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Not the Indians

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Marion Independent School District has a long, long history. The school district was formed in 1860, even before the Civil War, with it being the fourth school district in Iowa. The mascot for our high school, The Marion Indians, has been there as long as anyone can remember. However, mascots like "The Indians" are perpetually a part of an ever-growing controversy, that being whether or not they are offensive towards Native Americans. This question has lately been amplified by the widespread racial equality movements of 2020, and on October 12th, the school board officially voted to phase out the mascot entirely by July of 2021. It remains a heavy point of interest at this time: is our mascot racist towards Native Americans?

In short: yes. While many say that "The Indians" puts Native Americans in a good light, as it is highlighting their bravery and strength. In reality, it places Native Americans on the same level as animals, like lions and dogs. There are multiple different ways to admire the characteristics of groups. You can admire the bravery or hunting ability of a lion as good characteristics of a strong animal with little sapience besides natural instincts. However, carrying over this same breed of admiration to Native Americans comes off as placing them in the same category as "strong animal with little sapience besides natural instincts," which obviously is not the case, and also, is racist.

There is also an added part of this that only our school has to face: the "Marion" part of "Marion Indians." Our town and school district were named after Francis Marion, a Revolutionary War military officer. Before his time in the Revolutionary War, however, Francis Marion partook in the Anglo-Cherokee War, during which he waged a brutal campaign against the

Cherokee. He even indirectly learned his famous guerilla warfare tactics he used against the British from the indigenous people he murdered. With this in mind, it becomes cruel from a historical perspective that we plaster "Indians" next to Francis Marion's name.

There is also a more obvious objection to the mascot's existence. How would we react if our mascot was instead stereotyping black people, or any other racial minority? It seems like most people would object to those as being mascots, but some people seem reluctant to condemn Native American stereotypes as mascots. What differentiates Native Americans from other racial minorities though? It seems the only thing separating them is that Native American culture is traditionally rooted in tribalism and a hunter-gatherer lifestyle. However, acting like these kinds of cultures are lower and less human than more "modern" cultures is a colonizer's way of thinking that ideally should have died off in the 18th century. This kind of cultural difference doesn't mean Native Americans should be grouped together with animals.

People who are adamant about these mascots staying often say that it's how it has been, and changing it would be destroying tradition that has existed at our school for decades. This way of thinking trivializes this issue down to "it was okay in the past, so it's okay now," which is not true in most cases. Especially this one. As society progresses, we must update our standards of decency and morality to the modern way of thinking. While it was moral in the past to use an ethnicity as a mascot, society has progressed to a point where doing so now is frowned upon. As such, we must update our standards to this societal progression. Things change as the world changes, and this should too.

It would be a disservice to not talk about the grander

Do you support the school changing our mascot?

Yes - 29%

Indifferent - 27.5%

No - 43.5%

Out of a convenience poll, 29% supported the mascot change, 27.5% were indifferent, and 45.5% did not support the change.

scheme of how Native Americans are treated in the United States, particularly in the modern-day. Native American reservations are notorious for their poor living conditions, along with having higher poverty rates. Support systems for them are often underfunded or almost nonexistent in some cases. Infant mortality rates are higher than average, and alcohol and drug abuse run rampant as a result of higher poverty. This is all a result of centuries of mistreatment by English settlers, extending into the 21st century. Racist mascots are only one facet of the many ways Native Americans are mistreated in America. Fixing this would require massive overhauls on a national scale to Native American reservations and organizations. The least we can do right now is do something that is comparably simple to solving higher Native American poverty rates: change our old racist mascot to something else.

Our high school's mascot is an old caricature of an ethnicity that is a victim to centuries of mistreatment and racism. Its existence in a modern-day America is absurd with updated standards of morality in place. Putting Natives in the same category as predatory animals evokes the kind of logic formerly used to justify atrocities against them. While changing our mascot would be a small step in the long and spiraling staircase leading to racial equality in America, it is still a step our school has to take. When reflecting back on what our country has done to Native Americans over literal centuries, it's the least the school could do in the current day.

What's going on around the school?



Choir records their music, a new version of presenting their concerts.



Sydney Burlage, '22, works on the first issue of this year's newspaper.



Elise Mehaffy, '22, plays volleyball at the last game of the year.

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