Student

English

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Controversial Sports Mascots

"'After 500 years, it's pretty unbelievable that this issue is at the forefront right now…. Even in the last 50 years (of the civil rights movement) we learned so much. It's just ridiculous that this is an issue'" (Martinez). In sports, mascots are a big part of the game. Some mascots are controversial. Many sports mascots that deal with the Native Americans are taking some heat. People feel that the mascots are disrespectful and belittling. Others feel like they are honorable and that there is no problem with them. People have been complaining and trying to get the major sports leagues to change the names and images of their sports teams. The leaders of those teams and leagues have gone back and forth as to whether or not they are going to keep the mascots or not. There is still much debate about the topic. Although some people think that Native American mascots are disrespectful, in reality they are only meant to be respectful and should stay.

Some Native American tribes that are being represented as mascots have supported having their name being used. ABC News reports, "the Seminole Tribe of Florida endorsed the school's use of its name as a moniker and Chief Osceola as its mascot" (Shaw). The Seminoles clearly have no issue being represented this way. They even supported it. When the Indians feel that the mascots are positive, there is no reason to get rid of them. The Seminoles have lived in Florida for a long time, since before the American Revolution. Florida State chose these people as their mascot because of this fact. The school is respecting and honoring them for their heritage and culture. There are Seminoles living in Florida, so the mascot was chosen for this reason.

There are just as many people in favor of the mascots as there are against them. The baseball team the Cleveland Indians Vice President of Public Affairs said, "…we have had discussions with people of all races who have no problem with our name or logo." He later added, "…we've had discussions with all races who dislike the Chief Wahoo logo and the name" (Shaw). If the people in charge changed the mascots, there would be just as much opposition to the change as there is to the current mascot. Making the change would please only one side of the argument. That side would likely be the side that is the minority. When a school is using a bear for the mascot, they aren't disrespecting or making fun of the bears. It can be interpreted the same way for having Native Americans as mascots.

The teams that play under the Native American logo don't mock or belittle them. The Blackhawks hockey Executive Vice President said, "…the team thought its logo was 'respectful and proud'" (Shaw). The players on the teams with Native American mascots are respectful and treat their logo like it means something. They esteem it as a good thing, not a joke. A lot of the players most likely couldn't care less about the logo of the team they are playing for. They just want to play the sport. It seems as though a lot of people are losing sight of what the mascots and sports are all about.

The Oneida Indian Nation doesn't like the Redskins name, they say it's "obviously wrong, insensitive and unacceptable" (Shaw). They feel like they are being misrepresented and disrespected. When the name and logo for the Redskins was picked out, it is very likely that it was not meant to be this way. It was simply chosen as something that represented their area well. Having the name of a Native American group as a mascot is only part of the issue that is less offensive. The other part of the issue is the images that are being used to represent the mascots. "Arab-Americans recently objected to a hook-nosed, snarling image used to represent Coachella Valley High School. The school has agreed to give the mascot a makeover, but not drop the nickname." (CBS) When people are using the mascots to portray the Indians as inhuman or less, it is right for that logo to go. But, in general, having the Native Americans as mascots gives recognition to and honors those tribes and people. A lot of people in the sporting world enjoy the mascots. There are just as many people who support those team mascots as oppose them.

In the end, whether or not these mascots will stay in place is unknown. It was said that, "… the movement to end the use of Native American images [is] a misguided attempt to be 'politically correct'." (Locklear 154) Hopefully people will see the good things about them and keep them around. There are lots of reasons to do so. Some Native American tribes involved have supported having their tribe represented by a school. There are just as many people in favor of the mascots as there are against them. The teams that play under the Native American logo don't mock or belittle them. It is a cool part of our culture to look to other cultures and implement them into ours in a way. That is what our nation is all about. There are people of every background that live around us, Native Americans included. The mascots that represent Native Americans are positive and deserve to stay around.

Works Cited

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