

Wednesday, September 30, 2009

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**-MEDIA ADVISORY-
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

IRESIST COALITION RALLY TO DEMAND AN END TO THE USE OF “CHIEF ILLINIWEK”

The IResist Coalition, a social justice organization, will hold a march starting at the Alma Mater and a rally outside of the Assembly Hall at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in response to the Students for Chief Illiniwek’s “Next Dance.”

The “chief” is *not* an honored symbol, but merely a caricature which mocks the very cultures and traditions it claims to champion. The “chief” does *not* represent the entire student body at UIUC. It does not unite the campus population, but continues to be a divisive symbol that creates a toxic environment for many students, faculty, staff, and community members. Recent research by Dr. Stephanie Fryberg (Tulalip) demonstrates the harm of mascot imagery.

The “chief” was officially retired in February, 2007. In a media advisory dated February 18 of that year, Students Transforming Oppression and Privilege (S.T.O.P.) stated:

“The educational, moral, and ethical grounds for ending the Illiniwek tradition have been clear for decades. This first step by the University absolutely cannot be separated from the issues of racism, privilege and power on this campus and the steps that remain to be carried out. Acts of intolerance and hate crimes repeatedly suffered by communities on this campus evidence the lack of a true climate of human rights and social justice at UIUC.”

That statement still holds truth today. Vandalism of the Native American House’s “Beyond the Chief” public art exhibit is one example of the climate at UIUC.

The “chief” issue is one that extends beyond our campus community. According to the Peoria Tribe of Indians of Oklahoma, “the image portrayed by Chief Illiniwek does not accurately represent or honor the heritage of the Peoria Tribe of Indians of Oklahoma and is a degrading racial stereotype that reflects negatively on all American Indian people.” Additionally, the Executive Committee of the Oglala Sioux Tribe issued a resolution stating that “Oglala Lakota regalia is being misused to represent ‘Chief Illiniwek,’ a disrespectful representation of the people of the Kaskaskia, Peoria, Piankeshuw, and Wea nations.” The Oglala Sioux resolution demanded the return of Lakota regalia, which to this day has not been returned to its original and rightful owners.

The IResist Coalition is in full support of the statements made by the Peoria Tribe of Indians of Oklahoma and the Oglala Sioux Tribe. The IResist Coalition is in solidarity with the Native community at UIUC and in the wider Champaign-Urbana area. The use of “Chief Illiniwek” by University-affiliated registered student organizations must end.

WHAT: Not Our Mascot Rally

WHEN: Friday, October 2, 2009 at 5:00 p.m.

WHERE: Alma Mater, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, intersection of Wright St. and Green St. and Assembly Hall, 1800 S. First St., Champaign, IL

WHO: IResist Coalition and Co-Sponsors: MEChA de UIUC; Changing Women; Red Roots; Latina/o Studies Graduate Student Organization; Critical Research Collaborative; Campus Antiwar Network; S.T.O.P. Coalition; Feminist Majority; ChiL@- The Chicana/Latino Association for Autonomous Anthropology’ Collaborative-History Graduate Students of Color Organization; Graduate Employees Organization (G.E.O.); La Colectiva; ISO; Students for Justice In Palestine; NAACP; Amnesty International

SCHEDULE: 5:00 p.m. --- Meet at Alma Mater, march down Sixth Street towards
Assembly Hall

6:00 p.m. --- Rally in front of Assembly Hall

7:00 p.m. --- Press Release with speakers from Coalition and co-sponsors

7:30 p.m. --- Open mic

8:15 p.m. --- Rally as spectators exit Assembly Hall

Source: IResist Coalition
www.iresist.org

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