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C. Richard King, *Redskins: Insult and Brand* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2016, \$24.95). Pp. xiii + 228. ISBN 978 0 8032 7864 6.

The third-most-profitable advertising brand in the US National Football League, with a value of \$2.4 billion and annual revenues of \$395 million in 2014, is represented by a racial caricature – the Washington Redskin – that some major United States newspapers refuse to publish. C. Richard King, professor of comparative ethnic studies at Washington State University, has been writing about Native American sports mascots for more than twenty years, and his position on this issue is unambiguous. He calls the team's name “a racial slur posing as a sports brand” (172).

Noam Chomsky (who is Jewish) has offered a searing parody of American Indian mascots. He imagines that sixty years after a Nazi victory in World War II, a prestigious German state university uses a sports mascot called “the Rabbi.” In Chomsky's tale, a student from the White Aryan Youth League dresses up in costume as a Hasidic Rabbi, complete with curl-locks and beard. The soccer team calls itself the Fighting Jews; the school's band is called the Marching Jews. Sports fans wear jackets and T-shirts with pictures of the Rabbi stitched into them. At soccer games, nearly everyone joins hands to sing “Deutschland über Alles,” with the Rabbi leading. The participants assert that they are honoring the Jews.

Professor Chomsky's tale aside, sports mascots of American Indians are unique in American sport. Although they have been banned in many schools (the University of Nebraska at Omaha Indians became the “Mavericks” more than forty-five years ago, for example), they endure in professional baseball and football. The names are supported by the owners of the Redskins and other teams, who maintain that the names and other imagery display “reverence for the proud legacy and traditions of Native Americans” (13). To Professor King, however, “Redskin” has deep connections to the history of anti-Indian violence and is “as much a weapon as a word [that] injures and excludes, denying history and humanity” (1), that displays “a paradoxical love of imagined Indians and a loathing of actual, embodied Indians” (4).

King, who writes powerfully as well as provocatively, provides a summary of its use in American literature beginning in the seventeenth century. “Redskin” has been used in a descriptive way (as in the novels of James Fenimore Cooper), but also as a reference to bloody Native scalps taken for bounty. “Redskin” became firmly anchored in the language as “a living slur” (17) by the time L. Frank Baum used it late in 1890. Baum, who later would write the Oz books, was a newspaper editor in Aberdeen, South Dakota, when he referred to the assassination of Sitting Bull: “With his fall the nobility of the Redskin is extinguished, and what few are left are a pack of whining curs ... The best safety of the frontier will be secured by the total annihilation of the few remaining Indians.” “Here,” writes King, “Baum celebrates genocide” (17–18).

The Washington Redskin at one time was much more than a name; it was a stereotypical bazaar run wild; during the 1940s, halftime shows included

a big-piece swing band, mounted on a smart canvas teepee on the back of a section of bleachers. At the half-time intermission, smoke began pouring out the top of the big teepee, a rhythmic

## 2 *Reviews*

tom-tom set up, and out on the field war-whooped a 150-piece band in Indian dress, playing “Hail to the Redskins.” (37)

Rampant Indian mimicry was credited with saving the team from bankruptcy in the late 1940s.

King develops a broader context for the debate regarding the Redskin as a football team’s name: a general attitude in America, “often unspoken and unconscious,” that Indian imagery is common property, “that everyone has a right to use Indians as they see fit; everyone owns them” (100), by which Native names are attached to all manner of business and merchandise, from hotels, to carpets, to low-grade wine. King identifies a sense of “racialized entitlement” (101), and a desire on the part of the colonists to maintain control of the historical narrative.

The author also analyzes several polls in which “some Native Americans have expressed a counterintuitive and supportive opinion” of the team’s name (126). One *Washington Post* poll released in 2016 found a decidedly nonchalant attitude, with results similar to a survey by the Annenberg Center in 2004. King dissects the polls skillfully, and finds bias in their phrasing of questions and other methodology in which “critical thinking and moral reflection get lost in formulaistic questions ... which oversimplify complex issues” (131).

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