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A Review for In Whose Honor

Is it stereotype or inspiration? Is it discrimination or respect? Is it destruction or revival? The questions are frequently asked when discussing cultural elements utilized in all kinds of “mainstream” activities, including fashion designs, commercial logos, and school mascots. Our school, UIUC, is a school without a mascot. It is rare for universities the States because schools need symbols to love, share, and being spiritually connected. As a result, why doesn't our university, a significant member of the Big Ten with thousands of students from different backgrounds, has our own symbol?

Actually, we had one, but it was discarded for a better reason.

The documentary movie, *In Whose Honor*, showcases and reflects the controversy about “Chief Illiniwek,” the former mascot of UIUC, taken place in 1989. While the universities, including UIUC, showing their “honor” toward Native American Indians and their culture with Indian mascot, the Native Americans are feeling being hurt. The main character of *In Whose Honor* is Charlene Teters, a Native American and a mother of

two, who dares to speak out after watching a UIUC basketball game and feeling her daughter are “belittled.” (*In Whose Honor*) She chooses to fight for her people through protesting by herself. At first, she is attacked, insulted, and even the security of her family is threatened. However, she doesn’t retreat and her endeavor finally calls attention from the mainstream media and Native American associations. UIUC faces great pressure from both the society and other Big Ten schools.

The cinematography is remarkable. There is no “actor” in the movie, but interviews of actual people relate to the incident expressing their point of views. The movie itself is a meticulously formatted argument. I, sincerely, didn’t get the point of Charlene Teters’ aggressive reaction: apparently, the school and the students were not mocking at Native American, in stead, they were showing their loves toward the culture. The director, Jay Rosenstein, anticipates the doubts from audiences, including me, and offers counter arguments through editing raw materials. For example, the editor presents the interview of the last “Chief” himself to show how some people firmly belief that the mascot is a serious cultural tradition for the university and its alumnnus, the dance is performed with respect, and the audiences don’t have offensive behaviors. However, the

scene of audiences doing inappropriate behaviors and the emotional words from Charlene Teters (*In Whose Honor*) inserted right after the “Chief’s” interview makes a strong irony as the counterargument.

The music also performances an important role in the movie. It, for example, reinforces the arguments through contrasting the actual Indian music beats and the music performed by the university orchestra. Furthermore, the music also performs as a narrator itself— at the end of the movie, the consequences of Charlene Teters’ protest are shown in slides of white words against black backgrounds; the slides are dull; however, with the music in the “genre” of Indian music, the slides triggers strong empathy.

Works Cited

In Whose Honor. Jay Rosenstein, New Day Films, 1997.