

The following was posted on Facebook by Wisconsin resident Jess Steindorf and was read at the October 16 Menomonee Falls School Board meeting that discussed changing the school's "Indians" nickname.

I include my tribal ID so that you know this message comes from an actual Indian and not someone who says their great-great grandma was a Cherokee princess, which is something that doesn't exist, by the way. I am a real Indian. I eat frybread. I speak some Winnebago (Ho Chunk). I've lived on our mission. I have many family members that have died from diabetes. Almost all of my male ancestors including myself have served in the military. I am a real Indian.

I think these mascots are great. We are the only race of people on this continent that are honored so by having sports teams named after them. No other race can really claim that. I do not believe that "Irish" is a race so Notre Dame doesn't count. Ireland is a nation, not a race of people.

When people join these sports teams, they do so to better themselves, their friends, the people around them, and their communities. To see an Indian mascot brings me pleasure. I don't think the initial intent behind naming the sports teams was to make fun of my ancestors and those like them from other tribes. It was done to honor them and to instill fear upon the opponent. That is not a bad thing and it's not something to be ashamed of. It's something to be studied and remembered.

I speak with many non-tribal members about this. I am told repeatedly that the names are offensive but when I ask why, they tell me that they know of someone or they hear, someone somewhere is offended by it. I have never been given a name or a phone number where I can contact these phantom people, despite my asking. Someone somewhere is going to be offended by everything. But, I think they are really telling me that I should be offended by this because I'm too ignorant to know better. This, is the offensive part to me. I know when I'm angry about something. I have a bachelors degree and I was educated at a western culture university. I received a bachelors degree from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. I know when somebody is making fun of me and when somebody is honoring me. Trust me, it feels a lot different. The worst part about this is having non-tribal members try to convince me that I should be offended by something when they have absolutely no idea what they're talking about.

So, over the years I have thought about this problem often. I have began to formulate a hypothesis as to why this is such an issue in this country. I think this summer I may have found the answer.

In July and August, I took the family over to Europe. We had never been there and we wanted to see a different culture and experience new things. One of the things that they have in Germany that's quite interesting is that they have signs on the streets naming the Jewish people and Jewish families right outside their original homes that were taken from them in the late 30s and early 40s. To the German people and their society it serves as a constant reminder of their past and

they are not ashamed of it. They look at it with wide open eyes and they see the truth as to what happened. They don't run away from it or deny that it ever existed but face it for what it is, the truth.

After hundreds of conversations and listening to hundreds of people and calling into numerous sports talk radio shows about this I think I'm beginning to understand what the general American population is trying to do. The removal of these names makes it easier to forget that before 1492 this continent has already been "discovered" by a bunch of red skinned people. They would like to forget about this unpleasant part of our history. They think that by changing mascots they can change and remove words from the English language and all will be forgotten. They think that the simple words are the enemy and are dangerous. Is history a lie agreed upon by all?

I'm a quarter breed Indian, but when I suntan I tend to be more red than my Caucasian friends and family. I am red skinned. I am a Redskin. These are words that my tribe and the people on this continent used to describe themselves and each other. These aren't words to be feared or words to shy away from simply because they have an alternative meaning to you. A meaning, that might actually be incorrect. Calling me a redskin is no more racist than calling a red rose, red. We have to be able to use words that we've all already agreed upon, called a language, to describe things and this is one of them.

I have never ever met another real Indian that thinks that these mascots are offensive. I have met a lot of non-tribal members that are so worried about being labeled a racist that they think that they have to take this position to protect me and defend me from society at large. I've even asked them in crowded restaurants if they would prefer if I would stand up, point at them and accuse them of either being a racist, or a murderer. They would prefer I accuse them of murder, something that's illegal and a felony over being accused of something that's perfectly legal. Think about that for 60 seconds and then read that last sentence again. That's how scared everyone is of race right now in this country and it needs to stop.

The removal of this mascot isn't going to change the fact that French trappers discovered my tribe in the Green Bay area in 1634. It's not going to change that the very land that each and every person reading this email right now was once inhabited by Ho Chunk. Not owned by, as land ownership is a western civilized concept, but lived on by the Wisconsin Winnebago. This land can no longer be used for its original purpose. There are too many non-tribal inhabitants living on it, and that's ok. Do you think it's even possible that everybody go back to Africa or Europe? You aren't European and you aren't African, you're American. Stay here in America, but you should know this history and your kids should know this history and your grandkids should know this history.

Native Americans wore feathers and face paint before contests. Doing so while showing respect for the opposing team is not offensive. Indians hoot and howl while they are deer hunting. I've done it and I'll do it again. Feel free to hoot and howl to cheer your team on. It is part of our culture and I am not offended if you mimic it. Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery.

If Native American mascots are offensive then please allow me to bring up some much more offensive things to the general public, things we should fix before we start dealing with silly sports teams.

\$1, George Washington, the only six star general and father of our country was a slave owner. Andrew Jackson, who is on the \$20 bill, was directly responsible for the deaths of thousands of native Americans during his time in office. Robert E. Lee probably saved more American lives than Ulysses S Grant, pictured on the \$50 bill. And everyone's favorite, the \$100 bill, Benjamin Franklin was never elected to any public office that I remember. He should've been president!!! Harriet Tubman probably belongs on federal reserve paper somewhere.

I love this sign. “=“ . It's an equal sign. It's used in math a lot because you can very easily make two things equal simply by writing something down twice. However, in nature it is very rare that you actually find two entities that are equal, but I believe I've actually found one in the American society, which is a very rare thing. You may read this text and walk away from it thinking that I am crazy. You might not change what you believe and be unmoved. That's ok. Your opinion matters if you are educated in the points above. I'm going to tell you two things that equal one another and it's hard to argue against it. You can try, but you might have to make up something irrational. I'm very eager to hear if somebody can come up with an argument that I haven't heard before. Here goes,.... it is just as equally crazy to remove all mascot monikers from every sports collective in America as it would be to create a law which states that Thou MUST use a native American moniker when forming a sports collective or sports team of any consequence. That is equal.

-Jess Steindorf