even yellow to a certain extent, is because of its history. White and black are acceptable because there is no negative history and meaningful power behind them. What many do not realize, is ‘redskin’ comes from the historical skinning of Native American heads as punishment by the European conquerors, and the blood that came with it (Shapira). When the word is used so commonly and without judgement, it is as if that moment in history was nothing.

Finally, the impact of football in the US is enormous. People spend millions of dollars collectively every year on the sport and is the perfect time for energy and excitement. Football is a rough sport, and the redskin name promotes savagery and hostility. Not only is this false way of living promoted and desensitized in the US with the name, but the changing of the name could create huge influence in the US to demote this kind of stereotype on First Nations people and restore the truth behind the name.

In conclusion the Washington Redskins should change their name because of the offense to numerous varying Aboriginal groups in North America, the history behind the word, and the impact the sport has on culture, despite what polls and surveys say.

(Indean Country Today)

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