More Than A Word

[Transcript]

Archival Video: Sometimes facts are dull. Popular interest is most easily stirred by the unusual. This perhaps is the reason scarcely one in a thousand knows the true story of the American Indian. It is the strange and the unusual in relation to the Indian, which has been painted as permanent adornment for the walls of our public buildings, homes, and art galleries. Even a meager knowledge of Indian facts, and they're by no means dull, must be sought by those who feel them essential to a well-rounded knowledge of public affairs.

News Montage

- The campaign to get football's Washington Redskins to change their name got a boost from the government.
- U.S. patent office voted today to cancel the federal trademarks for that name.
- The Washington Redskins are regrouping on making the case to keep their name. That after a major blow to their cause in federal court today.
- Pressure continues to mount on the Washington Redskins to change their name, which many consider racist.
- The patent office says the Redskins name is disparaging of Native Americans.
- What's really going on is the patent trade office is putting economic pressure on the Washington football team.
- Trademark protection makes it easier for the team to make money from merchandise sales.
- This is political correctness run amok.
- It's a slur.
- This is absolutely ridiculous. It is political correctness run awry.
- They get to be called the Redskins?

Donald Trump: Who? Pocahontas? Well, no, she's… Look, look. She is… Is it offensive? You tell me. Oh, really. I'm sorry about that. I will tell you right now. They don't look like Indians to me, and they don't look like the Indians. Now, maybe we say politically correct or not politically correct. But you go up to Connecticut, and you look. Now, they don't look like Indians to me, sir.

News Montage

- Thank god that's not the test of whether or not people have rights in this country or not. Whether or not they pass your look test.
- The Native American children, they were all standing around it going (mock crying) "I can't go on with my life because the football team."
- "We will never change the name of the team. We will never change the name. It's that simple. NEVER - you can use caps." Dan Snyder is now the George Wallace of the NFL.

What's in a word?

Narrator: It's been said that an image is worth a thousand words. A concept implying that a single visual element can replace a multitude of descriptive factors, that one image can carry meaning and definition far more adequately than any verbal or written description. In the case of our own definitions, that is, as Native American people, why have we been reduced to a single word, a single silhouette? Redskin. One word, two syllables. Labeled in many dictionaries as a noun dated or offensive. And simply defined, an American Indian.

Suzan Shwon Harjo: The reason this is an important issue is because it's fundamental. It undergirds and overarches and surrounds all the other issues. If you don't get this one, you don't get any of them.

Tara Houska: The overall idea of Not Your Mascots is representation of Native Americans in the mainstream. And so, kind of, you know, where we sit in the dialogue and where we are as part of, you know, this concept of "Yes, we've progressed past 1900, we're still here. Pushing education, trying to get, you know, US, Inc. into educational curriculum. That's how real change is effectuated, you know. It's not just getting rid of mascots, it's also having this educational understanding behind it so people understand "This is why it matters."

Harjo: Every so often, the press discovers native peoples.

News Anchor: The protest in North Dakota against a major oil pipeline continues to grow. Over 100 Native American tribes have joined the fight against the project, saying that it threatens one tribe's water supply and its sacred land.

Harjo: This is one of those times. How is it that they are able, they the pipeline company and the state of North Dakota and the judge, how is it that they're able to proceed in the way they have? Well, the first way is that they believe their own racist stereotypes about Native people.

Narrator: In 2005, the National Collegiate Athletic Association sanctioned schools with abusive and hostile team names, logos, and mascots. The University of North Dakota's Fighting Sioux fell under this sanction. In 2006, the university sued the NCAA in response to the ban. An agreement was reached to allow them to continue using the name if they could gather support from the state Sioux tribes within a three-year period. Initially, all of the Sioux tribes agreed except the Spirit Lake Tribe and the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe. The Spirit Lake Tribe eventually voted to support the use of the name. The Standing Rock Tribe voted against it. The North Dakota Board of Higher Education subsequently ordered the name retired. In 2011, the North Dakota state senate approved legislation ordering the university to retain the name. The bill was then signed into law by Gov. Jack Dalrymple. After continued resistance from the NCAA, including the banning of teams from NCAA postseason events, the bill was repealed in the fall of 2011, and the Fighting Sioux name and logo were changed to the Fighting Hawks. Therefore, it cannot be understated that the state of North Dakota made an unprecedented legal effort to protect a sports mascot. As many people's social media feeds begin to fill up with news from the Standing

Rock Dakota Access Pipeline protests, the same effort to protect real Native American people could not be seen.

News Clip

- Reporter: People are being pepper-sprayed.
- Protesters: We're not leaving. We're not leaving.

Harjo: They believed that the Sioux people are savages and hostiles. They believed the past degraded, withdrawn policies.

Houska: I think that it informs a lot of people about, you know, where we're moving as Native Americans and where we are in the dialogue. You know, if we're still considered these kind of like headdress caricatures living on the plains and, you know, never went past 1900, that doesn't really allow us into like this, you know, modern dialogue.

Philip Deloria: You know, Indians make up between 1.5 and 2% of the population. And Indian people's visibility in American culture is in many ways reflective of that. But in other ways, Indian people's presence in the social, political, and economic landscape of the United States, is not reflective of that 1.5%. Indian people hold a disproportionate kind of weight through treaties and treaty relationships, through tribes and tribal power. So, removing Indian mascots from a few football teams or baseball teams, does that diminish Indian people in terms of thinking about Indians in American culture? I don't think so. Indians have many, many other power bases. And they're places where I think we'd rather have the conversation. We'd rather talk about treaty rights than talk about, you know, the rituals of Washington football fans.

Daniel Snyder: We did our homework, unlike a lot of people, and we understand the issues out there, and we're not an issue. The real issues are real-life issues, real-life needs, and I think it's time that people focus on the reality.

Fan: I don't think they should change the name because of the fact that it's not doing anybody any harm.

Fan: It was never intended to be racist. Twenty years ago, you didn't hear about any of this. And I just think we're in a society that tends to focus on being more politically correct now, and they want to look for reasons to exaggerate everything.

Fan: I think what they did was, like everything else, they're mixing a lot of things with politics. And this is supposed to be entertainment.

Deloria: It seems to be untenable to let the current situation go unchallenged. The struggle for rights, for sovereignty rights, for treaty rights, for human rights, for Native American people has to take place across a broad array. On the one hand, it has to be fought in the cultural domain, where we take on questions like this. It has to be fought in the social, the political, the economic, the environmental domains as well. And those things all get mushed together in important kinds

of ways. But it's wrong to say we shouldn't contest this. We should contest it. It's just part of a bigger, broader kind of front.

Harjo: So, of course, we have big issues. Everything is an emergency issue. You can't talk about health without talking about education, or you can't talk about education without talking about water rights or religious rights. Pretty soon you realize the interconnectedness of everything, and you realize that nothing exists on just a linear platform of priorities. Everything matters, everything's important. We have all of our people working at some level on some aspect.

Fan: I am not a Native American, so I don't know how those people would feel about that, so I wouldn't be qualified to comment. But from a fan perspective, it is innocent, harmless fun, and it is intended not to be anything remotely disrespectful at all. It is just us being appreciative of our team and supporting our team.

Houska: So, when I first moved here, I did a lot of lobbying on the Hill, on Capitol Hill, and it was for, you know, tribal issues. So, juxtaposing that with, you know, then you go out and you see people just openly mocking your race and people that honestly do not think that Native Americans exist anymore, I saw it as a real problem. Where, you know, you would go into meetings or whatever, and people would think that Native Americans were these really savage people and really uncivilized. And they would call our court systems "kangaroo courts" and things like that. It really became something that, I thought, was kind of almost like this fundamental issue because when you are dehumanized, you have problems across the board with any kind of advocacy that you're going to be doing.

Harjo: What we know now that we didn't know collectively as societies a while back was that actions are preceded by thoughts. So, you have attitude, and then the thought, and then the action. And if you have an attitude about something, about a people, that they're less than human, you don't attach rights to them. They don't have ancestral rights, they don't have religious rights, they don't have cultural rights, they don't have water rights because they don't have, as cartoons, as stereotypes, any of these things. The politicians, the members of Congress, do not make good public policy for cartoons. They don't make lasting public policy for just ephemeral images. That once they've made a determination that you are an anomaly in the modern world, as society seems to have made about native people, thinking we were dead, gone, buried, forgotten at the end of the 1800s, and those of us who exist now are just sort of stragglers moving in their ancestors' direction. So, once they made that determination, then there's no reason to really put a lot of thought into public policy for us.

Fan: Back in the olden days, in the Westerns, you know, there was always cowboys and the Indians. And we feel that, you know, we're America's team because of the fact that, you know, we are the Redskins, and the Indians were here first.

Fan: I don't think that we as Redskin fans mean anything deplorable about the American Indian nation. I think it's a good thing.

Fan: The name is not intended to be derogatory in any way. It's a thing of pride, an idea of pride, that we have in the team.

Fan: Actually, it should be a honor because they are honoring the American Indian name, and it's not anything derogatory against the American Indians. The Redskins used to be a good thing.

Fan: It was all in honor of them to what not. Even if you listen to the song that we sing every time we make a touchdown, or whenever we do something good, it's "hail to the Redskins and the sons of Washington."

Houska: It's not just entirely about the Washington football team. I mean, the Washington football team is kind of, you know, people ask, why that one? I think that's one of the most in-your-face examples of it, simply because it is a racial slur. And, you know, for me personally, actually, the character that I think is most offensive is probably Chief Wahoo. That's incredibly offensive and just this gross racial stereotype that is no different than, you know, Sambo.

Fan: In my opinion, it's really, you know, it's only a small fraction of, I feel, the Native Americans that's against it, just a small fraction.

Fan: A certain group of American Indians, just a certain group. But from what I've seen and what I've read and what I've heard is not a whole lot of them. But you all know the squeaky wheel gets the grease. So, they're gonna try, and I hope they never change it. Dan Snyder's sticking by his guns and good thing.

Fan: I think there doesn't need to be a solution because there's no problem. I think the only time you need to focus on a solution is if you have a problem. I don't see this as being a problem, and I think the people that do see it as being a problem are just focusing on the wrong things. And I think these same people, if this name were to be changed for example, these same activists would find something else now to go and move onto.

Jared Ball: At the end of these defenses of the name and the brand is this idea that white America is saying, "You all should be grateful for these so-called advances that you've been given since we started this project called the United States. Because we could be just flat out murdering you and enslaving you. So, whatever you're suffering now pales in comparison. So, if we want to call you Redskins, at least we're not riding through your communities and literally scalping you."

Fan: As far as for down here in the parking lot on the ground, Redskins is beautiful, you know. Without a doubt, without a doubt. And to take away that after what? Over 65 years, I guess, I think. It'd be disastrous, you understand.

Deloria: I mean, it's worth digging into what the symbol systems around mascots really look like. And what they do is they generalize Indians in all kinds of ways that always act to the detriment of Indians. So, Indian people, of course, not monolithic on this issue, not monolithic on this issue. But the images give you a picture, you know, of a kind of single Indian warrior, war-whooping in

various degrees of offensiveness. But they don't allow history to happen because history requires complexity. So, this is what stereotyping is about. A stereotype is a political claim. It's a simplification of a whole body of complicated stuff into a distilled, simplified, kind of, version that actually makes sense for people. The stereotype is 140 characters. But history, and the real world of real people, is complicated. It's always complicated. This is why building a picture of a people around a stereotype is a really bad idea.

What's in a name?

Snyder: The name of our football team is the name of our football team and I think that what I would encourage you to do and everyone else to do is just look at the history, understand where the name came from.

Narrator: The Washington football team was originally founded as the Boston Braves in 1932 in Boston, Massachusetts. During their inaugural year, they played their games at Braves Field, which was also home to the Boston Braves baseball team. In 1933, team owner George Preston Marshall moved the team to Fenway Park, home of the Boston Red Sox, and changed their name to the Boston Redskins. Marshall had hired William "Lone Star" Dietz, who claimed Sioux heritage, as their head coach. Dietz brought with him four Native American players: Orien Crow, Larry Johnson, David Ward, and Rabbit Weller. Many fans today, including current owner Dan Snyder, assert that the name Redskins was chosen as a way to honor Dietz and the other Native American players. According to a quote from the Hartford Courant regarding the name change, George Marshall stated that the choice to change the name to Redskins had nothing to do with their selection as William Dietz as the head coach. "The fact that we have in our head coach, 'Lone Star' Dietz, an Indian, together with several Indian players, has not, as may be suspected, inspired me to select the name Redskins." - Hartford Courant | July 5, 1933. In 1937, the team relocated to Washington, DC and became the Washington Redskins.

Deloria: There's this moment in the consolidation around sporting identities, I think, linked to colleges first, and then linked later to professional kinds of teams, and mascots in the teens and the 20s become really important kinds of things, anchors on hooks on which people hang the symbology that takes place around a team, their own identities, and then certain kinds of rituals. So, it's a moment where sports is kind of emerging as a kind of secular, you know, I don't want to call it a church-going experience, but it has certain kinds of elements of this ritual communal bonding, shared identities, sort of transcendent meanings.

Ball: If people, you know, ever remember or look up the YouTube footage of the famous, I believe it was in 1991, the fall of '91, on their way to that final Super Bowl, we had been given seat cushions, yellow seat cushions, on our entry into the stadium. And I intentionally got two because I knew I wanted to keep one, and then I would throw one at Deion. And once the game got out of hand, and we were winning, I did that. I threw a seat cushion at Deion Sanders, and that started what is now the famous seat cushion throwing game, where thousands of seat cushions were thrown. So, I'm the guy. But it was that kind of fandom, I mean, tailgating, the

drinking, the hanging out. I did all of it. There's a lot of complex history with DC, this football team, with race, its fan base. The Washington football team was the last in the NFL to desegregate. It was brought to DC by George Preston Marshall, who was an overt racist. There was this clarity around why that name should be kept that way, why the team should be kept white. As a response, a lot of black residents of the DC area, in DC or in DC areas, said we're not gonna be supporters of this team. And we'll go to the archenemy, the Dallas Cowboys.

Snyder: I understand that it means, and obviously, when we sing "hail to the Redskins, Braves on the warpath," it means honor, it means respect, it means pride, and it's that simple.

Clips from "Peter Pan"

- Personally, I should prefer to see the aborigines.
- And the Indians too.
- This should be most enlightening.
- What makes the red man red?
- Teach them all about red man.

(Singing) What made the red man red?

Clips from "Peter Pan"

- Teach them all about red man.
- Do you mean savages?
- The Indian celebration continued late into the night.

(Rapping) Manifest destiny arrested what's best for me / The kill my culture / America made a mess of me / You inherited everything we die for / And all we get is a god damn mascot

Archival Video

- Narrator: Here inside the Edes and Gill Print shop, some members of the Sons of Liberty have gathered for what appears to be a secret purpose?
- Man #1: Are we going through with it?
- Man #2: There's nothing else we can do?
- Man #1: Who are we trying to deceive with these ridiculous disguises? Every man here can be identified in a second.

Deloria: I think there's two big moments in American history. The first is the moment of the revolution, where Americans have to figure out, American colonists figure out culturally, and in terms of their social identity, they figure out ways in which they can stop being British colonists and start being American. And the fundamental claim that they make is that they're indigenous to the continent. This is what happens in settler societies. So, they're indigenous to the continent, and so they take old European rituals and practices and beliefs, they graft them onto new sort of symbol systems around Indians, and all of a sudden, they create meaning for themselves. And they create an identity as being aboriginal and indigenous to the continent. And that lets them speak in oppositional ways to the British government. And in many ways, I

think, to build the cultural formation that allows them to create a revolution and a rebellion. So, Indians are wrapped into the fiber of America from the very, very beginning.

And then there's a second moment, at the turn of the 20th century, when Americans are confronting modernity and the sort of struggles around that. What does it mean to be in an industrial place full of immigrants, frontier is closed, and there's all kinds of ways in which they feel a sense of crisis? What gives them reassurance? A refiguring of this kind of Indian play that they do where they can grab on to something that's authentic, that's of the land. And it is anti-modern and gives them a sense of authenticity.

Bob Costas: Political correctness, I'm no fan of it. But get yourself a dictionary. By definition, Redskins is an insult.

Narrator: Redskin has been defined in many dictionaries as “disparaging and offensive,” “a contemptuous term used to refer to an American Indian,” and “a racial slur.” It was listed in Merriam-Webster's first collegiate dictionary in 1898 as “often contemptuous.” The most cited, in defense of the name, is this 2005 article by linguist Ives Goddard, 'I Am a Red-Skin': The Adoption of a Native American Expression (1769-1826). Goddard references multiple documents, which record use of the word by Native Americans as a term of self-reference and had benign origins. Those opposing the name reference multiple historical documents, which use the word as a pejorative. An 1863 article in The Winona Daily Republican in Minnesota states, "The state reward for dead Indians has been increased to $200 for every red-skin sent to purgatory.”

Houska: To me, it's, you know, a lot of people point to the historical, kind of, context of it being a bounty for Native American scalps and Native American people and, you know, I think that that actually has validity, and I think that's definitely where the origins of it came from. However, I look at it more as the modern context, which is if you call someone a Redskin, you know that's a racial slur.

Ball: Something has to be said, as I mentioned even for myself, about the power of propaganda, the power of environment. Or understanding even the origin of the term “fan” being connected to fanatic, the absence of logic. The symbol, the brand, the connection, the lifelong attachment to these teams does negatively impact me as an individual and, I think, many people, collectively, in terms of their ability to make the correct conclusion regarding the politics of it all.

Amanda Blackhorse: I have been to many different communities throughout the United States, and I have never gone into a community where someone greeted me and said, "Hello, Redskin." It's just not something that we do. And so, but the way that that term was used historically was to describe indigenous people in a very sort of savage manner. You see it in newspaper clippings, you see it in movies, you see it historically. That's how we were referred to usually by the colonists. If we go back several hundred years, you will see that the R-word was used as a term to describe scalps or pieces of flesh from indigenous people.

Joe D. Horse Capture: You know, in the past, if you look at some of the historical documents, the R-word was referred in common language as a way to reference Native Americans, and it was negative. If we compare the origin of the R-term, compare it to the origin of the N-word, it's very similar. Because historically, the N-word didn't have as derogatory meaning as it does today. But over time, it's changed. It's changed that we can't use that word to refer to a group of people. I respect that. And I think it's totally wrong to use that term. But we can accept that. We can accept that we shouldn't use that word, but we can't accept, for some reason, they can't accept that we shouldn't use the R-word.

Ball: For those of us, with particular black American or African descended within the United States context, we absolutely should know better. In fact, when Baldwin, James Baldwin, famously said, "When a white man calls me nigger, I don't get upset. I just ask why you need me to be one," he's saying because if I'm not the nigger you think I am, you're not the white man you think you are, and then everything falls apart. So, if Indians are not in fact Indians, and they're not in fact able to be called Redskins and Braves and used as mascots, then what actually are they? Then maybe they are not deserving of the material treatment that they continue to suffer, and then maybe whites, we as whites, are not deserving of all the supremacy and the material benefit that we accumulate from all of it.

Deloria: Well it's funny, right? I mean, you know, in our whole interview, we've avoided using the word "Redskin," in part because one of the things we're trying to do, I think, as people who are contesting culture, is to make the word unsayable, in the ways that like the N-word is unsayable. I'm not going to say it. I could say it as an example, but I'm not gonna say it. And I want people not to say the R-word. So, removing that word from our vocabularies is a good thing. There are many, many other words that we can use. We don't need to use words that lower the level, that bring up histories of pain and suffering. There are plenty of occasions for Indian people to bring up those histories and talk about them, and there's plenty of vocabulary. But we don't need to actually go there with that word.

Blackhorse: We're not denying the color red. You know, we have wonderful, you know, organizations throughout Indian country. You know, we have The Red Nation, you know, is an advocacy group. We have The Red Warrior Society are warriors in Standing Rock. You know, you have Red Hand Media with Ryan Redcorn. The word "red" is not an issue. So, for those people in Oklahoma who say, "the land of the red people," that's not the issue there. The issue is when you call people Redskin or Blackskin or Yellowskin. That is offensive, so why do we continue to have that?

What's in a movement?

News Anchor: Even President Obama has weighed in saying he thinks the name should be changed.

Obama: If it had a storied history that was offending a sizeable group of people, I'd think about changing it.

Sean Hannity: From 2008, an Obama campaign ad, look at that. Oh, my goodness. Showcasing Washington Redskin players. You know, the team that just lost their patent because of the team name, it's "offensive." Hypocrisy, of course not.

Pundit: I don't know, this is from 2008? Yeah, I think that people back then were not thinking about this the same way they're thinking about it, and I think that that happens oftentimes.

Deloria: There was a kind of moment in my life when, all of a sudden, that stuff had been naturalized as individual kinds of cases. There's a kind of moment in my head where it became structural. Where, all of a sudden, you realized it's not just a couple of one-offs. No, it's a pervasive kind of cultural sort of structure that happens and is repeated over and over and over again.

Ball: Over the 20, you know, plus years since that last Super Bowl, as I've learned more, it became apparent it was just not possible for me to continue to both support the team and encourage its name and its branding be at all welcomed in our home.

Deloria: And there is a moment when that day happens where you're like, "Why did I not see this before?" And you kind of saw it before. It was this little itchy kind of feeling that you had. But then there was a moment where, all of a sudden, it became really important and powerful, and you realized the kinds of structures of domination. You realized the cultural, you know, liabilities, the deficits that were created for Indian people around this stuff. And then you felt, I mean, I felt, suddenly, you know, offended, mad, frustrated, annoyed, angry in ways that I hadn't necessarily felt before. And then you hit that moment and you don't go back.

Houska: It's been going on since the 60s, so when people are saying, you know, "Why now? Why are you all of a sudden mad now?" No, this has been going on for a really long time. And, to put it in context, the 60s, I mean, that was prior to the Indian Child Welfare Act. There are children who were still being taken from our families at that point, and it was still so important that people went out in the streets and were fighting these, you know, harmful stereotypical images because even then they recognized this is dehumanization, it matters. And so, this has been a long-fought battle.

Harjo: And I became interested in this subject, well, as a child when all our relatives in Oklahoma, both the East and West side of Oklahoma, would talk about how awful it was to be lampooned in the various sports arenas, particularly by the University of Oklahoma. And then, when I was a little older, the person who came to our school to give a talk was a famous Indian Powwow dancer named Clyde Warrior, who was Ponca, and he was a founder of the National Indian Youth Council. So, he talked about how important voting rights and student rights were and why. And their history. And then, because he was the founder from Oklahoma, he talked about Little Red at the University of Oklahoma. And Little Red was a long-standing mascot and was always played

by a white guy who would go out and put on what they said was an Indian outfit, or an Indian costume, and would dance around and make a fool of himself and of us. So, since that time, everything that I've done has really been informed and was energized during that period by Clyde Warrior and the NIYC group and the University of Oklahoma Students who worked so hard to retire Little Red.

Narrator: Since the 1960s, Native Americans have petitioned the team to change the name. The team received the first of their six trademarks in 1967. In 1972, a group of Native Americans met with Edward Bennett Williams, then president of the football team, and asked him to change the name. The team declined to do so, but did modify the lyrics to their song, "Hail to the Redskins," changing the phrase "scalp 'em" to "beat 'em." Between 1972 and 1978, the team received four more of their trademarks. Most notably, the Indian head logo. In 1992, thousands gathered in protest outside the Metrodome in Minneapolis, Minnesota during Super Bowl XXVI, where the Washington team and the Buffalo Bills were playing. In 2008, the article “Of Warrior Chiefs and Indian Princesses: The Psychological Consequences of American Indian Mascots” was published in the Basic and Social Psychology Journal. The article detailed four studies that examined the psychological effects of American Indian mascots on youth. The study suggests that American Indian mascots have harmful psychological consequences for the group that is characterized by the mascots. This is true whether the American Indian mascot was represented by a caricature, a European American dressed as an American Indian, or an American Indian figure, and whether the mascot represented an American Indian university, a mainstream university, or a professional sports team. The original case Harjo et al vs. Pro-Football, Inc. was filed by Suzan Shown Harjo and six other Native Americans in 1992. The case requested the removal of the team's trademarks on the basis that it disparages Native Americans, in particular citing the Lanham Act of 1946, which prohibits trademarks that may disparage people, institutions, beliefs, or national symbols. In 1999, the trademark trial and appeal board ruled that the name was disparaging to Native Americans. However, the decision was overturned in 2005, citing the claim was not supported by substantial evidence and that the Native Americans had waited too long after turning 18 to file the complaint. In 2006, the second case, Blackhorse vs. Pro-Football, Inc., was filed.

Harjo: So, we're in court with the Washington football team. We're on a second suit, and the first one that we litigated for 17 years carried my name and six other native people. And the current one is captioned after Amanda Blackhorse, who's Navajo, and five other people.

Brad Bell: Well, this particular matter goes back to 2006. That's when a group of Native American activists filed a trademark complaint. They won that battle. The team countersued, and today a judge ruled in favor of the Native American activists, saying that the team name is in fact disparaging.

Blackhorse: I am from Big Mountain in Kayenta, Forest Lake, Arizona. I'm from the Dene Tribe and I am a social worker by day and I'm a mother and I am also lead plaintiff in the case Blackhorse et al vs. Pro-Football. I became aware of the mascot issue when I was attending the University of Kansas. I guess, I kind of always knew that it was there, but to really be educated on it I think

we have to really understand the history of Indian people, of indigenous people, of Native American people. And so, a group of us, we got together, and we decided to protest at the Kansas City and Washington team game. And I was even more shocked at what I saw. The outright disrespect and the outright racism that was, you know, thrown at us, was socially acceptable. And then people continued to say that "You should feel honored, this is an honor, we're honoring you." You can't force honor on people. You know, people yelled at us, threw their beers towards us, just got in our face and just said whatever they felt like. As time went on, as we began to protest more and more at these games, it's been the same thing. There's no difference from Kansas City to Phoenix to Minneapolis. You see the same sort of behavior in sports, and it doesn't differ between whether it's the Cleveland Indians or the Kansas City team or the Washington team. At the very beginning, when I met Suzan Harjo, and we had talked about this case and being involved in it and what that entails, she said, she warned me and she said, "You will receive a lot of hate." I had no idea what I was really getting into, I guess, in a way. I mean, I understand what she said. Now, I truly understand it because I've experienced it. And it has been life-changing. It has taken a lot away from me as a person, and it's been really tough. And I kind of just went through it because I feel like, I'm an indigenous person, I'm an indigenous woman. And I have a voice, and that's the strongest thing that I have right now. And that's the strongest thing that we all have as indigenous people in any fight that we're doing. In 2014 was when we won our case, the TTAB ruled in our favor. And that was just, it just went wild after that. And there were sometimes when I was really afraid for my safety. I've had threats. There were times when I felt like I was being watched. And I've experienced, a couple of times, people outside my home taking pictures of me. My accounts on social media were constantly being hacked, it seemed like, my computer, you know. And I know a lot of this just sounds like maybe some paranoia, but, you know, when, I always think, when you go up against a billion-dollar industry and a million, billion-dollar franchise, there are going to be repercussions.

Sportscaster: Redskins owner Dan Snyder is sitting with the president of the Navajo nation.

Blackhorse: I feel like the Washington team heavily lobbied my tribe, my community, and I think a lot of that was to discredit me, as the Washington team began to receive a lot of backlash because of, you know, people didn't agree with them. And they decided to create a fund called Original Americans Foundation where it's like a charitable foundation. They give money to the poor Indians. They brought the Navajo code talkers to the game and honored them. I think everyone knew at the time exactly what they were doing because there you had the code talkers wearing brand new jackets, holding brand new blankets with their tags still on them, and being displayed out there like, you know, they're being used. And I think the Navajo nation had to stand up and get involved. And so, what followed after that was the Navajo nation had to deal with historical trauma. We had to deal with colonialism. It was right there in front of us, and we had to address it. We kind of also went through sort of an identity crisis where folks who, prior to that, didn't really know where they stood as far as this issue goes. The identity crisis is that we don't know where we fit in in the larger society and in media. So, when we address native mascots on a larger scale, that conversation is different than when we have that conversation within our own communities. Because for us, as indigenous people, confronting that issue is a psychological process because we're confronting colonialism. And we're bringing up our own

historical trauma and intergenerational trauma that we have to address, and it's difficult. It can be very hard for people to go through that.

What's in a perspective?

Ian Washburn: My name is Ian Washburn. I'm 38 years old. I've been a Washington football fan since 1982. I was born and raised in the DC area. I am a very fortunate third generation season ticket holder of the Washington football team.

Josh Silver: My name's Josh Silver. I'm over 50 years old, and the AARP solicits me every once in a while. I'm from the Washington, DC area. Grew up in Bethesda, Maryland. Have been a lifelong fan of the Washington football team.

Washburn: I was born at exactly the right time to catch the glory years of the Gibbs 80s, of Riggins, Theisman, Monk. So many great players.

Silver: The big rivalry was with the Dallas Cowboys, and it seemed like, in the 1970s, the Cowboys usually had the upper hand. But then they hired a young coach, Joe Gibbs, in the early 1980s, and then the team, the Washington team, gained the upper hand. During that decade, Washington didn't really have any other sports. You didn't have a baseball team. And then the basketball team, in the 80s and 90s, was really pretty bad. So, for most fans, it was this team. So, a lot of fans developed really strong emotional ties to it.

Washburn: I've stuck with the team all these years, in the FedEx Field, through the Daniel Snyder era, all of the nonsense we've put up with over the past 15 years. Somehow, I remain a fan of Washington football. Still very proud of it, I still enjoy it, I still like it a lot. It's an important legacy to me and my family. However, in 2013, I made the official decision that I would no longer use the name, the imagery. I would eliminate it from my fandom. I would keep the burgundy and gold, I would still celebrate Washington football as I always had, but I was no longer going to play Indian.

Silver: The old RFK Stadium, named after Robert Kennedy, was a place, it rocked, you know. In a close game, the bleachers were literally jumping up and down. And you had a real community feeling with this team. The lawyer would sit next to the janitor, whites would sit next to blacks, and, you know, little did we know that something that seemed to unify all classes and all races by its very name was a racist name. A lot of us just didn't know that. And it just seemed, at the time, such a great community unifier. You know, cowboys vs. Indians, "Hey, we're the underdog." It's a good thing, you know. “We're honoring Native Americans,” and that's what the owner of the team, Dan Snyder, says today. It's a name that's supposed to honor Native Americans and be a symbol of courage. You know, the older I got, and I started reading about Suzan Harjo's court case in the Washington Post. I mean, you know, you start to learn that "Hey, the name really isn't so cool. It really is a racial slur."

Washburn: And the more I just thought about it deep, the history of this name, the man who created that name and imagery, the history of this nation, my place in this country and history, I just started to realize that this is really, really messed up. This is someone else's culture that we've hijacked to do what we want with as sports fans.

Silver: From what I read and from what I'm told, it's associated with genocide, you know. I'll just say it very plainly. It's associated with scalping. And for a Jewish American, I think every single Jew, well, I should say every single human being but also especially every single Jew, should be very sensitive to this because, in Jewish history, we have been called so many names, and the names connote inferiority. They make you feel ashamed of yourself. And the names, you know, they're repeated enough times to millions of people. You wear a star, you wear a yellow star, which is supposed to be a symbol of shame. All these things make a people inferior. And for Jews, it resulted in the Holocaust. The name, the propaganda, the ideology. So, for me, I'm very sensitive to this issue.

Washburn: Definitely the mascot movement has definitely given me a lot of information that I would not have otherwise had. I was not taught that in school. Our culture generally doesn't teach that and, again, the sports teams allow us to play Indian, which makes natives invisible relics of the past. Playing Indian with a sports team doesn't allow indigenous people to be alive in the year 2016.

Silver: Ian Washburn and I have created a grassroots organization, and we call it Rebrand Washington Football. And the subtitle is “Fans for a new name.” So, saying, "Hey, we're fans. We love the sport, but we want to change the name.” Maybe there is an important niche for fans to be active and to work together with Native Americans and other groups concerned about the name.

Washburn: And the more and more I learn about this name and what it's come to mean and what it means to indigenous people, the more disgusted I become by it, the more I began to just abhor this name. I want it gone so bad, and I look forward to the day that it is gone.

Silver: I would love it if Mr. Snyder had an epiphany and next week, or in a couple months from now, he said, "I'm gonna change the name." But I'm also realistic. This may go on for a number of years. Mike Wise, you know, who's a famous sports columnist, he's optimistic. He says within 3 or 5 years. I hope he's right. But if it takes more than that, we're girded for the long term.

Bill Maher: You know that whole controversy about the name Washington Redskins? They did a survey, 9 out of 10 actual Indians don't give a shit.

Kendis Gibson: A new Washington Post poll found that 90% of Native Americans are not offended by the Washington Redskins nickname.

Narrator: On May 19th, 2016, the Washington Post released a poll claiming 9 out of 10 Native Americans did not find the name Redskins offensive. Like the 2004 Annenberg poll, which

claimed similar results, the Washington poll was conducted via telephone and consisted of individuals who self-identified as Native American.

Deloria: You know, the other thing that's worth saying, and I hope somebody has said it, is the really flawed nature of the polling of the sort of idea that there's a consensus in Indian country around these kinds of things. If there is a consensus in Indian country around mascots is that mascots are a bad thing. And you can see that in every, the proliferation of native organizations. These are the institutional things that represent Indian people coming out against this.

Gregg Deal: The sort of vague and arbitrary way of gathering this information through the Annenberg report has created a narrative that fits for the Washington football team. The Washington Post followed up with their own poll, their own set up, last year, and it's exactly the same. They are trying to talk to self-identifying native people and, uh, there's not enough information to provide who is and who isn't indigenous at that point. And, uh, and even the number of people that they're looking at plays into the role of a percentage that is less than 1% of Indian country. So, it's not reflective of a, you know, majority conversation.

Deloria: It's complicated out in Indian country. There's no doubt about it. But these are not the mechanisms that allow us to say, with any clarity, what Indian people think or believe. I think the better way to think about it is the way that, for example, Kevin Gover, at the Museum of American Indian, has framed it, which is, "Look at how national organizations and national Indian leaders have framed it and spoken out about it. It's pretty much unanimous there."

Jared Hautamaki: I mean, come on, you know, self-identified Native Americans, you know, on the phone. Let me pull my card out. I mean, I know I'm a tribal judge, but I do carry my tribal ID here in DC. If I can find it. You know, that's not self-identified. That is, I am a tribal member. And I'm opposed.

Narrator: On November 18th, 19th, and 20th of 2016, the first ever Indigenous Comic Con was held in Albuquerque, New Mexico. The event celebrated indigenous artists, actors, musicians, and fans from all genres of art, media, and culture.

Johnnie Jae: I am Johnnie Jae, and I am the founder of A Tribe Called Geek: Indigenenerdity for the Geeks at the Powwow. And what we do is we promote, highlight, and celebrate indigenous contributions to pop culture, geek culture, and also to STEM fields. You know, this is a way that we represent ourselves. With native mascots, with the stereotypes that you see, this is people trying to define who we are as native people. It's trying to push a forced concept of what they think we should be and who that we ought to be to them. And so, with Indigenous Comic Con, I think this is a good way to start showing that, you know, we're more than these stereotypes. We're more than, we're more than the mascots.

Jonathan Nelson: My name is Jonathan Nelson, and I'm an artist, designer, illustrator, all around creative. And I'm a Navajo from Hogback, New Mexico. I think it kind of strengthens what's already there as far as identity goes. I know me, when I was growing up, there was really nothing,

no imagery that I could latch onto, except for the Cleveland Indians or the Washington team. I was able to, naturally, I gravitated toward that type of iconography. But I think today it's pretty much, it's very damaging, especially to the youth. You know, I have a 5-year-old son, and, you know, this is something that he should not be able to see or, you know, have to tolerate. So, in that regard, I was able to use my skills as a creative to create graphics that kind of battled that.

Lee Francis: The initial idea was really to provide a place where native folks could get together and celebrate their indigenenerdity, their indigenous nerd identity, in a way that reflected the modern realities in which they live. It's not all historicized. It's not this sort of past recognition of a people long gone. It was, we wanted to show a place where people are doing amazing things. That there is actors, writers, musicians, talent, movies, etc. that are all putting this stuff together, and it's something that is propelling us forward, not looking backwards.

Jared Yazzie: I'm Jared Yazzie. I'm an artist, graphic designer, screen printer for OXDX clothing. It's a clothing line I founded back in 2009. It hits a lot of issues. I do a lot of social justice type designs and just stuff that represents native people. We talk a lot of appropriating images. We try to force it back on people. And I think a image on a shirt is a real, like, billboard for yourself to, kind of, to say something without saying, you know. Be loud without having to be loud. I'm pretty quiet myself, so sharing a bold statement in a piece of art is something powerful for me to use and opens dialogue with people. It makes people talk and discuss and ask questions about it. I have one called Dehumanizing, which shows kind of a edit over a original chief image's eyes, but it's kind of made with Blackhawks logo, Indians logo, Redskins, Braves. And it's just to show that those kind of images are dehumanizing to native people.

Arigon Starr: I'm Arigon Starr. I'm from the Kickapoo Tribe of Oklahoma, and I am the creator, the writer, the whatever, the what-not of Super Indian, and that's my comic book and it was also a radio program and that's who I am. Super Indian was set up to bust stereotypes. In fact, the very first page of the book, volume one, starts out with a warrior on horseback who's like beating up a bear and all this kind of crazy stuff, levitating, shamanistic, all that stuff. And it says, "But sadly, his story isn't another comic book." I want to take all of those stereotypes of, like, "How much Indian are you?" or cultural appropriation, those sort of things, and just turn them on their head.

Jae: Just seeing all the representation that we have now as native people, being lawyers, being doctors, and just this growing movement of embracing everything about yourself, whether it's traditional, whether it's modern, you know, it's more okay than it used to be. So, now you're seeing people speaking out about being a geek, and it's okay, it's acceptable, and that's something that we definitely need for our kids to feel like they belong.

Yazzie: It's hard to be native on social media these days ‘cause that's all you see. You're pummeled with these images of something that's not yours, and so we're trying to flip it. We're trying to be positive, we're trying to show Navajo native culture through social media in a positive way.

Francis: This is the counter to that. Because what happens is, even what we see among our own people who are wearing mascots, is because when there is nothing out there in popular culture that represents them, then all of a sudden you're going to grab onto whatever seems to look or slightly represent you, and that often is detrimental to the broader existence and identity of native people. But it's the only thing that's there. So, the more of this kind of pop culture work we can get into the market, into the world, into the collective consciousness, it gives people a choice. So, instead of looking at, you know, the Washington team, you can say, "Oh, I'd rather look at Kagagi." You know, "I want to wear that hat instead." "I want to look at, you know, I want to look at Tribal Force." "I want to look at that. I'll wear that shirt. I'll wear that hat because that's a representation that we need."

Narrator: On November 2nd, 2014, over 3,000 people, a majority of them Native American, gathered at TCF Bank Stadium, in Minneapolis, Minnesota to protest the use of the name.

Protester: So, Mr. Snyder is saying that Native Americans are okay with the name. Well, I don't see that today. Look at what we have here. Thousands of Native Americans come to one event in Minnesota to say that they are opposed to the name.

Rapping: I ghost dance over drums / my music speaks to the young / I give my heart for the people / the revolution's begun / we're standing stronger than ever when history weighs a ton / I'm giving thanks to Creator and suffering with the sun / my mother says I'm her son / my people say I'm the one / my microphone / it inspire / I fire it like a gun / higher into your privilege conspiring with the spirits / my environment require my lyrics be the exhibit of genius that has a plan / my allegiance is with the land my people agreed to care for therefore I'm gonna make a stand / my freedom is nonexistent convenient to uncle sam / they're colonizing our minds / we're compromising their plans / our knowledge lives in the land / the answers live in our youth / the cancers live in our elders / I'm trying to see the truth / my brothers and sisters suffer while people silence our voices / you hold our mouths shut then tell us that we are voiceless

Simon Moya-Smith: And as a journalist, I call out journalists who would say that we are of the opinion that it's offensive. No, it's a racial slur.

Keith Ellison: We know that if you try to defame a people, if you try to put down a whole people, then that is an insult in and of itself, but it also leads to denial of treaty rights. It also leads to denial of housing and human rights.

Gregg Deal: This is not an honor. It honors their idea of what they think we should be. The honor should come from us. And we stand here to honor our people, our ancestors, our image, and they cannot take that away from us.

What's in the future?

Deloria: I think, because Indians have been so important in America, American history is taught with a certain kind of picture of Indians that doesn't work to Indian advantage. And what we need to do is to think about ways to re-educate, to take people back to the ground, back to the bottom, to tear down the structures of what they think they know, and that is incredibly hard to do. I mean, what primary educators tell you is by the time a kid is in 3rd grade and hits the Thanksgiving unit in November, Indian month, they already have the pictures in their head. They already know about Columbus, they already know about Squanto, this stuff just seeps into the brains of kids who are soaking up stuff about dinosaurs and earth moving equipment and things like that. So, we have to think, how are these kids learning? And we have to think, we have to change their parents, the ways that they're teaching them, and we have to change the ways that our entire culture represents Indians. So, that's a battle that goes on into infinity. It's the biggest, longest struggle ever. But we can't turn our backs on that. We always have to think about that.

Text on Screen: On June 19, 2017, in a separate trademark case challenging the Lanham Act, the United States Supreme Court voted 8-0 in favor of The Slants, an Asian-American rock band challenging the Lanham Act to trademark their band name. The 8-0 decision declared the Lanham Act unconstitutional. Within one week, the United States Justice Department dropped the Blackhorse case, which had been pending on The Slants decision. In response to The Slants decision, Washington team owner Dan Snyder stated, "I am thrilled. Hail to the Redskins." In considering the Supreme Court decision a victory for free speech, the Washington football team is now acknowledging that the term "Redskin" is disparaging. While the Blackhorse legal aspect is over, the fight against the Washington team name and other Native American mascots will continue.

Houska: We already kind of reached the point where the swing has gone against the team. I mean, most people are looking at me and, you know, they're saying predictions of five years or whatever. Even if we lose in the federal courts, I think the court of public opinion has changed. There are more and more youth especially, and other people of color, that are realizing these things are offensive.

Horse Capture: It's a matter of time. It's a matter of time. And we have, as Native American people, we have, through thick and thin, we have survived and kept strong for over 500 years. And we will prevail over this as well.

Houska: I think, as far as just an overall societal concept is, we should be judged by how we treat our most vulnerable citizens, period. We really should. And to be in a situation where Native Americans are often living in third-world conditions and do not have the same opportunities that everyone else does, that is a reflection of the U.S. society, and it's one that they should acknowledge and not be ashamed of. They need to acknowledge it, and they need to address it.

Blackhorse: They wanted to, kind of, tire us out throughout this process, but I think we've just become stronger through this process. The more that they've tried to silence me, the more that

they've tried to silence Suzan and my co-plaintiffs and anyone else who has fought in this movement, the stronger that we have become. And I know we're gonna win. I know it's gonna happen, and it's gonna happen soon. Maybe in the next couple of years, and I'm very hopeful. And I feel a deep sense of empowerment within the indigenous community throughout the nation. You know, we're done taking crap from these corporations who think that they can literally steal our identity and make it theirs and treat us like animals. We're done with that.

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