

Reporter's notebook



Grace R. Dove

Several recent area newspaper articles referring to Native Americans have provoked me to a howl of outrage - no pun intended for those who have heard my voice mail tape.

Native American names like Twisted Hair, Fool's Crow, John Fire Lame Deer, Crazy Horse and Man Afraid of his Horses admittedly sound rather strange, even offbeat, but they shouldn't become subject matter for jokes by those who don't understand their significance.

My people tend to take our names rather seriously because they're often associated with important events in our lives, spiritual gifts or our personal beliefs.

Often a name must be earned in some way, such as Whirlwind Dreamer in the movie Powwow Highway, and is given in a ceremony as sacred to us as baptism is to the Christians.

It has been my privilege to be present at two such naming ceremonies, a Seminole ceremony in 1988, at which my husband was the firekeeper, and a very moving Lenape naming ceremony this past May, which the chief's wife had asked me to witness.

These names are usually given by a medicine man and are seen by our people as how Creator will know us for the rest of our lives.

Unfortunately, many old, respected Native names are actually English mistranslations:

- Fool's Crow was cropped down from "He went crazy and killed several Crow warriors," given to a warrior ancestor of the man who would later become spiritual leader of the Teton Sioux.

- Man Afraid of His Horses wasn't scared of his pintos and appaloosas. His name should actually be "He raises horses which make men afraid," very descriptive of his talents for raising war ponies.

- High Elk didn't get high smoking elk leavings. It's short for "He steps high like an elk when he

Native American names should not be ridiculed

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walks."

- Crazy Horse's name combines the two symbols of "crazy" (incomprehensible) and "horse" (the new way of life) and should be thought of as representing the incomprehensible new way of life forced upon the Plains people by incoming settlers.

- John Fire Lame Deer got his name from a burning building. When Lame Deer settled on the reservation and registered with the Indian agent, he was told that he must adopt a "white" name.

At that moment the trading post next door caught fire.

Hearing the traders' fearful shouts of "Fire!" Lame Deer knew that the name was strong medicine because the white man was afraid of it, so he told the agent, "That's my name."

It was also easy for Lame Deer to pronounce.

- Twisted Hair, the Hakawi warrior of F Troop fame, actually is a name commonly given to the storytellers of various Plains tribes.

The storytellers' job is to remember, care for and share the legends of their people as a way of preserving their ten thousand-year-old culture, religious beliefs and oral history.

They often wear something special to identify themselves, and may pass unmolested through enemy territory, for their importance to their people is recognized by all Native nations.

Twisted Hair referred to the distinctive hairstyle worn to identify the storytellers of certain Plains tribes.

This custom has survived into modern times - as a 20th century traditional Lenape storyteller, I carry a buckskin bag containing my stories to identify myself.

Twisted Hair carries the entire culture of a people inside his head - he is no joke.

Even our tribal names have been butchered in translation to the point that very few of our Native nations are known by our real names.

For example, "Seminole" means

"crazy people" or "runaways," while "Mohawk" means "coward," "Apache" means "enemy" and "Sioux" means "they cut people's throats."

These people use names quite different from these to refer to themselves: Mescalero, Chiricauca, Lakota and Dakota.

Those known to the white man as the Navajo call themselves Dine (the People), while the tribe known as the Delaware call themselves Lenni-Lenape (Original People) and the Natives of northeastern Canada are the Abenaki (People of the Dawn.)

We really don't like our people's names (Cherokee, Dakota, Pontiac and Winnebago) used on cars, soft drinks and RV's. It isn't respectful.

While on the subject of respect and Native names, it isn't at all nice to refer to Native women as "squaws" or Native dress as "Indian garb."

I did a slow burn when I saw these words in a recent daily newspaper article, all in one paragraph: "squaw town, where several young women dressed in Indian garb..."

"Squaw" is a French corruption of a Mohawk word for a woman's private parts. Using this word to refer to a woman is the grossest possible insult.

What word is best? If you know her tribe, say, "A Lenape woman." If you don't, "A Native American woman" will suffice.

Not Indian. Our friends from India are the true Indians.

When referring to Native attire, "regalia" is the proper word, not garb or costume. The colors and style of one's regalia and hairstyle can denote one's tribal affiliation, marital status, personal beliefs and even honors which one has earned.

A parting shot: remember what Tonto, called the Lone Ranger? "Kimosabe" refers to equine posteriors.

Father Coyote, the patron saint of cosmic humor, strikes again! Ah!

Grace Dove is a community outreach worker and board member with the Lenni-Lenape Historical Society, which operates the non-profit Museum of Indian Culture in Allentown. Her heritage includes Lenape, Eastern Cree and European.

As I was saying



Jack Hilsher

Ogden Nash? Who he? An amazing senior, that's who. Once on the NEW YORKER staff (once my favorite magazine but not any more) Mr. Nash worked on creating the hit musical "One Touch of Venus" along with twenty-odd books, which included a collection of light verse many thought to be at least up to Dorothy Parker's standards. Herewith three samples; see what you think. My favorite, the third naturally.

CROSSING THE BORDER
Senescence begins
And middle age ends
The day your descendants
Outnumber your friends.

BIRTHDAY ON THE BEACH
At another year
I would not boggle,
Except that when I joggle.

REQUIEM
There was a young belle
of old Nachez
Whose garments were

Miss Kitty, Ogden Nash and the man in the doll house

always in patches,
When comment arose
On the state of her clothes,
She replied, When Ah Itches,
Ah Scratchez.

Retirement in a Condo Complex Seen Through the Eyes of a Child

Author unknown - a teacher asked her pupils how they spent their holiday and one little boy reported, "We always spend Christmas with Grandma and Grandpa. They used to live here in a big house, but Grandpa got retarded and they moved to Florida.

They live in a place with a lot of other retarded people. They ride 3-wheel bikes to a big building called the wrecked hall, but it is fixed now. They play games there, and do exercises, but they don't do them very good.

There is a swimming pool but they just stand in the water with their hats on. I guess they don't know how to swim. My Grandma used to bake cookies and stuff, but nobody cooks there anymore...they all go to the restaurants that are fast. At the front of their park there is a doll house with a man sitting in it. He watches all day so they can't get out without him seeing.

They wear badges with their names on them. I guess they don't know who they are. My Grandma says Grandpa worked hard all his life and earned his retardment, but I wish they were back home.

I guess the man in the doll house won't let them.

True Story

Back in the days when a neighboring city had a few tarnished spots, there lived a notorious madame named "Kitty." Her well-known establishment, named after herself (what else?) was known far and wide, and was located on a well-traveled thoroughfare in South Wilkes-Barre.

One day a man was driving by Miss Kitty's infamous house of dubious pleasure, along with his young son. The boy, gazing out the window as they passed, said, "Gee, look at that big old place. Wonder who lives there?"

The father, his mind on something else, absently replied, "Oh, that's a house of ill repute."

SCENE II, some weeks later. Same route, same son, only this time his older sister was driving. The boy, pointing out the window to Kitty's said, "See that place? That's where Ellery Pute lives. Dad told me."

Published poets

Dallas fifth graders Melonie Sappe, Rebecca Hadzor, Mary Dudascik, Jill Matley, Erica Harvey, Nick Russom, Lee Griffin and Heather Jones, students in Mrs. Nulton's fifth grade English classes have had their work selected to be published in the American Academy of Poetry's Anthology of Poetry by Young Americans. First row, from left, Jill Matley, Lee Griffin; 2nd row, Rebecca Hadzor, Mary Dudascik, Melonie Sappe, Heather Jones, Erica Harvey. Absent from photo, Nick Russom.



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