

Patriarchy and the ‘Fighting Sioux’: a gendered look at racial college sports nicknames

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The use of Native American nicknames and symbols by US college athletics is a long-standing practice that embodies various forms of authoritarian oppression. One type of authoritarianism is that of patriarchy and it has been present in the struggle over the nickname at the University of North Dakota, the ‘Fighting Sioux’. This article explores philosophical connections of the dynamics of patriarchy to the resistance that this movement has faced at the University of North Dakota. A short history is provided, and these connections are illustrated in terms of sports and violence, the ‘old boys’ club’, the ‘father knows best’ syndrome, objectification and the disparagement of ‘liberal women’. Suggestions are offered for countering the engrained dynamics of patriarchy in regards to this issue, and thus working towards a more respectful and anti-racist future at American universities.

Introduction

This article will expand the focus of racialized college sports nicknames to include the dynamics of patriarchy, using the University of North Dakota (UND) as a test case. Elements of patriarchy may be seen throughout many of society’s large institutions, including universities and colleges. The ways in which such schools—individually and organizationally—perpetuate racist stereotypes and practices sharply mirrors the ways in which patriarchy affects women in similar contexts.

First it is important to note that racism—prejudice and discrimination based upon perceived race—is the most obvious issue of contention in the controversy over UND’s nickname, the ‘Fighting Sioux.’ Since 1930 UND has used imagery, mascots and nicknames characterizing North Dakota’s largest racial minority—Dakotan/Lakotan/Nakotan people¹—to represent its sports teams.² This Northern Great Plains college thrives throughout the cold winters on the entertainment offered by hockey culture and the strong, vigilant adherence to it by many UND community

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members. In recent years, large financial donations made by a wealthy alum to build a brand new hockey arena produced a political scandal that has left a permanent mark upon the issue. The ominous dynamics of racism always loom in the background.

Racist double standards exist in the use of the 'Fighting Sioux' nickname. No other racial or ethnic group in the US is currently employed in mascots, nicknames and logos to the degree that Native Americans are—and overwhelmingly without their permission. The US political climate has been sensitized to racism targeting African-American, Asian-American and Jewish culture. Most Americans would be highly offended if UND were to change its nickname to an equally stereotyped nickname such as the 'Hard-Working Blacks' or the 'Thrifty Jews'. In fact, the most common racial nicknames in the US are all Native American—in the mid-1990s 'Warriors' and 'Indians' ranked in the top ten most commonly used college athletic nicknames in the country (Nuessel, 1994). Thus, the usage of 'Fighting Sioux' places Native Americans and D/L/Nakotans³ in a position of cultural belittlement not reserved for other ethnicities. This issue is present on other college campuses as well—for example, Florida State has the 'Seminoles' and the University of Illinois has the 'Fighting Illini'—generating controversy and collective indignation.

The issue might seem quaint and overly 'politically correct' to some, but others argue that these symbols, mascots and nicknames help to perpetuate racist stereotypes about ethnic minorities in the United States (Black, 2002; Fenelon, 1999; Tovares, 2002). Research into propaganda techniques has shown that an effective way to marginalize a certain group of people is name-calling, 'card-stacking' and the transfer of meaning by which the groups are publicly portrayed (Lee & Lee, 1939; Noakes, 2003; Toth, 1992).

But is racism the only oppressive dynamic active in this controversy? I submit that there are other forms of domination in effect, such as economic, political and sexual domination. First, economics is clearly a central factor with university-related issues. It is quite possible that change would have occurred long ago were it not for UND's economic reliance upon alumni donations both large and small. Whether it is the insistence of 1940s graduates or the average 2005 graduate on retaining UND's nickname, or the incredible financial and political clout wielded by powerful, public figures, the same subtle threat is in place: if UND drops the nickname, then alumni will stop contributing money to the school. The late multimillionaire hotel owner Ralph Engelstad threatened to pull his support for building a new hockey arena if the nickname was changed. Then, a 2000 poll of UND alumni found that 23 percent would decrease their contributions to the school in the case of a nickname change (Social Science Research Institute, 2000).⁴ Even though a nickname appears to be an unsubstantial criterion for funding one's alma mater, it remains an effective threat while higher education's budget is on the chopping block.

Additionally, hierarchical and bureaucratic domination are core components of resistance to change. When most power and decision-making authority over UND remains in the hands of a small number of people (or sometimes one individual)—the President, the State Board of Higher Education, the Alumni Association, wealthy donors and so on—it is difficult to have a fair, balanced, participatory and meaningful

dialogue and decision-making process. Minority rights—the rights of underprivileged and less powerful minorities of all kinds—are easily trampled in any setting where the voices of those minorities are not adequately represented, and UND is no exception to this rule.

Finally, there is an element to this issue that is key to understanding the political process of the controversy. This element is also perhaps the most sinister, since it is ‘under the radar’ and perhaps less obvious than the other forms of domination. The actions and reactions of the power-actors have been at times highly macho, paternalistic and sexist. Herein, I will make the case that patriarchal power is functioning in UND’s usage of the ‘Fighting Sioux’ nickname and logo.

Patriarchy is a social system in which the father is the head of a family or in which men have control over women (Lerner, 1986). It is also understood as the dynamic that fosters and causes sexist behavior. The functions of patriarchy may be understood in more specific ways that explain oppressive interpersonal relationships, family structures, institutional values and other systems of power. Finally, patriarchy can be defined as societal domination of ‘male-identified’ traits and behaviors.

Patriarchy exists alongside capitalism and White supremacy in the United States, and together these structures of power form a matrix of oppression that facilitates the domination of various groupings of people (Collins, 1991; hooks, 1989). Consequently, certain values, ethics, policies and practices exist within these structures and permeate the rest of society. It is in this intersection of patriarchy, capitalism and White supremacy that the practice of using racialized sports nicknames may be best understood.

This article explores the patriarchal aspects of and patriarchy-like relationships embedded within UND’s use—and its supporters’ use—of the ‘Fighting Sioux’. The aim of the article is to show how patriarchy is functioning in a broader matrix of issues (such as race, economics and politics). To a large extent, I have employed analogies towards this end. After a brief history of the ‘Fighting Sioux’, this article discusses problems regarding sports and violence, the ‘old boys’ club’, ‘father knows best’, objectification and ideological attacks upon ‘liberal women’. The article ends with a brief suggestion about what to do about the situation at UND.

This article is authored by a Caucasian male, fortunate to have met many Lakotan and other Native people who have articulated and inspired many of the thoughts which follow. Although an outsider to the community most directly impacted by this practice, the author sees himself as an ally to the Native and other ethnic minority students at UND—his alma mater—and their struggles for greater respect and self-determination.

History

A brief history of Native Americans and their treatment by Euro-Americans, particularly the United States government, is vital to understanding the context in which the UND nickname exists. From the time of Columbus, Native people have been treated as inferiors in their own land. To varying degrees, most Native American nations have been forcibly relocated from their land and onto reservations, fallen victim to

incidental or deliberate disease pandemics, assimilated (via mandatory English-only ‘boarding schools’), politically manipulated as one nation against another or outright massacred by Euro-Americans (Brown, 1972; Cozzens, 2001; Fowler, 2001; Hale, 2002). According to Churchill (1995), Native Americans presently possess about 2.5 percent of the land they had prior to Columbus’ arrival, yet they would in fact control approximately 35 percent of the continental United States were existing treaties actually respected. The Northern Great Plains and the Lakotan people were some of the last to be formally subjugated by the US Army (Brown, 1972).

Native Americans have been starkly absent from the major institutions of American society—particularly higher education—since the period of European colonization. Predictably, there were no ‘Sioux’ students at UND until 1935—a full five years after the school’s nickname was changed to the ‘Fighting Sioux’ (Geiger, 1958). Although Native American enrollment has been steadily increasing over time nationally, only 18 percent of Native Americans aged 18–24 are enrolled in college in the US, the lowest of all recorded racial categories, compared to 42 percent of Whites enrolled. Native Americans also have some of the lowest educational attainment rates—only 13 percent of Native Americans 25 years or older hold a bachelor’s or graduate degree, while 30 percent of Whites hold such degrees (National Center for Education Statistics, 2005). Even though Native Americans nationally represent a proportionately low percentage of college students, they are over-represented at UND, where Native American students constitute the largest non-White ethnic group, representing almost 3 percent of student enrollment during the 2005–2006 academic year. Whites accounted for 91 percent of enrolled students (UND, 2005). Still, having a sizable minority at UND does not guarantee a voice in the university’s affairs.

UND changed the nickname of its school sports teams from the ‘Flickertails’ (a small prairie rodent) to the ‘Fighting Sioux’ in 1930. There are few existing records that explain why the nickname was changed, except for editorials written in the UND student paper, *The Dakota Student*. These editorials argued that: (1) Sioux are good at exterminating bison (the team nickname of nearby North Dakota State University); (2) the Sioux are ‘warlike’ and of ‘fine physique and bearing’; and (3) the word ‘Sioux’ is easily rhymed for yells and songs (Annis, 1999).

The use of ‘Fighting Sioux’ has followed a typical patriarchal pattern, with sexism repeatedly popping up in the debate. In 1972, fraternity men displayed an ice sculpture of a topless Native woman with the words ‘Lick ’em Sioux’ displayed across her breasts. In 1992, Native children found themselves harassed at a UND homecoming day parade by jeers of ‘Squaws, go home to the reservation where you belong’; the word ‘squaw’ is commonly interpreted to be a derogatory reference to female genitalia. Finally, a 1997 *Grand Forks Herald* article reported opposing-team sports fans attempting to use UND’s nickname to their competitive advantage by crudely chanting during a sporting event: ‘Sioux fuck their women!’

Sports-related t-shirts that sexually demean Native Americans regularly appear around the time of sporting match-ups between UND and North Dakota State University (NDSU). The bison is the nickname and logo of NDSU, and these shirts often put Native people on a par with that animal. One shirt depicted a Native male

on his knees in front of a bison, ostensibly to perform oral sex, with the phrase: 'Blow us: We saw, They sucked, We came'. Another shirt featured the geometric logo of a 'Fighting Sioux' female with thick red lips and the text: 'A Century of Sucking, 1890–1990'. One recent shirt, sold by a Grand Forks business, featured an obese Native male engaged in 'doggy-style' sex with a bison, with accompanying text urging him to 'Buck the Bison UNDER'.⁵ Only a naïve observer could ignore the presence of racism, patriarchal domination and sexual humiliation in these uses of the 'Fighting Sioux'. See Figure 1 for examples of these shirts.



a



b



c

Figure 1. Racist and sexist images: a) year unknown, b) c. 1990, c) 2001

Sports, machismo and violence

The usage of Native American nicknames by colleges would likely be a minor issue were it not for collegiate sports. College sports and the logos and team names used by teams are widely circulated throughout their communities and nationally. Thus, one might argue that the most common view of a university held by the average citizen comes from sports, not academics. For example, three-quarters of Americans feel that four-year colleges and universities placed ‘too much emphasis’ on athletics (Selingo, 2004), which shows how many think higher education should be less about athletics than it currently is. Although only a relatively small part of a university, athletics has become the free-market solution to a university’s ability to (supposedly) stay financially in the black or at least be a ‘well-rounded college’, while not delivering on any of its promises (Frank, 2004). Increased expenditures on athletics often lead to cuts in other areas of the university.

According to Dworkin and Messner (1999), sport provides an excellent opportunity to analyze critically the social construction of gender. Even though athletics has recently provided fairer access to men and women, the effect has not led to a change or breakdown in traditional concepts of masculinity and femininity:

Organized sports has overblown the cultural hegemony of heterosexualized, aggressive, violent, heavily muscled male athletes and heterosexualized, flirtatious, moderately muscled female athletes who are accomplished and competitive but expected to be submissive to the control of men coaches and managers. (Dworkin & Messner, 1999, p. 354)

The ideology offered by collegiate sports emphasizes intense competition and school patriotism. In a philosophical sense, the male political and business leaders of tomorrow get their inspiration and start from winner-take-all sports. For upper-class athletes, masculinity is transferred primarily to an education and career instead of athletics, unlike working-class athletes whose highest hope is expressing their masculinity through sports. According to Messner’s (1989) study of former athletes, ‘many successful men speak of their earlier status as athletes as having “opened doors” for them in their present professions and community affairs’ (p. 78). Athletic participation helps to validate for men their positions of privilege within their chosen professions (Messner, 1989). As such, sports, business and politics all find reflection in each other’s image. American athletics fosters the same cut-throat and masculinist competition upon which capitalism and oligarchal democracy thrives. The focus on male-gendered competition conceals the need for cooperation among people in society, such as the stability and nurturing necessary for childrearing and maintaining a household.

The visceral violence of sports (especially UND’s most popular sports, football and hockey) encourages a ‘take-no-crap’ attitude in athletes (Messner, 1990). Fans emulate athletes’ attitudes in their behavior towards other fans and any who they fear might undermine ‘their fun’—such as those advocating a team name-change. Belligerence is embedded in the commonplace threats—devoid of fairness and logic—which are lobbed at highly visible name-change advocates. Counter-demonstrators

have bullied and intimidated spectators of name-change rallies, using strategies perfected on the court, gridiron and rink.

The word 'fighting' in the name of UND sports teams allows fans to utilize overly masculine and aggressive attitudes towards all opposed to them. By labeling Lakotans as violent people (thus the 'Fighting' part of the 'Fighting Sioux') and assuming them to be 'warlike' as it was assumed in 1930, UND falsely represents a people who were put on the defensive when their land was invaded by Euro-American armies and settlers, whose subsequent push into their territory violated official treaties (Brown, 1972; Matthiessen, 1992). Lakotans fought against the US Army, not against opposing hockey teams. They fought for survival, not for a National Championship trophy. Perversely, fans think that by inventing a hyper-aggressive (and inaccurate) stereotype of the Lakotan people they are 'honoring' them, instead of merely imposing their own attitudes and norms upon Native culture.

'Old boys' club'

The informal relationships that men are able to create as an outgrowth of sports, social fraternities, business dealings and other 'respectable' activities in society are tools that women and other disenfranchised people of society both struggle to create themselves and struggle to fight against. Thus it may be understood that an 'old boys' club' of sorts controls the discourse and decision-making regarding the 'Fighting Sioux' nickname.

The best example demonstrating the presence of an 'old boys' club' is the 'Engelstad Factor'. After a brief hockey career at UND, Ralph Engelstad went on to make a fortune in the casino industry of Las Vegas. After amassing enormous wealth and power, he began giving money to UND—usually for only sports-related purposes. In 1998, a hockey arena was named after him because of his multi-million dollar gifts. Later, with the help of ally Earl Strinden of the Alumni Association, he pledged \$100 million to UND, half of which would be used to build a new hockey arena. Engelstad was an avid collector of Nazi paraphernalia and threw two 'birthday parties' with Hitler themes in the 1980s, which resulted in him getting sanctioned by Nevada in 1989 with a \$1.5 million fine for defaming the state's character. When questions surfaced about Engelstad's potentially racist past, along with allegations of his political meddling at UND, he sunk all \$100 million (plus an additional \$4 million) into an over-the-top arena that the Ralph Engelstad Arena Corporation still owns, although UND's teams play there (Brownstein, 2001). There are literally thousands of depictions of the 'Fighting Sioux' logo in the arena, most built into the infrastructure itself. It is obvious how a rich man like Engelstad has enjoyed influence over UND, in a similar way to how other wealthy donors influence other institutions of higher education.⁶

Promises of financial donations dangled in front of UND, combined with alliances of North Dakotan elites with ties to UND, perpetuate racist conditions. Since society continues to be male-dominated, it is useful to look at the actions of present White male students, since they will become the future power brokers in the region. Many

students graduating from UND will be instilled with a rabid dedication to the nickname and will go on to defend it mercilessly. Most UND sports promotional materials include photographs featuring male athletic fans with their mouths wide open in a cheer (or scream) and 'Fighting Sioux' logos plastered all over their clothing.

The UND 'old boys' club' has adapted—just as other clubs (like country clubs) have had to in recent years—to demands for more inclusiveness. However, instead of making real attempts to share power, the 'old boys' club' uses the 'Fighting Sioux' nickname to feign diversity and multi-culturalism, just as corporations have propped up a small handful of female mid-level managers. Gender tokenism in the workplace often leaves women relatively disempowered in terms of upward mobility since they are cut off from resources afforded to the male dominants; it also creates stress and other psychological pressures which can have a long-term effect on women (Oakley, 2000; Yoder & Aniakudo, 1996). In fact, some suspect a critical mass of women is necessary in order to change conditions permanently (Oakley, 2000). Similarly, the 'Fighting Sioux' has come to represent the equivalent of tokenism based on race. Without a quantitative change in the arrangements of power, token Native students will remain disempowered, although supposedly 'represented' by the most common face of Native people at UND: the logo.

UND does not technically have a mascot (someone who dresses up as a 'Fighting Sioux' for sporting events), yet all Native students have, in effect, become mascots for the university to parade around: 'See, we're not being racist.... How can we be racist when we have so many Native American programs?' This argument sounds suspiciously like, 'How can we possibly be sexist when we employ so many women?' The simple *presence* of the oppressed clearly does not signify or ensure justice. And the flexibility of the 'old boys' club' allows it to retain its general character.⁷

Perhaps the strongest indication that outsider voices are not being considered at UND—and that the club has not opened its doors wide enough yet—is the open letter signed by 21 Native-related programs at UND opposing the nickname and logo. In this letter, these programs, organizations and offices state that UND has failed to

respect and respond to regional tribes which have strongly endorsed changing the name and logo, along with organizations including the National Congress of American Indians and the National Indian Education Association, who have also gone on record asking UND to change the nickname/logo. (UND Indian Related Programs, 2000)

Despite this unified statement by an affected minority constituency that opposes the practice of an overwhelmingly White and male administration, UND has yet to change its practices. UND frequently refers to these Native programs, but never mentions that these programs are mainly financed externally (by independent grants or federal money) or that most programs are on record as opposing the nickname. Using the mere existence of these programs—as empty symbolism—to justify its practices has been a central tactic of UND.

'Father knows best'

University administrators have frequently made paternalistic decisions on behalf of name-change advocates. We could call this the 'father knows best' problem. For example, when activists ceased to take UND's patronizing seriously during the late 1990s, the administration finally responded by setting up a bureaucratic organization in 2000, university President Charles Kupchella's 'Nickname Commission'. Although officially designed to help inform the new president about the issue and what various constituencies within the UND community felt about it, the commission served merely to soothe, delay, placate and sterilize activist demands. How long would a committee have to deliberate on the racism of a team called the 'Helpful Mexicans', in honor of the migrant farm workers that North Dakota's economy keeps in a state of consistent poverty? Would *any* committee really have to think twice about other racialized nicknames?

Even if the authoritarianism and 'smoke and mirrors' nature of this technique were not immediately apparent, the State Board of Higher Education (SBHE) cleared up any confusion on the power differential between activists and the administration. Just before this Nickname Commission was posed to deliver its recommendations to President Kupchella, the SBHE stepped in (playing the '*grandfather* knows best' role), mandating that the 'Fighting Sioux' nickname would stay indefinitely and that neither UND nor Kupchella had the ability to change it.

Why did the SBHE take this action? It turned out that Ralph Engelstad played the role of UND's 'father' (and 'sugar daddy') better than most. In a letter to Kupchella (and copied to the SBHE) from late 2000, Engelstad threatened to let his \$100+ million stadium rot in the tundra if President Kupchella and the university did not toe his line and keep the 'Fighting Sioux' nickname. Engelstad reiterated a common theme throughout the letter that Kupchella ought to heed his demands because he was the donor doing a favor for UND. The day after receiving this letter, the SBHE made its mandate.

Other events echo paternalistic tones. A while after the stadium debacle, Engelstad verbally attacked a female professor for daring to raise her voice in defiance of what could only be called his megalomania. Engelstad's words were reminiscent of a father demanding that his daughter be 'seen and not heard'. He referred to the professor as 'Ms' not 'Dr', saying that if he were 'running the University of North Dakota' he would 'fire [her] ass'.⁸ One has to wonder if a well-known, tenured male professor—whose salary is likely to be 25 percent greater than a female professor's (Bellas, 1993; Bellas, 2000)—would have been subjected to similar standards.

The periodic, incoherent outbursts from UND's father figures appear as blatant demands for name-change activists to be silent. For example, former Alumni Association President Earl Strinden referred to activists as 'nothing more than a pimple on the rear end of an elephant' (Benedict, 2001, p. C1) in the same tone as a father haranguing his own child, designed to make the child accept his rule of the family.

The 'father knows best' syndrome is seen when other members of 'the family' become active in debating an issue of the day, thus upsetting the status quo. It is

difficult to carry out ‘business as usual’ when that business is constantly charged as being racist. However, the UND administration’s actions suggest that students, professors and Native Americans should not meddle in the operations and decisions of things that do not concern them. Thus, students should only be concerned with attending class, studying and graduating. Professors should focus on teaching their classes, conducting their research and gaining tenure. And Native Americans should focus on more important problems, since UND is in fact helping Natives by using the ‘Fighting Sioux’. University administrators ought to be the ones to make all the important decisions for the university—or so goes the logic central to this demand for obedience.

Holly Annis, an enrolled member of the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe and UND student, has observed this paternalism and thus writes in an exasperated tone,

American Indian students at the University of North Dakota have been protesting the use of Fighting Sioux for 30 years. Thirty years of perpetuating archaic stereotypes of Native people. Thirty years of educational forums. Thirty years of telling us to be honored. (Annis, 1999, p. 5)

Objectification

Objectification is a process that causes a person to feel as if they are treated as an inanimate object rather than as a human being. This is commonly done by creating popular portrayals of certain groups of people that idealize certain aspects, qualities or characteristics of members of that group. Such portrayals then provoke society to hold the rest of that group accountable to those same standards. For example, U.S. society holds many unreasonable standards for women: body weight, breast size, waist size, cheekbone height, lip depth, figure and so forth. Magazines, movies, music, fashion, pop culture and the cosmetics industry enforce restrictions upon women regarding their social behavior, diet, clothing style etc. These standards facilitate the objectification of women by men (Calogero, 2004; Goffman, 1979). Thus, one could argue, it is not the actual person that a heterosexual man becomes attracted to but an ‘idealized’ woman, who has specific characteristics that can affirm that man’s sexuality without giving the woman much autonomy or sense of self-worth.

A similar process occurs with the ‘Fighting Sioux’. White UND students pay homage to unrealistic, romanticized, dated and irrelevant interpretations of Native people as if they were the norm. Whites—who can purchase baby clothes that say ‘Fighting Sioux Forever’ or sweatpants with ‘Sioux’ written across the butt—have turned Native people into objects to be enjoyed and consumed. The objectification of Native Americans and their culture as products is a practice rampant throughout the city of Grand Forks, and also throughout the entire country (Merskin, 2001).

When successfully objectified, Native people are properly ‘Fighting’, they are obedient representatives of White preconceptions and they are ‘good sports’ about it. Further, D/L/Nakotans (not to mention all Native people) are cast into one visual portrayal, a symbolically perfected logo (Black, 2002), just as girls and young women

are subtly told to look and act like Britney Spears. UND even holds a trademark on the logo, thus controlling where and how it is used by all other parties.

Conveniently, objectification does not require permission; the standard bar can be raised whenever necessary for control purposes. Self-loathing is caused when the objectified cannot achieve the lofty goals set out before them. When Native students fail to achieve the image of ‘fine physique and bearing’ noted in *The Dakota Student* in 1930—regardless of their intention to do so or not—they fall short of the standards set by Whites at UND at that earlier time. Such standards are intended to focus more upon a romanticized, silent appearance than upon the students as thinking and active agents who exist in the here and now.

Obedience to the standards of objectification is important. Obedient people limit themselves based upon the popularly perceived notions of possibility. But when a Native person refuses to be objectified and becomes openly resistant, they are told to ‘go back to the rez’, just as a sexist man would tell a woman to ‘go home if you don’t want to go past third base with me’.

Words can be used to distract attention from objectification. According to former UND student and Standing Rock Sioux Tribe member Ira Taken Alive, UND uses words like ‘honor’ and ‘respect’ to dissuade concerns about the use of the nickname and logo, and the consequent objectification of Native Americans. Taken Alive wrote a letter to the student newspaper, saying that prior to his enrollment at UND,

[I] seemed to have taken comfort in the pretty words of ‘honor’ and ‘respect’ espoused by the University to legitimize its use of the name. After my first week on campus however, I had come to realize that I had fallen victim to false advertising. (Taken Alive, 1999, p. 4)

Disparaging ‘liberal women’

Universities have typically been bastions of freedom in society. As such, liberal attitudes about freedom of speech predominate at institutions of higher education. However, such political ideologies have consequences when considering that the society around most universities tends to be more conservative. Progressive academics at UND were targeted by critics for their support for a name change and were frequently told: ‘If you liberal professors don’t like it here, you can leave’ ... ‘especially those liberal White women’. Such comments have appeared in letters to the editors in the *Herald* (the Grand Forks newspaper) and on talk radio.⁹ Although there’s nothing wrong with being liberal or a woman, the term ‘liberal women professors’ is slung about as an insult.¹⁰

Demographically speaking, Native women are easier targets than Native men, since Native female students outnumber male students by a near 2:1 ratio (UND, 2005).¹¹ Just like the feminists of yesteryear, ‘liberal Native women’ are targeted in this blame game. They are implicitly told that they should be ‘concerned with more important matters’. A laundry list of ills is usually given, such as poverty, alcoholism, suicide, unemployment and so forth. Insinuated in such claims is that Native women should feel guilt and responsibility for these other things. Further, Native women should not be responsible for the image of their culture; they should instead be caring for their

babies at home, so the children do not grow up with such problems. It is the place of the men (especially White men) to ensure that Native culture is managed (i.e., marketed and sold) properly.

Since few Native Americans or other people of color have teaching positions at UND—0.01 percent of UND faculty in 2003 were ‘American Indian’ (Affirmative Action Office, 2004)—sensitized Whites often take it upon themselves to cry foul. Thus, liberal White women serve as easy punching bags for a resistant majority who feel that their way of life is threatened. The accusation of being a ‘liberal White woman’ acts to say: ‘You do not have a vital opinion or stake in this matter.’ Yet the opinion of a conservative Native man like David Yeagley¹² is worshipped by the Grand Forks media. Conservative White men like Ralph Engelstad, Earl Strinden and others have been able to purchase respectability from the public. The unspoken assumption is that liberal White women just have to trust these men and their intentions.

In 1999, the Executive Committee of UND’s Women’s Studies program stated, ‘Native American women and children seem to be taking a large amount of the anger being expressed against the proposal that UND change its nickname and logo.’ Women are pointing out that patriarchy is openly hostile towards the primacy of care, cooperation, compassion, tolerance and nonviolence—all traditionally ‘female-gendered’ traits. By doing so, the traits ascribed to the male gender of ‘benevolent’ decision-making, force, competition and domination are being challenged. By participating in this debate, the stranglehold of male monopoly is being threatened.

Nickname-change advocates are commonly charged with attempting to enforce a ‘politically correct’ dictatorship over campus expression, and it is asserted that attempts to sensitize the language of others is anti-White, anti-American, anti-male etc. Yet the movement to change Native American nicknames and logos is not about ‘special rights’ (as frequently alleged about ‘gay rights’, too), but rather about ‘human rights’. Human rights are not just a ‘PC’ issue, but a fundamental part of the modern, liberal democrat tradition US society derives from. To claim something is ‘PC’ is an attempt to devalue the merit of an argument articulated by someone in an oppressed group.

Perhaps equally as important as the commonplace targeting of so-called ‘liberal’ women is the baiting of liberal men, who one could argue have been ‘feminized’ and socialized with feminist values. The machismo of these liberal men is questioned—are they wimps who do not like sports, or maybe hyper-sensitive and cannot take a joke? In either case, feminized men’s lack of ‘male-ness’ causes them to be viewed no differently than weak, overly-PC liberal women.¹³

What to do about patriarchy?

The challenge to radical teachers is to contextualize the ways in which racism is transmitted through complex institutions like universities. In doing so, we can begin to explain to students and other colleagues that patriarchy plays an explicit role in the

reproduction of racist practices, such as the sustained support for the 'Fighting Sioux' nickname.

The larger goal, of course, is the removal of all patriarchal tendencies within universities, as well as greater society. The intersections of the tendencies discussed above are equally rampant in other institutions and sectors of our society—particularly multinational corporations, law enforcement, prisons and the military. Undemocratic, exclusionary, objectifying and anti-progressive tendencies push these institutional participants (whether willing or otherwise) towards particular modes of interaction that stymie freedom. This warrants dedicated struggle by internal and external actors for a more just, egalitarian and feminist world.

Patriarchy itself may be fought by in a number of ways. Efforts to democratize various institutions in society will help to combat the patriarchal tendencies of institutional leaders. Working to sensitize and educate everyday people about the problems of patriarchy and gender inequality cannot help but produce results (Stake & Rose, 1994). It has been shown that feminist activism is widely sustained and enhanced (as most activism is) by creating strong collective and individual identities that are ideologically oriented towards feminism (Liss *et al.*, 2004; Stryker *et al.*, 2000). The stringent enforcement and expansion of affirmative action (particularly to include class status as a discriminated-against category) can create inroads for institutionally disadvantaged people to participate in the workplace, government and universities. Even though patriarchy is not only propped up by men (hooks, 2000), deliberate male defection from patriarchy is a vital step towards undoing the privileges that men enjoy as a result of their sex (Digby, 1998; hooks, 1989). Finally, perhaps most important, is that patriarchy should be identified and properly called by its name whenever it rears its ugly head.

At UND, all the aforementioned patriarchal trends could be reversed. The real, non-objectified, non-romanticized history of Native people needs to be taught, a history that focuses on Native people as active agents instead of incidental impediments towards Westward expansion. Only in that context can the problems and struggles Native people face make sense. Native people deserve the right to be 'honored' in the ways they wish to be honored, not just as trophies of days gone by, but by the dominant culture learning the Lakotan language, attending powwows, visiting reservations and reading about Native-written history and spirituality. Inclusion within decision-making structures that deliberate on issues that affect Natives will empower instead of restrict. Listening to the wishes of Native people will result in more respect and positive outcomes than a condescending 'father knows best' approach. Finally, UND's community should avoid the politicized 'red-baiting' that denigrates the views of 'Fighting Sioux' critics before their voices are even heard.

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Notes

1. This article uses 'Native American' interchangeably with 'Lakotan'. Others prefer to identify descendents of North America's first human inhabitants as 'Indigenous', 'First Peoples' or 'American Indian'.
2. The current UND logo, drawn by an Ojibwa UND graduate, is reminiscent of the Chicago 'Blackhawks' hockey team logo—which a previous UND logo was also based upon. UND has copyrighted the present logo and thus restricts access to use it, but interested readers can find the logo on UND's website (www.universityrelations.und.edu/logoappeal/artist_logo.html).
3. What is commonly known as the Sioux Nation is in fact a collection of seven distinct tribes, which include the Dakota, Lakota and Nakota people. 'Sioux' is seen by some as a derogatory word created by the French, an abbreviation of an Ojibwa phrase meaning 'little snake'.
4. It should be noted that well over half the survey respondents stated they would not reduce their financial contributions. The 23 percent who stated they would decrease contributions included those who 'strongly agreed' (19 percent) and 'agreed' (4 percent).
5. 'Buck' is often used as a derogatory word for a Native male.
6. Engelstad's influence and actions are similar to those of other high-profile individuals, who have used contributions as a means of making political demands of universities. For example, Phil Knight, CEO of the Nike Corporation, reneged on his promise to donate \$30 million to the University of Oregon after the school joined the Workers' Rights Consortium, an organization critical of Nike and sweatshops (Dreiling & Wolf, 2003). The family of Sam Walton, which has controlling interests in the Wal-Mart Corporation, gave \$300 million to the University of Arkansas, allegedly to guarantee that a favored chancellor stay in his position (Cohen, 2004).
7. The UND Alumni Association's board of trustees is male-dominated by a ratio of more than 3:1 (i.e., 16:5). The 'emeritus' board members are even more slanted, roughly 5:1 (based upon gender identification in board biographies at www.undalumni.org/).
8. This was in a letter Ralph Engelstad wrote to Professor Sharon Carson on October 9, 2002 (see www.und.edu/org/bridges/engel_fury.html).
9. Academics have long been criticized by right-wing pundits for their alleged 'left/liberal' political ideologies (most recently, see Will, 2004). Yet the picture is not as clear as this (for more details see Hamilton & Hargens, 1993; Zipp & Fenwick, 2006). What is clear is that female faculty members on the whole tend to be more liberal than male faculty members (Zipp & Fenwick, 2006).
10. Ironically, many of the so-called 'liberal' women who actively support a UND nickname change would eschew the 'liberal' label in favor of 'radical'.
11. The female:male Native student ratio was computed from enrollment figures for the 2005–2006 school year—the actual ratio is 1.907:1. Enrolled White male students outnumbered White female students by 457 that same year at UND.
12. Yeagley is a well-circulated academic at the University of Oklahoma, whose writing appears in the conservative *Frontline* magazine. Apparently, famous liberal or radical non-UND Natives—people like Winona LaDuke, Russell Means or Ward Churchill—have not been invited to write editorials for Grand Forks' only daily newspaper, the *Herald*.
13. Thanks to Sharon Carson for pointing this out.

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