Resolution to Eliminate the Mascot and Form a Task Force to Investigate the Aztec Identity

Author: Diversity, Equity, and Outreach Committee

WHEREAS, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 states that: “No person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance.” and;

WHEREAS, the State of California’s Education Code Title 1, Division 1, Part 1, Chapter 2, Article 3 [220] states: “No person shall be subjected to discrimination on the basis of disability, gender, gender identity, gender expression, nationality, race or ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, or any other characteristic that is contained in the definition of hate crimes set forth in Section 422.55 of the Penal Code in any program or activity conducted by an educational institution that receives, or benefits from, state financial assistance or enrolls pupils who receive state student financial aid.” and;

WHEREAS, the State of California’s Education Code Title 1, Division 1, Part 1, Chapter 2, Article 3.5 [221.2] states: “(a) The use of racially derogatory or discriminatory school or athletic team names, mascots, or nicknames in California public schools is antithetical to the California school mission of providing an equal education to all; (b) Certain athletic team names, mascots, and nicknames that have been used and remain in use by other teams, including school teams, in other parts of the nation are discriminatory in singling out the Native American community for the derision to which mascots or nicknames are often subjected; (c) Many individuals and organizations interested and experienced in human relations, including the United States Commission on Civil Rights, have concluded that the use of Native American images and names in school sports is a barrier to equality and understanding, and that all residents of the United States would benefit from the discontinuance of their use; (d) No individual or school has a cognizable interest in retaining a racially derogatory or discriminatory school or athletic team name, mascot, or nickname.” and;

WHEREAS, Executive Order 1097, from the Office of the chancellor of the California State university system states: “The California State University (CSU) is committed to maintaining an inclusive community that values diversity and fosters tolerance and mutual respect, and further goes on to state that “The CSU strives to be free of all forms of Discrimination, including Harassment, because of a Protected Status. It is CSU policy that no Student shall be excluded from participation in, or be denied the benefits of, any CSU program or activity because of any Protected Status,” with examples of Protected Status being Age, Disability, Gender, Genetic Information, Gender Identity or Expression, Nationality, Marital Status, Race or Ethnicity, Religion, Sexual Orientation, and Veteran or Military Status. and;

WHEREAS, the United States Commission on Civil Rights, by Resolution dated April 13, 2001, called for an end to the use of American Indian images and team names by schools: “Schools should not use their influence to perpetuate misrepresentations of any culture of people. Stereotypes of American Indians teach all students that the stereotyping of minority groups is acceptable, a dangerous lesson in such a diverse society”; and
WHEREAS, in 2005, the American Psychological Association called for “the immediate retirement of all American Indian mascots, symbols, images and personalities by schools, colleges, universities, athletic teams and organizations,” stating that their position is based on “a growing body of social science literature that shows the harmful effects of racial stereotyping and inaccurate racial portrayals, including the particularly harmful effects of American Indian sports mascots on the social identity development and self-esteem of American Indian young people.” and;

WHEREAS, Native symbols and mascots have been used, but then later acknowledged as inappropriate and retired by institutions of higher learning including the following: Dartmouth College, Eastern Michigan University, Marquette University, Seattle University, Southern Oregon University, Stanford University, Syracuse University, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, University of Oklahoma; Arkansas State University, and the University of North Dakota; and;

WHEREAS, more than 100 organizations across the nation have endorsed the discontinuation of Native American mascots, including: National Congress of American Indians, the National Indian Education Association, the Society of Indian Psychologists, the Anti-Defamation League, Commission on Human Rights, United States Civil Rights Commission, Asian Americans Advancing Justice, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), American Jewish Committee, Museum of Tolerance, National Education Association (NEA), California Teachers Association (CTA), University of California Student Association (UCSA), and;

WHEREAS, in 2005, the NCAA adopted a policy to prohibit NCAA colleges and universities from displaying hostile and abusive racial/ethnic/national origin mascots, nicknames or imagery at any of the 88 NCAA championships.

WHEREAS, the research described in a San Diego State University graduate student’s thesis, entitled, Fail Montezuma!: The Last Vestiges of an Obscured Yet Stubbornly Persistent Culture of Racism at San Diego State University, provides information on the formation of SDSU’s present-day institutional identity.¹ and;

WHEREAS, San Diego State University’s Policy file, section 4.4 states: “The university shall cultivate a campus climate that promotes human dignity, civility, and mutual appreciation for the uniqueness of each member of our community. Because the university’s educational goals are founded on the values of intellectual honesty, appreciation for diversity, and mutual respect, it is critical that our academic and co-curricular programs, scholarships, courses, workshops, lectures, and other aspects of campus life reflect diverse perspectives. Freedom from discrimination, harassment, and violence against persons or property is a basic right and is requisite for learning. Freedom of speech shall be protected. By the same token, the campus community shall denounce and confront acts of intolerance, abusive behaviors, and the beliefs and past events that have separated us as a people.” and;

¹ For more information, please see Ozzie Monge’s master’s thesis.
WHEREAS, San Diego State University’s Diversity Pledge states, calls on students, faculty and staff to pledge “To embrace the diversity of all individuals respecting such attributes as their sex, gender, race, ethnicity, age, class, citizenship, marital status, sexual orientation, nationality, socioeconomic status, religion, physical ability, mental ability and expression; To strive toward social justice for all people in order to create and sustain a safer, more productive, and inclusive campus environment; To refrain from using derogatory terms or statements that are harmful and disrespectful to others; To not contribute to stereotypes or make generalizations about individuals but rather to use my own experiences and interactions to better understand and embrace all people; To educate myself about cultures other than my own; To engage in and contribute to the diverse world around me; To actively honor this pledge within my everyday life.” and;

LET IT BE RESOLVED, that San Diego State University retire the current human representation of an Aztec as the school mascot as well as retire usage of spears or weapons that connote barbaric representations of the Aztec culture.

LET IT BE RESOLVED, that San Diego State University form a task force to investigate and make recommendations regarding the appropriateness of the continued usage of the Aztec moniker including symbols, signage, logos, branding, buildings, statues (e.g., Monty), awards (e.g., Zuma) and other references to the possible misappropriation of Aztec identity. This task force shall also make recommendations regarding an education component in relation to the Aztec identity.