

Get off the warpath

Texas school districts should change offensive mascot names

In an era when it is hip to be politically correct, correctness lacks in many parts of the nation, especially Texas. The American Indian Resource Council is working to get schools in the San Antonio area to change the names of their mascots.

While it may seem to be a part of American culture to have names like

"Braves" and "Redskins" as school mascots, these names not only offend many Native Americans, they also encourage stereotypes. This encouragement is wrong, and these schools should consider changing their mascots.

In the San Antonio area alone, there are at least 20 schools that have Indian-related names. While the names were not meant to offend Native Americans originally, they have continued to promote the idea of the 'noble savage' that H.D. Thoreau once wrote about. In a *Houston Chronicle* article, Jonathan Hook, president of the American Indian Resource Council, said these names portray Native Americans as "savage, war-like people."

Anyone who has had a history class beyond the fifth grade will know that Native Americans were no more savage or war-like than the settlers. While settlers were moving westward and claiming all land for themselves, Native Americans had to fight to keep the land that they had lived on for centuries before the settlers appeared. Yet, the most common picture of a Native American is one riding a horse with a tomahawk in hand, chasing down a poor, innocent settler.

This image is the one that Hollywood and grade-school history classes have used to brainwash America. To say that Native Americans are savage is to disregard a greater truth. When the settlers landed here, they did not understand the Native Americans anymore than the the

Native Americans understood them. But it seems that the only history lessons that are given are ones on how the Native Americans were savages. These mascot names just perpetuate these images of false history.

When schools have mascot names like "Warriors" or "Braves", inevitably head dresses and war dances are used in celebrations. Even though the students and schools may not mean any disrespect to Native Americans, head dresses are religious objects, and using them is an insult to Native Americans. Hook said, "They will wear feather bonnets, and that's a religious object to us. It's like using a cross to boost spirit at a football game." The mock dances are offensive and make a mockery of time-honored celebrations for Native Americans. Schools should be conscience of respecting all cultures including that of the Native Americans.

Another problem that needs to be addressed in Texas is the use of offensive Native American words for the names of places. The use of the word "squaw" particularly is offensive to Native-American women. According to Hook, "Most modern American Indian groups now consider 'squaw' an obscene reference to a

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woman's body part." Yet in Texas there are 21 places that have the word in their names.

It is disrespectful for the state to continue using a name that is obscene and degrading to a group of American citizens. While one may argue that these names are not a sign of disrespect, but a part of American culture, that is ignorant and wrong. These names may be a part of the past culture, but today they only show a lack of respect and understanding for groups that are not the majority. These names do not add anything to American culture unless it is to show how Americans are content with stereotyping and disregarding a part of their society.

These names must be removed and replaced with names that use native languages or honoring a person or group of people. It is inconceivable to believe that today, not only in Texas but in many parts of the nation, America has let such obvious disrespectful and stereotypical names to remain.

Brienne Porter is a junior political science major.



JOE PEDEN • THE BATTALION

As America faces security issues, some pranks are just not funny

Two Clear Brook High School seniors were arrested recently after dropping rolls of toilet paper and paper towels from an airplane on two high school football fields in Houston. They were charged on Oct. 31 with deadly conduct and released on a \$30,000 bail. Deadly conduct is classified as a Class A misdemeanor, and is punishable by up to one year in jail and/or a \$4,000

fine if convicted. Many in the community believe that this act, classified as deadly conduct, is ridiculous, and an overreaction to the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks. But the 17-year-old boys made a poor choice, and must accept their punishment. As the country is on high alert for security reasons, would-be pranksters must realize that joking in such a way cannot be tolerated.

The seriousness of irresponsible pranks was even present at Texas A&M recently. A white powder spilled in a hallway in Dunn Hall shows that even college students are not above the temptation to act stupid. Those responsible for the Dunn Hall prank should be punished to the extent of the law.

In the aftermath of Sept. 11, people are now exerting more caution than ever, and are still frightened more than normal by unusual sightings and objects being dropped from the air. About 200 people called in that day to report the plane flying unusually low and dropping unknown objects from the plane. While officials agree that there was no threat in the prank, this must be used as an example to show that no actions with even a remote chance of being a threat to citizens will be dealt with lightly. Especially in a time of heightened sensitivity to such ideas, all concerns must be handled with more caution than under dif-

ferent circumstances. These two students were likely aware of the state of the nation and chose nonetheless to commit an act which obviously overrode their better judgment, and as a result must be forced to take consequences for their actions. Ignorance and immaturity are not excuses for thoughtless, irresponsible pranks.

These untimely pranks are comparable with the numerous school shootings across the nation. After the tragedies, many lawmakers have rightly pushed for a zero-tolerance policy, ranging from a year suspension for a bomb threat to putting 14-year-olds on a \$100,000 bail, with the possibility of life in prison, for a mass killing threat.

Many people argue that this is uncalled for, that the public is just overreacting. Perhaps it is, but whether it is in line with what is acceptable or not, it is absolutely necessary.

The statement will be made through this decision that no threat to the public will be tolerated, regardless of the threat, whether it was merely intended as a prank or not. Any threat to the well-being and safety of the public must be dealt with severely in order to enforce the idea that terrorizing citizens is not acceptable.

Still, in the case of the two young men, some people think that the bail was too high, that perhaps the punishment and classification too extreme.

However, one thing is certain: these boys will never forget this. And as a result, will hopefully learn from this experience, and realize that it is not only dangerous to pull a stunt like that but it is also morally wrong, as they have infringed upon the rights of the unsuspecting people who were frightened into thinking something terrible was happening. And through this punishment and harsh classification of the act, it is demonstrated law enforcement is serious about protecting our citizens.

Ruby Lee is a sophomore computer science major.

War Hymn should remain like it is

In response to Richard Bray's Nov. 12 column:

There are several things wrong with this suggestion and resolution. The first should be obvious, and that is tradition. This university that prides itself on tradition. Since the induction of the War Hymn, Aggies always have repeated the second verse, because, as Bray stated, "Aggies decided that the first verse sounded too much like the Ivy-League fight songs."

When you have RHA passing a resolution on this, and then passing a resolution in support of Bonfire, they are picking and choosing which traditions they believe we should keep. What's next, will we start singing "We are the Aggies, the Aggies so true, we're from Texas A.M.U." when we sing "The Spirit?"

I do not see where visitors do not take A&M seriously because of our War Hymn. Bray also makes it sound as if we are the only school that attacks another school in their fight song. The UT fight song, 'Texas Fight' states, "Texas Fight! Texas Fight! / and it's good-bye to A&M. / Texas Fight! Texas Fight! / and we'll put over one more win."

I encourage all Aggies to join together to sing the second verse twice, not only when we play UT but anytime we sing the War Hymn.

*Justin Williamson
Class of 2005*

The tradition for excellence

When I earned my degree from Texas A&M, I looked at that diploma as one might look at owning a blue chip stock. It was a good investment and one that, when presented as a credential, is valued by those who judge accomplishments. However, countless other Aggies around the world and myself, who have worked hard to earn this degree, have turned over a tremendous challenge to those coming from behind — increase the value of my stock.

Much has been made recently about traditions at A&M. But I was proud with the way the current crop of Aggies stood to the adversity of the Bonfire. I was proud at the Oklahoma State football game, too. It was my son's birthday, and I bought the tickets as a present to him. I did not know that the game held any significance, and we showed up, struggling to find a parking place and fighting the crowds and wondering where the heck was the traditional maroon.

I was overwhelmed with a pride of where I attended school and that my children and wife were there to witness this accomplishment. That a handful of students could accomplish what was accomplished that day is truly amazing. And once you get out into the real world, away from the protected campus, you will find that it is accomplishment that you will be judged on, not whether you allowed cheerleaders at football games.

My degree, earned with a lot of pain and determination on my part and the support and love of those close to me, means as much to me as it means to my wife, my mother, father and my children. It means accomplishment. Because of my pride,

MAIL CALL

I do not want A&M to be like any other school in the world. This is a selfish sentiment, I want A&M to be the tradition for excellence.

There needs to be a new spirit in Aggieland: a spirit of excellence. We need a new sense of where we are going, to what heights we should attain. Not if, but when. With future leadership of the campus administration should come a new desire to be the best the world has to offer. Let's not set our sights on UT Let's not set our sights so low that our accomplishments are dwarfed by our desires. We truly are unique and truly inspired. Our deeds are our words, and we need direction to mold our deeds.

I ask all students and former students to stand united against mediocrity. Demand excellence. Do not set the bar too low, but raise it so all can prosper. Each dean of a college should be asking themselves, "What can I do to make my college the best the world has to offer?" Each professor must ask, "What more can I teach my students?" Each student should demand from themselves and their leadership excellence. A&M should stand for the best we can offer. It should be the home of excellence and it can be if you continue to achieve. Focus there, and everything else will take care of itself.

*Fred B. Hink
Class of 1985*



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