Bad Anthropologies: Scholars, Sports Fans, and Native American Mascots

I

I have come to dread introductions. Like most cultural anthropologists this in part derives from the weight of popular misconceptions that connect me with archaeological digs, human evolution, and bizarre behavior in exotic lands. What makes such encounters worse are the disappointed looks that often greet the revelation that I study race and sports in the contemporary United States, particularly the controversy over Native American mascots, not cannibals, lost civilizations, or missing links.

As uncomfortable as such introductions may be, they pale in comparison with professional presentations of self. Such rituals of legitimation reiterate the boundaries of the discipline, hierarchically ranking its practitioners in accordance with the supposed value of their endeavors. Anthropologists studying sport have long remarked upon this hierarchy and puzzled over the continuing delegitimation of their work. Although I know quite well where my work fits, recently, I was publicly reminded of my place within the field in such a way that encouraged me to rethink anthropology, mascots, and the study of them. A few weeks after starting a new position, I ambled into the department office to retrieve something I had printed, when one of the staff members called me over to meet an emeritus faculty member who as it happened had long taught and published in anthropology as a Native Americanist. Following the customary exchange of names and remarks about training, he quickly turned to inquire after my area of study. Upon hearing that I was investigating the mascot controversy, he visibly tensed, responding: “You have to be kidding. No really, what do you study?” Repeating myself, he scoffed, “That’s not serious anthropology…that’s not even an issue Indians care about.” With that he turned on his heels and strode out of the office, pausing at the door to say over his shoulder, "When you decide you want to do some serious anthropology, stop by my office in College Hall." Speechless, humiliated, and angry, I wanted to scream: "what is serious anthropology?" Instead, I silently returned to my office with my printing. I knew what his dismissive comments meant: a good, proper, serious, and legitimate anthropology, buttressed by science and ensconced in the academy, explores the margins not the center, studies down, not up, has a more or less singular, essentialist conception of the other (as in there is one way to be Indian), and refuses to consider the pleasures and productions, identities and entertainments, or spectacles and struggles of the contemporary world worthy of attention. In retrospect, it is clear to me that my ill-mannered colleague was restating what the field says in a more subtle fashion to scholars of popular culture: "you do bad anthropology."

Studying the history and significance of pseudo-Indian imagery in athletics, I have gained a deeper appreciation of what makes anthropology, popular culture and their intersections so troublesome, unacceptable, or taboo, in other words, bad, to so many anthropologists. Native American mascots, I suggest in what follows, reveal the shifting relationships between anthropology and popular culture. In fact, such icons are both vulgar renderings and close relatives of disciplined anthropology; like their more legitimate and presentable kin found in universities and museums, they engage with, interpret, and otherwise fashion culture, difference, and otherness. This recognition, in turn, I assert, should prompt a more expansive understanding of the discipline and the popular. To contextualize this discussion, I begin with a consideration of the relationships between anthropology and popular culture. Then, I briefly review the history of Native American mascots and the ongoing controversy surrounding them. Against this backdrop, I examine the historical relationships between academic anthropology and athletic icons. In conclusion, I call for a more dynamic approach to the intersections of anthropology and popular culture, too often dismissed as bad anthropologies.

II

Anthropology and popular culture are bound to one another in surprising and familiar ways. These relationships are not novel, accidental, or occasional. Rather they occupy a central, if unrecognized, position in the development of both anthropology and popular culture. A suggestive, though necessarily abbreviated, list ranges (a) from early efforts to popularize the discipline in museums and world's fairs to documentaries on lost civilizations, strange customs, and traditional peoples on cable television, particularly the Discovery Channel; (b) from vernacular debates of human origins and the peopling of the Americas to countless tourist sites devoted to dead, lost, and exotic peoples; (c) from the recent proliferation of prehistoric fiction in the wake of The Clan of the Cave Bear to the borrowings of anthropological knowledge by New Age spiritual movements; and (d) from the playful incorporations of anthropological themes in Gary Larson's Far Side to the translation of anthropological findings into public discussions of human nature. Surprisingly, whereas the public has long had an intense interest in anthropology, actively consuming, (re)interpreting, and recycling the central subjects, problems, and tropes of the field, anthropologists have devoted little attention to these popular cultural forms and even less to the ways in which the discipline informs, imprints, or encourages them.

Anthropologists have increasingly attended to popular culture (see for example, Fabian 1998, They have studied movies (Traube 1992) music (Feld 1988, Waterman 1990), advertising (Davila 2000, Russell 1992) tourism (Kirschenblatt-Gimblett 1998), television (Kottak 1990, Mankekar 1999) magazines and their readerships (Lutz and Collier 1993), and sports (Springwood 1995). The (dis)articulations of anthropology and popular culture, however, have received relatively little attention. With few exceptions, most anthropologists have all but ignored disciplinary entanglements with popular culture. And when they have taken up the imbrication of these social fields, frequently they have attempted to correct or condemn particular misuses as inappropriate, unscientific, fantastic, or false (Williams 1991).

This is not to say the relationships between popular culture and anthropology have been unstudied; rather these relationships have been understudied. In fact, scholars interested in these relationships have emphasized three themes: (a) the place of anthropology in the public imagination (Banks 1994, di Leonardo 1998, Ginsburg 1992), (b) efforts to popularize anthropology (MacClancy and McDonaugh, Rydell 1984), and (c) the imprint of anthropological knowledge on popular forms and institutions (Haraway 1989, Karp and Lavine 1991, Kirschenblatt-Gimblett 1998, Lutz and Collier 1993). Given the many and varied relationships between anthropology and popular culture, this limited list is somewhat surprising. It underscores the need for interpretations cast in more complex terms, sensitive to historical conditions, cultural meanings, and social implications. With this in mind, this essay marks an initial effort to foster a deeper appreciation of the collisions and collaborations of the popular and the anthropological.

III

Today, nearly 2,500 schools, including more than 75 colleges and universities, employ pseudo-Indian imagery (Rodriguez, 1998; Staurowsky, 1999).   They have a long history, dating back to the late 19th and early 20th century. They developed in conjunction with the rise of intercollegiate and professional athletics, a crisis in white masculinity, the closing of the frontier, urbanization, industrialization, and the subjugation of Native America (Churchill, 1994; Drinnon, 1980). Over the course of the 20th century, Native American mascots have become a taken for granted element of American culture, reflecting the pleasures, possibilities, and powers they have granted their Euro-American performers.   In this context, pseudo-Indian imagery in athletics and education congealed for myriad reasons, including comments by fans or sportswriters, historic relationships between an institution and indigenous peoples, and regional associations. Over the past century, they have become institutionalized icons, encrusted with memories, tradition, boosterism, administrative investment, financial rewards, and collective identity.

Native American mascots rely on stereotypes and cliches. They reduce indigenous peoples to a limited set of cultural features: the feathered headdress; face paint; buckskin paints; warfare; dance; and the tomahawk (chop). They recycle these key symbols to fashion moving, meaningful, and entertaining personas and performances that many take to be authentic, appropriate, and even reverent. The condensed versions of Indianness rendered through such signs and spectacles confine Native Americans within the past and typically within the popular image of the Plains warrior. Pseudo-Indian imagery, then, confines indigenous peoples within overlapping tropes of primitive difference: on the hand, romantic renditions of noble savagery conjure bellicose warriors like Chief Illiniwek and the Fighting Illini of the University of Illinois or the Seminoles with ‘their’ Chief Osceola at Florida State University; on the other hand, perverse burlesque parodies of the physical or cultural features of Indians invigorate the basest visions of ignobility, such as Chief Wahoo of the Cleveland Indians or Willie Wampum at Marquette University (King, 2001).

Increasingly, Native American mascots have become subject to debate (King & Springwood, 2001b; Spindel, 2000). Activists protest at sporting events featuring teams with such team spirits, while students and citizens openly express concern about school symbols; in turn, political organizations, from the American Indian Movement to the National Congress of

American Indians, have denounced pseudo-Indian imagery in athletics. Together, these public challenges have fostered heated discussions and policy reassessments. Some schools like the University of Utah have altered their mascots, while many others, such as Marquette University and the University of Miami, have ended their use of pseudo-Indian imagery. Likewise, many school boards—from the Minnesota Board of Education to the Los Angeles School District—have passed resolutions requiring that schools change the Native American mascots. In addition, religious organizations and professional societies—including the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations, the National Education Association, the United Church of Christ, the Modern Language Association, the United Methodist Church, and the American Anthropological Association—have condemned the continued use of pseudo-Indian icons in education and athletics. And at the national level, the United States Commission on Civil Rights and the Trademark Trial and Appeal Board have taken stands against Native American mascots. Over the past quarter century, the total number of symbols has dropped noticeably. By one estimate nearly 1,500 Native American mascots have been changed, retired, or reworked since 1970 (Suzan Shown Harjo, personal communication, 2 December 2001).

IV

At first blush, the persistence of pseudo-Indian symbols and the spectacles associated with them would seem to have little to do with anthropology. After all, the AAA has passed a resolution denouncing such mascots and most would recognize readily the racist content and romantic intent of such emblems. In this section, I want to draw attention to a much more complex set of relations between these athletic icons and academic anthropology. In the process, I want to highlight the ways in which such mascots can be (and have been) read as bad anthropologies. Specifically, I draw attention five distinct relations: (1) early interchanges in which playing Indian shapes the emergence of anthropology and later disciplinary anthropology informs nascent traditions of playing Indian at halftime; (2) practical and philosophical contradictions between academic anthropology and more popular versions like Native American mascots; (3) their near parallel responses to crises of legitimation in the wake of decolonization; (4) the long silence of anthropologists about such symbols and spectacles; and (5) recent critiques of pseudo-Indian imagery in anthropological scholarship and institutional politics.

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Playing Indian was formative to America; it was equally important to the creation of anthropology (see Deloria 1998). In many respects, the two traditions share a common heritage.

In the 1840s, pioneering ethnographer and cultural theorist, Lewis Henry Morgan participated in the founding of the Grand Order of the Iroquois, inspired by and created after their image of the Iroquois Confederacy. Like many other fraternal organizations of the time, the new confederacy incorporated Indian regalia and rituals (or at least EuroAmerican conceptions of them), including an elaborate initiation and renaming ceremony. In contrast with similar groups, the Grand Order of the Iroquois, under Morgan’s influence, committed itself to accuracy, cultural preservation, and social advocacy. Over time, Morgan, largely through his association Ely Parker, increasingly embraced scholarship over spectacle, laying the foundation for more disciplined and legitimate anthropological inquiry.

If playing Indian proved fundamental to the history of anthropology in North America, anthropology was arguably more crucial to the later development of Native American mascots. Playing Indian at halftime emerged precisely as efforts to professionalize and popularize anthropology came to fruition. Throughout the 19th century, EuroAmericans played at being Indian on stage and in literature, while encouraging Native Americans to enact notions of Indianness at fairs, in museums, and for other public performances. These stagings peaked in their popularity and sophistication in the late 19th and early 20th century at World's Fairs and in wild west shows. The increased use of Native American culture to (re)create self and society corresponded with the final stages of the EuroAmerican subjugation of Native America in which programs and policies sought to assimilate Native Americans and to restrict indigenous practices and precepts. It was in this context of well worn and accepted patterns of playing Indian, imperial nostalgia, and the paternalistic momentum to control Indian expression that EuroAmericans began to fashion Native American mascots. Importantly, anthropological agents and agencies concerned as they were to advance the discipline and its findings in policy, pedagogy, and spectacle, actively contributed to the ideological context shaping the emergence of mascots. For instance, during its institutionalization, anthropology reinforced the notion that indigenous peoples were disappearing, imploring its practitioners to salvage as much as they could of these vanishing cultures; a similar longing and logic shaped the use of pseudo-Indian imagery in athletics. Moreover, EuroAmericans who invented local traditions of Indian play often poached from anthropological texts and recoded dominant anthropological discussions, conceptually the took ideas like culture (authentic, fixed, bounded, and timeless), while in some cases utilizing accounts of material culture to fashion costumes.

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In spite of noteworthy entanglements, sports mascots have little resemblance with academic anthropology. In part this might be summarized through a schematic contrast of the ways in which they do anthropology, that is, the distinct manner in which they engage the other, fashion difference, and make sense of self and society: whereas professional anthropology cultivates disciplined, intellectual accounts of others intent to edify; more popular versions foster desires and pleasures frequently through body centered performances and unruly poaching of difference. Thus, Native American mascots are bad anthropology. On the one hand, they are undisciplined, uncultivated, transgressive, superficial, insensitive, ethnocentric, imperial, nostalgic; and on the other hand, hinging on mimesis, they celebrate going native, holding out the promise that in playing Indian one might escape or transcend (post)modernity. And, in some cases, such as at the University of Illinois, playing Indian at half-time promoted a vernacular tradition of ethnography in which individuals traveled to Indian communities and collected knowledge and material culture.

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As odd as it may sound, the development of academic anthropology and mascots parallel one another in the wake of decolonization and desegregation. Crises of authority and representation have besieged both and have been vigorously and creatively met with efforts to salvage their unique approaches to cultural interpretation. As activists have increasingly questioned the authenticity, intentions, and effects of mascots, in many cases, administrators, alumni, and fans have sought to reauthorize them. Central to these efforts have been the presence and support of Native American communities. A number of universities have collaborated with American Indians. Marquette asked Indian students to design an authentic and honorable symbol, Florida State has long drawn upon the support of a portion of the Florida Seminole Tribe to validate its theatrics, and the University of Illinois has invoked both Lakota and Peoria individuals to legitimate Chief Illiniwek. The withering of support can in some cases lead to the retirement of a mascot as at the University of Miami after the Miami tribe withdrew its endorsement of the Redskins mascot. Schools with mascots, like anthropologists, have responded to the challenges of postcoloniality through collaboration. Significantly, whereas anthropologists have seized upon them as reflective occasions to interrogate disciplinary practices, supporters of mascots have endeavored to deflect and contain the dis-ease of postcoloniality.

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Despite striking parallels and troubling contradictions, professional anthropologists remained silent about mascots and their significance for much of the 20th century. One might attribute this to the discipline's historic interest in other cultures at the expense of mundane aspects of American life, or even argue that mascot were invisible to most anthropologists, because they were accepted components of the American cultural landscape. Something more is going on here as well, namely the historic distrust and devaluation of the popular within academic anthropology. The public has a long and storied fascination for anthropological things; yet with few exceptions, anthropologists have failed to take the popular seriously. After an initial flirtation with public pedagogy and popular reception, institutionalized versions of anthropology in the United States sought refuge in the academy, in the abstract, in education and erudition. To be sure, some, such as Margaret Mead, have enjoyed a large general audience, however, popularity, with its less rigorous standards, lack of peer review, and emphasis on entertainment, has often been read with suspicion, not taken as a sign of success or prestige with the discipline. More generally, when non-anthropologists do anthropology, especially when it resonates with a broader public, anthropologists are ambivalent at best, prone to challenge or efface playful and imaginative popular commentaries on anthropological things.

Moreover, the paradigms shaping the practice of anthropology, including the neglect of the center, the failure to study up, the refusal of popular culture, the rejection of frivolity, and importantly the centrality of the scientific model to the practice of anthropology. Objectivity, in particular, stressing detachment and neutrality on the one hand, while discouraging public advocacy on the other, seems to have militated against anthropological inquiry into mascots. One anthropologist in response to an invitation to present a scholarly paper on the unfolding controversy on her campus remarked to me: “Things are going very badly here right now and I am much too close to the situation to be objective. I don't even want to be objective (which may be an awful thing for an anthropologist to say)." (March 7, 2001). The importance of objectivity to cultural anthropology as both an ideological structure and methodological tool, I would argue, accounts at least in part moreover for the tendency of the field to marginalize sport studies. That is, the centrality of pleasure, emotion, proximity, and the self all run counter to what many anthropologists still believe makes for good anthropology. In this context, mascots and myriad other unsettling pleasures could not enter into the anthropological imaginary as significant social artifacts.

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Whereas many anthropologists did not see mascots as problematic for much of the past century, in the wake decolonization, the rise and fall of the new left, and the feminist and the civil rights movements, they have more actively engaged such symbols and spectacles. Consequently, a largely adversarial relationship prevails between anthropology and the continued tradition of playing Indian. Anthropologists began to insert themselves within local mascot controversies in the early 1970s. Patricia Albers, for instance, worked to educate and organize against the University of North Dakota Fighting Sioux while affiliated with the anthropology program there. A short time later, at Stanford University, the Department of Anthropology openly opposed the proposed reinstatement of the Stanford Indian in 1975, denouncing it as "misguided" and "unintentionally racist." More recently, anthropologists individually and collectively have worked to retire mascots at a number of colleges, invoking strategies and discourses echoing and expanding those utilized at Stanford. At the University of Illinois, to take but one example, the Department of Anthropology has demanded that the administration retire Chief Illiniwek not simply because it is a racist stereotype, which it is, but because of its negative impact on teaching, recruitment, and the practice of anthropology.

Against the background of local struggles, the AAA passed a resolution condemning mascots. At the same time, several anthropologists, notably Brenda Farnell, Charles Springwood, and Pauline Turner Strong, have undertaken critical inquiry into the history and significance of pseudo-Indian imagery in athletics, exploring, amongst other things, the persistence of stereotypes, the discourse of supporters, questions of hegemony, and cultural citizenship. Increasingly in the discipline, then, critical sensibilities link political intervention and scholarly inquiry, revealing fundamental features of academic anthropology's ongoing entanglements with the popular. Although many anthropologists continue to neglect or even ignore popular culture, when they do address it, they are likely, as this snapshot suggests, to question, critique, and try to correct it. Focusing on the accuracy, authenticity, and effects of vernacular and commodified stagings of cultural difference, they often seek to remedy popular culture.

V

In this paper, I have outlined the bundle of relations binding academic anthropology with the tradition of playing Indian at halftime. Thinking of anthropology in relation to sport mascots encourages the elaboration of a more dynamic conception of anthropology. Indeed, this account suggests that anthropology is much more than a scholarly domain, isolated from other forms of cultural production. It is better understood as a social field composed of professional, commercial, vernacular, popular, and other projects offering accounts of culture, difference, and humanness. Over the course of the past century, it has taken shape through an array of uneven and flexible dialogues, struggles, and borrowings between competing constituencies and overlapping audiences. In the end, I would argue, it is only by reconceiving of the anthropological, the popular, and their entanglements that we can properly situate the discipline, adequately interrogate its undisciplined, unruly, and bad relations, like Native American mascots.

Rather than thinking from the top down or from the inside out in a manner that privileges the institutionalized and professionalized practice of the discipline, then, future studies should emphasize the porous boundaries, multiple dialogues, and conflicting projects emergent as popular culture and anthropology collude, collide, and contest with one another. These crossings, conflicts, and conversations originate in the efforts, ideologies, and interventions of individuals and audiences within and beyond the academy. Thus, it is not simply a question of why anthropology becomes popular, of how or why anthropological endeavors appeal to popular audiences, but more how anthropology has circulated within, imprinted, encoded, and engaged the popular and in turn how popular forms have entered into, shaped, challenged, and appropriated the field. In essence, these complex and contradictory relationships constitute, what might be best-termed, popular anthropologies, which call for greater study and reflection by anthropologists.

This reframing has a number of consequences. First, it insists that popular anthropologies have always been about more than a mass audience. They demand creative, active, and engaged social agents--authors and audiences--who absorb, recycle, reject, and otherwise reinterpret the discipline. Second, to discern the significance of the articulations of anthropology and popular culture necessitates something more than close readings of the image of anthropology in the public imagination. Such catalogs are useful, but obscure the complex relationships between these social fields. Third, it encourages a severing of anthropology from the text. To be sure the practice, popularity and popularization of anthropology has turned on text, but this is not the limit of popular anthropology only its beginning. In fact, popular anthropologies are bodily and performative, visual and auditory, spiritual and personal, slippery and elusive forms found in music, sport, film, tourism, and sundry other conjunctions of pleasure, power, knowledge, identification, and differentiation.

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III

At first blush, Native American mascots, like sport more generally, would seem to have much to teach students of culture. Anthropologists, however, have not studied them. In fact, the initial concern with mascots originated among indigenous leaders and students in the late 1960s. For the much of the next quarter century, pseudo-Indian imagery remained a political issue, declining in importance and urgency for a time after its initial impact. Then, in the early 1990s, precisely as activism against mascots resurged, did scholars begin to turn attention to the uses and understandings of Indians in athletics. Initially, Kiowa-Comanche, Cornell Pewewardy (1991), then an educator in the Minneapolis area and now an associate professor of teaching and leadership at the University of Kansas, was a lone voice. Shortly thereafter, sport sociologists, Laurel Davis (1993) and Synthia Slowikowski (1993) joined American Indian Movement leader Dennis Banks (1993) in a special section of the Journal of Sport and Social Issues devoted to mascots. In subsequent years, scholars in sociology, linguistics, English, history, Native American studies, and law dominated the literature on Native American mascots, anthropologists, save for myself and sometime collaborator Charles F. Springwood, have written very little on the subject (Churchill, 1994; Connolly, 2000; Coombe, 1999; King, 1998, 2002, 2003; King & Springwood, 2000, 2001a, 2001b, 2002; Nuessel, 1994; Spindel, 2000; Springwood & King, 2000, 2002; Staurowsky, 1998; Vanderford, 1996).

Importantly, although anthropologists have largely neglected the social significance of mascots, they have recognized their political importance. In fact, when Native American students, political leaders, and activists began challenging mascots in the late 1960s and early 1970s, anthropologists supported their efforts on college campus across the country. Individual anthropologists at the University of North Dakota supported efforts to challenge the school’s Fighting Sioux team name, imagery, and traditions (Patricia Albers, personal communication). At roughly the same time, at Stanford University, the Department of Anthropology openly opposed the proposed reinstatement of the Stanford Indian in 1975, denouncing it as “misguided” and “unintentionally racist.” More recently, anthropologists individually and collectively have worked to retire mascots at a number of colleges, invoking strategies and discourses echoing and expanding those utilized at Stanford. At the University of Illinois, to take but one example, the Department of Anthropology has demanded that the administration retire Chief Illiniwek not simply because it is a racist stereotype, which it is, but because of its negative impact on teaching, recruitment, and the practice of anthropology. Against the background of local struggles, in 2000, the AAA passed a resolution condemning mascots.

Over the past quarter of a century, then, anthropologists have virtually ignored the scholarly significance of Native American mascots, while simultaneously recognizing the political valence of such imagery and rituals. This pattern poses an interesting paradox, best explained through an examination of the structures and sentiments in the field that mitigate against the study of sport in general and the presence of pseudo-Indian symbols in particular.

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I came to the study of Native American mascots, and by extension, sport, quite by accident. An admission that is hardly surprising given the foregoing discussion. I watched sports, but never would thought to study them; I consumed mascots, but never saw them for what they were.

Like most EuroAmericans, I had a rather schizophrenic relationship with Indians. Symbols of Indianness were all around me, mapped onto the landscape through place names and collective memory (as in Shawnee Mission, Kansas, where I spent a greater portion of my youth), encoded in popular culture (reruns of westerns on television and commodity forms, the Winnebago or Jeep Cherokee) and childhood games (both the conventional cowboys and Indians game and the action figures with which my friends and I played), and structured the spaces and rituals of socialization (from the annual nationalization and narration of Columbus Day and Thanksgiving in elementary school to my participation in the YMCA's program for father-son known as Y-Indian Guides, in which indigenous motifs inform both the crafts and activities and the governance, later Scouting with its secret Order of the Arrow, and quite briefly the Free Leonard Peltier movement). There were, however, no Indians. In this context, I, like my peers, saw nothing wrong with the use of Indian imagery in athletics. It was natural. I cannot remember ever pausing to question the symbols or spectacles associated with either a rival high school whose teams were dubbed the Indians or the local professional football team, the Kansas City Chiefs. In fact, Native American mascots became visible to me in a terribly mundane moment. A former roommate, wanting to mark my acceptance to the graduate program in anthropology at the University of Illinois (home unbeknownst to me of the Fighting Illini), gave me a piece of sport memorabilia from his collection: a doormat, dominated by an off-center rendering of a cartoon Indian; in orange and blue (the school's colors) with braids, a single feather, and a bulbous nose, that proclaimed enthusiastically, “Illinois, where the fun is!” Grotesque burlesque to be sure, made all the worse by my desire not offend -- in retrospect, what I think of as a defense of white privilege in my silent acceptance of his gift.

I began to recognize Native American mascots as something other -- unnatural, hurtful, powerful, meaningful, and racist -- as I came of age as an anthropologist at a time when the discipline struggled with the lingering legacies of colonialism, continental philosophy, textuality, reflexivity, the postmodern turn, cultural studies, and questions of power. Although by no means conventional, my take on these issues had pushed me to commit myself to doing anthropology at home, to studying up, and more to formulating anthropology as cultural critique (Marcus and Fischer, 1986). My realization that Native American mascots were problematic, my desire to scrutinize mundane features of American culture and my insistence that anthropology address political and ethical as well social and intellectual questions came together at the University of Illinois. The school not only had a rich tradition of playing Indian at half-time in the figure of Chief Illiniwek and more generally in its teams, the Fighting Illini, but also shortly after my arrival a vocal opposition to this tradition. In this context, I seized upon mascots and other stagings of and struggles over Indianness (see King 1998), as a means to find a way for it to make a difference.

For the better part of a decade, I have been striving to recapture anthropology through the study of Native American mascots (see Fox 1991). And, studying sport has afforded me the opportunity to craft an engaged anthropology. To me, this has meant producing a situated, responsive, and anti-racist/anti-colonial anthropology, fostering dynamic exchanges between theory and practice as well as scholarship and pedagogy. It has produced a cross-disciplinary space, bringing other perspectives into conversation with anthropology; at the same time, it has forced me to take indigenous peoples seriously (see King and Springwood, 2001b). Pseudo-

Indian imagery in/and sport has opened public forums typically of little interest to anthropologists. On the one hand, it has allowed a presence for anthropology on radio programs, in editorials, and as responses to misleading journalism (Springwood and King, 2002; King et al, 2002). On the other hand, it promotes political activism. For instance, my work on mascots allowed me to lobby the Iowa Civil Rights Commission to pass a resolution against the use of Indian imagery in educational institutions. Finally, sport, I have found, furthers comparative inquiry into the key concerns of American culture, especially racial stratification and ideologies (see King and Springwood, 2001a). In essence, I am suggesting that Native American mascots, like sport more broadly, fosters critical anthropologies, attentive to race, culture, and power, encouraging collaborative reframings of the taken for granted beliefs an behaviors.