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Dishonor in Racial Depiction

False Depiction of a race, or an act of tradition, Charlene Teters a Native American activist fights for the removal of the University of Illinois mascot Chief Illiniwek. In the film “In Whose Honor”, Charlene Teters is a mother of two, and an art major from Santé Fe, New Mexico, took her kids to an Illini football game in 1988. This is where Charlene learned of the hurtful depiction of her people. The University of Illinois had a 60+ tradition of the celebration of Chief Illiniwek, and mascot created and performed by a student of the university. Watching the Chief Parade around the football caused a feeling of embarrassment and shame over Teters. From that point on Teters decided to make a stand on the issue and can’t allow this injustice to go by unchallenged. "It still makes me angry because I know they are hurting other people when they do that. And I knew that I couldn't be here and not address that issue." Teters began picketing outside the stadium, despite harassment from jeering students and unsympathetic administration officials.

On the other side of the spectrum the trustees, alumni, fans, administration officials are insisting that the Chief is a proper, and honorable representation of Native Americans. The administration insisted that the tradition of the Chief is well standing character and refuses to change the mascot. In the process of petitioning and gaining support for the ban of the use of the Indian or derogatory words several Universities dropped their use of the word of “Indian” as a mascot. Despite all of the media attention, and the growing support of Native American equality it stood by its claim even while facing suspension. Charlene continued her fight for equality leaving the university to pursue the ban of derogatory names as entertainment or team mascots.

I feel that the use of Indian is a terrible depiction of Native Americans. The director used the multiple clips of visual aids to help with getting across points being expressed by Charlene. One of the most effective was the picture of the four flags, one of the flags of the Cleveland Indians. The other three flags were degrading names of teams (Negro’s, Caucasians, and Jews) with the clips ending with now you know how we feel. That clip allowed me to relate to Charlene, and completely shifted my complete support for Native Americans. Jay Rosenstein gave both sides of the argument but it was displayed, but it was slightly bias with more support toward the side of the Native Americans. The narration was entering keeping the viewer engaged, and left room for people to choose sides despite being a documentary. The editing really focused on Charlene’s grief and struggles focusing on dark colors, slowing down her close ups, or photos, along with narration describing her pain in further detail. The images that was key in the movie seemed to be slowed down and focused on for, and referred to more than once. Such as why the university feel unwilling to change the mascot. I believe the thesis is based off the title and the movie is, “What is the purpose having a symbol that imitates a figure especially a person and it’s not accepted as official and despised, how are you honoring people you are honoring.”

Works Cited

<i>In Whose Honor?</i> Dir. Jay Rosenstein. New Day Film, 1997. Videocassette.

<http://www.pbs.org/pov/inwhosehonor/film_description.php>