

Go Brave!

I love the fall. Weather is spectacular. My only child was

born then. Football returns. And of course, the Major League Baseball playoffs begin, culminating in a World Series.

I have long been a Braves fan going back to their days in Milwaukee. When they moved to Atlanta, I thought, “Wow, Atlanta must be a pretty cool place if my Braves are moving there.”

As a result, I came south to play baseball in college. I have lived in Atlanta most of my adult life. Have experienced “Worst to First,” fourteen consecutive division titles, a World Series Championship (should have been more), and a recent resurgence that has had us in the playoffs the last several years.

I begin each year thinking this could be our year. Who knows? Maybe.

But there is one thing that isn’t quite right with the Braves. Its name. The Native American community finds the moniker a bit unsettling. Sure, certain Native American groups give the team lip service, but wouldn’t you if your casinos were a major promotional partner of the team? In talking with Native American groups, I’m told some simply hold their noses while others adamantly want change.

So, what gives? In an era where racial groups fight denigration, when will the time come that the Braves understand they must make a change? And when that happens, what will that change be?

I shared an idea with a columnist. He printed it. And a movement began. Albeit, a subtle movement. Quiet support grew among Atlanta corporate, civil rights and community leaders to encourage a very slight but poignant tweak. The Atlanta BRAVE.

Gee, that doesn’t seem like enough of a change to make a difference, you say. So why all the support?

Atlanta understands its unique place in history as the cradle of the civil rights movement. Brave leaders at a critical time of our nation. Martin Luther King, Jr., Coretta Scott King, John Lewis, Ralph David Abernathy, Andy Young, C.T Vivian, Joseph Lowery, Vernon Jordan and countless others.

That courage and leadership is not restricted just to the Black community, however. Brave leadership has come from the likes of Mayor Ivan Allen, former President Jimmy Carter, Olympics chieftain Billy Payne, media mogul Ted Turner and a host of dream changers.

Just picture an Atlanta BRAVE organization that continues to honor leadership, bravery, and contributions within the Native American community, while creating a Wall of Fame to honor brave Georgians, Atlantans and Native Americans.

It seems like a rebranding with a generous endorsement of that branding from an enthusiastic and supportive corporate and civic community, could go a long way to heal some of the pandemic era financial wounds not to mention racial ones.

What a great story to share with the league and nation about how the local team realized its impact on the City Too Busy to Hate.

“Our nation was born in genocide when it embraced the doctrine that the original American, the Indian, was an inferior race. Even before there were large numbers of Negroes on our shores, the scar of racial hatred had already disfigured colonial society. From the sixteenth century forward, blood flowed in battles of racial supremacy. We are perhaps the only nation which tried as a matter of national policy to wipe out its indigenous population. Moreover, we elevated that tragic experience into a noble crusade. Indeed, even today we have not permitted ourselves to reject or to feel remorse for this shameful episode. Our literature, our films, our drama, our folklore all exalt it.”²⁹

– Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Commentary

This is a no-brainer. Talk about unification and harmony! Talk about uniting all the races via the courage, leadership and bravery of not only our indigenous Americans, but those who helped make the City of Atlanta the great city it has become, the City Too Busy to Hate. Many have called this small tweak an “elegant solution.” Yet others dig in resistant to change and even label it “woke” or “political grandstanding.” After all, they say, there is nothing offensive about “Braves.” Yes, bravery is honorable. But that’s not what the moniker represents. It represents an indigenous American population that was murdered, denigrated and relocated to make way for the White man. The right thing would be to honor true bravery, contributions and leadership. The Brave.

[Note: The Atlanta Braves won the World Series in 2021, while the Native American community continued to urge change.]