**An Atrocious Yet Forgotten History**

The Washington Redskins may be a source of pride for some; a team some are delighted in which to be a fan and partake in pre-game rituals of face-painting and costumes. But what is lesser known among these fans is that the word “redskin” comes from the bloody scalps of murdered Native Americans. Would one still feel proud to be a fan of the Washington Redskins knowing this? Although some may suggest that the name of the Washington Redskins football team should be kept because many Native Americans are not offended by the word, the Washington Redskins should change their name. This is because of the history of the word. Some Native Americans find the word redskin offensive and racist, and there is a negative impact on the self-esteem of young Native Americans when using these mascots and team names (American Psychological Association).

The term ‘redskin’ has a long and brutal history. Redskin was first used as a word in 1769 in a letter translated by a British lieutenant from an Indian Chief in which he assured safe passage if the officer visited his tribe. Redskin was later used in a negative context; first in 1863 when the Winona Daily Republican in Minnesota made an announcement: “The State reward for dead Indians has been increased to $200 for every red-skin sent to Purgatory. This sum is more than the dead bodies of all the Indians east of the Red River are worth,” (Shapira). Indigenous people were referred to as ‘redskin’ because they were slaughtered for money; their bloody scalps showed as proof. The word redskin doesn’t deserve a place in our modern society.

There are many words in which Native Americans identify and are proud to call themselves: Navajo, Blackfoot, Inuit, Sioux, and many others. “Native Americans call themselves many things, but redskin isn’t one of them,” (“Proud To Be (Mascots)”). Data shows that 67 percent of Native Americans say ‘Redskins’ is offensive (Indian Country Today). Actively enrolled members of tribal groups were the only ones surveyed in this poll. Native Americans don’t call themselves ‘redskins,’ in fact they find the term offensive. The American Indian Movement, also known as AIM, since it’s beginning in the 1960s has protested mascots and team names appropriating Indigenous cultures. Tara Houska, a tribal lawyer and member of the Couchiching First Nation in Canada, denoted that in the 1960s during the beginning of AIM, tribal leaders deemed mascots and team names like the Washington Redskins as offensive and racist (American Indian Movement (AIM)). Regardless of how many Native Americans aren’t offended, many Native Americans are offended by the word redskin as well as the appropriation of their culture for entertainment values.

The appropriation of Native American culture doesn’t just offend Native Americans but also harms their self-esteem. In 2005 the American Psychological Association released a recommendation of the “immediate retirement of all American Indian mascots, symbols, images and personalities by schools, colleges, universities, athletic teams and organizations,” (American Psychological Association). This was because of the growing evidence that these appropriations of Indigenous cultures may cause negative effects on the social identity development and self-esteem of young Native Americans. Research shows that this also harms non-Native Americans because of how they interpret, and stereotype Indigenous people based on these images in the media (American Psychological Association). Sports teams appropriating Native American culture for entertainment purposes is inappropriate and only gives harm to everyone involved.

Some may propose that the name of the Washington Redskins football team should be kept because many Native Americans are not offended, but the team should change their name because of the negative impacts it has on Native Americans as well as non-Indigenous people. The Washington Redskins should change their name because of the history of the word, some Native Americans find the word ‘redskin’ offensive and racist, and the negative impact on the self-esteem of young Native Americans these mascots and team names seem to have. Redskin is a slur with heavy historical connotations which should not be taken lightly nor used for entertainment in the form of sports team names.

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