



The Society for the Study of Social Problems

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November 15, 2016

Office of the Commissioner of Baseball
Commissioner Robert D. Manfred Jr.
245 Park Avenue, 31st Floor
New York, NY 10167

Dear Commissioner,

I am the Executive Officer of the Society for the Study of Social Problems (SSSP), one of the oldest and most respected professional social science organizations in the country, and it is my understanding that you plan to meet with the owner of Cleveland's MLB team to discuss their nickname and logo. This is a very important issue for us, evidenced by the fact that the membership of the organization passed unanimously two resolutions (both attached) in 2007 and 2010, respectively, focused on Native American sport nicknames/logos. I am writing to urge you to use the power of your office to change the team's nickname and logo, and toward that end wish to provide you with information that you may find useful in your conversations with Cleveland management.

Published research findings from a wide variety of academic disciplines clearly demonstrate the problematic nature of Native American sport nicknames and logos. First, these nicknames/logos constitute stereotypes of Native Americans and reinforce such stereotypes in society. Stereotypes are defined as misleading generalizations about categories of people. Second, these nicknames/logos create a hostile climate for Native Americans and their allies. Third, these nicknames/logos convey disrespect for Native American people and their varied cultures. Lastly, these nicknames/logos have negative effects on Native American youth, lowering their self-esteem, sense of future possibilities, and views of their Native communities.

Native American sport nicknames and logos also must be understood in the context of other social problems faced by many Native Americans. Among these problems are low levels of educational attainment, exposure to high levels of toxins, poverty, violence, substance abuse, suicide, and physical health problems. The underrepresentation and misrepresentation of Native Americans in United States popular culture is intertwined with these problems, as thoughts, cultural beliefs and representations (i.e., words and images) have an interdependent relationship with behaviors and social

structures/systems. The fact that portrayals of contemporary Native Americans are rare in the mass media makes every existing portrayal of them especially important. Given that many non-Native people in the United States have limited contact with Native American people also makes existing representations of Native Americans especially important. In other words, Native American nicknames/logos in sports are not only a social problem but also contribute to other social problems faced by Native Americans.

Given that Native American sport nicknames/logos contribute to problems faced by Native Americans, we hope that Major League Baseball will take bold action to eliminate these nicknames/logos. This includes not only the nickname and logo of Cleveland but also those of Atlanta. If we can be of assistance in any way, please do not hesitate to let us know.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'H. Delgado', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Héctor L. Delgado, Ph.D.
Executive Officer, Society for the Study of Social Problems (SSSP)

Enclosures