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CHIEF ILLINIWEK: UNDERSTANDING THE CONTROVERSIAL
DISCOURSE AND THE POLITICS OF POWER

BY

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THESIS

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Abstract

Prominent discourses surrounding the Chief Illiniwek mascot controversy on the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign campus, between the years of 2000-2007, will be examined using textual analysis. Utilizing Tribal Critical Race Theory as a guiding framework for the analysis, various materials have been collected (websites, newspapers, testimonials, and personal experience), and subsequently analyzed. The aim of this project is to uncover how these discourses were being framed, who supported them, how students of color experienced their campus racial climate during this controversy, and lastly how the university played a role in perpetuating the use of stereotypical imagery on campus. Suggestions and recommendations that the university should take into consideration in order to effectively address the Chief Illiniwek mascot issue are also presented as concluding remarks.

Para mi mamá, que sin su sacrificio no estaría donde estoy. Y para mi familia que siempre han creído en mí, especialmente en los momentos difíciles.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

“Historically, American Indians have been the most lied-about subset of our population” (Loewen, 2007, p. 93).

“Situated within a broader context of issues concerned with social responsibility, politics, and the dignity of human life, higher education should be engaged as a site that offers students the opportunity to involve themselves in the deepest problems of society, to acquire the knowledge, skills, and ethical vocabulary necessary for modes of critical dialogue and forms of broadened civic participation” (Giroux, 2002).

“...as educators, we are responsible for maintaining the ethics of teaching and for helping to eliminate racism in all aspects of school life” (Pewewardy, 2000, p. 3).

I remember the first time that I walked through the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC) campus in the fall of 2009. August actually marked the second time that I had been on campus since my initial campus visit in April earlier that year. However, when I visited in April I was only on campus for one day (and not even a full day at that), spending the majority of my time in the student union and also in the college of education, the department that I had applied to. At one point during my visit in April, I had wandered around the campus towards Lincoln Ave., where many of the residence halls were located, and in doing so passed through Nevada St., known by many students and university affiliates as the site for the cultural houses on campus along with some of the cultural studies departments (such as African American studies). In walking along Nevada St., I noticed several different signs along each side of the street, appearing nearly identical in nature, not only with regards to the shape and size of the sign itself, but also the writing that was inscribed in large, capitalized, red letters, against a white background, making it nearly impossible to *not* notice the signs planted in the grass. One example of a sign read: FIGHTING ILLINI, TODAY YOUR HOST IS PEORIA. What was interesting about the sign aside from what it stated, was that the first two words, “fighting illini”

were spelled backwards. All of the signs had this same layout except that the last words for each were different (e.g., another sign read Meskwaki). As I walked I remember wondering about the signs, why they were planted where they were, and what their connection was in relation to the school and also to the cultural houses. Little did I know at the time that these signs were actually a part of an art exhibit (which I will discuss later in the paper) and are but one piece of a larger political, ideological, and ethical struggle which had captivated (and continues to do so) the university for nearly 20 years prior to my arrival to the campus.

I left my visit in April still wondering about those signs. I felt like I wanted to ask someone about them but did not feel comfortable enough to do so. What was even more intriguing was that as interested as I had been in the signs, it appeared that I was the only one. That is, none of the other students who were walking down Nevada St. that day seemed to notice the unmistakable red letters that I could not take my eyes off of. At first I assumed this was probably because those who had walked down Nevada St. were accustomed to seeing the signs and they were not as novel to them as they were to me. For many, I am certain this was the case. However, the more time I spent on campus, the more I began to realize not only the significance of the signs themselves, but also the metaphorical significance of the lack of attention they were given.

When I returned to the campus in the fall, I once again felt that strange feeling in my stomach. Perhaps it was due to the fact that I was so far away from home and that I had never lived in another state besides my home state of California. It could have also been the small college town setting of the Champaign-Urbana area, another aspect that I was not accustomed to. I have no doubt that the feeling was some combination of the two. At the same time, I could not help but think that there was something more to this feeling, something more unsettling that I

could not articulate well. Though I could not clearly identify at the time what that feeling was, in retrospect I believe that it was the feeling of being a student of color, specifically a Chicana, on a campus that appears to rarely come across “my kind”. In other words, as I understand it now, that feeling was stemming from a sense of isolation I felt when walking around campus, feeling invisible in a space where I was clearly and noticeably different than everyone else.

Though I knew very little about the history of the campus itself, I quickly learned that there was something unique about this campus and its racial climate, that is (according to my definition), the environment created on campus for students and its (campus) ability to address race-related tensions between and among students, faculty, and administration. On my first trip to the bookstore, I saw a section that was selling Chief merchandise. This merchandise was a paradox to me given that I had heard from other students that the UIUC mascot, Chief Illiniwek, had been recently retired. Though I knew little about the Chief mascot controversy at the time, I was struck by the fact that the bookstore was still continuing to sell this merchandise despite the Chief’s retirement. In fact to this day (as of April 2011), two campus affiliated bookstores continue to sell Chief wear and merchandise, T.I.S. College Bookstore and Follett Bookstore (boycott “the chief”, IRESIST.org).

The selling of Chief merchandise in the bookstore was the beginning of my interest in the Chief mascot controversy. The more time that I spent on campus and speaking with students, faculty, and staff, all of which had been there longer than myself, the more information that I learned regarding the controversy and its long history of political deadlock. As I became more acquainted with the university, its history, and some of the current issues it faces, I became more and more involved with student activist groups on campus (along with their activities), many of which had been working to combat a hostile campus racial climate for several years. Thus, it is

from these personal experiences (along with other background experiences and personal interests), from which I operate to write this paper.

The quotes I presented at the outset of this paper are reflective of the two major themes that will guide the arguments made in this paper, that is: a) that the knowledge of Native Americans¹ and their history in this country is fraught with misconception after misconception and that images of Native Americans in popular culture, such as sports mascots, often only serve to further perpetuate stereotypic, anachronistic, and overall negative ideas about Native Americans, and b) that educational institutions and specifically those pertaining to higher education, should be rooted in a commitment to social justice, diversity, access, and equity for the various populations they represent and thus should *actively* engage in issues (locally, nationally, or globally) which threaten to undercut these commitments. To demonstrate how these two themes work together, I will specifically be examining the case of a Native American sports mascot and its ensuing controversy at an institution of higher education.

For many years, the use of Native American symbols, figures, and insignia have been widely accepted as sports mascots at the elementary school, secondary school, college, and professional level. The purpose of a mascot is essentially one-dimensional: to fight and to do it bravely. The question of why then, anyone would consider the use of Native American figures to represent mascots (who are by design one-dimensional representations), is a complex one.

¹ In defining this term, I draw upon the definition provided by Pewewardy (2000), who states, “[t]here is no universally accepted term for the peoples native to North America. Indian, Native American, and American Indian are all unsatisfactory terms for indicating the diversity of tribal nations existing in the area which is now the United States. That said, Native American, American Indian, Native, and Indian are used interchangeably as a common vernacular...” (p. 3). Though I am aware that these terms are used differently across different contexts, I am not, for the purposes of this paper, engaging in those specific dialogues.

How do we come to understand the complacency with which such representations of an entire *people* are accepted?

Chapter 2

What is the Purpose of This Paper?

The purpose of this paper is to examine the aforementioned question, that is, how Native Americans have been subjected to this type of representation and how others invested in these mascots vehemently oppose their removal. Specifically, the case of Chief Illiniwek at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign will be examined. Information relevant to the Chief's origin as well as the protests and political deadlock that ensued between anti-chief and pro-chief camps will be analyzed. More specifically, the aim of this paper will be to identify and examine prominent discourses related to the Chief mascot issue during the time period between 2000-2007², including the primary arguments in support of and against the use of the Chief as an official university symbol. In conjunction with the above aim, there will also be an attempt to examine: a) what was driving these discourses, b) who were the ones in support of them, c) the university's role (as a public institution) in the issue, d) what this issue signified for Native American students, as well as other students of color, and e) the campus racial climate that students experienced.

In order to examine the questions/topics of interest for this study, textual analyses will be conducted through a Tribal Critical Race Theory framework (discussed below). Data collection procedures consisted of primary and secondary sources, including websites (blogs, student organizations), media coverage, newspaper articles, testimonials (primarily through transcripts of

² The years 2000-2007 provide a wide net of Chief discourse for one to examine. Because of this, it would be a very difficult, and indeed arduous, task to undertake an analysis of all available materials related to the Chief during this time frame. Thus, the events and materials that I have focused on specifically for this paper, are based on what I believe is the most useful and accessible to conduct a discourse analysis, for the specific purposes of my research.

Chief debates on campus), as well as personal experience on campus as a newly arrived student. Although the time frame specified for collecting such materials are the years 2000-2007, it is not an absolute frame, meaning that information prior to 2000 and post 2007 will also be used to provide a brief history of the issue, along with its current status. The main reason for selection of the years 2000-2007 is to understand how the debate had escalated in the years prior to the university's official retirement of the Chief in 2007.

In researching the Chief issue and also through my own experiences with student activism on campus, I began to see the connection between my initial feelings of discomfort on campus (i.e., the strange feeling in my stomach) and the enduring impact of the Chief controversy, which to this day continues to divide both the campus and local community. Thus, there are several reasons why examining the Chief controversy is important: a) to highlight how embedded systems of racism continue to function in our most prized institutions, particularly those of education, b) to understand how students of color make sense of these systems which adversely affect them, how they create dialogue about their experiences, and also how they become active agents of change, c) to understand how negative popular culture images inform our understandings of Native Americans and their histories, and d) to understand how the university administration's inaction is the *same* as contributing to the issue's pervasiveness. And perhaps last but not least, to demonstrate through my own personal narrative as a graduate student on campus that the feelings and environment of racial hostility on campus are *real* and not simply imagined and in some cases (such as my own) take on both a psychological and physiological response.

The remainder of the paper is divided into different subsections³, beginning first with an explanation of my guiding theoretical frameworks, followed by: a brief history of the Chief's origins, how the controversy initially started and how it persisted from 1990-2000, an examination of what happened during 2000 and thereafter, how the Chief issue sets the tone for other campus racial climate hostilities, and lastly, some concluding remarks and suggestions for the university in terms of *fully* addressing and engaging issues of race and racism on campus.

³ This paper, though comprehensive, is by no means an attempt to be exhaustive of all of the literature and topics of interest related to the Chief, or Native American sports mascots more generally. Even within each subsection, there is a plethora of information which one can draw from.

Chapter 3

Theoretical and Methodological Frameworks

A primary theoretical framework that is employed throughout this research project is that of Tribal Critical Race Theory (TribalCrit) (Brayboy, 2005). TribalCrit grows out of an extensive base of scholarly work done on Critical Race Theory (CRT). Thus, TribalCrit shares some of the same tenets which are integral to the CRT framework, however, is specifically tailored to meet the needs of Native Americans as they have a different legal and political relationship with the federal government than do other people of color in the U.S. (Brayboy, 2005). Though Native Americans are also racialized in many of the same ways as other people of color are, indigenous groups are also different from other racial and ethnic minorities due to the importance of tribal sovereignty and tribal agreements with the federal government (Brayboy, 2005). However, in order to better understand the central tenets which compose TribalCrit, it is important to first contextualize the role of CRT and its influence on the study of race and racism, particularly through legal and educational standpoints (that is, how CRT has been influential in the fields of law and education).

Contextualizing Critical Race Theory

CRT emerged out of a necessity to place social constructions of race and forms of oppression related to systemic racism at the forefront of discussion (Parker & Lynn, 2002; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Yosso, 2006; Lynn & Parker, 2006; Solórzano & Delgado-Bernal, 2001). Several key legal scholars, such as, "...Derrick Bell, Mari Matsuda, Richard Delgado, Angela Harris, and Kimberle Crenshaw" were considered to be the first "wave" of CRT scholars who critiqued the field of Critical Legal Studies during the late 80s and 90s (Lynn & Parker, 2006, p. 259). Critical Legal Studies (CLS) was a liberal field of study that critiqued the way in

which the legal system "...served to privilege the wealthy and powerful in the U.S. while ignoring the rights of the poor to use the courts as a means of redress" (Lynn & Parker, 2006, p. 259). Though CLS offered a powerful critique of the function of the law for marginalized groups, several legal scholars of color (the first wave of CRT scholars) critiqued CLS in stating that it did not go far enough in its critique of the legal system in that discussions of race and racism (and its role in shaping the lives of people of color) were largely absent from the CLS discourse (Lynn & Parker, 2006; Yosso, 2006; Parker & Lynn, 2002). To illustrate this point, Parker and Lynn (2002) state, "CRT scholars, many of whom had been strongly influenced by civil rights law and CLS law, began to take up seriously the question of race and racism in the law by calling for a complete reinterpretation of civil rights law with regard to its ineffectiveness in addressing racial injustices, particularly institutional racism and structural racism in the political economy" (p. 9). This perspective explicitly highlights how deeply embedded racism is to the history of the U.S., and how race relations between people of color and Whites were structured such that Whites were placed at the top of a racial hierarchy (Yosso, 2006). Thus, the study of racism necessitates a critical examination of White privilege within the U.S., and the political, economic, and societal benefits which are granted to people solely on the basis that they are White (Yosso, 2006; McIntosh, 1990).

Another reason why CRT is useful to understanding the meaning of race and racism is not only because of the fact that it places racism within a historical context, but also because it highlights the ways in which racism functions today, which may or may not resemble previous racist acts. In other words, because race is a social construction, so too must racism be socially constructed, thus indicating the fluid nature of racist acts, attitudes, and systems (Parker & Lynn, 2002). This means that racism of today may not look like racism of the "past" because of new

contextual factors; at the same time, because race is such a deeply embedded concept in U.S. society and because institutional practices have consistently reflected racist behaviors, racism still persists, however its forms may have changed (e.g., emerging scholarship on racial microaggressions). As such, one important aspect (of many) of CRT is that it

“...engages in an ‘undressing’ of the objective nature of the law and legal doctrine. Concepts such as color-blind interpretations of the law or meritocracy are ‘unmasked’ by critical race theorists to be precursors for White, European American hegemonic control of the social and structural arrangements in U.S. society”. (Parker & Lynn, 2002, p. 9).

Thus, CRT provides a lens of analysis for understanding how color blind approaches and the downplaying of race lead to institutional malpractice, which in turn adversely impacts people of color at the expense of privileging Whites. Such critiques provide a challenge to the dominant narrative which claims that racial injustices are no longer perpetuated, except when these injustices are blatantly obvious (Yosso, 2006).

Yet another important and integral aspect to CRT scholarship is the use of storytelling and narrative accounts to legitimate the experiences of racism felt by people of color (Parker & Lynn, 2002; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Yosso, 2006). Thus, CRT privileges the use of storytelling as a means of highlighting the experiences of people of color and also as a means of demonstrating the impact of racism through the perspective of those who encounter it most often (Parker & Lynn, 2002). CRT scholars most often make use of “counter-stories” that is, stories which stand to counter the dominant narratives which dictate the experiences of people of color (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). As Yosso (2006) states, “[c]ounterstories reflect on the lived experiences of People of Color to raise critical consciousness about social and racial injustice” (p. 10). In addition, such stories highlight the epistemologies (ways of knowing) of communities of color, which are often disregarded as not valid or not “scientific” enough to hold value (Yosso, 2006). CRT scholars argue that these stories are valid forms of knowledge and provide

evidence against the dominant narrative that racism is not really “a big deal” and that people of color are being “overly sensitive” (I will return to the use of counter-narratives as a methodological approach shortly).

In the above paragraphs, I have provided a brief overview of the development of CRT and its utility in highlighting and uncovering racism through the behavior of individuals, but most notably through institutional practices and the legal system. To that effect, CRT scholarship (and its offshoots) today have retained three key elements:

“a) to present storytelling and narratives as valid approaches through which to examine race and racism in the law and in society, b) to argue for the eradication of racial subjugation while simultaneously recognizing that race is a social construct, and c) to draw important relationships between race and other axes of domination” (Parker & Lynn, 2002, p. 10).

Though CRT originated through the work of legal scholars, many education scholars have examined how CRT can function to explain racism within school and schooling environments, and in particular, the disparities in educational resources and outcomes between White students and students of color. For the purposes of my research project, I am most interested in applying a CRT lens to the educational arena of higher education institutions. Though original conceptions of CRT have laid the groundwork for much of the scholarly work which challenges dominant, color blind ideologies, CRT was framed mostly along the lines of a Black/White binary, which does not fully address and account for the experiences of people of color who are not African-American (Brayboy, 2005; Yosso, 2006). The need to break from this binary has necessitated the emergence of CRT work that can specifically address the nuances of a particular racial/ethnic community, such as what Latino Critical Race Theory (LatCrit) has done for the experiences of Latina/o students.

The Nuances of TribalCrit

It is with the understanding and recognition that Native Americans have a markedly different position in society than other racial/ethnic minorities, that I utilize a TribalCrit framework for my analysis⁴. Drawing primarily from the scholarship of Brayboy (2005), I feel that TribalCrit provides a useful frame of analysis for which to study the persistence of Native American mascot imagery and in particular the adamant resistance put forth by supporters of such mascots to retain them. Though TribalCrit shares some similar perspectives as put forth by CRT, there is at least one important difference which in turn shapes some of its tenets:

“...CRT...does not address the specific needs of tribal peoples because it does not address American Indians’ liminality as both legal/political and racialized beings or the experience of colonization” (Brayboy, 2005, p. 428-429). In other words, as mentioned earlier, CRT as a framework does not account for the fact that tribal peoples have a specific relationship with the federal government based on tribal sovereignty. Both the legal and political aspects of tribal sovereignty are important issues to consider when discussing Native American mascot imagery. This is because the right to who owns this imagery is one that is constantly up for contestation, despite tribal sovereignty rights (Tsosie, 2002). Notions of “Indian authenticity” have been political battlegrounds for the “right” to own Native American mascot imagery, along with which groups have the most say with regards to the legitimacy of such images.

⁴ It should be noted here that I do not claim to be an expert in indigenous literatures, nor do I consider myself a part of the Native American community. I am, by many accounts, an outsider to this community and have chosen this framework based on my knowledge of CRT in general, and TribalCrit more specifically. Furthermore, because I am not fully or even close to being fully read in indigenous literatures and scholarly debates, I realize that there may be debates that I am not engaging in, either because I am not well read enough to do so, or because I am not aware of them altogether. That being said, my hope is to aid in providing a better understanding of TribalCrit as it relates to this topic.

In order to account for this unique legal/political difference between Native Americans and other ethnic/racial minority groups, Brayboy (2005) converts the first tenet of CRT, racism is endemic to American society (Lynn & Parker, 2006) to, “colonization is endemic to society” (p. 429). The effect of changing “racism” to “colonization” is essentially that of historicizing previous indigenous/White relations in order to understand how these relationships are shaped today, and also to highlight how they are driven by assimilationist goals and desires (Brayboy, 2005). Thus, by examining the role of colonization, one is able to analyze indigenous/White relations through a lens which examines how the continued presence and ramifications of colonial experiences for Native Americans (such as language loss, tribal separation and tribal extinction) influences their status in society today (Brayboy, 2005). Furthermore, colonial experiences also highlight the relations between the federal government and tribal governments, characterized mostly through mistrust, particularly because of false governmental promises made to Native American people.

There are a total of nine TribalCrit tenets, many of which are connected in one form or another to the first as presented above. For example, the second tenet states, “U.S. policies toward Indigenous peoples are rooted in imperialism, White supremacy, and a desire for material gain” (Brayboy, 2005, p. 429). Such sentiments stem from “manifest destiny” policies whereby Whites saw it as their “god ordained” destiny to take from indigenous peoples what they believed was “rightfully” theirs. Using such “logic” made it justifiable for Whites to take lands and resources away from indigenous groups along with the subsequent justification for assimilation of the Indian into “American” culture and ways of life (Tsosie, 2005). As such, tenet number six states, “governmental policies and educational policies toward Indigenous peoples are intimately linked around the problematic goal of assimilation” (Brayboy, 2005, p.

429). Many of these tenets are evidenced when analyzing both the arguments in support of retaining the Chief and also retiring him. These tenets will resurface again later in the paper when I analyze the Chief discourse and the ensuing controversy.

It is important to note that while Brayboy (2005) emphasizes the legal/political nature of Native Americans as being a distinct marker from other racial/ethnic minority groups, he also highlights how Native Americans become racialized, much in the same way as other people of color. That is, Native Americans become subsumed under the term “ethnic minorities” without a consideration of their unique legal/political histories, and relationship with the federal government. These racializations are apparent through the stereotypic nature of Native American mascot imagery and its connection to other popular culture representations of the time, which portrayed people of color in a similarly negative light (e.g., minstrel shows done in blackface) (Farnell, 2004). Thus, while Native Americans have a unique political and social history due in large part to the effects of colonization, they are often times viewed as having no more rights than any other U.S. citizen (Tsosie, 2002). What becomes even more problematic, is when Native American tribal sovereignties are contested by European Americans and those with privilege in order to ensure that they do not receive any type of “special treatment” which might benefit Native Americans at their own (Whites’) expense (Tsosie, 2002). Thus, the theme of racialization applies in many ways to Native Americans, despite their differential histories.

Counter-storytelling as Method

At this point, I would like to return to the idea of using counter-stories and counter-storytelling as methodological tools informed by the basic tenets of CRT and other ethnic-specific CRT models, such as TribalCrit. Though I had yet to explicitly state it, I am employing a methodological approach of counter-storytelling and counter-narrative to this project,

presenting my own experiences in conjunction with the data in order to provide the context for my interpretations and analysis. Additionally, through providing my own narrative, I am legitimating my first hand experience as a viable account of the impact of racism I experienced on campus and why those experiences are tied to issues related to the Chief (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Parker & Lynn, 2002). Counter-stories are described as being "...tool[s] for exposing, analyzing, and challenging the majoritarian stories of racial privilege. Counter-stories can shatter complacency, challenge the dominant discourse on race, and further the struggle for racial reform" (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 32). The counter-story that I am providing in this paper stems from two different sources: textual analyses using a TribalCrit framework and also my own personal narrative. Through the textual analyses I hope to challenge the dominant ideology that Native American mascots are *not* harmful and in fact serve in many ways (or in some way or another) to racialize Native American peoples. I am further challenging the fronts put on by university administration and officials when it comes to their commitment on "diversity" by demonstrating how despite the racialized nature of the Chief, the university in effect did very little, almost *nothing* to adequately and actively engage the issues that the Chief was really about, namely that of racism and privilege. In addition, I add my own personal narrative to this project as a means of telling a side of the story which rarely gets told, or if it gets told, becomes distorted (Yosso, 2006). Through sharing my own narrative I hope to demonstrate instances of student agency and resistance, and the spaces of dialogue and critical reflection which are created in the margins (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

Chapter 4

The Chief: A Brief History and the Beginnings of Controversy

An important aspect in understanding the Chief Illiniwek debate is related to the history of the Chief's origins. This is due in large part to the claim of authenticity of the Chief, which was made by its supporters (Farnell, 2004; Rosenstein, 1997; Prochaska, 2001; Crowley, 2004). That is, those who adamantly supported the Chief were firmly convinced that the Chief was in fact an accurate depiction of Native American tribal ways and practices, namely through the Chief's way of dress and dance. Thus, the question is, was the Chief a real historical figure in Native American history? Furthermore, how did he become the beloved symbol of the University of Illinois?

The Illiniwek (also referred to later as "illini") were a "loose confederation of Algonquian-speaking ethnic groups inhabiting present-day Illinois and parts of Wisconsin, Iowa, and Missouri" that formulated around 1650 (Prochaska, 2001, p. 157). Thus, "Chief Illiniwek" as a historical figure, did not in actuality exist. Rather, the name was taken from the reference to the confederation of tribes that were living in present-day Illinois, prior to European colonization, settlement, and subsequent forced relocation of Native Americans. Despite the fact that the closest living descendants of the Illiniwek are the Peoria Tribe of Oklahoma, many of those who studied this history within the context of Illinois and/or the Champaign-Urbana area, believed the Illiniwek were a group that had essentially died out (Prochaska, 2001). As is the case with any history, it is always written by the "winners" (i.e., dominant group), which in this case signifies being written from a White, Eurocentric perspective (Loewen, 2007). In other words, the history of North America, "centers on a hidden text regarding its relationship with American Indians—a central text that must be hidden, sublimated, and, ironically, acted out"

(Farnell, 2004, p. 30). These ideas related to the relationship between colonizer and colonized, that is Euro-Americans and Native Americans, will be addressed later in the paper when considering the rationale for Euro-Americans' fascination with Native American mascots and symbols. For now, suffice it to say that the history Native Americans have endured as being classified as "inferior" to that of White colonists (along with its complexity), has much to do with not only the types of stereotypic images that Native Americans are assigned, but also with the supposed reverence Euro-Americans have for these images and symbols.

In 1867, the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign was founded, shortly after the federal government "appropriated" land to states for the establishment of public land grant institutions (Morrill Land Grant Act of 1862); however, these "appropriated" lands were not always empty, and once again Native Americans were forcibly removed (Prochaska, 2001). The history of the Chief and its relation to the university does not begin until 1926, the year when the Chief made his first appearance. The Chief, though claimed by its supporters as being rooted in authentic "Indian" culture, actually originated as an idea for a halftime stunt by the assistant band director at the time (Rosenstein, 1997). Lester Leutwiler, a university student and former Boy Scout member, showed up during halftime to play the "Chief" in the game between Illinois and Penn State, wearing "Indian attire" that he had designed himself (Prochaska, 2001; Rosenstein, 1997; Crowley, 2004). During halftime, Leutwiler performed an "Indian dance", and after it was over, walked to centerfield with a "drum major playing William Penn...smoked [a] peace pipe and 'walked arm in arm across the field to a deafening ovation'" (Prochaska, 2001, p. 162). This image, remnant of supposed peaceful relations between Native American tribes and White colonists is clearly a historical inaccuracy (Loewen, 2007). It would appear then, that the

halftime stunt which resulted in the emergence of the Chief, was simply that, a halftime stunt not rooted in any “authenticity” nor with consent of local tribes.

Two new marches were written for the Illinois band in 1928, “Pride of the Illini March”, and “March of the Illini” (Prochaska, 2001). These were added in conjunction to the alma mater, “Hail to the Orange”, known later collectively as the “Three in One” (Prochaska, 2001). The second person to play Chief Illiniwek, Webber Borchers, went a step further in making the outfit of the Chief “authentic” by purchasing Sioux regalia in South Dakota (Prochaska, 2001; Crowley, 2004; Rosenstein, 1997). By 1930, with the purchase of the new regalia, Chief Illiniwek had become the unofficial icon of the university, and also of the Champaign-Urbana area as well.

Charlene Teters is frequently cited as the person who sparked the anti-chief movement on the University of Illinois campus (Rosenstein, 1997), though there were reports that the American Indian Movement (AIM) began writing letters against the Chief in 1975, noting that the Chief demonstrated ignorance on behalf of Whites and denigrated Native Americans’ distinct cultures (Crowley, 2004). Teters was recruited to the university for a graduate program in art in 1988 (Rosenstein, 1997). A member of the Spokane tribe, Teters was raised near a reservation close to Spokane, Washington (Rosenstein, 1997). As such, she was raised knowing many cultural traditions related to her membership in the Spokane tribe; she then passed this knowledge onto her own two children, whom she wanted to strongly identify with their cultural heritage (Rosenstein, 1997). Teters first experienced anger and sadness against the Chief when she took her two children to a school basketball game (Rosenstein, 1997). At the game, her children, who had never experienced the mascot, were shocked when they saw him come out to perform the infamous Chief dance in regalia that is used for spiritual practices (Rosenstein,

1997). It was in this moment that Teters began to realize not only how angered and upset she was at the mascot, but the effect it was having on her children who had been raised knowing a great deal about their cultural histories and past (Rosenstein, 1997). For Teters, as for many other Native Americans, the Chief's dance was a mockery of Native American identity and way of life. What made the dance even worse, was the fact that the audience (i.e., its supporters) was so captivated and moved by the Chief's reenactment of "Indianness".

Though Teters was the main catalyst for spurring the "anti-chief" (and as some scholars have referenced it pro Native American) movement, her efforts were preceded by an American Indian student, Marcus Amerman, who wrote a letter of objection to the Chief to the campus newspaper, *The Daily Illini* (Spindel, 2000). This letter was only the beginning of a long and bitter struggle between what became known as "anti-chief" groups and "pro-chief" groups. The chief issue at UIUC became so heated that it was difficult to find any type of middle ground between both groups. However, when considering the nature of the issue, that is, a stereotypic representation of Native American people, should there really be a middle ground? I would argue no. With the seriousness of such an issue, and given the historical context of racism in educational institutions, university administration should have: taken *immediate* steps to address the issue, passed a resolution to fully resolve the issue, and ensured measures that would fully educate the campus and surrounding community about the issue. What did they do instead? In 1990, the university board of trustees voted (by a majority) to keep the Chief and make him an official symbol of the university (Spindel, 2000). In response to this vote, the chancellor defended the decision of the board of trustees insisting that, "Chief Illiniwek...was both a positive and an authentic representation of Native American culture" (Spindel, 2000, p. 144). This statement was made in spite of the fact that (among other issues), the Chief had always

painted a roman numeral “I” on his chin, even though Native Americans had no use for roman numerals (Spindel, 2000; Rosenstein, 1997). To quell some of the controversy that had ensued on campus in regards to the Chief, the university did request that groups on campus stop using Indian caricatures for Chief related events, and that the Chief stop painting the roman numeral on his chin (Rosenstein, 1997). These small changes in effect did very little to address the Chief controversy, and more importantly what was really at stake, issues of racism against Native American peoples and students.

With the board of trustees vote to keep the Chief, efforts and resistance on behalf of those who did not support the Chief persisted. In response to this resistance, pro chief supporters also stepped up their game, with both sides engaging in a continuous backlash against one another. In many instances, these “chief battles” were fought using whatever political grounds were available to each group. For example, in April of 1994, Joseph Gone (an American Indian graduate student) filed a complaint against the Chief and the hostile campus racial climate at UIUC to the Office of Civil Rights in the U.S. Department of Education (Complaint to the Office of Civil Rights, mascot info-selected letters, American Indian Studies Program, UIUC). Later that same year, Chancellor Aiken appointed a committee to investigate campus inclusiveness, and the lack thereof, as demonstrated by Gone and other American Indian students, faculty, and staff (Wurth & Heckel, 2007). One of the first recommendations proposed by the committee in supporting campus inclusivity was a retirement of the Chief (Rosenstein, 1997). However, this recommendation spurred the political power of rich alumni, who threatened to withdraw making donations to the university if the Chief was removed (Rosenstein, 1997). This backlash went so far as to inspire a university alumnus, Rick Winkel, then a state representative, to propose a bill that would ensure that the Chief would become the official symbol of the university (Rosenstein,

1997). Though the bill passed by an overwhelming majority, it was later vetoed by the governor of the state, Jim Edgar (Rosenstein, 1997).

As the controversy escalated, 1997 marked an important year because it was when Jay Rosenstein released his documentary *In Whose Honor?*, which placed the Chief issue at UIUC at the forefront of discussion and also provided a much simpler way to disseminate information about this issue. The documentary examined specifically the Chief issue at UIUC, including various interviews with the Board of Trustees and also Charlene Teters herself, while at the same time placing Native American mascots within a larger context, citing other universities (such as Stanford), which have encountered the same issue but have managed to resolve it much more effectively (Rosenstein, 1997; Rosenstein, 2001). The documentary, which is still shown on the UIUC campus, provides students, staff, and faculty who are new to the university and also new to the issues of the Chief with a way of better understanding its development and how this debate has taken place over the years.

I saw this documentary for the first time in the fall of 2009, when I had borrowed the movie from La Casa (a cultural center on campus) because I was interested in learning more about the controversy. In October of the same semester, I was a participant in the “Not Our Mascot” rally, which was put together by various student organizations and also activists from the surrounding community. I remember being told about the Chief issue by other classmates and cohort members who had been at the university a much longer time (since undergraduate), but I did not realize the magnitude of the issue until I had watched the documentary, because it demonstrated not only how long this issue was in debate, but also the extreme lack of leadership taken by the university administration in resolving this issue. In fact, the documentary and other public documents demonstrated exactly the opposite, not simply that the university did not know

in which manner to proceed with the issue, but were in fact in support of keeping the Chief because of everything he supposedly represented.

When I came to this realization, it was hard to describe how I felt about it. It was definitely a mixture of disappointment and even shock, that something which appeared so blatantly racist to me was the symbol of “honor” for others. At the same time, it was also not very difficult to understand, because of the fact that many who agreed with the Chief’s “honor” were the same ones who were in the highest positions of power and privilege, people who are White and middle-class, or who ascribe to White, middle-class values or ideologies. What I began to notice the more and more time I spent on campus and working with various activists, was that the same rhetoric was being used by those who defended the Chief, over and over again. No doubt that those who were against the Chief also had similar rhetoric, however, it was much more informed, much more rooted in an understanding of history, racism, and colonialism, and many of those who opposed the Chief could clearly articulate why. The people I encountered who were in support of the Chief often had arguments that were non-sensical, or would give reasons such as “because I like him”, or “because I want to keep him” as support for their arguments. I believe this was when the positions of power became most clear to me because I understood that as a person of color, particularly a scholar of color, I always have to have my evidence handy that I will use in support of my arguments, but for those with privilege, they do not need evidence at all. They can make illogical and ill-supported claims left and right and still be seen as legitimate (McIntosh, 1990). Despite this frustration, I know and understand the importance of my voice in these issues, even if I need to cite ten books before being allowed to speak. And many of those scholars on campus who have been a part of this activism against the Chief for so long, who for so long have been ignored, feel the same way.

At a 1998 UIUC senate meeting (comprised of both students and faculty, but primarily faculty), it was voted 97 to 29 that the Chief should be retired and that the university “...discontinue licensing Native American Indian symbols as representations of the university” (Kaufman, 2010, p. 183). During the meeting,

“...the voices of students and faculty were heard, a supporting petition signed by more than 700 faculty was presented to then Chancellor Michael Aiken, and data from 10 other institutions were presented and attested that those colleges and universities did not experience any diminution in gift-giving as a consequence of retiring their Indian mascots” (Kaufman, 2010, p. 183).

This meeting came at an important time, just a year before the university was due for its upcoming accreditation review by the North Central Association (NCA). Many activists saw the accreditation review as an opportunity to denounce the university’s poor handling of the Chief situation on campus, which in turn could potentially impact the university’s accreditation. Much of what has made the most impact in prompting university action to address the Chief issue has to do with outside organizations, such as the NCA, that have been made aware of the issue and have prompted university response to address it. Despite the fact that the Chief issue on campus quickly became a public embarrassment to the university, especially the more it progressed because of all the organizations and evidence supporting the Chief’s retirement, it would be another 10 years (since the 1998 meeting) before the university would finally decide to remove the Chief.

The Chief: 2000 and beyond

By 2001, the University of Illinois was still fairly unresponsive to the protests against the Chief. Although the mascot itself had undergone slight alterations (such as removing the roman numeral I from the Chief’s chin), there were still no signs of the university’s intention to remove the mascot (Rosenstein, 1997). A “Dialogue on the Chief” was called for in 2000, as part of an effort for the university to engage in a campus-wide discussion of how to go about handling the

Chief issue (Farnell, 2004). However, this dialogue was mostly called for in response to criticism from the university's accreditation agency, the North Central Association (NCA) (Farnell, 2004). Thus, the political pressure from the accreditation agency was a catalyst in getting the university to discuss its mascot issue, despite protests that had been going on for at least a decade.

Although the dialogue was conducted with the supposed intention that it would somehow shed light on the direction that the university administration should take in regards to dealing with the Chief issue effectively, in reality, there was nothing new that came from the dialogue itself, nor the report that was handed to the board of trustees in November 2000 by former circuit judge Louis Garippo, who presided over the "dialogue" (Gamache, 2010). As I will discuss below, the dialogue itself did very little to address the Chief issue effectively, particularly because the primary arguments in support of the Chief and also against the Chief were already known, and also because the "dialogue" consisted of members from both sides (i.e., anti Chief and pro Chief), reading statements within a time limit of three to five minutes (Gamache, 2010). Thus, the dialogue itself was conducted by having a speaker from each side, switching back and forth in reading statements, leaving very little room for sparking new ideas or discussions. The information and statements (which I also call testimonials, since the statements express the personal sentiments of the speakers), were used as part of a larger report that was compiled by Garippo, which was designed to provide an "impartial" and unbiased" account of what was happening with the Chief on campus, how it was impacting campus life, and also recommendations that the university should take into consideration in order to better address this issue; the report was entitled "The Chief Illiniwek Dialogue Report" (Gamache, 2010). However, the report itself, which claims to be objective about the issue, is in fact laden with

biases towards retaining the Chief, constructed in such a way that "...portrays pro-Chief supporters as positive and reasonable and anti-Chief supporters as divisive and disruptive" (Gamache, 2010, p. 65).

The report, which I will discuss in some detail below, was more symbolic than anything else. It did little justice to the work that had been done by activists over the years at Illinois, including sending letters to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights and the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA). Despite the fact that the university was still unwilling to budge, at the very least it was going to have to make itself somehow accountable to organizations like the NCA, especially because of increasing national attention.

In the accreditation report conducted by the NCA in the time frame of 1999-2000, there was a special section entitled "third-party comments", which was entirely devoted to the Chief controversy and its effect on the educational experiences of Native American students (NCA Institutional Reports, 2000). As the report states,

"[t]he North Central Association received over 100 letters, petitions, press releases, and newspaper articles protesting the continued use of the school symbol and mascot, Chief Illiniwek...no letters in support of the Chief were received, and no letters on any other topic were received" (NCA Institutional Reports, 2000, p. 22).

This eight page section succinctly summarizes many of the major events that had transpired over the last 10 years with regards to the Chief, some of which I have already mentioned above.

Within these pages are summarized some of the very reasons why the Chief is demeaning and degrading to Native American people and cultures. The report highlights the anti-chief arguments made by Teters, citing the notion of authenticity as being the central reason for why the Chief is "...deeply offensive to American Indians" (NCA, p. 23). In other words, because the Chief's antics, dress, and portrayal are not reflective of any of the practices or traditions of

any indigenous groups, the Chief is essentially a fabrication created based on what Whites believe encompasses “indianness” (Farnell, 2004; Pewewardy, 2004; King, 2004).

In addition, the report also cited a letter written by a faculty member in the history department who argued that,

“1) the Chief undermines the educational program of the university by distorting American Indian history, 2) the Chief seriously undermines the university’s ability to recruit American Indian students, 3) the Chief undermines the learning environment of all students by humiliating American Indian students” (NCA, p. 25).

Thus, the report provides some of the basic premises of the arguments against the continued use of the Chief on campus, that is, that he not only negatively affects the perceptions and knowledge of Native American peoples and students, but that he also influences the campus racial climate in a way that dissuades Native American students from attending UIUC.

Though the NCA claimed in its report that it would not take a specific position on the Chief issue, it did state that it was the “...educational consequences of the policy [Chief], tied to NCA criteria”, that were of most concern and the most related to accreditation review (NCA Institutional Reports, 2000, p. 22). Additionally, the NCA was concerned with “...the governance of the institution in this respect and about the methods the institution has used to address the controversy” (NCA, p. 35). Once again, the theme of the lack of university action is evidenced through the report and also through the Chief mascot debate which by 2000 had been nowhere near being resolved. The impetus for the campus-wide Chief Dialogue in 2000 was then largely a by-product of the NCA’s institutional report recommendations and in essence, risk of losing accreditation.

The Dialogue on the Chief was announced shortly after the NCA report was submitted to UIUC. On February 16th of 2000, the board of trustees released a public statement announcing that they had a “...plan for renewed dialogue on Chief Illiniwek” and that the first step in the

process of dialogue would be "...opinion solicitation [whereby] students, faculty, staff, alumni, and the general public will be invited to submit their opinions in writing" (Dialogue on Chief Illiniwek Announced, University of Illinois). What is interesting about the opinion solicitation approach to the dialogue is that both the arguments for and against the Chief at this time were well known within the university community. In particular, anti chief groups had already submitted numerous letters to the local and campus newspapers, had requested meetings with the administration and the board of trustees, and had worked in coalitions to combat the racism perpetuated by the Chief. Some scholars have noted, that the Chief dialogue was hardly a dialogue, but rather a form of the university *appearing* to address the Chief issue (Springwood, 2004; Farnell, 2004; Gamache, 2010).

Though the dialogue did not bring any substantial changes or progress towards resolving the Chief issue, it allows for one to examine the testimonials provided by campus and community members in order to better understand the arguments that had framed the Chief controversy. Thus, it is to these testimonials that I turn to in order to analyze the reasons given for the support of and opposition to the Chief.

"Dialogue": a Way to Understand the Controversy

The primary argument that has been made by those in favor of the Chief, is that he actually serves to "honor" Native American people; this is most evidenced by his behavior (stoic face, "dignified" posture) and the "authenticity" with which his dances (and other antics) are performed (Farnell, 2004; Rosenstein, 1997; Pewewardy, 2004; King, 2004; Prochaska, 2001; Harjo, 2001; Staurowsky, 2007). Thus, those who are in support of the Chief truly believe that he is "more than just a mascot" but actually a reflection of the way in which Native Americans would want to be portrayed (Rosenstein, 1997). Adam Chaddock, a graduate student at the

University of Illinois (at least during the year 2000, thereafter whereabouts are unknown)

expressed a popular notion held by Chief supporters, that he is not merely a mascot, in this letter written in 2000 during the Dialogue,

“...first, Chief Illiniwek is not a mascot. Rather, the Chief is the symbol of a great university. A mascot runs around the playing field dancing with the cheerleaders, fighting with the opposing mascot, leading the crowd in cheers. The actions of the Chief are much more dignified than those antics. The Chief puts on a respectful and ceremonious performance that brings pride to our great university. Make no mistake about it, the Chief is a proud symbol, not a foolish mascot.” (Chaddock, Dialogue Intake Session, 2000, retirethechief.org).

As evidenced in the above letter, nearly every supporter of the Chief cited the fact that the Chief was more than a mascot; that he represented dignity, among other things, characteristics they felt were absent among other mascots. However, the real question to ask with the above affirmation regarding dignity is *who* the Chief represents dignity for (Rosenstein, 1997).

The notions of “pride” and “dignity” associated with the Chief are especially echoed when the individual making these claims *assumes* that Native Americans would want to be represented in that manner. This conclusion is rather paradoxical, especially when various Native American activists, scholars, and organizations have repeatedly spoken against these images as not honoring them. One such example of this ignorance comes from Bob Craft, a resident of Champaign-Urbana and alumni of the university who submitted a statement for the dialogue, “I think that I would be proud if I were an American native to be represented by such a first class individual [Chief] as we have had each and every year. Again, make no bones about it, I fully support Chief Illiniwek for the University of Illinois.” (Craft, Dialogue Intake Session, 2000, retirethechief.org). In this brief statement, Mr. Craft has demonstrated the extensive reach of White privilege, where a broad statement can be made without any substantial or supporting evidence, and even in light of voices which have repeatedly stated that the Chief is not a symbol of honor. Mr. Craft clearly is missing his own point of perspective, which allows him to judge

the Chief as being a “first class individual”, and thus he assumes in this statement that his opinion is normalized, and any opposition runs counter to “reasonableness” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).

When supporters of the Chief make their claims about honor and pride, they base it in the fact that the Chief represents more than simply a mascot, that he is somehow above and beyond what a “typical” mascot would look like. One such letter which expresses this sentiment is from Michael O’Byrne, a community member who graduated from UIUC and has spent most of his life living in Champaign-Urbana,

“I do support the Chief, because the Chief is a part of the pride that I have in the University. He’s a symbol of that pride. He’s not a Hawkeye and he’s not a Buckeye, he’s not a Wildcat, he’s not a Badger, they are mascots. The Chief is a symbol of the pride of the people of Illinois in our Native American heritage. The concept of Chief Illiniwek comes from Native American heritage when the Illini were part of a confederation of Indian tribes whose name was incorporated in the name of our state of Illinois.” (O’Byrne, Dialogue Intake Session, 2000, retirethechief.org).

Supporters of the Chief frequently make attempts to cite historical “facts” and data as a means of legitimating their support for the Chief. In the above example, O’Byrne does mention that the name Illiniwek is derived from the original Illiniwek tribes which inhabited present day Illinois. However, “inheriting” a name does not signify that there is any true recognition of Native American heritage, as O’Byrne claims. That is, simply because the mascot is named Illiniwek does not mean that there is necessarily any trace of the name to indigenous cultures and traditions. In addition, arguing that the symbol of the Chief should stand because *he* personally takes pride in the Chief while simultaneously ignoring the voices and narratives of Native American people who dissent is simply another example of how White privilege can function (McIntosh, 1990; Brayboy, 2005). O’Byrne, is placing his needs and wants above those of the Native American people who are the ones being represented in such images, thus engaging in his ability to utilize White privilege to dismiss Native American voices.

What appears to be left out of the conversation for those who support Native American mascots are the embedded systems of racism and colonialism that persist in the U.S. (Brayboy, 2005; Tsosie, 2002; Farnell, 2004; King, 2004; Prochaska, 2001; King & Springwood, 2001; Staurowsky, 2007). It is the relationship between colonizer and colonized, as has been described previously in this paper, which functions to privilege White interests over the sovereignty of Native American groups (Tsosie, 2002). Additionally, relations between Native Americans and European colonizers (and subsequently the federal government) have been characterized by a sense of the “white man’s burden” whereby Native American groups need to be “taken care of” by more civilized, privileged, and essentially superior groups (Tsosie, 2005). As such, the historical context of these relations is what freezes images of Native Americans in time, depicting them as backwards, barbaric, primitive, uncivilized, and as “noble savages” (Tsosie, 2005).

One of the most paradoxical and complex issues for me to understand as a student on campus was the fact that I was attending what was supposed to be an institution of higher education, with a mission statement that states, “[t]he University of Illinois will transform lives and serve society by educating, creating knowledge and putting knowledge to work on a large scale and with excellence” (“mission”, www.uillinois.edu), and yet what I was witnessing people say on campus proved to be the complete opposite. The University of Illinois was doing everything except educating, and was in fact continuing their long tradition of instilling and maintaining ignorance and permitting racism, as evidenced by the fact that many defenders of the Chief are alumni. However, the younger generations of students were still being “educated” in the same fashion, and without proper university response to this issue, it was only continuing a

cycle of misinformation and racism. Stephanie Cord, who was a junior attending UIUC during the 2000 dialogue, is but one product of continued university inaction,

“I don't feel personally that Chief Illiniwek is a cartoon. I think it's an honor that can keep the people in Illinois aware of the Indians. When I was a kid I think when I saw Chief Illiniwek, it made me want to learn about Indians and their heritage even more...As a matter of fact, when my family took me on a vacation, we were in Canada one time and there was an Indian tribe nearby, we were at a restaurant and I heard people talking about it. I wanted to go, because I wanted to see their traditional dances and stuff. So I think it made me want to be educated about the Native American heritage even more so than what I learned in school did. I also don't see why people jump on a bandwagon to get rid of symbols like the rebels or Vikings or Sabers or anything that respectfully honors our past and our heritage.” (Cord, Dialogue Intake Session, 2000, retirethechief.org).

A common theme among those who support the Chief is evident in the above excerpt when Cord mentions that she feels having the Chief sparks an interest in learning more about Native Americans. This has in fact been far from the case. As scholars have frequently noted, very little attention has actually been given to the Native American voices heard at such events, and even less attention has been given to the history of misappropriation of Native Americans in the U.S. (Brayboy, 2005; Tsosie, 2002; Tsosie, 2005). Native Americans, whose identity has shifted over time according to the needs of the White, dominant group, have with the use of mascots become frozen in time, remembered only as Whites would want to remember them, and remembered in a way that makes it seem as if they no longer exist (Deloria, 1998).

More and more frequently, institutions of higher education are failing to serve their intended purposes and instead serve the interests of those with the most power, the White elite (Giroux, 2002). In an article published in the Harvard Educational Review, Giroux (2002) argues that neoliberalism and capitalistic market principles have negatively impacted institutions of higher education because corporate power and influence in such institutions have gone unchecked. In other words, because such institutions are heavily influenced by corporate models of management they become more accountable to these models as opposed to ensuring that

students are educated in democratic and social justice values. As one example of this corporate model, Giroux (2002) notes that students are encouraged to pursue degrees in disciplines that will give the biggest payoff financially,

“In the age of money and profit, academic disciplines gain stature almost exclusively through their exchange value on the market, and students now rush to take courses and receive professional credentials that provide them with the cachet they need to sell themselves to the highest bidder.” (p. 432).

Thus, much more energy is focused on which disciplines will rake in the most money (such as the sciences) and supporting those disciplines as opposed to ensuring that institutions serve “...a public good and [act as] an autonomous sphere for the development of a critical and productive democratic citizenry” (Giroux, 2002, p. 433). The University of Illinois is just one example of an institution which claims to foster *critical* and *educated* discussions about political and societal matters, while at the same time allowing a Native American mascot to persist on campus.

Ms. Cord lastly concludes her statement with familiar rhetoric about how Native Americans *should* feel about the Chief’s presence on campus, “[t]he Native American people shouldn't see it as a discrimination, but they should see it as a way to keep their heritage alive. And to make it aware, more people aware of where they come from instead of hiding it.” (Cord, Dialogue Intake Session, 2000, retirethechief.org). According to, once again a train of false logic, Native Americans should take pride in the Chief because he allows others (mainly Whites) to remember that Native Americans ever existed, and not only to remind them, but to remind them of what and who “authentic” Native Americans were. Clearly in this statement and in similar others, there is no recognition of White privilege and no regard for the colonialist goals of assimilation (Feagin, 2010; Brayboy, 2005). The fact that Native Americans “should do as they are told” is reminiscent of the forceful way in which they were removed from their lands and the forceful way in which they were expected to assimilate to U.S. White culture.

Another term discussed in scholarly work to describe why Native American mascots are seen with such reverence is that of “imperial nostalgia”, coined to specifically understand the relationship between colonizer and colonized, in this case the relationship between European Americans and Native Americans (Farnell, 2004). In “imperial nostalgia”, there is a “...colonialist longing for that which has been destroyed [which is then] enacted in new spaces of racial representation— [such as] the sports arena” (Farnell, 2004, p. 35). In other words, the colonizer, Euro-Americans, have a desire to re-enact what they destroyed (Native American cultures), however they do so in a way that represents *their* image of Native Americans; thus, the image of Native Americans are then “re-built”, essentially using a Euro-American lens (Farnell, 2004). It is for this reason that Native American mascot imagery remains stereotypic.

The effects of colonization, in conjunction with a racial hierarchical system which privileges Whites over other groups, sets the context for the ways in which Native Americans are treated as second class citizens whose tribal sovereignties are only respected when they do not interfere or undercut benefits that are received by Whites; this includes material and economic gain, along with access to institutions and institutional benefits (Tsosie, 2002). Thus, these relationships have strained the ability for tribal nations to achieve self-determination (Brayboy, 2005). Popular culture images such as Native American mascots are inherently not intended to depict Native Americans in any positive, meaningful way because of their very stereotypic and inaccurate nature (Strong, 2004). And yet, those who support the Chief blatantly state and believe that he is an “authentic Indian”. It is surprising, and perhaps alarming, to think that so little is known about the issues that affect indigenous communities today, along with their historical past, and yet many Americans could easily identify the Cleveland Indians logo or the

Washington Redskins mascot without hesitation and without problematizing these depictions.

As Joseph Gone states in his letter to the Office of Civil Rights,

“a primary obstacle to renewal and self-determination in Indian communities is the appalling ignorance of most American citizens regarding Native American histories and cultures, including policy-makers at local, state, and federal levels of government. As multi-dimensional peoples engaged in complex struggles for autonomy and equality in the 1990s, we are virtually invisible to the American consciousness, which gleans any awareness of Indians from caricatured Hollywood portrayals or facile tourist excursions” (American Indian Studies program, UIUC, selected letters, 1994).

These mascot images, only serve to further solidify that Native Americans do not belong anywhere else but in history textbooks, where even these depictions can be very historically inaccurate (Loewen, 2007). In using anachronistic images of Native Americans as mascots, their multi-dimensionality is replaced with simple commodification (Tsosie, 2002). In other words, Whites prefer the commodified image of Native Americans over the contemporary one; Whites prefer make believe Native Americans over real ones.

What Allows the Chief to Persist?

Up until this point, I have focused on discussing the discourses regarding the Chief, that is, arguments which are in support of keeping him and also arguments as to why he is a racist, stereotypic symbol. The main source of information for analysis of both sides to the Chief issue has been statements read during the 2000 “Dialogue on the Chief”, partially because these statements are readily accessible and partially because they demonstrate the key arguments that were utilized by both pro chief and anti chief groups. However, even with the information presented before you, you might still be asking, but how is it that this issue can go on for so long? How can people simply stand by and blatantly ignore what is being said, continue to wear Chief related insignia as others watch them and cringe at the sight? Perhaps you are not confused at all by such questions because you have reached the same conclusions I have. Or perhaps you are not bothered by these questions because you think that those who continually

support the Chief are just a bunch of stubborn extremists who will not change their minds, while the majority will come around eventually. In either case, I will admit that I was initially perplexed by these questions. As I participated in various events and interacted more frequently with scholars and activists who had been on campus far longer than I had, I began to realize how deeply entrenched the Chief issue was and that it is something beyond simple ignorance, but rather a prime example of systemic racism (Feagin, 2010).

In this section I will re-introduce concepts central to CRT and TribalCrit, as a means of not only demonstrating how I resolved these questions for myself, but also to present a better understanding of the Chief debates to the reader, who may or may not be familiar with the literature or issues at stake.

When I first began to ask myself why it was possible for so many people to blindly support the Chief, and why the university did not feel it was necessary to do anything about it, I realized that I needed to review some of the frameworks that I had been studying throughout my higher education career. I sometimes forget, that as a person of color who has struggled through different “isms” (such as racism and sexism), that my perspective and experiences allow me to understand situations, for example those that involve race, in a way that is markedly different from my White counterparts, or counterparts who ascribe to White normative values. I do often times experience frustration when I am confronted by a situation that involves White privilege and it is in those moments where in order to control my frustration, I try to remember that I am but one individual subjected to an entire system of racism that has persisted since the inception of this country (Feagin, 2010; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). It is in those moments of my frustration where I look to other scholars of color, in order to seek comfort in the writings of others who have already experienced what I have, time and time again.

CRT, a central framework that I am drawing from (from which TribalCrit also has its roots), begins with the premise that racism is “ordinary”, that it in fact composes the everyday experiences of people of color in the U.S., whether knowingly or unknowingly (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Although this basic premise is stated simply enough, its meaning is actually considered quite radical. This is because dominant ideology in the U.S. chooses to ignore racism, to deny that it ever existed, and to de-legitimize the experiences of a person of color when they feel they have experienced a racist act towards them. Because many Whites do not “see race”, people of color are often made to feel that they are overly sensitive when they react to a racial joke, insult, or act (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Thus, a person of color becomes “unreasonable” or “irrational” when they take offense to racism. However, in understanding that racism is ordinary, that it has been weaved into the very structure of the U.S. (Feagin, 2010), a person of color no longer becomes “irrational” when they react to racism, rather a response is merited.

In this way, CRT serves as a framework to better understand why comments such as, “[w]e feel that the Chief is an unifying factor amongst the tribe of Illini, which I would define as everyone who has graduated from the University of Illinois. And that includes people of all races and ethnic groups, Asians, Africans, Caucasians and people of all religious persuasions, as well”, although non-sensical in their logic, can still make perfect sense (Black, Dialogue Intake Session, 2000, retirethechief.org). Although I do not know the racial identification of the individual making the comment, I know that he is nonetheless operating from a White framed lens because of the fact that he can make a blanket statement that supposedly encompasses all races and ethnic groups, completely ignoring how racism has functioned in this country. In making such a statement, he claims that people of all ethnic groups should embrace the Chief, for the same

reasons that he (speaker) would. A White perspective or point of view becomes normalized when Whites are placed at the top of a racial hierarchy, as they have been in this country (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Thus, people of color can “see” and understand racism in a way that is markedly different than Whites (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).

TribalCrit, an emerging form of CRT that focuses specifically on the experiences of Native Americans and indigenous groups in the U.S., shares many of the same basic tenets of CRT (Brayboy, 2005). However, one important difference between the two as has been mentioned previously in this paper, is that TribalCrit views *colonialism* as being ordinary to the everyday experiences of Native Americans and indigenous groups. Though race relations between Whites and people of color in the U.S. stem from colonialist thinking and ideologies, Native Americans and indigenous groups are the only racial minorities who are recognized as sovereign nations by the federal government. Thus, the importance of understanding colonialism as central to the experiences of indigenous groups is that these groups were subject to years of assimilation, conquest, and dishonest governmental relations (Tsosie, 2005; Brayboy, 2005). Additionally, Native Americans were romanticized in ways that were different than other people of color, particularly because of the idea of the “noble savage”, and identity shifts for White colonists (Tsosie, 2005; Deloria, 1998). As Deloria (1998) argues in his book *Playing Indian*,

“Indian ‘Others’ have been constructed at the intersection of real and imagined Indians. Colonists (mis)perceived real Indian people through a variety of European cultural lenses. Religion, gender relations, subsistence, technology—these and many other perspectives defined and distorted the ways Europeans saw Indians” (p. 20).

In order to better understand the roles that Whites have taken as “Indians” it is crucial and necessary to understand the historical relationship between White colonists and Native Americans, both during the pre-revolutionary period and also after. Through a historical analysis of what it has meant for Whites to “play Indian” Deloria (1998) points to the importance of the

construction of White identity, along with constructed meanings of Native American identity, on behalf of the colonists. As he argues, colonists initially had mixed feelings about indigenous groups, seeing them as both a threat and also as a means of distancing their European identity from that of Britain. Many colonists began to undertake “indian” identities as a means of rebelling against their mother country; one such example of this is the Boston Tea Party, where several colonists dressed in “...Mohawk Indian disguise” to protest the taxed tea received from Britain by throwing several cargoes of tea overboard into the Boston Harbor (Deloria, 1998, p. 6).

The Boston Tea party “...offers a defining story of something larger—American character. In the national iconography, the Tea Party is a catalytic moment, the first drumbeat in the long cadence of rebellion through which Americans redefined themselves as something other than British colonists” (Deloria, 1998, p. 2). Thus, colonists infused parts of Native American identity (as defined by them) with their own as a means of establishing an identity that would set them apart from Britain. As both CRT and TribalCrit have noted, racial identities and categories have been socially constructed and conveniently aligned with the interests of the dominant group. White Indians ascribed to what *they* believed were Native American ideologies, defining and re-defining ideas as they saw fit (Deloria, 1998). Although White colonists experienced an initial fascination with their association with Indian identity, as their own “American” identity began to develop, Indians could no longer be associated with “them” (Americans) but rather had to develop an “otherness” that would allow for Americans (Whites) to continue maintaining their superiority (Deloria, 1998).

After the revolutionary war, whereby colonists broke away from British rule, the questions of American identity persisted. This was especially true considering the fact that

“real” Native Americans threatened American expansion west of colonial borders (Deloria, 1998). Thus, when the goals of colonists changed from rebelling against Britain to expanding their own nation, the role playing of Native Americans and incorporation of Indian identity to American identity began to change. Viewing Native Americans as a “...savage Other assured Americans of their own civilized nature and, more important, justified the dispossession of real Indians” (Deloria, 1998, p. 37). In this way, White Americans created an identity that would suit their interests, allowing them to utilize Indian identity when they wanted to, while at the same time forcibly removing Native American nations.

When analyzing the Chief issue through a TribalCrit lens it becomes easier to understand how images of Native Americans become distorted, redefined, and controlled by Whites. Native American mascots more generally speaking, and the Chief more specifically, then are simply another way of demonstrating how deeply entrenched colonialism and the effects of colonialism are to the experiences of Native Americans in the U.S. In many ways, colonialism has served to freeze images of Native Americans in time, making them subject to the ways in which members of the dominant group want to remember them.

For those who support the Chief, a historical and critical understanding of the relationship between Whites and Native Americans and the effects of colonialism is often absent, or at best, completely distorted. This lack of understanding is what makes those who support the Chief sound “rational” and those who do not support the Chief sound “irrational” or even “politically correct”. In this way, those who do not support the Chief are portrayed not only as a small minority, but also as people who are being overly politically correct (Prochaska, 2010). Jacqueline French, a senior during the time of the 2000 dialogue, clearly demonstrates a lack of historical understanding,

“And some of the arguments which I have just heard puzzled me because I don't want anyone to feel disrespected or having to hide their identity or feel that Chief Illiniwek is anything out to hurt an individual, rather growing up for me, I learned that the Chief was something that was a part of Illinois, part of the midwest, part of American history and I am thankful for what this University has taught me, both before I came to school here and with education that I have received.” (French, Dialogue Intake Session, 2000, retirethechief.org).

Unfortunately, images and characters such as the Chief continue perpetuating misinformation regarding Native Americans and continue the same cycle of misappropriation that has been in place since colonial times. Mascots like the Chief convey a message about Native Americans that is not only inaccurate but that is devoid of any critical, historical information. As evidenced in the above quote, the Chief serves as an image of Native Americans that is constructed by Whites, entirely fabricated upon White notions of “indianness”.

Hence, the reason why TribalCrit and CRT are so useful to better understanding the Chief issue is because they place an analysis of colonialism and racism at the forefront, topics that are not part of the dominant ideology. Utilizing these frameworks, I began to understand why it was that I interpreted the Chief differently than did my White counterparts. During my time on campus at Illinois, particularly as an activist, I witnessed (repeatedly) how White privilege allowed the Chief to remain. Protest after protest and letter after letter, all of it seemed to be doing very little to spark university action. It is for these reasons that many activists took to involving more than the board of trustees, but also the NCA (as discussed previously) and even the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA).

Influence of the NCAA

Though the Chief controversy continued well into the 2000s, it was at last “resolved” by the administration when the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) issued a policy in 2005 that would “...require colleges and universities with Native American mascots and imagery to refrain from displaying those during NCAA sponsored events. The policy further stated that

institutions with this imagery would be ineligible to host NCAA championships starting in 2006” (Staurowsky, 2007, p. 61). This policy threatened the university’s athletics not only because it would tarnish their reputation, but it would remove the university from the NCAA’s media coverage and radar, at least in terms of the university receiving positive media attention. This in turn, would affect the university’s ability to generate money using media sources (Rosenstein, 2001). However, even this policy issued by the NCAA was met with university resistance (Staurowsky, 2007). The University of Illinois appealed the NCAA policy twice and did so unsuccessfully both times (Rosenstein, 1997; Staurowsky, 2007). In 2007, after these failed appeals, the University of Illinois issued a statement that it was going to officially retire the chief. In this statement, issued by the Board of Trustees, participation in the NCAA is cited as the primary reason for the Chief’s retirement:

“THAT the Board hereby directs the immediate conclusion to the use of Native American imagery as the symbol of the University of Illinois and its intercollegiate athletics along with the related regalia, logo, and the names ‘Chief Illiniwek’ and ‘Chief’, and the Board hereby directs the Chancellor of the Urbana-Champaign campus to manage the final disposition of these matters and report the decisions back to the Board and in so doing *to remain in compliance with the NCAA policy* [emphasis added]” (consensus resolution passed by the Board, ullivan.edu).

Thus, the NCAA’s policy with regards to university athletics had much to do with the university’s decision to retire its mascot, despite protests that had been taking place since 1989. The NCAA’s policy did not, however, come of its own accord. Rather, it was the consistent work of scholars and activists on campus who strategized the best methods possible of obtaining university action.

In November 1997, a proposal was approved by members of the Student-Faculty senate which recommended that the

“...university’s Division of Intercollegiate Athletics include in the goals of its Self-Study, ‘to consider whether the caricature and impersonation of a Native American

Indian as the UIUC athletic mascot serves the integrity of the UIUC athletic program, the campus, and the principles of the NCAA” (Kaufman, 2010a, p. 57).

This proposal was presented to then Chancellor of UIUC, Michael Aiken, who did not want to include this recommendation in the Self-Study, an assessment that was to be undertaken by the university’s athletic department (Kaufman, 2010a). Because of the Chancellor’s refusal in considering this recommendation, Stephen Kaufman, a professor and longtime activist on campus, sent a letter to the NCAA president, with various reasons why the Chief’s presence during athletic events seriously compromises the NCAA’s non-discrimination policies (Kaufman, 2010a).

In his presentation before the NCAA’s Executive Subcommittee on Gender and Diversity Issues, Kaufman highlighted several key points that are integral to understanding why the Chief needed to be removed, such as, a) the hostile environment that is created for people on campus who *do not* support the Chief, b) the degradation of Native American religion and culture through the use of practices as half-time entertainment, and c) negatively impacting Native American youth who are subjected to such mascots thereby taking away from their university and academic experiences (Kaufman, 2010a). Kaufman (2010a) further highlighted that the impact of such mascots is not confined to the university but rather is distributed publicly through media broadcastings. Fans of the opposing teams have used racial epithets to spur support for their own teams, for example, “scalp them Indians” (Kaufman, 2010a). Using Native Americans as mascots carries with it a historical meaning and context that frequently goes unchecked and unanalyzed.

The Chief debates on campus involved more than differences in ideological viewpoints; there were real and tangible threats of violence made to those who did not support the Chief. The idea that the campus racial climate was hostile (and continues to be in many ways) is true

not only ideologically speaking but also literally. Various activists were faced with threats of violence, such as notes that were sent to their homes or damages to their cars during campus business hours. In the next section I will analyze how the Chief and the ensuing debates negatively impacted campus racial climate using my own experiences as well as notable events that occurred as the debates intensified. It is my goal to demonstrate how the Chief and the lack of university action in this issue set the tone for the university's response to other racial hostilities on campus.

Chapter 5

The Chief and its Influence on Campus Racial Climate

As an incoming student to the UIUC campus in 2009, I knew very little about the campus or the types of issues that students of color faced. However, I quickly became aware of the fact that there was a collective group of student activists who made frequent appearances to various events supporting different social justice causes such as recognition of the struggles of undocumented students or expanding the cultural houses for students of color. In attending many of these events, I started to meet and interact with more and more activists, nearly all of which had been on campus for at least two years. Through my interactions with these students I learned more about the history of the Chief and the issues on campus that were related to the presence of the Chief. During my second year as a master's student I joined IRESIST, which is a group of activists (composed of both students and community members) whose goals and aims are social justice oriented, working to combat discrimination across various forms. I had become familiar with many members of IRESIST through my participation in previous forums, protests, rallies, etc., where these members were present. As a member and activist organizer for IRESIST, I had the opportunity to work with various dynamic individuals, all committed to producing positive change on campus.

Working with IRESIST, as well as collaborating with other social justice organizations on campus, provided an outlet for me to discuss my frustrations with the university administration. Our meetings and informal conversations provided a space that is frequently sought after by students who experience various discriminations, including racism and sexism, as a means of better understanding these experiences. Through my association with IRESIST and other students of color on campus, I was able to successfully form a reliable community with

which I could vent about my experiences without feeling like I was being overly sensitive or reading too much into a situation (Yosso, 2006). It was through these conversations with other students that I found strength in my efforts, especially because many of them had been dealing with the same issues for so long, and yet they had not given up the fight.

Members of IRESIST, who had been actively working against discrimination on campus for many years, and myself (after becoming familiar with issues on campus) noticed a pattern of university inaction and resistance in combating racism that was all too frequent. The Chief controversy, though important on its own, was but another example of how the university refused to engage in addressing discrimination on campus, particularly as it pertained to racism. The difficulty in removing the Chief was only a testament of the power of White privilege that the university administration exercised over students and faculty of color on campus. And as the controversy dragged on over the years, it was increasingly apparent that the issue would not fade on its own, that only university action would be effective in addressing campus racial tensions. Despite claims about how the Chief “honored” Native American and indigenous groups, he served as a reminder that racist role playing is permissible, so long as the ones engaging in role play do it with the best of intentions.

In the fall of 2006, two Greek organizations at UIUC, a sorority and a fraternity, hosted a party which was later referred to as “Tacos and Tequila”, a racial themed party which encouraged Greek members to dress as “Latinas/os” and act in ways that are stereotypically Latina/o (Ramos, 2008). As is often the case, the term Latino was equated with Mexican, and therefore partygoers dressed up with Mexican flags wrapped around them, or used the colors of the Mexican flag as part of their attire. The incident received attention after Facebook (a popular social networking website) photos from the event were circulated, many of which were

accessible to any Facebook user because the photos were not private. Many activists and organizations, including Latino Greek organizations, moved quickly to formulate awareness of the issue and bring it to the university's attention (Pierce, 2006, *Daily Illini*). Though awareness of the event spread in the weeks after it happened, and many who were outraged participated in writing letters to the *Daily Illini* (a popular student newspaper on campus), the university's response, similar to their take on the Chief, was anything but swift (Ramos, 2008). For many activists on campus who had been there for some time, "Tacos and Tequila", although wrong in and of itself, came really as no surprise. If a "tradition" such as the Chief, where a White student was dressed in supposed Native attire, could persist for so many years, how was dressing up as a "Mexican" for a party any different?

It was clear through the photos that were taken from the event, depicting partygoers (who were mostly White) as pregnant, or wearing sombreros, or dressed as gardeners, that the university has a serious case of racism happening on their campus, and yet, none of these actions, nor those of the Chief, are called what they are, racist (Ramos, 2008). Instead, the members of the participating sorority and fraternity insisted that because they did not know it was racist to have a racial themed party, that they were not committing racism or any form of discrimination (Ramos, 2008). Both the fraternity and sorority who hosted the party issued immediate letters of apology, not because they really knew the damage they had caused, but more so because of the negative publicity and criticisms they were receiving. Student activists, long familiar with the university's lack of addressing racism, organized a protest entitled "Breaking the Silence", which took place on October 31st, 2006, where "...hundreds of University of Illinois students filled the Quad side of the Illini Union" (Kantor, 2006, *Daily Illini*).

Speaking against the university's failure (once more) to adequately address the incident, students at the protest listed a long history of racism on campus, including poor recruitment attempts for increasing student diversity and racial tensions between White students on campus and other students of color (Ramos, 2008). As one letter to the editor for the *Daily Illini* noted,

“This past Monday, after weeks of stonewalling, Zeta Beta Tau fraternity issued a very sincere apology. They ensured us that ‘diversity training’ is now going to be part of their initiation program. Yes, an entire group will now receive training in how not to upset the ‘diverse’ students on campus.

So some make the claim that the racism so prevalent on this campus is a result of ignorance. This is a fundamental and convenient misunderstanding of how racism is perpetuated. On a meeting at La Casa on Monday, Oct. 15, it was suggested that the Tri-delts and ZBTs responsible for this party had not come in contact with any Latinos or Latinas, and maybe non-whites should make an attempt to show that these stereotypes don't characterize them.

But the ‘Tacos and tequilas’ exchange did not occur simply because members of these houses didn't know better. The Tri-delts and ZBTs aren't stupid, at least not enough that they wouldn't know that what they did was wrong. The Tri-delta house, coincidentally, is right next to the office of the Latino/Latina Studies Program.

This isn't about ignorance, because that's not what causes racism. This is about the perpetuation of white privilege.” (Mcmillin, 2006, *Daily Illini*).

For students who were familiar with racism on campus, the connections between White privilege and “Tacos and Tequila” were immediate. Not only was this privilege at work because of the party itself, but was even more so apparent in the responses given by members of participating Greeks and the university administration. When administrators were approached during the “Breaking the Silence” protest, their response for addressing the issue was an assurance of diversity training for incoming students and increase awareness of diverse students (Mcmillin, 2006, *Daily Illini*). In this way, university administration circumvented naming the issue of racism thus “saving” them from addressing a much larger, more complicated problem that they themselves contribute to.

“Tacos and Tequila” came at a time when the Chief controversy was still at a very heightened point. The university had by this time already attempted twice to appeal the NCAA ban which prohibited Illinois from hosting NCAA tournaments and from using the Chief at

NCAA sponsored athletic events (Eppley, statement from the chairmen). Many Chief supporters were disappointed at the NCAA's decision in keeping the ban and were looking for university officials to pull whatever strings necessary to maintain the Chief. In the aftermath of "Tacos and Tequila", the university suffered another public embarrassment by allowing racism to run rampant on campus, with little consequences for its perpetrators. A majority of the students protesting both the Chief and "Tacos and Tequila" were students of color, thus further dichotomizing White students and students of color on campus. With frustrations increasing, many pro Chief students and supporters found outlets through online sources, such as the Facebook page "If They Get Rid of the Chief I'm Becoming a Racist", a pro Chief page created in November 2006 (Spartz, 2007, *Daily Illini*).

Postings on the pro Chief Facebook page were found to contain derogatory comments and even threats made to Native American student/activists and Native Americans more generally. One such comment made on this page by a student was posted in November of that same year, "[w]hat they don't realize is that there was never a racist problem before. But now I hate redskins and hope all those drunk, casino owning bums die" (Spartz, 2007, *Daily Illini*). A second posting was also found, which targeted a specific, anti-Chief individual and activist on campus, "[a]pparently the leader of this movement is of Sioux descent. Which means what, you ask? The Sioux Indians are the ones that killed off the Illini Indians, so she's just trying to finish what her ancestors started. I say we throw a tomahawk into her face" (Spartz, 2007, *Daily Illini*). Students and faculty against the Chief first became aware of these postings on January 8th, 2007 when students found the Facebook page and brought its comments to the attention of the Native American House, a cultural house on campus specific to the needs of Native American students and faculty (Spartz, 2007, *Daily Illini*). Members of the Native American House, including its

then director Dr. Wanda Pillow, and also activists against the Chief, demanded immediate university action and protection from such threats (Thacker, 2007).

The Facebook postings and threats were yet another example of how volatile the situation on campus had become. And yet, despite these offenses and the harm they were causing to the campus community, the university administration continued to lack the strong leadership that is necessary in effectively addressing these issues. University administrators, who themselves did not want to let the Chief go, ignored their responsibility to ensuring a safe and respectful campus, and instead violated their own principles of nondiscrimination (Kaufman, 2010a). Chancellor Herman, then Chancellor of the UIUC campus, issued a mass email to the campus community about the Facebook incident stating that the university "...has spent 140 years creating a 'welcoming environment' and that he 'will not tolerate such violent threats'" (Spartz, 2007, *Daily Illini*). In this email, the Chancellor further stated,

"The idea that the debate over this issue could degenerate to personal attacks that threaten the physical safety and well-being of members of the campus community is something that all of us should find truly abhorrent. . . I do not know the motives of the students who posted the threats, but I do know that their words are dangerous and racist." (Chancellor Herman, response to facebook threats).

This response is one of the few times that Chancellor Herman stated publicly that the Chief issue is connected with racism. However, his wording is carefully chosen to address these specific comments as being racist, rather than the presence of the Chief himself. Perhaps even more surprisingly, Students for Chief Illiniwek (SFCI), a registered student organization (RSO) on campus, also spoke out about the incident, distancing themselves from the pro-Chief supporters' comments (Spartz, 2007, *Daily Illini*). In a paradoxical fashion, pro-Chief supporters are both racist and non-racist at the same time. They are racist by virtue of their support for the Chief, while at the same time they consider themselves non-racist, because the racism they exhibit does not take the form of racial slurs or epithets.

Tired of dealing with racist issues on campus and wanting to call more attention to the matter, the Students Transforming Oppression and Privilege (S.T.O.P.) Coalition organized a forum that took place on February 1st, 2007, entitled “Racism, Power, and Privilege”, held at Foellinger Auditorium on the UIUC campus (Staff Editorial, 2007, *Daily Illini*). The purpose of this forum was to discuss the campus racial climate, how students of color were feeling on campus in light of the previous racial incidents (“Tacos and Tequila” and the Facebook threats), and also ways that the university and campus community can respond to effectively address racism on campus (Browning, 2010). The forum, attended by approximately 3,000 campus community members (and also broadcasted live via the web), provided a space for discussion of campus racial climate issues, in the presence of university administrators and officials (Browning, 2010).

The forum demonstrated how students of color, activists, and faculty refused to stay silent during a time of high racial tension on campus. Although UIUC is a large school (with more than 40,000 undergraduates and graduates on campus), the Champaign-Urbana area is relatively small in comparison. Thus, it was easy for activists who spoke out against these issues to be identified, particularly when discussing the Chief because there are so many who support him. At the forum, the S.T.O.P. Coalition presented a list of demands to the university administrators present, including President of the University of Illinois, Joseph White, and Chancellor Herman (Browning, 2010). The first demand on this list requested that “...the UIUC Administration facilitate the unconditional removal of ‘Chief Illiniwek’ and eliminate the use of American Indian imagery” (S.T.O.P. Coalition Demands, Feb. 1st, 2007, <http://www.iresist.org/stop/>). Listed first, this demand pointed to the importance of the Chief’s presence as perpetuating a hostile campus climate. Additionally, it proved to be a long-lasting

issue, a battle fought by activists on campus for nearly 20 years. The list of demands continued with six additional demands (each followed by subsidiary demands that described implementation), all related to increasing the representation of students of color on campus and getting the university to become accountable and responsible for racist actions committed on campus.

Although the Racism, Power, and Privilege forum was successful in generating attention to the campus' hostile climate and also in providing a clear articulation of demands that would aid in making the campus environment more welcoming for students of color, the barrage of disparaging comments against the forum and anti Chief activists more generally continued, especially through online sources where anonymity is easier to maintain. In an article entitled "*Staging an Intervention in a Virtual Dystopia: The Online Fallout of the Race, Power, and Privilege Forum and the Removal of 'Chief Illiniwek'*", Browning (2010) examines her own experiences as a graduate student at UIUC during the time of the forum. More specifically, the article discusses her activism on campus in combating the Chief, mainly through the medium of the internet.

Oftentimes, online versions of Daily Illini articles were subsequently followed by a series of comments, usually written by pro Chief supporters, that criticized the article or anti chief efforts. Browning, who took an interest in the Chief controversy and campus climate, began to respond to pro Chief comments on these articles, leading to thread after thread of responses and also making her identity known because of the frequency of her comments. Unlike the majority of other comments posted online, Browning consistently used her real name and identified herself as a graduate student. Thus, her initial battles against racism were through the online arguments and discussions she engaged in.

Although the forum was designed to begin a constructive dialogue about the experiences of racism and privilege on campus, many commentators continued to exhibit their privilege by completely ignoring the purposes of the forum. Rather than engage in critical debate, Browning noted, commentators chose to resort to the same ignorance that was already expected of them, stating that “pity departments” (by this they were referring to the humanities, ethnic studies, and other departments that are not considered “hard sciences”) were the ones generating a Chief problem. In effect, they did what CRTists would predict by flipping the Chief problem on its head so that it would appear that anti chief activists were actually the ones making the problem, not those who created the Chief himself (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Pro Chief supporters did what those with privilege are able to do, that is, turn the issue of racism back onto people of color in order to claim that it is *their* problem, and not everyone’s.

A month after the forum, the board of trustees released a statement officially retiring the Chief. This statement, which I have discussed previously, cites the primary reason for retirement of the Chief as being attributed to the NCAA’s ban on sports teams with Native American mascots. However, with all of the negative publicity the university was receiving and with the increasing racial tensions on campus, in addition to the NCAA policy, it is hard to imagine how the university could continue avoiding the very issue that was poisoning its’ campus.

Despite the Chief’s retirement in 2007, unfortunately, it was not the complete end of him. He has reappeared on several occasions after the board of trustees’ statement, and has more recently gained momentum with his supporters. In the next section, I will discuss more recent Chief developments along with my experiences as an activist with IRESIST.

Eyewitness to Racism: Activist Experiences

I spent my first year as a graduate student taking whichever opportunities I could to learn more about the Chief. Initially, much of the information I gained was a result of informal conversations I had with students and faculty who had all spent more time on campus than I had. Some of the best information that I gained was through members of IRESIST, some of which had been on campus for several years because they completed their undergraduate degree at UIUC. Learning about the Chief issue fascinated me because it opened door after door of racist practices and attitudes supported by the university. However, for many others who had seen the same story repeat itself, it was an issue that was getting old and even exhausting to deal with. Fortunately, many of the activists that I was in contact with are passionate individuals, committed to social justice for the long haul, and they knew what it meant to challenge an entire institution who had engaged in these practices for so many years. Yet, they always found the time to vent with me about these issues because it served as a way of coping with them, and also of being able to relate to someone who could understand the experience of being a student of color on campus.

As a second year graduate student, I had already familiarized myself with the campus and its resources, along with some of the narratives of campus racism that had been shared with me by other scholars and activists. These narratives, in conjunction with my own passion for social justice, inspired me to join IRESIST and more broadly activist efforts on campus. I wanted to dedicate myself to becoming both a scholar and an activist, blending together theory with practice by applying the skills I could to aid activist efforts. This task, I quickly realized, proved to be extremely exhausting. However, it provided me with insight that I would not have had otherwise, and I am thankful for having taken that opportunity.

As I have previously mentioned in this paper, my first major encounter with the Chief issue was in the fall of 2009, when I participated in an anti-Chief protest outside of Assembly Hall, a large auditorium where several campus events take place. We were protesting the Chief's "Next Dance", an event that was hosted by the Students for Chief Illiniwek (SFCI) and was geared towards keeping the memory of the Chief "alive". During this event, a student is trained to play the role of the Chief, that is, to mimic the Chief that appeared at athletic events, except that no team representing UIUC could be present. In other words, the event was designed to replicate what the Chief would normally do during halftime for sports events, without it being "sponsored" by the university administration. In this way, SFCI and other supporters of the Chief were able to keep their Chief dancing despite the NCAA ban and board of trustees resolution.

It would appear rather odd and extremely contradictory, that after so much struggle and activism on campus, and after so many debates, discussions, meetings, protests, letters, racial tensions, etc., that the Chief would reappear again after his official retirement. How did this happen? Of course, White privilege always has a way of inserting itself even into battles that appear to be won. For the 2007 homecoming parade (in October), Chancellor Herman allowed floats that contained the Chief Illiniwek logo to be a part of the parade, on the basis that students were entitled to free speech, no matter how "...culturally derogatory, offensive, or even racist" the speech is (Prochaska, 2010, p. 105). Chancellor Herman thus provided an avenue of argument by which pro Chief supporters could continue circulating images of the Chief; on the basis of free speech.

Clearly equating images of the Chief and use of the Chief himself with free speech is a mistake. The reaches of free speech do not extend indefinitely and although this First

Amendment right is protected with the strictest of scrutiny, not all speech is guaranteed as free speech. Most public educational institutions are considered *limited public forums*, a legal term used to describe how such institutions can regulate forms of speech. In the case of limited public forums, school officials can only regulate the time, place, and manner of speech but not the content (Alexander & Alexander, 2009). At the same time, schools are also committed to their own policies on nondiscrimination and thus have the power to regulate campus organizations (such as SFCI) if their activities violate the code of conduct set forth for such organizations (see *Pi Lambda Phi Fraternity, Inc. v. University of Pittsburgh*, 229 F.3d 435, 2000). Additionally, legal precedent in educational law has established that a school can regulate forms of speech if it can be reasonably forecasted that such speech would result in “material and substantial disruption” (see *Tinker v. Des Moines Independent School District*, 393 U.S. 503, 1969). In this case, the Chief has demonstrated considerable disruption and interference with student learning because of the hostile racial climate that has been created because of the Chief, and over the years with the ensuing controversy (Baca, 2004).

In violation of its own principles of banning the Chief, the university returned control of the Chief back to those with the most privilege and power. SFCI capitalized on Chancellor Herman’s statement that the use of the Chief by students was considered free speech, and have used this as their primary argument for why they are not violating registered student organization codes of conduct in hosting their “Next Dance”. The protest that I attended in 2009 was in fact the second time that the student organization SFCI had hosted a “Next Dance”. The first “Next Dance” was hosted in November 2008, and was attended by “...9,000 Illini alumni and current students” (Editorial Board, *Daily Iowan*). Thus, this particular event received overwhelming support from students and alumni, much to the disappointment of anti-Chief activists who had

long strived for his removal. Even so, a small group of protestors gathered outside of Assembly Hall in order to protest the “Next Dance” sponsored by SFCI. No matter how many numbers supported the Chief, student resistance was always present.

The numbers of those who attended the “Next Dance” in 2009 were not nearly as high as the first time around, and even better still the numbers of protestors increased that year from approximately 20 to over 200. The increase came, organizers informed me, from better planning and outreach for that year, but also more importantly, from the fact that the “Next Dance” took place on a random day with no particular significance. In 2008, the dance was hosted after a football game, meaning there was an increased presence of Illinois fans in the area (Editorial Board, *Daily Iowan*). However, in 2009, SFCI hosted the event on a Friday in October, with no particular athletic event preceding the dance. Through my participation in both protests, I noticed the difference from 2010 to 2009, due in large part to the fact that the “Next Dance” in 2010 was hosted shortly after the homecoming game between Illinois and Indiana. But the difference in timing was not the only new change to the “Next Dance”.

SFCI were attempting to come back strong for their “Next Dance” in 2010 as a means of recovering from the year before when it did not receive as much attention or attendance from pro Chief supporters. In such an attempt, they strategized to host the “Next Dance” after the homecoming game, realizing that it would be a great opportunity for them to attract alumni and fans who would already be in the area because of the game. In addition, they prided themselves on the fact that they had managed to recruit a student to play the Chief who is half-Cherokee (Goldenstein, 2010, *Daily Illini*). Having Ivan Dozier as the new Chief portrayer gave SFCI exactly what they wanted: an excuse that the Chief was not harming Native Americans because

if that was the case, then why would a Native American (even if only half) agree to take on that role?

For the third year in a row, IRESIST and other student organizations on campus met to plan a protest against the “Next Dance”. However, this time, we were presented with a whole new set of issues that we needed to address. In actuality, the issues were the same, but our responses to these issues needed to be carefully strategized, especially because the event was to take place on the weekend of homecoming. The first issue that was of concern was the timing of the event, scheduled to take place after the homecoming game. We knew that protesting at the event would pose a serious safety issue because there would be so many alumni and fans present, and not only present, but most likely drunk because a majority of them would be tailgating and pre-partying for the game. We wanted to continue with our plans for a protest, but we wanted to make sure that those present would feel safe to protest and that we would not have any issues between ourselves and the pro Chief supporters. Organizing to ensure safety was especially important because of the fact that a protestor was attacked the year before when a pro-Chief person ran up to her and shoved the megaphone she was holding into her face. Although the incident received little media attention, those who were present were able to witness how the police were policing the protestors, as opposed to the pro Chief fans, which is why the incident occurred. Had any of the two policemen present turned to surveillance the pro-“Chiefters” they would have noticed rather quickly someone running in our direction. Thus, security for our protest was to take top priority.

Another issue that we needed to address was how we wanted to present and publicize our protest. Because the protest was going to happen after homecoming, we did not want to be seen as the ones who are dividing the campus by staging a protest on that weekend. Unfortunately,

SFCI had to their advantage the fact that they had not only a lot of support from alumni and fans, but also that they could portray the “Next Dance” as a way of celebrating homecoming and university “traditions” whereas we immediately would be labeled as the “troublemakers”. This label would be ascribed to us in either case, because of the way that racism and White privilege work and have worked on the UIUC campus. But the label is even more readily assigned because we are seen as causing divisions during homecoming, when the supposed goal would be for students to unite.

Thus, we strategized to maintain as positive a message as we could about our protest as being an event that is really designed to unite the campus around a non-racist mascot. We called our protest “New Mascot Now!” to demonstrate that we were not simply protesting but that we were demanding a new mascot that we could feel proud of, instead of maintaining the old void of the Chief. We also decided to host a party after the protest, to present a fun alternative to attending the Chief’s “Next Dance”. Though the protest was still about White privilege and racism on behalf of the university, we centered our message on being about how we wanted to move forward from the Chief and feel united with others on campus around a new, non-racist mascot. In our flyers and presentations, we were careful to highlight how we wanted campus unity as a means of demonstrating how SFCI were the actual dividers, because they continually find ways to revive a racist image. Though we knew that we would be seen by many as the dividers of the campus anyway, we still strived to make our message positive and clear.

One of the last major issues that we needed to address was that of the new Chief being half Native American. This last issue was a bit tricky because we did not want to be seen as critiquing Native American identity through a critique of Dozier. We knew that our words would be twisted in ways that would make us seem as if we are questioning Dozier’s heritage

and ethnic identification, even if behind closed doors we were. Instead, we continued to cite the same reasons as before for why the Chief is a stereotypical, racist representation and that his presence becomes no different whether a White person is underneath or a Native American. When initially deciding how to handle the Dozier situation, several members from the Native House met with Dozier in order to discuss his decision about portraying the Chief. After several meetings that indicated that Dozier would not change his mind, the Native House refrained from further attempts to educate him.

With the planning underway and the rally coming near, we made as many preparations as we possibly could. As was done in the past, we hosted a rally outside of the Swanlund Administration building, home of the university's top administration, such as the Chancellor. I was also in charge of sending and emailing a collective letter to the President, Chancellor, and Vice Chancellor outlining several reasons why the "Next Dance" similar to the previous two, was a violation against university RSO conduct and campus nondiscrimination policies (the email was sent October 20th, 2010). The letter, which I originally composed and sent to the group for feedback, was signed under the collective name of Students for a United Illinois, with the names of activist members and also the names of co-sponsoring organizations for our rally listed in the letter as well. We chose the name Students for a United Illinois to reduce the negative connotation that the name IRESIST would have for the event. In addition, the name had several student organizations attached to it that supported our rally and removal of the Chief, thus demonstrating strength in numbers.

Not surprisingly, the responses to the collective letter we sent were minimal at best, and completely dismissive of our cause at worst. Only President of the University of Illinois Michael Hogan and Vice Chancellor Renee Romano responded to my emails. Chancellor Easter did not

respond to my emails about the “Next Dance” until after I had sent a second collective letter, regarding the university’s complacency in allowing the Chief to remain on campus and allowing SFCI to violate nondiscrimination policies. The responses that I received from both the Vice Chancellor and the President were short, sweet, but completely avoided the contents of the letter itself. Because of the precedent set by Chancellor Herman, both the President and the Vice Chancellor commented that SFCI could not be regulated because of the fact that their expressions and use of the Chief (even though it is a university trademark) are protected under the First Amendment. Frustrated by this response, I replied via email to both the President and the Vice Chancellor highlighting how the SFCI were making a mockery of university policy and that the university needed to step up and firmly end this divisive issue once and for all. I have yet to hear back from them.

Sadly, the university could have taken this opportunity to sanction SFCI for violating the use of their trademark to the name “Chief Illiniwek” and all related “Chief Illiniwek” merchandise and materials. On October 1st 2010, the University of Illinois issued a “cease and desist” letter to the Honor the Chief Society, one of three major pro Chief groups that have supported the Chief’s “Next Dance” both through sponsoring the event financially and also promoting it through their website. As stated on their webpage, the Honor the Chief Society,

“...was founded in 2001 to lend historical perspective to the Chief Illiniwek Tradition at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. It is the Society's objective to share the history of Chief Illiniwek so that people can gain a better understanding of the heritage surrounding one of our country's most time-honored academic traditions” (Honor the Chief Society, home page).

This webpage, much like the other pro Chief websites, is laden with inaccuracy, misrepresentations, and false information concerning the Chief. It comes as no surprise really, because those who created and maintain such websites are some of the most adamant supporters of the Chief, but I have to admit, even reading through their website is painful. If I were as

ignorant and racist in my comments as those who are a part of the Honor the Chief Society, I would feel extremely embarrassed. Unfortunately, the people in these groups cannot see or understand racism the way I do (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).

The “cease and desist” letter was issued because a lawyer on behalf of the Honor the Chief Society filed a trademark application in order to win trademark rights over the use of “Chief Illiniwek”. Although the Honor the Chief Society had already been using the name “Chief Illiniwek” for marketing of their various events, the group was attempting to gain official and legal use over the name from the university, who under NCAA restrictions, is banned from using the “Chief Illiniwek” name and imagery. In this letter, University of Illinois lawyers stipulated (with proof attached to the letter) that the Honor the Chief Society was in violation of trademark rights by using the name “Chief Illiniwek” for their website, including “...posters using the ‘Chief Illiniwek’ name (i.e., ‘Chief Illiniwek Poster - Memorial Stadium’ and ‘Chief Illiniwek Poster - Assembly Hall’) and a pin using the ‘Chief Illiniwek’ name (i.e., ‘Chief Illiniwek Pin’) and bearing the ILLINI trademark” (Goldstein, cease and desist letter). These items can be found on the Honor the Chief Society’s website under “merchandise”. Additionally, the Honor the Chief Society violated trademark rights in their advertisement of booking a Chief performance by stating on their website, “[i]f you are interested in booking Chief Illiniwek to speak or perform at your function or event, please contact the Honor the Chief Society with specific details of your request” (Honor the Chief Society, home page).

The letter clearly details how the Honor the Chief Society has violated trademark law because the university owns the trademark to “Chief Illiniwek” and thus, when this trademark is reproduced through other sources, it appears to be university approved, or in some way connected to the university. On October 14th, 2010, approximately a week before the “Next

Dance” was scheduled to take place, media outlets in Champaign-Urbana reported that the “Next Dance” was going to be canceled because of the university’s legal threats (Wood, 2010).

Though we were at first very surprised (and in many ways relieved) by the news, we knew better than to believe something before seeing it. Sure enough, the very next day, the “Next Dance” was back on, with the reasoning that the students had worked too hard to put together this event for them to not follow through (Goldenstein, 2010, *Daily Illini*).

For the “Next Dance” to continue even in the face of university legal action makes the university’s ability to regulate their campus and enforce their policies look pitiful. The “cease and desist” letter was not what I expected or hoped it would be. More than anything else, the letter was simply something that looked good on paper. What was even worse was that after the “Next Dance” happened, the university did nothing to follow through with their supposed “legal action”. Without swift university action to back the letter, it was meaningless. And unfortunately, it appeared that the pro Chief groups knew this all along.

Without any further impediments to the “Next Dance” the pro Chief groups were ready to host it for the third year in a row. We were also ready, having organized a rally/protest outside of the event and an after-party as an alternative to the “Next Dance”. We advised those who wanted to attend our rally to meet at Assembly Hall as opposed to following last year’s model, where protestors met at the Alma Mater and marched to Assembly Hall. Because we wanted to be mindful of the potential danger we were putting ourselves (and the protestors) in, we did not want to march through the pools of Chief fans, many of which were stationed all around campus after the homecoming game, and many of which had been drinking since the start of the game. However, as the primary organizers, we decided to meet each other at a specified location on campus so that we could march together to Assembly Hall to meet other fellow protestors.

I think it was during that march where I felt the most fear. Walking for approximately 15 minutes, myself and several other organizers (a small group of about eleven people) walked shouting chants of “hey hey, ho ho, this racist mascot’s got to go” and “what do we want, a new mascot, when do we want it, now!”. During this march (and also at the rally) we received countless stares, taunts, namecalling, and Chief fans shouting “Chief” and pointing to their Chief shirts and attire. At one point, a Chief fan came up to one of our security guards, taunted him with namecalling, then pushed him. Another member of security stepped in and was luckily able to deescalate the situation. Sticking together during this march was really the only option that we had in order to ensure that no violence would erupt. On several occasions, Chief fans came up close to our faces, visibly upset, and often attempting to engage in shouting matches with us during our chanting. When this happened I refrained from exchanging insults, but rather continued to shout our chants even louder.

It was estimated that approximately, “5,000 people attended the ‘Next Dance’ event, marking an increase over the 1,500 from 2009, but a decrease from the first event’s turnout of 10,000 people” (Goldenstein, 2010, *Daily Illini*). A new website, combining the forces of all three pro Chief groups (SFCI, Honor the Chief Society, and the Council of Chiefs) was announced at the “Next Dance”; the website is called “The Chief Lives”. The website markets itself as the “official website of the Chief tradition” and contains videos from previous “Next Dance” events, a link to their Facebook fan page, various ways of donating, and “educational” history on the Chief (thechief lives.com).

Although I would like to believe that over time the Chief issue at UIUC will gradually die down, the evidence so far leaves me dubious that it will be that simple. Unfortunately, the last “Next Dance” managed to attract more people instead of less. I do not foresee the Chief ever

being reinstated as the mascot because of NCAA policy, but I am not sure in what ways the pro Chief supporters will channel their energy and “love” for the Chief in the future. I also do not know if the university will ever actually acknowledge the Chief and the hostile racial climate as a result of the controversy for what it is, or if they will continue to avoid using the “r” word. I have no doubt that instances of hostility towards Native American students and anti chief supporters will continue, such as the vandalism of the “Beyond the Chief” art exhibit (mentioned at the outset of this paper), which has occurred nine times (see vandalism history of “Beyond the Chief”).

What I do know is that no matter what happens in the future, no matter what racist acts take place, there will always be activism and student resistance against it. In the short time that I became acquainted with other activists on campus, and especially those who had been on campus for some time, I realized that no matter how old the story became, how tired of the university they were, how fed up with people they were, they were always striving to make the campus better. And after participating as an organizer and seeing first-hand how much hard work it is, how exhausting it can be, I appreciated their persistence even more. Seeing their strength and resilience inspired me to continue the struggle as well, even when being at UIUC made me sick to my stomach. I accepted that in my position as a student of color in higher education, who is using their studies to transform the educational system for others, I would always be faced with this fight. By virtue of my decisions to continue pursuing my graduate degrees, I have accepted this challenge.

Chapter 6

Conclusion: Where do we go From Here?

With everything that has transpired in regards to the Chief over the past 25 years, it seems almost difficult to ask the question, so where do we go from here? It remains unclear what the university will decide to do about these issues in the future, such as will there ever be a new mascot, what will happen to those who sell Chief merchandise, or what will be the eventual fate of SFCI? Although the Chief has been retired, the struggle for activists remains far from over.

As has been demonstrated throughout this paper, the struggle in removing the Chief as the campus mascot, though significant, is really just one example of the function of White privilege and racism in an educational institution. Only in a system that privileges Whites and their perspective over people of color, where colonialism and its effects are conveniently forgotten, where the portrait of Native Americans is painted by White eyes, where to speak out against racism means you are being “politically correct”, where a person of color can speak and not be heard, only in such a system are images like the Chief permissible and even “honorable”. In this paper I have focused much of my attention and energy into discussing the Chief issue in detail because as a student on campus, it is so difficult to ignore. However, the complacency that allows the Chief to persist is the same as the one necessary for “Tacos and Tequila” to happen, with very little consequence. If the university administration has any interest in healing their campus, they need to start taking activists’ demands more seriously.

With regards to the Chief, I would suggest the university seriously consider our previous recommendations:

- a) “that all 'cease and desist' letters from the university to Students for Chief Illiniwek, to the Honor the Chief Society, and to

the Chief Lives organizations be fully implemented. In the absence of full, timely compliance, we demand the university immediately take legal action to address the failure of these organizations to comply.

b) we demand the university undertake all necessary measures to publicly dissociate the name 'Fighting Illini' from any and all Native American imagery and associations. This action was strongly urged by the NCAA as part of the compromise that allowed the university to continue to use 'Fighting Illini', and we demand that the university comply with both the spirit and the letter of this request without further delay.

c) we demand an immediate end to the band's playing the Chief's Dance music -- known as the 'Three in One' -- at half-time, and to create a half-time show that does not offer an opportunity for the current, unofficial 'chief' to perform in the stands.

d) we demand that the university take more proactive measures in finding a new mascot, something that would stand in place of the 'chief' and which would allow for a greater sense of campus unity." (Illinois Leaders: Stop The Presence of Chief Illiniwek. New Mascot Now!).

In doing this, we argue that the university could accomplish a greater sense of inclusivity on campus and a recognition of the racism perpetuated by the mascot, the damage it causes by miseducating students about Native Americans, and the hostile racial climate that it spurs.

Most importantly, I recommend that the university administration call racism what it is, that they stop avoiding usage of the "r" word and that they take responsibility for their lack of action which only further divides the campus. Furthermore, I recommend that the university administration admit their past mistakes and failures, acknowledge the institutional privilege they have abused, and engage in critical discussions with the campus surrounding the Chief and other racial hostilities on campus. Only through a demonstration of strong leadership will the UIUC campus be able to move forward.

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