

RISE MODULE: RACIAL IMAGERY

“If we ask the right question we can change the world with the right answers.” – Ogwo David Emenike

ACTIVITY: ASKING CRITICAL QUESTIONS

Objectives:

1. Explore the use of racial imagery in sports and its implications.
2. Discuss the use of Native American mascots.
3. Demonstrate how critical questioning is a valuable tool to examine the “status quo.”

Duration: 30 minutes

MATERIALS:

- Racial Imagery Handout (A cartoon by Tony Auth, published in the Philadelphia Inquirer in 1997.)

INSTRUCTIONS:

This activity takes place in a two rounds.

1. In round one distribute the racial imagery handout to participants with a Post-it note covering the Cleveland baseball team’s mascot.
2. Instruct participants not to remove the Post-it note until told to do so.

A cartoon by Tony Auth, published in the Philadelphia Inquirer in 1997.



Use the following questions to support a dialogue about the images.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Are any of these real team mascots?
2. If they are not, why don't they exist? Give participants ample time to discuss the images. Often, quite quickly, participants come to a consensus that the images are troubling and play on historical racial stereotypes.

For the second round, ask participants to remove the Post-it to view the Cleveland baseball team's mascot. Facilitate a discussion using the following questions as a guide.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Is this a real mascot?
2. Do you see similarities in the racial stereotypes?
3. Why is this one used while others are not? Allow time for reflection. Often times there is a sharp division in how some see the use of Native American mascots. While many see connections between the other images, some use the argument that tribes are being "honored" and mascot imagery glorifies Native American tribes. Share that recently (Jan. 29, 2018) the Cleveland Major League Baseball (MLB) team announced it will no longer use the "Chief Wahoo" logo on uniforms. This change will be put in place for the 2019 season and is the result of discussions between the team and the league. The team still has copyright of the image and plans to continue selling other merchandise with the image.
4. Is it a good thing that the team will no longer use the "Chief Wahoo" mascot on their uniforms? Why or why not?
5. What benefits and challenges might such a change have:
 - a. For Native Americans
 - b. For Cleveland fans
 - c. For the team
 - d. For MLB
6. What are your thoughts about the team's continued use of the mascot on other merchandise?
7. Are there other examples of racial imagery that participants can think about (e.g. Washington, D.C. NFL team or Florida State University mascot)?

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Native American images and terminology often have been used as imagery associated with sports teams.
2. Some perceive this practice as disrespectful to Native Americans and any other group, especially when caricatures and derogatory terms are used.

NEXT STEPS: Take the following actions after completing the activity with your team.

1. Share photos on social media and tag/mention RISE.



@RISEtoWINorg



@RISEtoWIN

2. Discuss your experience with students, athletes, coaches, athletic department staff and other organization members. Identify ways you and your school/organization can help lead the way in improving race relations and driving social progress.

FEEDBACK:

RISE welcomes feedback as we seek to continually improve our tools and resources. We encourage all participants to share their feedback by completing an online survey at bit.ly/risetools. Our Leadership & Education Programs team can be reached at education@RISEtoWIN.org.