

TEN REASONS TO RETIRE THE CHIEF

2. Stereotypes - Images can Hurt

“Chief Illiniwek freezes Native Peoples in the Past” *

“Notable Quotes”

Views on stereotypes, symbols, and Native American Imagery.

“Indians seem to live ... outside time and history. No matter how much time passes, Indians are expected to remain aboriginal.” - Carol Spindel (2000)

“[He rejects performances that] “hearken back to almost a Disney-esque, Bambi kind of cultural perspective of what we used to be. I can’t do that. I don’t live there now, I will never live there and I will never tread in the past.” - R. Carlos Nakai, in Native Peoples (2003)

“Indian mascots and logos are how non-Native people view and remember the Native peoples of this nation. The aggressive acts and parodies performed by athletic team mascots and participating fans perpetuate ... myths that Native Americans were uncivilized peoples constantly involved in warlike activities.” - Mary Landreth (2001)

It is almost as if a culture that is literally saturated with allusions to fictional Indians had no interest in living Indians at all.” - Fergus Bordewich (1996)

“Although many students view Chief Illiniwek in positive terms, he is nonetheless a stereotype that hinders our understanding of American Indian history and culture.” - Tom Bassett (2000)

“Mascots playing dress up and want-a-be Indian are sadly sometimes the only representation other cultures see of us. It’s stereotypes like Chief Illiniwek that keep Native Americans from being respected at schools and work.” - Vanessa Casillas (2000)

“Chief Illiniwek is not keeping Native culture alive, he is keeping a stereotype alive.” - Christine Redcloud (2000)

(full references on the web site)

✓ Reality Check



The University is *not* about the Chief. It is about excellence & leadership in teaching, research and athletics.

← U.I. Graduate School of Library and Information Science, ranked 1st nationally

Stereotypes and Symbolism: Images can Hurt

By the Editor, RetireTheChief

What do you think of white people?

It’s a simple enough question. “There are all sorts”, you might say. Indeed, Hitler was white. Mario Cuomo still is. Perhaps you don’t hold stereotypes of your race; rest assured that others may well have stereotypes of you .

Native Americans face extraordinarily powerful stereotypes. These include the “Good Indian”: handsome, calm, dignified, brave - as well as the “Bad Indian”: lazy and lecherous, constantly on the warpath. (Spindel)

Native American stereotypes are well entrenched, and perpetuate the image of the Indian of over 100 years ago - what historian Robert Berkhofer calls the White Man’s Indian. The images were created by “Generations of Wild West shows and Hollywood films.” (Bordewich)

Stereotypes tend to have a life of their own. “Many interactions between American Indians and non-Indians serve to affirm stereotypes because people are looking for information to confirm their stereotypes”, write authors Poupard and Becker.

We must move on from symbols such as the Chief. He is a symbol and powerful stereotype of Native American life in the 1800’s . Continuing use of the Chief as a University of Illinois symbol perpetuates an outdated image which tends to place today’s Native Americans in the distant past, and which reinforces that outdated image in the eyes of non-Indians.

It is time - actually, it is past time. Isn’t it time to retire the Chief? •

(Above is the abbreviated form; the full article, and all references, are on www.retirethechief.org.)

NOTICE TO THE BILLBOARD TEAM

- ☹ **Bad news:** the Chief has *not* yet been retired. As such, the call to restore him seems ... premature. Also, **only** the Board of Trustees - not the Chancellor - may retain/retire the Chief.
- ☺ **Good news:** in time, the Chief will be retired, for the good of the University, at which time your message will be appropriate. Hang on to those T-shirts!

WELCOME

This site exists to *give a voice* to those who believe Chief Illiniwek should be retired, to promote discussion between those who are pro- and anti-Chief, and to encourage a change in policy - to retire the Chief. We want to help *turn up the volume* on the Chief debate. Regardless of your stand on this divisive issue, [welcome](http://www.RetireTheChief.org). Much more may be found at our web site, www.RetireTheChief.org .

www.RetireTheChief.org: Welcome • Letters • Essays • Position statements • Web sites • Pro-/Anti-Chief dialogue