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On *In Whose Honor?* Sadness and Discomfort

I watched the documentary *In Whose Honor?* as a part of my English class but I became invested in the topic while watching. The movie is about the controversy surrounding the removal of the University of Illinois's mascot, Chief Illiniwek. I knew very little about the topic, so I was excited to watch the documentary. My knowledge on the issue greatly expanded but I was also exposed to a new perspective on issues regarding culturally based, or lack thereof, mascots. Being a white American, I haven't had to stand up for mockery of my own culture like Charlene Teters did for hers.

In the documentary, Charlene Teters explains her role in the movement to remove the Chief and the backlash she faced doing so (*In Whose Honor?*, 1997). Her disappointment is first introduced when she describes the initial encounter she and her children had with the chief when going to a U of I basketball game. To say the least, the halftime show provoked sorrow and embarrassment for her family. The documentary was certainly full of gut-wrenching situations even for someone who is not a part of the ethnic background being debated. I was alarmed by some of the horrors she endured on in such a recent time.

Being the catalyst for this change on the campus, Charlene Teters was a perfect fit for this documentary in regard to both the narrative and emotional plot. She was able to tell factual stories but also support her claims with personal experience. Her personal connection allowed her to stir emotions within viewers. This does, of course, draw bias into the picture; I do believe this is the biggest limitation of the documentary.

While I was deeply disturbed by some of the clips in the documentary, I sort of had an idea of how the situation would settle out. While my prior knowledge was limited, I did have an idea of what would happen because I am involved in campus life at U of I.

Including actual clips of some events that took place showed the validity in the claims Teters made. A lot of the sadness and discomfort I felt during the movie took place when clips containing racial slurs or stiff arguments were shown. Including these clips allowed viewers to feel some of what Teters endured as she advocated for change (*In Whose Honor?*, 1997). The tribal music that complemented the film carried a sad tone through the movie. The paradox of the authentic music and the fabricated mascot raised question to the appropriateness of the mascot; how does the chief represent people of American Indian background? The music showed that in reality, the chief disrespects aspects of American Indian heritage.

## Works Cited

*In Whose Honor?*. Jay Rosenstein. Perf. Charlene Teters. New Day Films, 1997. DVD.