

Converging Interests, Unequal Benefits? Tribal Critical Race Theory and Miami University's Myaamia Heritage Logo

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Miami University has used Native American imagery to promote itself since its founding. In 1929, Miami teams began using the racist term Redsk*ns. In 1996–1997, they changed the name to RedHawks. Despite the strengthening relationship between the university and the tribe, the racist mascot imagery remained visible in the university community. In 2017–2018, the university returned to Native American imagery by unveiling a new “Heritage Logo” to represent a commitment to restoring the Myaamia language and culture. In this paper, the authors used tribal critical race theory to analyze how the Heritage Logo represents a point of interest convergence, where symbols of the tribe signal acceptance and recognition of the Myaamia people, while institutional racism and the possessive investment of whiteness are left ignored and unaddressed.

In a move similar to several other institutions, schools, organizations, and professional sports franchises, Miami University changed the nickname of its athletic teams from the racist moniker Redsk*ns to RedHawks in the 1996–1997 academic year.¹ Native American imagery and mascotry had been an object of protest and activism since the late 1960s. In 1972, Miami University and the Native American tribe from whom it took its name (and location), the Miami Tribe, examined the nickname as a result of their newly formalized relationship. The tribe asked the university to remove the caricatures, but ultimately, supported the name and reaffirmed that support in 1988 (Toglia & Harris, 2014). The topic arose again in the early 1990s, due to student activists and concerns from administrators. After a series of public forums, the name seemed to have survived again, but the Miami Tribe “suddenly withdrew its support” for the nickname in the summer of 1996 (Toglia & Harris, 2014, p. 299). By the next spring, the athletic teams had changed to RedHawks.

Despite this change, we, as Miami University faculty, noticed that the imagery and former name were not completely quashed from campus as late as 2016; they were on caps and t-shirts worn by our students, still plastered over the main entrance to the football stadium, painted in the basketball practice gym, and hanging on banners in the natatorium and athletic department offices (Figures 1 and 2). The vestiges of the former name and imagery led us to consider why these racist depictions were still visible on campus more than 20 years after its supposed demise. Given that the university was actively working to reshape and improve its relationship with the Miami Tribe at this time through initiatives that support the revitalization of the Myaamia language and provide financial assistance for tribal students to attend the university, its decision to not remove these images struck us as consequential.

As we contemplated the significance of the university's maintenance of the former racist imagery, we noticed a slow emergence of another kind of Native American imagery, what the university

termed the “Myaamia Heritage Logo.” This logo, based on designs from traditional Myaamia ribbon work, started to appear in an increasingly wide array of spaces beginning in 2017, including in official e-mail signature lines, on shirts and caps in the campus bookstore, as part of signage on the varsity soccer field, in alumni and fundraising correspondence, and on gear issued to student-athletes. This rollout of the Myaamia Heritage Logo culminated in November 2019 with the “Celebrating Miami: Tribe and University Week,” where multiple athletic teams wore the logo on special jerseys to coincide with Chief Douglas Lankford's visit to campus to promote the growing relationship between the university and the Miami Tribe.²

This reemergence of Native American imagery is the first time that we could find where a university that dropped the Native American nickname and associated imagery returned to it in a different form. In the late 1920s, the Redsk*ns nickname was adopted and maintained throughout the 20th century, purportedly as an honorific to the Miami Tribe. In the 1990s, it was dropped due to its racism. Now, Native American imagery, which was developed in concert with the Myaamia people, has returned as a way to honor these people. We wondered, how do the interests of the university and the Myaamia people converge in these new visual representations, and how are they related to the holdovers of the still visible Redsk*ns mascot and imagery?

Several scholars have explored the issue of Native American imagery in sport, but none have explored or addressed a reinvocation of that imagery. As such, we have situated this article within the work of broader sport studies scholarship on this subject. Then, we considered how the reemergence of Native American imagery at Miami University provides a space for investigating structures of racism and racial capitalism. Next, we explored how the new Myaamia Heritage Logo, which was produced in conjunction with the Miami Tribe, suggests a possible flattening of power relations between the university and the tribe. It does, as activists have asked, allow Indigenous peoples to have a say in how they are represented and allows them to tell parts of their own stories. At the same time, we cannot ignore how it “rhymes” with previous notions of “honoring” Indigenous peoples within racial systems of privilege and oppression. We use the idea of interest convergence from tribal critical race theory (TribalCrit), a framework underutilized in sport

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Figure 1 — Banners in the athletic department, 2017.



Figure 2 — Practice gym, 2017.

studies, to consider that the return to Native American imagery through the development of the Myaamia Heritage Logo works to benefit and (re)construct white systems of power.

Tribal Critical Race Theory

TribalCrit emerged out of critical race theory (CRT), a framework that places race and racism at the center of analysis, challenges colorblind approaches, commits to social justice, uses counter-storytelling methodologies to centralize marginalized voices, and is transdisciplinary in nature (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001). As Brayboy (2005) argued in his call for TribalCrit, CRT was developed to address the civil rights issues of Black people and thus is “oriented toward an articulation of race issues along a ‘black/white’ binary” (p. 429) in which other ethnic and racial groups are not included. In response, variations of CRT arose to meet the needs of specific populations, such as Asian critical race theory and Latino critical race theory.

Although CRT and its outgrowths focus on the premise that racism is endemic in society, Brayboy (2005) posited that TribalCrit is unique in its basic tenet that colonization, described as the continuing quotidian dominance of European American epistemology and power structures, is the central force in American society. Additionally, TribalCrit recognizes that policies of the United States toward Native American have historically devalued the indigenous identity, culture, and ways of knowing and are “rooted in imperialism, White supremacy, and a desire for material gain”

(Brayboy, 2005, p. 431). As both Brayboy (2005) and Castagno and Lee (2007) asserted, the unique histories of tribal nations and their political relationships with state and federal governments must be central components to analyses of educational practices and policies that affect both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students, as the impacts of such policies are widespread in creating environments in which racism can be perpetuated and condoned. These practices, as we will suggest later in this paper, include the use of Native American mascots and imagery and, as such, are rich and relevant sites for analysis through a TribalCrit lens.

Driven largely by the work of Hylton (2005, 2008, 2010), CRT has been used by other scholars in the British sporting context to examine the experiences of British Asian male footballers and cricketers (Burdsey, 2006, 2011), Black male and female coaches (Rankin-Wright, Hylton, & Norman, 2019), and Black and minority ethnic amateur football players (Bradbury, 2010). CRT is also being increasingly used in American scholarship as a theoretical viewpoint to explore numerous issues related to race and sport, including race-conscious leadership in college sport (Cooper, Nwadike, & Macaulay, 2017), hiring practices for head football coaches in the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) (Singer, Harrison, & Bukstein, 2010), paying college student-athletes (Brown & Williams, 2019), and the experiences of, and challenges facing, Black athletes and sport administrators (Hawkins, Carter-Francique, & Cooper, 2017). Despite the field’s embrace of CRT, there is very little academic work within sport studies that uses a TribalCrit framework.

Like CRT but more broadly, TribalCrit is an efficacious theoretical framework for analyzing structural racism and racism (Bergerson, 2003; Brayboy, 2005; Hylton, 2008). TribalCrit has been widely applied in education studies to examine multicultural education (Writer, 2008), teacher preparation programs (Castagno, 2012), student activism (Desai & Abeita, 2017), and representation in history textbooks (Padgett, 2015), among other topics. Apart from Castagno and Lee’s (2007) article about ethnic fraud and Native American mascots in higher education, scholars have not readily drawn on TribalCrit to examine Native imagery in sport, the role of sport in assimilationist policies, sport’s place in the ongoing process of colonization, or the experiences of indigenous athletes.

One of the key principles of both CRT and TribalCrit is the idea of interest convergence. First espoused by Bell (1980), the interest convergence principle posits that the interests of Blacks in securing racial equality will only be accommodated when they align with the interests, needs, and expectations of whites. Racial progress is thus a process that only occurs when the interests of Blacks and whites converge. Should white interests or benefits be threatened by those of Blacks, or impeded in some way, then progressive measures are halted. Castagno and Lee (2007) took this principle and situated it within TribalCrit to go beyond the Black–white racial dichotomy and extend the concept to indigenous peoples similarly constrained by white power structures. In their analysis of the university policies, specifically the policy that discouraged, but—due to a fear of declining alumni donations and lost revenue—did not prohibit, the presence of Native American mascots on campus in a sporting context, they concluded that the university supported the interests of the indigenous community only to the point that it also benefitted their own (Castagno & Lee, 2007). We contend that this type of conceptual framing is helpful in understanding the operation of racial power in Miami University’s development of the Myaamia Heritage Logo.

Another concept applicable to our analysis is racial capitalism, defined by Leong (2013) as “the process of deriving social and

economic value from the racial identity of another person” (p. 2152) reliant upon the commodification of racial identity to increase profits and boost brand value. Colonization is intimately tied to practices of capitalism and is often operationalized via processes of racial formation and/or racism (Hirschman & Garbes, 2019; Ray, 2019; Stangl, 2008; Staurowsky, 2000). In the United States, as Leong suggested, diversity is desirable and exploited for its market value, making non-whiteness a prized commodity. As a systemic phenomenon, racial capitalism can operate both at the level of the individual and the predominantly white institution (PWI; Bourke, 2016), as each can derive social and economic gain from associating with people or groups with non-white racial identities. As a PWI, Miami University has gained economic and brand value through its relationship with the tribe and the adoption of the new Myaamia Heritage Logo.

We must acknowledge that we are two white scholars using a theoretical framework initially created to “critique the legal system, based on the experiences of people of color” (Bergerson, 2003, p. 52). As such, we want to be careful in articulating that we are not speaking for the Myaamia people, nor are we claiming to understand their experiences. We also do not want to perpetuate the privileging processes of whiteness by colonizing TribalCrit theory for our own gain (Bergerson, 2003), but we cannot help but see Miami University’s reinvocation of Native American imagery as a racial decision made in and by a PWI. Rather, we hope to demonstrate how TribalCrit can be used to analyze relationships between institutions of higher education and uses of Native American imagery beyond mascotry by focusing our analysis on the unique relationships and history between the Myaamia people and Miami University.

Methodological Approach

Our inquiry began by first noticing the aforementioned legacies of the former nickname around campus. Our observations led to informal conversations about the holdover of the former imagery, which then led to codeveloping classroom activities and discussions for our students, most of whom want to work in the sport industry. As we incorporated the history of the mascot change into our course units on race and racism, our classroom conversations included asking students to voluntarily share their experiences with the mascots and their knowledge about the Myaamia Heritage Logo.

These conversations and classroom discussions continued for 3 years, during which time, we also amassed a collection of photos of the existing Redsk*ns imagery on campus and around town, ranging from banners in the athletics department to stickers on the windows of cars parked at the local grocery store. For spaces we could not access, such as the basketball practice gym or the locker room in the ice arena, open only to students and/or athletes, students volunteered to take photos for us. Upon the official release of the Myaamia Heritage Logo, we similarly tracked and collated its use on apparel, university publications, media releases, athletic uniforms, and campus spaces. We took photos of the logo in public spaces on campus, and no student shared any knowledge of the Heritage Logo being used in nonpublic, student-only spaces.

Our analysis is theoretically driven and relies on TribalCrit, primarily, its concept of interest convergence, and the broader process of racial capitalism, to analyze cultural texts of Native American imagery, including available photos of the remnants of the former mascot, the Myaamia Heritage Logo itself and the products featuring it, and the discussions surrounding its release.

To help illustrate these cultural texts, we have shared some representative images that provide visual aid in capturing how the former mascot and imagery and the new logo appear in campus spaces, on merchandise, and in the media. In adopting a methodological approach informed by cultural studies, we contextualized these texts within the wider histories of the university, the tribe, and the relationship between them, as well as the discourses that gave rise to the adoption and use of Native American imagery in college sport. As such, the emergence of the Myaamia Heritage Logo was the “event” that prompted our critical inquiry, and these texts informed the process of connecting and articulating this event to the various social forces out of which it arose and to which it also contributes (Andrews, 2008). In recognizing the existence of inequalities and injustices in this context, our analysis foregrounds the systems of power operating behind these images and representations and is “ideologically oriented” in calling for active change (Sparkes & Smith, 2014, p. 49). Our TribalCrit-informed analysis of these cultural texts, in this particular context, leads to understandings of how meanings of race and structures of power are reproduced and coarticulated through Miami University’s continued usage of Native American imagery nearly two decades after dropping its racist moniker.

Native American Imagery and Branding in College Sports

The long history of the appropriation of Native American imagery, mascots, and nicknames in American sport has been studied by several scholars of sport, especially in regard to their contested meanings, their historical roots, and/or calls for them to be eliminated (Davis-Delano, 2007; Guiliano, 2015; King, 2016; King & Springwood, 2000; King, Staurowsky, Baca, Davis, & Pewewardy, 2002; Robidoux, 2006; Stangl, 2008; Staurowsky, 1998, 2000, 2007; Strong, 2004; Toglia & Harris, 2014). In general, the primary argument scholars have made about the use of Native American imagery and/or mascots is that they are dehumanizing stereotypes, they conflate several different Native American tribes and ethnic groups into one “race,” and they do all of this without the consent or input of Indigenous peoples and for the benefit of white power structures. Proponents of the use of the imagery and/or mascots argue that they are an important aspect of representation to honor Native Americans, an underrepresented group in American popular culture.

Emerging and proliferating during the early decades of the 20th century, the use and appropriation of Native American imagery by public institutions of higher learning (many of which were racially and even gender segregated at the time) were tied to processes of colonialization, white settler nationalism, and capitalism within a broader context of a crisis in white masculinity (Guiliano, 2015; King, 2016; King & Springwood, 2000; King et al., 2002; Stangl, 2008). As such, Miami University’s adoption of the racist nickname Redsk*ns in the late 1920s and the debates around the appropriateness of its usage in the 1970s and 1990s, as well as the change of its team’s name to RedHawks, are aligned with the broader patterns of the imagery and mascot usage and debates.

Whereas Native American imagery has a long history in the construction of American national identity (Deloria, 1998), the widespread utilization of Native American imagery and/or mascots occurred concurrently with the rise of consumer capitalism, mass production, and commodification in the early 20th century, and

commercial interests were a driving force in their creation (Guiliano, 2015; King, 2016; Staurowsky, 1998). Native Americans were used as mascots for consumer goods like butter, home goods, and popular literature and films (Stangl, 2008; Staurowsky, 1998). In many cases, the decisions by white-controlled sports franchises and athletic programs to adopt Native American nicknames, imagery, and mascotry were purportedly about honoring them, but were/are rooted in the commodification of Native American signifiers and symbols “that extended the use of colonial tropes through faux Indian bodies, images, and music to maintain and grow [an] audience” (Guiliano, 2015, p. 5).

For example, King (2016) found that the Washington National Football League (NFL) team—before their relocation to the nation’s capital from Boston—made a branding decision to change its name from Braves to Redsk*ns in 1933 to differentiate themselves from the Boston Braves baseball team, with whom they shared a stadium. Ever since, Native American imagery has served as “raw material for the team and its traditions, anchoring the brand” which includes chants, costumes, and songs laden with racial signifiers such as headdresses, teepees, and drums (King, 2016, p. 31). Additionally, Guiliano (2015) analyzed the usage of mascotry in the spectacle that was a college football game day in the early 20th century. In general, big-time college football halftime shows, which often included white college men dressing in “Indian costumes” and dancing to drums, created a spectacle for both a paying crowd and an expanding alumni-donor base that generated communal symbols and rituals (stereotypical racial signifiers such as campfires, chants, songs, deerskins, and headdresses) for these crowds, including wealthy donating alumni, to coalesce around. They also constructed an image of Native Americanness contained and controlled by modern white, middle-class, American masculinity.

As such, “Native American mascots have very little to do with Native Americans” and are about constructing meanings of whiteness for the benefit of white power structures (King, 2016, p. 31). The imagery and/or mascots emerged in white-male-dominated spaces (higher education and sport) during a “concomitant crisis in White masculinity” (Toglia & Harris, 2014, p. 296). Modern sport at the turn of the 20th century was a male-dominated space, created, in part, as a way for young white men to learn and perform appropriate masculinity in an America where avenues for learning and performing such versions of masculinity, such as the frontier or war, seemed to be narrowing and sport replaced the frontier as a site for performing masculinity (Dyreson, 1998; Toglia & Harris, 2014). Invoking Native American through images and mascotry nostalgically recalled a past where white men successfully tamed the frontier. Centering “fighting” or “war-like” stereotypes erased the genocidal practices of white colonialization and, instead, implicitly honored the white (men) settlers/colonizers because they were brave and good enough to defeat these peoples (Guiliano, 2015; King, 2016; King & Springwood, 2000; Shriver, 1998). Furthermore, these mascots and imagery “work in inverted ways to impute ‘otherness’, legitimating civilization by sublimating savagery, and advocating progress by denigrating barbarity and primitiveness” (Stangl, 2008, p. 203). In this way, the mascots and imagery recenter whiteness under the guise of honoring non-white people and their ways of living.

In one of the few histories of Miami University, former president and history professor Phillip Shriver linked the school’s foundation to the Northwest Ordinance of 1787, which established the territory north and west of the Ohio River. In 1788, a group of prominent citizens from New Jersey were “given a patent from Congress for the settlement of a million acres in southwestern

Ohio, between the two rivers named for the Miami Indian tribe, the Great Miami and the Little Miami” (Shriver, 1998, p. 27), known as the Miami Purchase. The Miami name was not the name the people gave themselves; they called themselves the Tawee (Shriver, 1998).

With that in mind, a group called the Miami Confederacy, led by the Miami Tribe, were resistant to the settlers/colonizers, and a “just and lawful war” was declared by President George Washington (Shriver, 1998, p. 29). After a few years of war, the Confederacy was defeated at Fallen Timbers in the northwestern part of the state. The Treaty of Greenville of 1795 forced the Confederacy to surrender title to two thirds of what is now Ohio, including the location of present-day Miami University. As Shriver puts it, the

Miamis took the lead in resisting white settlement of their lands, and their resistance ultimately determined that a university in Oxford, Ohio, would bear their name, as a mark of admiration for the people who had called this home, who loved it as those who live there today love it, still bearing the name Miami. (p. 33)

Embedded in this history of the university, “Indians are at once present in the past, symbolically displayed” but contained and legally removed due to Eurocentric ideals of property rights and a history framed by whiteness (Staurowsky, 2000, p. 310). So, in its name (an anglicized version of the name the people were called or called themselves), the name of the town, Oxford, in which it is located (a reference back to the prestigious and influential university that helped build the British Empire) and in the ways in which it obtained its land (war and property rights treaties), Miami University is a physical incarnation of the white power structure and the possessive investment of whiteness linked to the violent displacement and genocidal practices of early colonization practices in the United States (see Feagin, 2010; Lipsitz, 1998; Staurowsky, 2000).

Native American imagery has been a part of Miami University implicitly and explicitly since its founding. Such imagery became an official part of its athletic program in the late 1920s, when the university was competing with a burgeoning University of Cincinnati and an older cross-state rival, Ohio University, on the sporting fields and for tuition-paying students. Miami University groups and publications had long used Native American imagery and the color red informally when covering its sports teams and athletes, but, based on school myth, the nickname Redsk*ns was officially adopted in 1929 after a Miami football player suggested it to University President Alfred Upham in a postgame celebration, referring to it being “Indian country and . . . part of the folklore” (Guiliano, 2015, p. 59). The next year, the name gained prominence in the yearbook and alumni newsletter and became a way for the university to build an identity and to differentiate itself from its rivals. The nicknaming may have been more intentional than this myth allows. In fact, it may have been a marketing decision from the start because

the athletic team nickname was chosen to set apart Miami University from other team nicknames in the region . . . at a time when mass production and mass commodification created the need for identifying marks including the marketing of products in advertising and also in sport. (Toglia & Harris, 2014, p. 314)

The timing of Miami’s acquisition of the Redsk*ns nickname (1928/1929) and the changing of it (1996/1997) is in line with

broader historical moments of Native American imagery usage. In other words, Miami University is not unique in either its acquisition of the nickname or in its relinquishing of it. Miami, however, is unlike other schools in that it reclaimed the use of Native American imagery in its development of the Myaamia Heritage Logo.

The Myaamia Heritage Logo and Collection

Two decades after dropping the Redsk*ns nickname, with its contested legacy still present on campus, the university returned to its connections with the Miami Tribe for branding purposes when it launched the Myaamia Heritage Logo and Collection. In 2017, Miami University President Gregory Crawford and Miami Tribe Chief Douglas Lankford signed a memorandum of agreement to launch the logo and an associated line of clothing and accessories. The new logo is meant to represent the relationship between the tribe and the university and evoke a sense of *neepwaantiinki*, or learning from each other (Figure 3). The pattern draws on traditional Myaamia ribbon work and features two elongated geometric diamonds, the left black one representing the tribe and the right red one the university. They are linked by a central diamond, symbolizing “the space where these two with a shared vision” (Weingartner, 2017, para. 6), encapsulating a red dot that suggests fire, warmth, and a shared responsibility to nurture the flames of the relationship. The black diamond stands for “depth of time, earned respect, accumulated cultural wisdom” that recognizes the tribe’s historical ties to its homeland, whereas the red diamond denotes responsibility, sacrifice, and the University’s pledge to share knowledge (Weingartner, 2017, para. 8).

A secondary logo, the Myaamia Heritage Turtle, was released alongside the main logo (Figure 4). The turtle has cultural significance to the Miami Tribe as an important symbol that appears on the tribal seal. It also has meaning to Miami University students who engage in the tradition of rubbing the heads of copper turtle figurines on the base of a sundial statue for good luck before exams (Miami University, n.d.-c). Taken together, the two new logos are meant to unite the tribe and the university through a mutual partnership grounded in respect, learning, and reciprocity. They are also symbols around which to build and reproduce community, similar to how universities used halftime show spectacles and imagery in the early 20th century (Guiliano, 2015).



Figure 3 — Myaamia Heritage Logo.

To cement these new logos into its existing branding strategies, the university released the Myaamia Heritage Collection, a line of products created to celebrate the “unique partnership” between the tribe and the university and “bolster awareness of its history” (Miami University, n.d.-b, para. 1). Offered in the campus bookstore and local retail shops, and through online outlets, the collection includes a variety of caps, t-shirts, hoodies, blankets, key rings, pennants, and decals featuring both the primary ribbon work logo and the turtle logo. A company called Victory Tailgate even sells a cornhole game set painted with the heritage ribbon work, retailing for \$229 (Victory Tailgate, n.d.). According to university media, royalties from the sale of these items go to the Myaamia Heritage Award Program, a structured course of financial support offered to students who are citizens of the Miami Tribe of Oklahoma or members of the Miami Nation of Indians of the State of Indiana. Recipients of this award, which covers tuition costs for up to eight semesters, must meet university admissions criteria, maintain the minimum credit enrollment and grade point standards, and take a series of “Heritage Classes” designed to expand their knowledge of tribal history, language, and culture (Miami University, n.d.-a, para. 1). As of fall 2019, there are 32 Myaamia students pursuing degrees on campus (Crawford, 2019).

The Heritage Logo and Intercollegiate Athletics

Miami University’s athletic department has a contract with Adidas, making the student-athletes embodied advertisements for the company, as well as for the university itself (King, 2012). In addition to rolling out the Myaamia Heritage Logo via product branding in official literature and in campus stores, the university also used it within the athletics department and on the bodies of the student-athletes. In fall 2018, we noticed student-athletes wearing t-shirts featuring the Myaamia Heritage Logo. When we inquired about these shirts, the students told us that they had been issued to all athletic teams and staff with a brief explanation of what the images meant.³

Designed by the Miami Tribe’s cultural resources officer Julie Olds, the shirts marked the beginning of a sustained effort to incorporate the new imagery into the sporting spaces of the university (Arwine, 2019). In fall 2018, Miami Athletics officially announced that the Myaamia Heritage Logo had been added to the



Figure 4 — Myaamia Heritage Turtle.

department's communication efforts by placing the logo on season tickets, schedule cards, video boards, posters, programs, and other graphics (Miami University, 2018). In January 2019, Olds designed another shirt, given to members of the men's varsity hockey team, that included the logo and the Myaamia phrase *wiicisaa-tioni*, meaning "The Brotherhood," a phrase widely used to identify the hockey team (Arwine, 2019). For the team's first home series of 2019, the athletics department worked with the Myaamia Center and the tribe to celebrate the partnership symbolized by the logo. Spectators at the two games had the chance to win one of Olds' t-shirts made for the hockey team, purchase Myaamia "spiritwear" from the Heritage Collection, play traditional Myaamia games, and watch big-screen videos showcasing the tribal students currently attending the university. More than 100 custom pucks decorated with the Myaamia Heritage Logo were manufactured for the series, some of which were used during game play, whereas others were given as gifts to members of the tribe attending the games (Arwine, 2019).

Concerted plans to fold athletics into the relationship between the tribe and the university culminated in the inaugural Celebrating Miami: Tribe and University week held in November 2019. Throughout the week, student-athletes from the football, men's basketball, volleyball, and men's hockey teams "paid tribute" to that relationship by wearing uniforms adorned with the Myaamia Heritage Logo (Crawford, 2019, para. 2). The hockey team once again used the special Myaamia Heritage Logo pucks, and the logo was affixed on the side of the seats in the ice arena (Figure 5). Perhaps the most visible embodiment of the logos as branding for the university came via the football team, which received nationwide media coverage on the sports multimedia network ESPN for its Myaamia Heritage Logo helmet decals (Figure 6). The Myaamia logos on the athletes' bodies acted akin to the corporate logos on the uniforms, which advertise to important market segments like "students, to live audiences at games, and, crucially, to television audiences" (King, 2012, p. 80), but also served to differentiate the university from other schools, much like the initial mascot appropriation (Toglia & Harris, 2014). In an interview about this celebratory week, Chief Langford remarked that "it's through athletics as a way to get [the relationship between the tribe and the university] out there to a national audience so they might learn



Figure 5 — Seats in Goggin Ice Arena, 2019.

about this relationship and how it benefits both the Tribe and the University" (Miami Athletics, 2019).

About this same time, we realized that much of the existing Redsk*ns iconography on campus was being replaced with either a large, red block "M" or the Myaamia Heritage Logo. The large Redsk*ns image set atop Yager Stadium, home of the football team and annual graduation ceremonies, quietly disappeared. It was covered over by a red block M. In the natatorium, a banner listing the conference championship years for the men's swimming team had previously included images of both the Redsk*ns and Red-Hawks mascots. This banner vanished, replaced by a new banner without any mascot images. The baseball field had had small Redsk*ns logo images on the outfield fencing, but these were replaced by the Myaamia Heritage Logo. The Heritage Logo soon appeared in other sporting spaces on campus, including the varsity soccer field, the field hockey pitch, the softball field, and the basketball/volleyball floor in Millett Hall. All of these changes occurred in near silence. Miami Athletics sent out one tweet about the new floor in Millett, but otherwise, there was no coverage in the local media or the student newspaper, no announcements were sent out to alumni, nor was any notice given to the faculty or staff. We found this silence to be curious. These changes were significant and represented a tangible shift in memory and materiality on campus. Surely, this was something to applaud, a decision with the potential to bring positive press to the university, yet the university administration made little mention of the changes.

Who Benefits? TribalCrit, Interest Convergence, and Whiteness

The silence surrounding the replacement of the former Redsk*ns imagery contrasted with the vocal and widespread coverage of the Celebrating Miami: Tribe and University week. The university benefits from the practice of racial capitalism by commodifying the racial identity of the Myaamia people (Leong, 2013), but is the Miami Tribe benefiting from this practice? Are the interests of the tribe being served by cornhole sets adorned with Myaamia ribbon work design? Are the t-shirts, caps, and scarves in the Myaamia Heritage Collection a way for the Myaamia people to control their

Check us out on SportsCenter's "Gear Up" segment tomorrow morning on ESPN. As they will be showcasing our special Myaamia tribute gear.

@MiamiOHFootball x @adidasFballUS

#ComeFlyWithUs | #GraduatingChampions



6:00 PM - Nov 12, 2019 - Twitter Media Studio

Figure 6 — Heritage Logo helmet decals, 2019.

representation, or just unique products for the predominantly white student body, faculty, and alumni to buy and display? The commodification of the Myaamia Heritage Logo is a means to raise scholarship money for tribal students to attend the university, but it also functions to coopt significant tribal symbols for commercial and entertainment purposes (Castagno & Lee, 2007).

In our reading of the university's silence, we draw on the interest convergence principle as a conceptual framework to consider how and why the interests of the university and the tribe align via the Myaamia Heritage Logo. In his theorization of racial organizations, Ray (2019) argued that racial ideology is conveyed through access to and allocation of resources, and "one's position in racialized organizations shapes agency" (p. 36). Perhaps, the Miami Tribe leaders recognized this and acted accordingly, grabbing the opportunity to gain on some of their interests and hoping that their participation here would lead to future opportunities for more gain.

Certainly, both the university and the tribe have benefitted from the development and launch of the Myaamia Heritage Logo, the associated collection of products, and its use by the athletic department. In designing the logos, the tribe benefits from the opportunity to represent itself, shape its own story, and exercise greater autonomy in sharing the values and beliefs important to the Myaamia people. Through the sale of the Myaamia Heritage Collection, the tribe also gains financial resources to support scholarships for tribal students to attend the university. National coverage of the football team's helmet decals heightened awareness of the tribe and its relationship with the university and provided the tribe a chance to highlight its efforts to preserve the Myaamia language and culture. And with the steady, but silent, elimination of the former Redsk*ns imagery, the tribe's interests in the removal of the former mascot are finally fully met, although more than 20 years later.

The university's interests converge with those of the tribe in several ways, but only up to the point at which it risks losing something. The Myaamia Heritage Logo and its increasingly widespread use suggests that the university is committed to acknowledging its contested past and celebrating its connection to the Myaamia people. Through the very visible spaces of intercollegiate athletics, the university is publicly demonstrating its interest in this relationship and wider efforts to embrace diversity. Although the university heartily promoted these interests during the Celebrating Miami: Tribe and University week, its silence around the removal of the Redsk*ns imagery suggests that the point of convergence had been met. For the university, the Myaamia Heritage Logo football helmet, uniforms, and hockey pucks struck just the right note—national attention and a unique branding point to set the university apart for 1 week out of the fall sports season. The more permanent commitment to respecting the interests of tribe—the removal of existing Redsk*ns imagery on campus—happened in silence. Rather than risk upsetting its influential alumni base, many of whom remain loyal to the Redsk*ns mascot (Toglia & Harris, 2014), by heralding the *removal* of that imagery, the university instead celebrated the *addition* of the Myaamia Heritage Logo as an effective branding element that would differentiate the university by marking its commitment to diversity, yet not threatening the underlying structures of power.

In times of reduced public funding and support for state institutions, many universities have acted like corporations in their own branding of themselves (King, 2012), so the incorporation of the Myaamia Heritage Logo into marketing efforts helps to set the university apart in its efforts to attract paying "consumers."

Ostensibly, this logo celebrating heritage positions Miami as a welcoming space for non-white students and makes (overwhelmingly white) alumni feel good about having attended a university with a history and tradition linked to relationships with the Miami Tribe (Toglia & Harris, 2014). The use of the logo indicates how the university seeks to extract value from a racialized other (Leong, 2013) and has an interest in embracing and celebrating diversity as a marketing tool.

As Castagno and Lee (2007) reminded us, there is a "long history of colonization and assimilatory policies aimed at tribal nations in the United States" (p. 7), so we wonder if this use of the logo works to assimilate Myaamia symbolism and imagery into dominant processes of capitalist commodification and consumption. Capitalism is not, and never has been, racially neutral, as it was "founded on the exploitation of racialized slave labor and the work of colonized peoples . . . owe[ing] its success to the global color line" (Hirschman & Garbes, 2019, p. 1). Miami's use of the Myaamia heritage as a brand functions in a similar way to past uses of Native American imagery in that it operates commercially by becoming a "recognizable sign and marketable commodity that would encourage consumption, foster identification, and promote loyalty" (King, 2016, p. 36) and works racially to express a nostalgic rendering of a lost indigeneity while simultaneously endorsing the superiority of the white civilization that defeated it.

Miami University—through its past and its history, its allocation of resources, its name, and its use of Native American imagery—is a (white) racialized institution where racial processes, meanings, and hierarchies are reproduced (Ray, 2019). The university is a (white) racialized organization in terms of demographics as well. In 2018, its student population at all three campuses was ~80% white, which was similar to its faculty. These racial demographics are indicative of the broader student population over the last three decades, making for a white alumni and donor base. Such student and faculty demographics and "embedded institutional practices that are based in whiteness" means that the University meets the definition of a PWI (Bourke, 2016, p. 20). Unlike minority serving institutions (like historically Black colleges and universities), PWIs are not an official designation in the United States. The label of PWI generally indicates that not only is the student population of a particular institution predominantly white, but that "race and racism are cornerstones upon which the institutions were built and currently operate" (Bourke, 2016, p. 12). This racism operates in service of reproducing whiteness because "white power secures its dominance by seeming to not be anything in particular" (Dyer, 1988, p. 44). As a PWI, Miami University's readoption of Native American imagery may very well be "manufactured for White consumption to achieve an agenda that serves a white power structure" (Staurowsky, 2007, p. 62), and it may seem to be a simple repeat of the old uses of such imagery, where white systems of power simply exploit Native American for their own benefit. However, the involvement of the Myaamia people in the logo's creation, and some of its resulting material benefits, shows that they "apprehend the system and their place within it" (King & Springwood, 2000, p. 298) and is a politically savvy use of agency in an otherwise constraining racial organization (Ray, 2019).

King and Springwood (2000) argued that the use of racialized imagery in intercollegiate athletics signifies broader "struggles over racial identity, struggles over history and power, struggles to locate oneself in an imagined community" (p. 294). Miami University's reinvention of Native American imagery demonstrates similar struggles about the meanings and (dis)location of the Myaamia people in the Miami University community. Using the interest

convergence component of TribalCrit, we can tease out these power struggles. Miami University gains by, among other ways, opening a new revenue stream in a time of continued declining public funding; solidifying its university brand via differentiation; promoting itself as a diverse university due to its links to Native American; and invoking Myaamia stories, symbols, and merchandise to maintain its imagined community of students, alumni, and donors. The Miami Tribe gains by, among other ways, having a say in how their stories are told and how they are represented within a PWI; creating space for themselves, literally and symbolically; educational opportunities for some of the young members of the tribe; and having an organized and dedicated scholarly pursuit of their culture and language.

Conclusion

As the only university—that we know of—to return to using Native American imagery after dropping it, Miami University’s adoption of the Myaamia Heritage Logo is an important demonstration of the complexities of the operations of racism in the 21st century. It is also a useful example for considering the relevance of TribalCrit theory to questions of Native American mascots and imagery. Although we initially saw the Myaamia Heritage Logo and Collection as a problematic example of the exploitation of the Miami Tribe, TribalCrit’s principle of interest convergence gave us a tool to consider the myriad ways that both groups could benefit from the new logo and collection while also maintaining larger systems of racial power and oppression.

Despite these interests addressed and gains made by the Miami Tribe through the university’s adoption and dissemination of the Myaamia Heritage Logo and Collection, we cannot help but notice how much it rhymes with previous invocations of honoring Native American heritage through the use of Native American imagery. In fact, even the invocation of the communal fire in the primary Heritage logo is similar to the University of Illinois’s interwar-era use of Native American campfire symbols and depictions as a site for the university community to gather (Guiliano, 2015). Furthermore, we notice how the readoption of Native American imagery benefits a PWI like Miami University and serves to support and reproduce white supremacist processes and ways of understanding by “allowing” the Miami Tribe to have a say in the marketing and advertising of the university, without having any substantive power in the university’s operations and without any broader material changes. In other ways, the rationale behind and discourse surrounding the changes and adoption of the Myaamia Heritage Logo look and sound similar to the language and reasoning used for the adoption of Native American imagery in the 1930s, and it benefits a similar white power structure.

But, how else could the university offset or undo these power relations? How could it expand beyond finding a site where its interests converge with (some of) the interests of the Miami Tribe? First, the university could commit to making Myaamia heritage a part of its educational plan. It might develop an Indigenous Studies department, where students could major or minor in Indigenous Studies. It could also educate its entire student body by adding one or more courses on Myaamia history, culture, and/or language into its broad-based university-wide general education plan, currently known as the Miami Plan. Second, it could continue making the Myaamia language and culture a permanent part of the campus beyond the Myaamia Center by providing public space reserved for statues or memorials of Myaamia history and/or art by members of the tribe. Additionally, in a move modeled after Sudbury, Canada’s

Laurentian University’s Tricultural Mandate, where English, French, and the indigenous language of Anishinaabemowin are used on campus signage, Miami University could similarly promote Myaamia language on campus (Laurentian University, 2019). Third, it could admit even more students from the Miami Tribe. Fourth, it could make Myaamia leaders a permanent part of university governance going forward. Fifth, it could create a reparations plan whereby the university uses part of its endowment to pay back members of the Miami Tribe for its use of the Miami name and the land upon which the campus sits (e.g., Georgetown University’s plan to pay reparations to the descendants of people who had been enslaved by the university in the 19th century).

In order to meet its own expectations and standards conveyed through its discourse and rhetoric surrounding the Myaamia Heritage Logo, Miami University must be willing to go beyond simply looking for narrow spaces where its interests converge with those of the Miami Tribe. It must begin to see the tribe’s interests and needs as the interests of the university. Otherwise, if it fails to build on the inclusionary first steps that it has already taken, its usage of Native American imagery does little more than rhyme with past uses of that imagery and follows those racist notions of honoring Indigenous peoples while reproducing dominant systems of oppression and white power structures for its own benefit as a PWI.

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Notes

1. Following King (2016), we want to offer a note on our language choices. King recognized the word *redskin* as an “insult and a brand.” We are in agreement, so we tried to only use the word when necessary, and we used an asterisk, even in historical documents, to mark its racism.
2. As demonstrated in this paper, naming has power. Although the Myaamia Center does not offer any explicit directions in terms of use, they use the word *Myaamia* to reference the people, community, culture, and languages and the word *Miami* to indicate the officially designated tribe and the university in their website’s homepage (Miami University, n.d.-d). The available primary documents often use *Miami* and *Myaamia* interchangeably, but elsewhere, we endeavored to use the words in a similar manner as the Myaamia Center.
3. In some cases, the explanations were very brief or nonexistent. For example, one student-athlete told one of us that she initially thought the logo on her university-issued shirt had something to do with Japan (the red circle in the white diamond looked like the Japanese flag to her).

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