

Cleveland's Unthinking Racism

David Leonhardt OCT. 29, 2016

For many of Cleveland's passionate, patient baseball fans, their team's logo is a joyful connection to the past. It's a reminder of the players from their childhood and from generations earlier. The logo — which was the centerpiece of a 28-foot-high [sign](#) that welcomed fans to Cleveland's old ballpark for many seasons — is one of the few constants across the decades.

But the logo is also an ugly racist caricature.

That much is undeniable, whatever else may be true. It consists of a cartoon face with bright red skin, grotesquely large teeth and a bent nose, topped by a single feather. The character is named Chief Wahoo, and the team, of course, is the Cleveland Indians.

This week, they're trying to win their first World Series in almost 70 years. Which means that hundreds if not thousands of well-meaning Cleveland fans have gone out to a ballpark wearing an ugly racist caricature, while being watched on television by millions of other people.

Baseball fans, even outside Cleveland, have been looking at Chief Wahoo for so long that many of us have become inured to the logo. We're aware that it has become controversial and probably understand that it's offensive. But then we go back to watching the game.

It is worth pausing to think about what the equivalents might be for other ethnic groups — for minorities less marginalized than Native Americans. They're horrific. Imagine the Philadelphia Blacks, featuring a logo with exaggerated lips and similar big teeth. Or the San Francisco Chinamen, featuring slanted eyes and a pointy hat (as the National Congress on American Indians [suggested](#)). Or the New York Jews, with a short mascot who had a large, crooked nose and wore a yarmulke.

The ugliness of the logo is no accident. When Cleveland chose the name in 1915, it had the worst stereotypes in mind: "Indians, on the warpath all the time, and eager for scalps to dangle at their belts," according to a 1915 newspaper article that a longtime Cleveland fan, Peter Pattakos, mentions in [a reflective essay](#) on the subject.

This stereotype is obviously not the one that most Cleveland fans have in mind when they think of their team today. That's why the team has often begun using an alternate logo — a simple red C.

But that half measure isn't enough. And it's not enough to point out that the logo summons fond memories for many people. Those memories don't actually depend on racism to endure. A slur is a slur, and it needs to be retired.

RESEARCH SUMMARY #5

Writing Workshop #2

FINAL SUMMARY:

On the lines below, write your finalized summary of this current event article. Challenge yourself by including sentence transitions and a variety of sentence structures.
