

Dear School Board members,

From the time I became aware that our school mascot is a “Colonial”, I’ve heard discussions about the negative connotation it implies. Even people who recognize the offense of it have dismissed it as part of the racist system that exists in this country. I remember my dad bringing it up with friends years ago, only to have them respond, “Oh, that’s an interesting point,” but then shrugging it off. In this time of raised awareness, we must take advantage of this momentum to make much needed change.

The Acton Boxborough schools just voted to change their colonial mascot:

<https://acton.wickedlocal.com/news/20201016/colonial-voted-out-as-acton-boxborough-school-mascot>

Grafton and Nashoba changed their Native American mascots:

<https://www.telegram.com/news/20200714/grafon-removes-indian-as-mascot-for-school-district>

We all have experienced colonialism in different ways, but our families who come from Indian or African countries can recall the oppression of colonialism that is much more recent. What is referred to in China as the “Century of Humiliation,” is the sad residue of European colonialism.

Three months ago I started a petition on [change.org](https://www.change.org) to see if the people of Shrewsbury agreed with the idea of changing the Colonial mascot. I never imagined the amount of responses I would receive from simply posting a link to the petition on my social media. To be truthful, I suffered a good deal of hate messages for this petition. The number of positive responses I got, however, has made me even more convinced that this is the right thing to do. Here is the link to the petition with over 700 signatures: <https://www.change.org/p/shrewsbury-public-schools-change-the-shrewsbury-high-school-mascot-to-something-that-s-not-racially-insensitive?redirect=false>

Some who I would guess have not thought about this issue very much responded with, “it’s our history”, or “you’re trying to erase our heritage.” But the point is, aside from the image of good hardworking people in a new land, the overarching system that made a business of exploiting the land, conquering the indigenous people, and enslaving entire populations all for the profit of the colony was the immoral part of it.

The central idea of colonialism is that there is a rich ruling class who feel that poor people basically exist to make the rich richer. The phrase, “The colonies exist for the benefit of the mother country,” means that the undesirable poor should be sent off to work on farms in foreign countries, sending the wealth back to the rich. At the time, they were referred to as “waste people” or called “wastrels.” This happened not only in America’s past, but colonial empires continue today, stealing the wealth from those who are less powerful.

The logo picture of a white man in a three cornered hat isn’t necessarily racist by itself, it’s the name. The name Colonial can easily be confused with a Patriot, and some do offer that defense. However, our name is not the Patriots, it’s the Colonials. I’ve found that many people have seemed to forget that the American Patriots fought against the Colonials. Isn’t that the basis of our American democracy?

I can imagine people will argue that this change will be too expensive and difficult to make. Perhaps keeping the logo while changing the name would not be that radical a transition. In our

diverse student population, there are many who see the “Colonial” name as exclusionary and insulting. Students live with this feeling everyday. This is the enlightenment we must come to, as challenging as it may be.

In the last three months, I have dedicated a lot of time trying to educate the opposition (who I noticed were primarily young, white males) on colonialism and its true meaning. The whole history of the colonial idea is fraught with racism from the start. The goal of exploitation of both nature and indigenous people to enrich the elite was a belief in racism itself.

The colonial empires of the past as well as the colonial policies that continue today are not something we should be proud of. If we really understood the harm of colonial policies, we wouldn't want that to be our identity.

Thank you for taking up this issue. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

-Louisa Scott, SHS Class of 2022