

Indigenous Girls/Women Seek Post-2015 Recovery from US-Sponsored Hate Speech

Girls, women, Indigenous Peoples, and especially indigenous girls/women recommend the US stop using tax money to subsidize schools and corporations who use derogatory indigenous imagery and language to degrade Indigenous Peoples and girls/women. Indigenous youth have the highest dropout rateⁱ and stereotypes cause girls and indigenous students to drop outⁱⁱ. This derogatory indigenous imagery and language interferes with women/girls' and Indigenous Peoples' access to social, cultural, economic, religious, and political participation.

[indigenous] students across the country attend K-12 and postsecondary schools that still maintain racist and derogatory mascots. Research shows that these team names and mascots can establish an unwelcome and hostile learning environment for [indigenous] students.ⁱⁱⁱ It also reveals that the presence of [indigenous] mascots directly results in lower self-esteem and mental health for [indigenous] adolescents and young adults.^{iv} And just as importantly, studies show that these mascots undermine the educational experience of all students, particularly those with little or no contact with indigenous . . . people^v

“Our cheerleaders dressed up one of our own [students] in a Halloween ‘Pokeahottie’ costume and tied her to a stake after dragging her out on the field in shackles against her will. They proceeded to dance around her, acting as if they were beating her and treating her like a slave. This is the most sickening halftime show I’ve ever witnessed,” said Dakota Kicking Bear Brown^{vi}, Miwok/football player, describing horrendous cultural adulteration at his school. Indigenous women are more likely to be assaulted by white than indigenous perpetrators^{vii}.

This description of sexualized representation of an indigenous woman beaten, enslaved, and held hostage creates a hostile educational environment for all girls, especially indigenous girls. This undermines the goal that the UN Open Working Group for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) proposed in Goal 4.5: “By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations.”^{viii} It also puts at further risk non-indigenous youth who are left culturally illiterate by US dogmatism and chauvinism.

The same student writes, “I have heard my own friends yelling around me, ‘Kill the Redskins!’ or ‘Send them on the Trail of Tears!’” It is not possible to eliminate disparities in education when the State party is sponsoring pornographic entertainment that promotes the genocidal elimination of Indigenous Peoples and the degradation of girls/women. The suicide rate among [indigenous] adolescents and young adults ages 15 to 34 is 2.5 times higher^{ix} than US average. The US UN Member cannot participate effectively in the post-2015 process while US regulatory agencies enable schools and for-profit corporations to illegally use indigenous culture in sports in a manner that creates a hostile environment for any youth, girls/women, or indigenous participants in education, health, social, political, cultural, religious, economic, or environmental activities. The US has grown comfortable with these depraved human rights violations against women and children as the status quo because it has not signed the ILO 169 or CEDAW and noted reservations to the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (DRIP) regarding the Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) process for developing Indigenous Peoples’ blessings (‘resources’).

However, the US must obtain FPIC of all potential Indigenous Peoples impacted by the use of indigenous persons and culture in media, especially sports mascots and associated symbols because paragraphs 15, 17, 18 of the WCIP Outcome Document^x require the US, if it remains a fully participating UN Member, to take steps to empower indigenous youth and women to “full and effective participation in decision-making processes in matters that affect them”, especially promoting their health and education and preventing violence against women and children.

Documented harms of racialized team names and mascots in sports include^{xi}:

- Perpetuating false, stereotypical images of indigenous cultures and histories
- Contributing to anti-[indigenous] racism in the United States
- Terrorizing [indigenous] peoples
- Preventing [indigenous] from full and equal enjoyment of public accommodations
- Fostering racial harassment
- Undermining equal treatment
- Fostering “racial microaggression” by transforming “learning environments into hostile environments”
- Allowing the dominant society to “define Indianness, undermining indigenous identity, tradition, and sovereignty”
- Abusing indigenous spirituality, misusing sacred objects—such as eagle feathers—and rituals for the sake of school spirit and local traditions, and promoting divisiveness and factionalism in [indigenous] nations . . .^{xii}

The attack on indigenous culture inherent in the appropriation of indigenous personality and culture in sports imagery and invocation of ancestors who have passed is also seen as a deliberate attack on women among many North American Indigenous Peoples. “No twentieth or twenty-first century [indigenous] has ever served as a

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mascot.^{xiii} Women are culture keepers and have special rights and responsibilities to care for ancestors and share culture with descendants. Paragraph 27 of the WCIP OD states:

We affirm and recognize the importance of indigenous peoples' religious and cultural sites and of providing access to and repatriation of their ceremonial objects and human remains in accordance with the ends of the UN DRIP. We commit to develop, in conjunction with indigenous peoples concerned fair, transparent and effective mechanisms for access to and repatriation of ceremonial objects and human remains at national and international levels^{xiv}.

The US is one of those States parties affirming, recognizing, and committing in this paragraph 27 to repatriation, which, in the case of mascots, is the return of our ancestors' culture to our Indigenous Peoples. The US is obliged to allow indigenous women to freely participate in the exercise of our religious and cultural practices, which are impeded by the desecration of our symbols, patterns, artwork celebrating our Creator and protecting our ancestors' spirits, and other cultural associations currently mocked and derided in sport with indigenous imagery. Schools and corporations invoking the spirits of indigenous ancestors must be compelled by the US State party to repatriate our ancestors' spirits and cultural associations so our spiritual and religious beliefs can be respected and practiced.

While youth, women, and Indigenous Peoples are so attacked by the pornographic nature of indigenous-themed mascots subsidized through US tax funds and tax breaks, indigenous girls and women are impeded in sharing our talent with the world. The social, cultural, economic, environmental and political contributions of indigenous women to the protection of our blessings ('resources'), including children, must be respected if Indigenous Peoples are to help implement UN SDGs. In the current atmosphere of state-sponsored hate speech inciting violence against women and Indigenous Peoples, we cannot practically plan for the post-2015 participation of youth, women, and Indigenous Peoples in sustainable development. Sustainable development respects human rights and the rule of law. We ask:

1. Why does the US take money in regressive taxes to give as subsidies to schools and tax breaks to corporations that use indigenous-themed derogatory imagery, language, and invocation of ancestors' spirits to cause suicide, homicide, rape, drug addiction, and other injuries, social and health problems among youth and women, especially indigenous youth and women?
2. How does the US plan to help youth, women, and Indigenous Peoples recover from the damage caused by these derogatory images of Indigenous Peoples and culture in the media?

Recommendation:

1. Prosecute violators of human rights with help of NHRI, established in conjunction with Indigenous Peoples, and with all existing indigenous, US, and international methods possible. Work with Indigenous Peoples impacted by derogatory indigenous imagery, in accordance with WCIP OD par 16 and other HR instruments to bring to justice human rights violators. Respect Geneva Conventions. Provide recovery for victims of derogatory imagery and language.
2. US ratify and implement without reservation Convention on the Rights of the Child, Convention to Eliminate all Forms of Discrimination Against Women, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, ILO169, Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Use or create whatever domestic laws necessary to stop indigenous-themed mascots and other derogatory images, in accordance with Universal Declaration on Human Rights, DRIP, and FPIC.

ⁱ US Whitehouse. "2014 Native Youth Report". (2014). https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/20141129nativeyouthreport_final.pdf.

ⁱⁱ Griffin, BW. "Academic Disidentification, Race, and High School Dropouts". High School Journal, v85 n4 p71-81 Apr-May 2002.

ⁱⁱⁱ American Psychological Association. (2005). "APA Resolution Recommending the Immediate Retirement of American Indian Mascots, Symbols, Images, and Personalities by Schools, Colleges, Universities, Athletic Teams, and Organizations," available <http://www.apa.org/about/policy/mascots.pdf>.

^{iv} Stephanie A. Fryberg and others, "Of Warrior Chiefs and Indian Princesses: The Psychological Consequences of American Indian Mascots," Basic and Applied Social Psychology 30 (3) (2008): 215–216, <http://sitemaker.umich.edu/daphna.oyserman/files/frybergmarkusoysermanstone2008.pdf>.

^v V Phillips, E Stegman. (July 1, 2014). "Missing the Point -- The Real Impact of Native Mascots and Team Names on American Indian and Alaska Native Youth". Center for American Progress, July 2014.

^{vi} Ibid. "Missing the Point."

^{vii} Futures without Violence. "The Facts on Violence Against American Indian/Alaskan Native Women"

<https://www.futureswithoutviolence.org/userfiles/file/Violence%20Against%20AI%20AN%20Women%20Fact%20Sheet.pdf>

^{viii} United Nations. (2015). "Open Working Group proposal for Sustainable Development Goals. Resolution and Report."

<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?page=view&type=400&n=1579&menu=1300> <http://www.apa.org/about/policy/mascots.pdf>

^{ix} US Center for Disease Control. Suicide 2012. http://www.cdc.gov/ViolencePrevention/pdf/Suicide_DataSheet-a.pdf

^x United Nations. (22.9.14). "Outcome document of the high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly known as the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples A/69/L.1". <http://wcip2014.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/N1453491-WCIP-FINAL-DOCUMENT-EN.pdf> <http://www.apa.org/about/policy/mascots.pdf>.

^{xi} Kim, K., et al. "Effect of Exposure to an AI Mascot on the Tendency to Stereotype a Different Minority Group," Journal of Applied Social Psychology 40 (3) (2010)

^{xii} Ibid., "Missing the Point"

^{xiii} Loewen, James. (18.4.15). "Why Historians Should Demand the Redskins Change Their Name". <http://historynewsnetwork.org/article/159160>

^{xiv} Ibid., "Outcome Document".