

The Michigan Daily

Edited and managed by students at the University of Michigan since 1890.



420 Maynard St.
Ann Arbor, MI 48109
tothedaily@michigandaily.com

ANDREW WEINER
EDITOR IN CHIEF

MELANIE KRUVELIS
and **ADRIENNE ROBERTS**
EDITORIAL PAGE EDITORS

MATT SLOVIN
MANAGING EDITOR

Unsigned editorials reflect the official position of the Daily's editorial board.
All other signed articles and illustrations represent solely the views of their authors.

FROM THE DAILY

Racism in disguise

Abolish offensive American Indian mascots locally

On Feb. 14, the Michigan Department of Civil Rights filed a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education calling for an end of the continued use of American Indian mascots, slogans and imagery in 35 public schools across the state of Michigan. The MDCR cites new evidence revealing the negative effects on the learning environments of students as the reason for requesting federal intervention against these schools. Although intentions of the MDCR are correct, bringing in the federal government is an overreach. This issue should be dealt with at the communal level to ensure that the education of students, who had no role in choosing which mascot their school uses, is not held in jeopardy.

From team names like the Redskins to the Indians, the continued use of American Indian imagery in athletics is racist. Elementary and secondary public schools shouldn't be purveyors of racism. Evidence suggests that mascots like these can ostracize American Indian students, making them feel uncomfortable in their own school. Furthermore, these symbols perpetuate stereotypes, which can to impact academic performance. Compared to the larger and more egregious manifestations of racism throughout the world, these problems may seem small, but this is no reason for inaction.

However, at the heart of this issue are individual communities, and therefore, a solution should come from the local level. The MDCR included Chippewa Valley High School as one of the schools who use Native American symbols, requesting they lose federal funding if they don't change their mascot. However, in 2008, the school's mascot, Big Red, was changed from an American Indian's profile to a red bird. This is just one example of Michi-

gan schools and communities taking actions to remove these symbols on their own. A rush to make this a federal case without first working with local schools to help ease a transition from traditional mascots to less offensive ones will blunt the focused attention this issue demands.

The call to bring in the federal government on this issue has the potential to negatively impact students. Taking federal funds does little to create a positive educational environment for students who have no say in the creation of their mascots.

It's up to the communities, who have the option to petition schools, to take a second look at the implications of their local mascots and revise them for the benefit of the community.

Should these communities fail to properly remove these base mascots, federal involvement could be considered. For now, this should be seen as a local problem that will take time, patience and the collaboration of the community.

EDITORIAL BOARD MEMBERS

Kaan Avdan, Sharik Bashir, Barry Belmont, James Brennan, Eli Cahan, Jesse Klein, Melanie Kruevelis, Maura Levine, Patrick Mailliet, Aarica Marsh, Megan McDonald, Jasmine McNenny, Harsha Nahata, Adrienne Roberts, Paul Sherman, Sarah Skaluba, Michael Spaeth, Luchen Wang, Derek Wolfe