

Cartoon Controversies Presentation

Sample Analysis and Annotated Bibliography

Cartoon #1 Analysis:

Cartoon #1 is comments on the topic of the Washington Redskins mascot Controversy—a hotly debated topic in recent years. The cartoon makes specific reference to the June 18, 2014, decision by the Trademark Trial and Appeal Board to cancel the six trademarks held by the team in a two to one decision that held that the term "redskins" is disparaging to a "substantial composite of Native Americans", and this is demonstrated "by the near complete drop-off in usage of 'redskins' as a reference to Native Americans beginning in the 1960s." The cartoon implies that the decision by the TTAB was the "correct call" as evidenced by the guilty expression on the football player's face. The Washington Redskins franchise is currently appealing the TTAB Decision.

While the cartoon's perspective is shared by a majority of American Indians polled in a 2014 University of California at San Bernardino survey, many Democrats and members of the "liberal" news media also support its viewpoint. Liberals may be more predisposed to be sympathetic to "correct" the past transgressions suffered by native peoples and this may even be a way for Democrats to garner votes from American Indians. During the 2014 Election Year, 48 U.S. Senators and President Obama, as well as many major newspapers editorialized against the Washington Redskins name. They argued that it is a demeaning, outdated and culturally insensitive vestige of a bygone era that is long overdue for retirement.

While it is true that the vast majority of Americans—including some American Indians—are not offended by the Redskins name, it also makes sense that many liberals would have objections to the Washington Redskins name and therefore support the recent decision by the TTAB. Since 1948, the Democratic Party has prioritized "civil rights" issue to a far greater extent than the Republican Party. Liberals are also more comfortable with "authoritarian," top-down decision-making in general, especially when it relates to the protection of minority rights.

Cartoon #2 Analysis:

Like Cartoon #1 discussed above, Cartoon #2 also uses football imagery to comment on the Redskins controversy. The perspective, however, is far more conservative in that it portrays the Redskins as blind-sided and victimized by excessive government overreach. The cartoon implies that the "hit" taken by the team was excessively hard and unfair—a cheap shot that will result in a "concussion," according to the sideline officials.

According to recent surveys the majority of Americans, including 89% of conservatives do not consider the Redskin name to be a significant concern. What is problematic, according to many Republicans, is the abuse of federal power symbolized by the TTAB decision. If the so-called Redskins "problem" is to be addressed at all, many conservatives would argue that it should be done through private sector, free market solutions, rather than federal bullying. Most conservatives would argue that forcing the team's owners to change their public identity involuntarily is costly and downright un-American. A better solution is to let the team and corporation change their mascot name voluntarily. And, if the franchise wishes to keep its controversial mascot name and risk of public backlash, so be it. Nothing prevents those affronted by the mascot issue from shifting their allegiance to another, "less-offensive" team, if they so choose. The private sector, not the government, should determine how best to resolve this relatively superficial issue.

Ultimately, many conservatives would argue that the ongoing sports mascots debate is evidence that political correctness is running amok in this country. A handful of academics and talking heads have dubbed themselves the “language police” and are now promoting this trivial discussion because they want to increase viewers, sell newspapers, and generally advance a liberal agenda. They want the American public to feel guilty about our nation’s past treatment of Indians, even though no one living today was directly responsible for this past mistreatment. Many conservatives would argue that they have no right to lecture sports fans.

My Opinion:

Cartoon #1 best represents my opinions regarding the Redskins issue. Native American mascots—and especially the name Redskins—are inappropriate in today’s society. To argue that a majority of Americans see no reason to be concerned about Indian mascots is to miss the point. There was a time in America when the majority of our citizens found no reason to object to slavery, but that didn’t make the practice right. Because a good many Americans don’t know any Indians personally, their concepts of native peoples are shaped by ignorant, rude, and demeaning media representations that bear no resemblance to actual Indians. Historically, the media also defined African Americans, Asians, and other various ethnic groups in a variety of misleading and inappropriate ways. But while these other caricatures have—for the most part—thankfully been relegated to the dustbin of history, Native Americans remain fair game for bigotry on game day.

Supporters of Indian mascots argue that the “political correctness” police are overreacting—that Indian mascots honor Native Americans and no real harm can come from a simple team name or half-time show. It’s time they realize that this is not a fringe issue promoted by a handful of vocal extremists. Since the 1960s, roughly 1500 mascots have been altered or dropped, at the local or college level. In the world of professional sports, however, Native American mascots are still going strong. Fans of the Atlanta Braves still use the “tomahawk chop,” the Cleveland Indians still retain their cartoon logo, Chief Wahoo. And the nation’s capital is still home to the Redskins—a name that is particularly offensive because the term dates from the colonial era, when bounties were offered for killing Native Americans and bounty hunters presented bloody scalps as evidence of a kill. Can anyone living today really imagine teams such as the Chicago Chinks or the New York Niggers? No. So why are racially oriented mascots still being utilized with respect to Native Americans?

Indian mascots and their related songs, dances, gestures, and costumes insult real cultural traditions, perpetuate hurtful misunderstandings, and contribute to a false sense of racial superiority for whites. Studies show that mascots can lower the self-esteem of Native American children, encouraging them to accept racial stereotypes and tolerate racism at an early age. In this manner, Indian mascots may undermine ongoing efforts by native peoples to overcome historical injustices and promote self-respect and integrity. Perhaps the reason many Indians claim to not be offended by sports mascots is that they’ve simply resigned themselves to living in a society that is pervasively ignorant, uncaring, and racist.

Banning ridiculous and hurtful sports mascot names, imagery, and shenanigans will not erase the historical injustices or resolve the contemporary problems now facing native peoples. But when this comparatively easy problem is done away with, our nation will be one crucial step closer to living up to its core principles of equality and justice for all. We, the people of the United States, will take a critical first step toward finally seeing American Indians as real people who are just as deserving of respect and compassion as anyone else. Simple human decency demands that we end this derogatory practice. Maybe then we can get on to tackling some more significant concerns facing native peoples.

Annotated Bibliography:

The Cagle Post, <http://www.cagle.com/tag/patents/>

Cartoon #1 comes from this post, will contains a number of political cartoons related to topics that are currently in the news. The cartoons collected are drawn from a number of cartoonist's work, but the creator of the post, Daryle Cagle, seems to be somewhat left-leaning in his perspective.

Ashley miller, Redskins PR Case Study Blog, <http://redskins-pr-case-study.tumblr.com/>

Cartoon #2 comes from this opinionated blog devoted to the Redskins Controversy. The blogger, Ashley Miller, does not support the Redskins name change and offers several compelling reasons why the issue should be dropped as a topic of major concern.

Scott Clement, "New Poll Says Large Majority of Americans Believe Redskins Should Not Change Name," Washington Post, September 2, 2014

The Washington Post is the most widely circulated newspaper published in Washington, D.C. Along with the *New York Times* and *Wall Street Journal*, it is highly regarded as one of the most respected and award-winning newspapers in the United States. It can be considered a credible source when it reports that a partisan divide on the issue that was absent in previous polls is clear in the latest data. Democrats' support for keeping the name has dropped from 85 percent in 1992 to 58 percent, while independents' support has also dropped by double digits, from 92 to 74 percent. Fully 89 percent of Republicans say the Redskins should not change their name, little changed from 92 percent over two decades ago.

Jeonghun Min and Daniel Savage, "Why Do American Indians Vote Democratic?" A Paper Prepared for Presentation at the 2014 Western Political Science Association Annual Meeting, Seattle, April 17-19, WA

The study conducted by Min and Savage is credible, as evidenced by the fact that its findings were presented at a national political science conference and accepted for publication in a recognized academic publication, *Social Science Journal*. With a 2012 exit poll, the authors empirically examined whether American Indians' cultural ties and their socio-economic characteristics affected their vote choices. They concluded that because of their greater poverty, American Indians are more economically progressive and vote more Democratic than their white counterparts. American Indians' socio-economic circumstances play a greater role than their cultural ties in their vote decisions and significantly influence why they are slower to abandon the Democratic Party.

James V. Fenelon, "Survey on Redskins team name found most American Indians believe it to be offensive and racist," Sociology Department, College of Social and Behavioral Sciences, The Center for Indigenous Peoples Studies at California State University, San Bernardino, 2014

Fenelon's study was conducted through the Center for Indigenous Peoples Studies at California State University, San Bernardino. Its findings--that the large majority of American Indians, when properly identified and polled, consider the Redskins name offensive, disrespectful and racist—are generally valid, given their association with a recognized institution of higher learning. The study found that American Indians were 67% in agreement, 12 % were neutral and 20 % disagreed with the statement. Other ethnic groups are spread across the three major categories of seeing the term Redskins as racist, as neutral, or disagreeing in seeing Redskins as racially offensive. Whites were 33% in agreement, 26% neutral, and 41% disagreed the term was racial, generally the reverse of American Indian responses. The neutral category played a significant role for whites in allowing them to not be seen as "racist" – upon further analysis more than 60% of whites reject the term Redskins as racist, while more than 60% of Indians see the term Redskins as racist.

Rich Lowry, "Liberals Fabricate Outrage over 'Redskins': The Team Name is an Anachronism, but a Harmless One, *The National Review*, October 8, 2013.

The National Review describes itself as "America's most widely read and influential magazine and web site for conservative news, commentary, and opinion." The publication is definitely right leaning and thus the author sees little harm in the Redskins moniker. As the editor of the National Review, Lowry is a conservative spokesperson. His opinion in this editorial is that overly sensitive liberals have exaggerated the Redskins controversy in order to gain political advantages.

Travis Waldren, "Redskins Paying Team Of Republican Advisers For Advice On Name Controversy," *Think Progress*, January 31, 2014.

Think Progress is a liberal American political blog that "provide[s] a forum that advances progressive ideas and policies." As an outlet of the Center for American Progress, it's perspective is definitely left leaning and should be considered biased. This blog's assertion that the Redskins have hired Republican advisers to help the franchise strategize on how to address its ongoing name controversy has been confirmed by other sources, but virtually all of these sources are left-leaning blogs.

Colby Itkowitz, "Interior secretary: It's 'surprising' Redskins name not changed, but it's not top priority for tribal leaders," *The Washington Post*, September 5, 2014.

As noted above, the Washington Post is generally considered to be a credible source. Colby Itkowitz is a national reporter for The Washington Post's In The Loop. She is formerly The Morning Call's DC Correspondent and Congressional Quarterly's transportation reporter.