

moving past the utes?

The Running Utes! The block “U” with the feather dangling on the side. We see these images posted on football helmets, all over the University of Utah website, and ever-present on marketing material. We see fans in various degrees of altered states running around in warpaint and headdress. In short, we are The Utes!

Or are we? And if so, for how long? With our entrance in to the PAC-12, the University of Utah moves into a brighter and bigger national spotlight. Perhaps it is time to re-evaluate the mascot status of the “Ute” and the use of the feather and drum in marketing material. Given the company we keep (Bruins, Ducks, Huskies, etc.), we must question whether the University wishes to present itself to the world as an institution that dehumanizes a group of people by packaging them as a mascot.

In his article, *The Truth about American Indian Mascots*, Dr. Chris Kraatz writes, “To “mascotize” a group of people is systematically to attach depictions of that group to commercial products, ventures or enterprises such that (1) the depicted group is defined by nationality, race, ethnicity or religion, (2) the depictions are designed by and profit only people outside the depicted group, and (3) the depictions are considered disrespectful, inappropriate, or stereotypic by a majority of persons within the depicted group.”

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mission statement

The Student Affairs
Diversity Council (SADC)
strives to cultivate
an environment
that embraces and
promotes the broad
scope of diversity within
the division.

it's hard to hate someone whose story you know: stories of growth and change

This column features stories by Student Affairs professionals and students who are willing to share an experience (event, book, speaker, etc) which promoted growth, a change in perspective, an awareness of another, or when some knowledge that was previously missing slipped into place.

a mixed bag

Keila Cone-Uemura

Stereotypes, like weapons, seem only to become real when they are loaded and pointed at you. Stripped of all your individual

human qualities, you become blurry and one dimensional, a shadowy figure in a shadowy, detached group. You are a faint fabrication of your former self. I know this from experience.

In third grade, I came face to face with my first racial stereotype.

“Since you’re Asian, does that mean you pray to statues?”

I was shocked and

offended, but did not know quite how to respond. As the child of an overwhelmingly blunt clinical psychologist, I have always been aware of my biracial heritage. When I was younger, I thought that being a blend of Japanese and Caucasian was special, a mixed bag of sorts. However, as the years went on and the steady barrage of questions continued, I became increasingly self-

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calendar

University Neighborhood Partners 10-Year Anniversary Tuesday, December 6 6:00 pm -8:30 pm

UNP is celebrating 10 wonderful years. Join us for an evening to commemorate a decade of linking the University of Utah to SLC's west side neighborhood. The evening will include dinner and a short program.

It's a Wonderful Life: Free Film Series at the Post Theatre Wednesday, December 7 7:00 pm -10:00 pm

Join us for a free screening of this holiday classic. Admission is free.

University closed for Christmas December 23-26

University closed for New Year's December 30-January 2

Keila Cone-Uemura is a Junior at West High and the daughter of Karen Cone-Uemura, Psychologist at the University Counseling Center

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conscious about the way I looked.

"Since Asian eyes are squinty, is it harder for you to see?"

"Is this why you're so good at math?"

"Do you eat dogs?"

It was strange, to have people look at the shape of my eyes and make an instant judgment. I felt separated from my classmates, as though an invisible barrier had suddenly burst up through the carpet. Desperately,



Keila with her younger brother, Ethan.

I tried to bury my Japanese side, pushing away the rich heritage and beautiful culture. The word "Asian" conjured up nightmarish images—overbearing "dragon" mothers and math geniuses, five-hour piano practice sessions and bowl haircuts. I became apprehensive when asked to explain my racial heritage,

"I became apprehensive when asked to explain my racial heritage, positive that once they knew I was half Japanese, my race would become my one defining factor."

positive that once they knew I was half Japanese, my race would become my one defining factor. I wanted people to see my personality rather than the features that physically defined

me.

Just recently, however, I have begun to rethink my position. I pride myself in being powerful and independent, yet rather than fight the stereotypes, I allow myself to live within them. By pushing away a part of myself, I am simply surrendering to the perceptions and opinions of others.

I can be half Japanese and still be an animal lover, a singer, a passionate follower of the arts and a sassy fashionista.

There is no one stopping me, no boundaries but the ones I put up around myself. Rules are meant to be questioned, oversimplified perceptions are meant to be disproven, and bags are meant to be mixed. Though stereotypes are hurtful, they will always exist—the only thing I can control is the way I react to them. I am definitely

not to the point of awareness that I would like to be, but I am well on my way, slowly fleshing out my own one-dimensional perceptions of the world. Life is not simply a melting pot—that would imply a loss of individuality. We are all part of an intricately woven quilt, enhanced by the intertwining stories and vibrant hues of a million different threads.

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We might look at this issue in terms of other institutions that use groups of people as their mascot. For example, Notre Dame was founded by Irish Catholics. The original concept was to provide a place of higher learning for this specific population of people, hence their choice of the mascot “Fighting Irish”. According to the Office of Budget and Institutional Analysis, in the autumn of 2011 there were 31,660 students enrolled at The University of Utah. Of those 31,660 students, 180 (or 0.568%) are Native American,

and few of those students are from the Ute tribe. Clearly, the U was not founded as an educational haven for Native American students. Given this information and historical precedent, the University of Utah mascot could—instead—be the “Stormin’ Mormons”. If you find yourself cringing at the obvious disrespect of this last comment, now you know what it feels like for our Native American students.

When speaking with Native Americans on the topic of having themselves and their culture “mascotized”, it is common for them to reference the treatment of the drum and feather. One woman writes, “Drums and feathers are sacred items. Each tribe has its own way of protecting and honoring these items. My tribe believes drums have their own voices...their own spirit. To use the drum you must be drug and alcohol free. Feathers are only brought out

for certain occasions. We are taught that to receive a drum or feather is a great honor and we are given instructions how to protect and care for these items”.

Now picture a football tailgating event and you start to get the picture of how sacrilegious our actions can seem. It is also important to note that, up until 1978, it was illegal for Native people to practice their religion and they could potentially be arrested for using sacred objects in their religious practice. Essentially, while we’ve been “whooping it up” (pun intended) with our drums, feathers and headdress, Native peoples have had to stand by and witness our dishonoring of their culture, history and religion.

Many arguments and research analyses look at the negative effect of dehumanizing Native Americans by the use of tribal mascots—regardless of stated institutional intentions—hovering around

Salty City Happenings and More

Interested in celebrating the season with a little diversity? Visit the Trees of Diversity exhibit at the Utah Cultural Center in West Valley City. Between now and December 27, enjoy over two dozen trees on display representing cultures from around the world. Also on display are 63 nativity scenes from around the globe, and gingerbread houses created by both professionals and amateurs (you can even add your own!). The exhibit is free. Learn more at www.wvc-ut.gov.

The Obama administration has revoked previous guidelines advocating race-neutral enrollment policies in elementary and secondary schools. The U.S. Justice Department and Education Department are allowing school district officials to make decisions about school locations, zoning lines and feeder patterns, in the hopes of promoting diversity. Learn more by visiting <http://www.businessweek.com/news/2011-12-02/obama-administration-says-schools-may-use-race-for-diversity.html>

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the concept that the institution is only “honoring” our Native American tribes. However, a quick Google search of Native American Mascots is a relatively easy way for all of us to start the self education process concerning this issue. Even the United States Civil Rights Commission wrote on April 13, 2001 that, “Schools that continue the use of Indian imagery and references... have simply failed to listen to the Native groups, religious leaders, and civil rights organizations that oppose these symbols...[T]he use of the imagery and traditions, no matter how popular, should

end when they are offensive.” Looking at The University’s relationship with the “Ute” mascot, we can see that changing our mascot over to Swoop in 1996 was an upgrade from the 1950’s conceptualized Ute Indian boy named “Hoyo”. It was hard

for the university community to give up “Hoyo” at that time and transfer their affection to Swoop. But it can—and has—been done. We can do this readily, positively and without rancor. And the time has come to do the right thing.



This article was authored by the staff of the WRC, pictured here.

student affairs diversity council

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