

Indians form council to fight racism

Key target: stereotypes in athletics and cinema

By Julie Collins

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Indian officials gathered yesterday to announce the formation of the American Indian Anti-defamation Council as a vehicle to protect Indians from discrimination and educate non-Indians about racist behavior.

American Indians said they will no longer tolerate the stereotypes of blood-thirsty savages portrayed in the cinema and seen on sports fields, calling them "institutionalized racism."

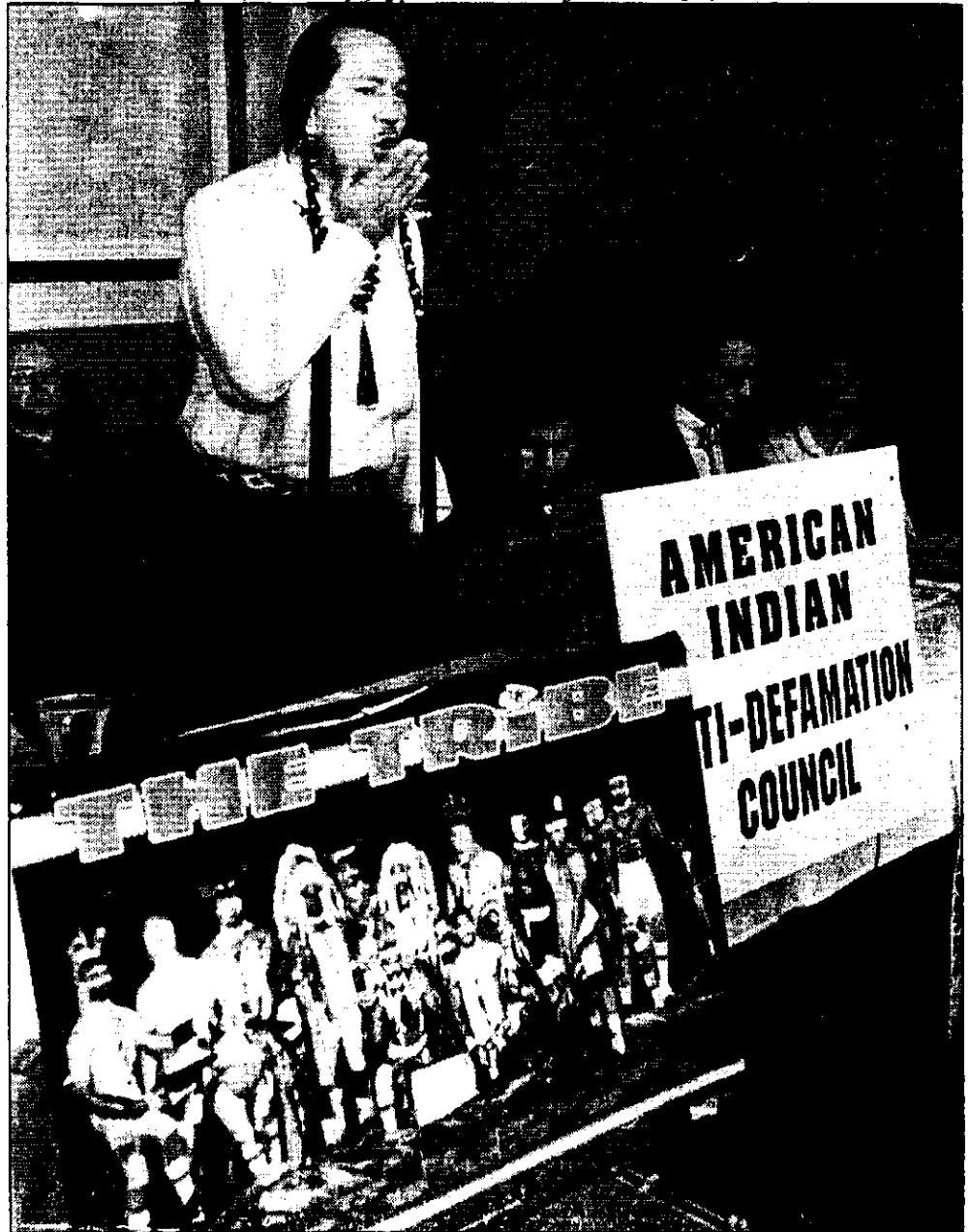
"You have Columbus Day, for crying out loud. You don't have a Hitler Day," said Indian activist Russell Means. "And yet you cannot bring the two together and become incensed. America cannot become incensed about Columbus Day. That's racism. So the need for the American Indian Anti-defamation Council is past due."

Means and other Indians have protested Columbus Day in the past, saying the explorer committed "cultural genocide" on the native people in the Americas.

Yesterday, leaders hung posters of sports teams dressed as "savages" in traditional Indian garb and carrying the hand-held "tomahawk" Kansas City Chiefs fans use. The council is investigating whether to sue high school, college and professional teams that use Indian names.

"I think that it's time people understand that we're not going to go away," said Cahuilla Red Elk, a representative of the American Indian Life Center in Colorado Springs. "There is not a lot of time left, nor a lot of patience for there to be any more of this rhetoric, any more racism. Because our children are growing and they are leaders of this future."

Dr. R.S. Rosen, member of New Jewish



The Denver Post / John Prieto

BATTLING STEREOTYPES: Indian activist Russell Means demonstrates a war whoop that he says is used by fans of the Kansas City Chiefs.

Agenda, compared the persecution of the Jews during the Holocaust to the plight of today's American Indians.

"As Jews who have suffered years of anti-Semitism, we welcome the council as allies where the respect of diverse cul-

tures is the norm," Rosen said.

An effort to reduce racism will be implemented through periodic monitoring of films, television and print media, to ensure a positive public image for American Indians.