

MEMORANDUM

TO: LEN JESSUP, PRESIDENT

FROM: RAINIER SPENCER, ASSOCIATE VICE PRESIDENT FOR DIVERSITY
INITIATIVES & CHIEF DIVERSITY OFFICER

DATE: NOVEMBER 18, 2015

RE: REPORT ON UNLV REBELS NICKNAME AND HEY REB! MASCOT

Introduction

After researching the history of UNLV's Rebels nickname and several mascots, after conducting a Listening Exercise with a variety of on-campus and off-campus constituencies, and after reviewing and analyzing the most common arguments presented against the nickname and current mascot, I have concluded that there is no reason for eliminating either the Rebels nickname or the Hey Reb! mascot due to any Confederate connection. In other words, neither the Rebels nickname nor Hey Reb! have a Confederate connection. The remainder of this report shall explain and expand upon those two conclusions.

On June 23, 2015, in response to a reporter's question about the UNLV Rebels nickname, US Senator Harry Reid of Nevada gave the following response "I believe that the Board of Regents should take that up and take a look at it." The context of the question put to Senator Reid was the aftermath of the June 17 murders in Charleston, South Carolina, in connection to which photographs were released of the alleged assailant posing with a Confederate Battle Flag and other racist paraphernalia. Additional context was the ensuing initiative and resistance to removing the Confederate Battle Flag from the South Carolina Statehouse grounds. Although the question asked, as well as Senator Reid's reply, were about the Rebels nickname, news outlets quickly shifted the topic to UNLV's mascot, Hey Reb! That same day, Media Relations provided a brief statement clarifying that Hey Reb is an 1800s trailblazer, and not a Confederate. Also on the day of Senator Reid's words, local and national media outlets began producing a

flurry of inaccurate attempts at coverage, in both print and broadcast formats. On July 2, Athletics and Media Relations produced a one-page document for use in clarifying further UNLV's nickname and mascot history. After several internal edits, it was made public on July 6.

Immediately following Senator Reid's comments, you directed me to begin studying this issue; and in late July, you gave me the charge of conducting a Listening Exercise with a variety of on-campus and off-campus constituencies in order to discern the feelings of these groups concerning the Rebels nickname and the Hey Reb! mascot. I began scheduling these meetings in early August, and conducted the first one on August 17. After only a few listening meetings, it became clear to me that mythology and general misinformation were contributing to a great deal of misunderstanding regarding these two items, and as a result were also hampering the cause of informed discussion. Therefore, starting with the mascot history document that Athletics and Media Relations had prepared, I began enhancing it via research into UNLV's history. My goal in conducting this research was to provide, via the enhanced history document, a framework of facts that would serve as a central reference point in all future conversations on this issue. This research has taken me to the Nevada State Museum Library at Springs Preserve, to the Special Collections area of UNLV's Lied Library, to the archives of the student newspaper, and to interviews with students, student-athletes, and employees from the 1950s, 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. Finally, it has led me to the fascinating, albeit somewhat arduous, task of reading every available issue of a Nevada Southern/UNLV student newspaper from 1954 through 1965, as well as a number of selected issues from later years.

The original mascot history document was written in a "spirit" style, and my earliest edits of it continued that style, which provided something of an argument (albeit fully justified by the research) for the nickname and current mascot. However, at an Academic Council & Cabinet meeting on August 25, it was brought to my attention that a document written in a spirit style and used in a listening meeting might possibly give the impression that we were not really interested in listening. Therefore, removing all arguments and editorial comments from the history document and leaving only the facts, I created the "dates & facts" nickname and mascot history document that is included in Section 2 of this report. This

document was used in all subsequent listening meetings, and I also provided it to the handful of groups involved in listening meetings in which the earlier version was used. It is important to note that the spirit version contained no fewer facts than the dates & facts version; it merely contained editorial comments that the newer version did not. Of course, since that time my continuing research has uncovered many additional facts that I have continued to incorporate into the dates & facts history and into this report as well.

This report is the result of my having conducted the Listening Exercise and also of my extensive research into the Rebels nickname and Hey Reb! mascot.

I have organized the report into six sections:

- (1) An executive summary.
- (2) A dates & facts nickname and mascot history document to serve as a handy overview.
- (3) A synopsis of the Listening Exercise, providing a general sense of opinion and also specific examples of comments and views.
- (4) A detailed historical analysis of the origin of the Rebels nickname and the later appending to it of Confederate symbols, as well as an account of the genesis of the Hey Reb! mascot.
- (5) An analysis of the primary arguments presented against the Rebels nickname and Hey Reb!
- (6) Observations and suggestions.

I feel it important to note that each of these sections is written from a different perspective. The first section is a condensed version of the report's principal points. The second section is composed quite simply of dates (decades and years) and facts. The third section is an objective account of what I heard during the Listening Exercise. The fourth section is an historical recounting and analysis of the Rebels identity and the Hey Reb! mascot, based on materials I was able to acquire and relevant persons I was able to speak with. This section is the heart of the report. The fifth section builds on the fourth, using it as historical and factual scaffolding on which to carry out an evaluation of a number of claims regarding the nickname and mascot. The final section considers everything that precedes it, providing observations from the perspective of my having compiled and written this report, as well as several suggestions you

might consider. The report as a whole, then, takes into account the dates & facts of the second section, the comments of the third section, the historical research of the fourth section, and the arguments made in the fifth section and applies to them the tools of scholarly analysis in an attempt to go beyond surface-level commentary and to arrive at an intellectual appraisal of the following two questions:

(1) Is the Rebels nickname a Confederate reference?

(2) Does Hey Reb! have a Confederate connection?

The effort to address and answer these two questions comprises the content of this report. In that sense the report has a narrow focus that has allowed me to concentrate on these two questions in a way and with a degree of intellectual rigor that have never to my knowledge ever been assayed previously in discussions of this issue at any level of discourse in any venue.

Before moving into the report itself, I will offer a few words concerning my qualifications to carry out this work. Relevant to this project, in addition to serving as the institution's Chief Diversity Officer, I have a doctorate in African-American Studies from Emory University. I am a professor of African-American Studies and I founded UNLV's African-American Studies Program 15 years ago. I am also a pioneering founder of the scholarly field of Critical Mixed-Race Studies, and have published three foundational books as well as several book chapters and journal articles in this field. I am conversant with both United States history and one of its principal components, African-American history.

Finally, I thought it would do well for me to seek out an authoritative source for what the word "Rebel" means. To that end, I consulted my personal *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, which provided the following definition:

noun.

1 A person who or thing which resists authority or control.

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Section 1

Executive Summary

(1) Is the Rebels nickname a Confederate reference?

No. The primary challenge to the Rebels nickname is the claim that it is a Confederate identity. Historical analysis reveals this claim to be false. The Rebels nickname is not a Confederate reference, as it predates the first appearance of Confederate symbols, which was April 20, 1955. Nevada Southern students were already known as Rebels before the application of those symbols; indeed, the symbols were applied because those students already had a non-Confederate Rebels identity, and also because of the north-south geography of the state. Therefore, it is not the case that there was a Confederate aspect to the Rebels name from the beginning, as the Rebels name came first and the application of the symbols after.

The Rebels identity was developed through working to give Las Vegas what it rightly deserved in terms of higher education, and expressing dissatisfaction toward Carson City legislators and Regents initially, and then later toward UNR. The Rebels identity never took part in racism or racial segregation, and in fact championed civil rights causes. All Confederate references at UNLV were eliminated 40 years ago. One of those references, the *Rebel Yell* name of the student newspaper, has crept back in over the intervening years. Talks are underway currently to change the newspaper's name. The original Rebels identity remains intact.

(2) Does Hey Reb! have a Confederate connection?

No. The primary challenge to the Hey Reb! mascot is the claim that he either is or looks like a Confederate. The historical record shows this to be an erroneous claim. The Hey Reb! mascot was designed expressly to be an 1800s Las Vegas pathfinder and to not have any Confederate connection whatsoever. His clothing is Western, not Confederate. His look is that of a Western frontiersperson, not of a Confederate soldier, and not of a stylized plantation owner. The greatest problem with Hey Reb! is one of poor communication on the part of the institution, a problem that can be remedied fairly easily.

Section 2

Historical Overview of UNLV Nickname and Mascots



1957-1973

1974-75; 77-82

1976

1983-1996

1997-2005

2006-Present

(These are dates of Athletics' printed mascot use. They may differ slightly from general University mascots in terms of timeframe.)

1950s

The Board of Regents opened an extension program of the University of Nevada, Reno (UNR) in Las Vegas in 1951. Initial classes were held in various locations at Las Vegas High School, including auditorium dressing rooms. In 1954, the extension program was designated by the Regents as the University of Nevada, Southern Regional Division, going by the popular name Nevada Southern. From the beginning, the sense of being Rebels was applied to and appropriated by supporters of the Southern Regional Division, who were continually in conflict with state legislators in Carson City and with the Board of Regents over funding and support for the new institution. Rebels, as an identity and a name, began to take hold before any Confederate symbolism was added later. Las Vegas residents soon began to push for land to build an actual campus, as Nevada Southern students were still required to go to Reno and attend UNR at some point in order to complete their degrees. The second iteration of a student newspaper, *The Rebel Yell*, featuring a Confederate Battle Flag on its masthead, published its inaugural issue on April 20, 1955, writing that “We feel that **The Rebel Yell** is an appropriate name for the paper because Nevada Southern students are often called Rebels.” Because of the north-south geography of Carson City and Reno on one hand and Las Vegas on the other, Nevada Southern students began to express that already established disaffection with Northern Nevada’s inequitable control of the state’s higher education purse strings via several Confederate-themed associations: a Confederate Cotillion; crowning of a Southern Belle; the Confederated Students of Nevada Southern name for the student government; and the creation of Beauregard, a winking cartoon wolf mascot believed to be named after a Confederate general and wearing a Confederate uniform, designed to contrast with UNR’s more ferocious wolf mascot. The Regents eventually committed to purchase an 80-acre parcel of land on Maryland Parkway for a Las Vegas campus. In 1957, the first classes were held on the new campus. Shortly afterward, Nevada Southern became a remotely located college of UNR. In 1959, Beauregard and the Confederate Battle Flag began alternating on the *Rebel Yell* masthead.

1960s

Student disaffection with Confederate themes began to grow. One by one those themes fell away without fanfare until only Beauregard, the Confederated Students of Nevada Southern student government name, and the *Rebel Yell* name remained. In 1962, the Confederate Battle Flag on the *Rebel Yell* masthead was removed,

and replaced by the image of Beauregard. In 1965, the Southern Regional Division officially became Nevada Southern University. Throughout the 1960s, significant tensions flared over autonomy and funding support for the university in Las Vegas, a situation that intensified the idea of the Las Vegas students as Rebels. In 1969, Nevada Southern University became the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Also in 1969, Beauregard was removed from the *Rebel Yell* masthead, and replaced by the official university seal.

1970s

In October 1970, a CSUN “Rebel name change committee” suggested changing the Rebels nickname. The following month UNLV African-American student Bert Babero Jr. authored a letter in the *Rebel Yell* in which he questioned the propriety of both the Rebels name and the Beauregard mascot. The same issue of the newspaper also contained two other letters—one supporting the name and one questioning whether the committee’s conclusion had been well thought out. These developments stimulated debate across campus, resulting in several changes. In December 1970, the student newspaper changed its name from the *Rebel Yell* to the *Yell*. In January 1971, UNLV students voted to retain the Rebels nickname. At some point circa 1973, the student Senate voted to change its name from the Confederated Students of the University of Nevada to the Consolidated Students of the University of Nevada. In 1973, UNLV students once again rejected an attempt to change the Rebels nickname. In 1975, UNLV students voted to depose Beauregard. His only presence on campus today is in areas describing the history of the mascot (such as in athletic teams’ media guides); in the Special Collections area of Lied Library; and in the Marjorie Barrick Museum, the former gymnasium that still has the old wood basketball floor with the wolf logo at center court along with interpretive signage recently added to explain his part in UNLV’s past. Without a mascot in 1976, UNLV adopted the image of a Colonial Militiaman, thought to be a more positive Rebel figure. This particular mascot did not win enduring support, however; and for a number of years the school had no mascot at all.

1980s

In 1982, UNLV formed a committee charged with developing a new mascot for the university. The committee’s guiding principle was that any new mascot must not have anything whatsoever to do with the Confederacy. As committee member and Director of Alumni Relations Fred Albrecht said at the time, “anything identifying with the confederate symbol would still offend black students/athletes.” Albrecht also noted the importance of any new mascot design being “kept synonymous with the Runnin’ Rebels,” the name coined by then-sports information director Dominic Clark in 1974 to refer to Coach Jerry Tarkanian’s up-tempo men’s basketball squads. The eventual design competition was won by local artist Mike Miller, who created a mascot themed specifically on the Las Vegas area. Hey Reb! was intended to be an 1800s pathfinder, one of the independent and nonconformist trailblazing adventurers who would lead travelers through the valley along the Spanish Trail, stopping for water at places such as the Springs and Blue Diamond on the way to California. Care was taken to ensure that Hey Reb! had no connection to the Confederacy. The mascot committee ensured that he was a westerner, dressed in Western clothing—not Southern, not cowboy, not plantation. Miller sold the rights for Hey Reb! to UNLV for a total cost of \$1.

Section 3

Listening Exercise

The Listening Exercise took place between August 17 and October 14, 2015. I met with 14 on-campus groups, 1 off-campus group, and also had in-person meetings or telephone conversations with 14 individuals. The overwhelming sense of the Listening Exercise was that the Rebels identity and nickname must be maintained. I take pains to add that I do mean to write “must be maintained,” as opposed to “should be maintained.” The support for Rebels as an identity and nickname, while not unanimous, was broad, intense, and very deep. Considering the totality of the groups and individuals I spoke with, that support was certainly near unanimous. In the few instances of disagreement with the Rebels name, that disagreement was quite vigorous, however. There was also strong support for Hey Reb!, although across the board that support was not as strong as for the Rebels nickname. This is to say that while the support for the Rebels identity was (with the exception of three meetings) always extremely strong, the support for Hey Reb!, while just as strong in some meetings, was less strong in others.

Following is a listing of the groups and individuals I met with as part of the Listening Exercise:

- On-Campus Groups: Interdisciplinary Degree Programs, Alumni Association Board, Campus Diversity Groups, CSUN Student Government, President’s Advisory Council, Administrative Faculty Committee, Faculty Senate Executive Committee, Classified Staff Council, Athletics, Graduate Council, *Rebel Yell* Advisory Board, Research Council, Black Student Organization, UNLV Foundation.

- Off-Campus Group: NAACP Branch 1111.

- Individuals: Community Activist Hannah Brown; local ESPN Radio 1100 Host Mike Pritchard; former UNLV Public Services Information Director and 1982 Mascot Committee chair Les Raschko; 1959 UNLV Student Body President James Bilbray; Professor Emerita Dr. Esther Langston; 1977 Student Body President John Hunt; Athletics Equipment Manager Paul Pucciarelli; Filmmaker and Las Vegas Documentarian Stan Armstrong; former UNLV Director of Alumni Relations and 1982 Mascot

Committee member Fred Albrecht; former UNLV student athletes Bill Casey, Freddie Banks, Eldridge Hudson, Stacey Augmon, and Dave Rice.

- On-Campus Groups Not Met With: UNLV Department Chairs, Council of African-American Professionals, Black Graduate Student Association.

- Off-Campus Groups Not Met With: KCEP Radio-Power 88, Las Vegas Urban Chamber of Commerce.

On September 16, I attended a Leadership Forum event for Department Chairs. At this event I invited all Chairs to a Listening Exercise session exactly one week later at the same time to discuss the Rebels nickname and Hey Reb! I asked them to speak with their faculty during the week and to bring those comments and thoughts to the listening session. One week later, on October 23, not a single Department Chair showed up, leading me to conclude that this topic is not an issue in academic departments.

Despite several invitations to coordinate meetings, neither the Council of African-American Professionals nor the Black Graduate Student Association responded.

I attempted to contact KCEP Radio-Power 88 numerous times without success. I tried emailing several times through the station's web site and media page, and I also tried sending a request to the media page of one of the station's talk-show hosts. Finally, I left two separate voicemail messages on the direct line of the station manager. I explained who I was and that I was seeking to have a conversation about the Rebels nickname and the Hey Reb! mascot. None of these attempts received any reply.

I contacted the Las Vegas Urban Chamber of Commerce, and although I sent the Chamber a copy of the history document, they never responded to the suggestion of a meeting. I did, however, speak with the President Emerita of the Urban Chamber, Hannah Brown, after the group had met amongst themselves. She told me that the group was split on the issue, which disappointed her. Ms. Brown is a long-time icon of the Las Vegas African-American community. She has lived in Las Vegas for 70 years, is a graduate of Las Vegas High School, and is also a committed community activist. She told me that in her conversations with members of Las Vegas' African-American community, she has never come across

the idea that the Rebels nickname is disliked or that the mascot is a problem. Ms. Brown told me that she wished “UNLV would spend its time on graduating more students instead of worrying about a mascot.”

Rather than recounting the conversations from every Listening Exercise session, I will instead provide summaries of several meetings that will give a good sense of the exercise in general. I do this for two reasons. The first is that recounting every conversation would be very long and would not, to my thinking, add substantively to the content of this report. It would only provide reinforcement of what I have already stated in terms of the general sense of the sessions. The second reason is that many of the comments are best understood in the context of the analyses found in Sections 4 and 5, and so I have interspersed them in those sections as appropriate rather than placing them here in this section. As I have indicated, the overall sentiment of the Listening Exercise was one of very strong support for the Rebels identity and nickname, and somewhat less support for the Hey Reb! mascot. I believe the following samplings are reflective of that distribution.

The general sentiment in the Research Council session was that the Rebels nickname was not only acceptable, but necessary from a branding perspective. In fact, one of the members noted that we can be “Research Rebels” in connection with our Top Tier aspirations, and several others agreed. There was also a consensus in this group that Hey Reb! could be dispatched with minimal negative consequence, as it is the name Rebels and in particular Runnin’ Rebels that drives our most impactful branding. The thought regarding Hey Reb! was that a non-human mascot would be preferable to a mascot that is gendered and raced, so to speak. Several members felt that Hey Reb! either had a Confederate connection or was perceived to have one, and that this should be taken into account in thinking about whether to retain him as the UNLV mascot. It was not so much that all these individuals themselves felt that the mascot was inappropriate, but more a case of: “If some folks are offended, then we should consider that.”

African-American documentary filmmaker Stan Armstrong stated that he has never heard of any disagreement on the Westside or in the Las Vegas African-American community regarding the Rebels nickname or Hey Reb! According to Mr. Armstrong, the Las Vegas African-American community has always been proud of the UNLV Rebels. He said that was here at UNLV in the 1980s and found no

disapproval over the Rebels nickname or Hey Reb! upon his introduction. Mr. Armstrong indicated that when he first saw Hey Reb! in 1982, he felt that the new mascot “looked like a John Fremont type.”

I met off-campus with the Executive Board of Local Branch 1111 of the NAACP. After the meeting, the Board was satisfied with the acceptability of the Hey Reb! mascot, and was noncommittal regarding the Rebels nickname. A subsequent email from the Board indicated that it was opposed to the Rebels nickname. This was the only group I met with that had this kind of split in terms of rejecting the Rebels nickname but accepting Hey Reb!

I asked local ESPN Radio 1100 Host Mike Pritchard for his views on how the Rebels nickname and Hey Reb! are viewed from a national perspective. He stated that at the national level there is no sense of the Rebels identity being associated with the Confederacy, nor is there is any sense of Hey Reb! as a Confederate. Mr. Pritchard told me that immediately after Senator Reid’s June 23 comments, ESPN 1100 did a call-in show on the topic, and the calls were fully supportive of the Rebels nickname and Hey Reb! He said that he did not see any Confederate connection as an issue for UNLV on the national scene.

The undergraduate Black Student Organization was, with the exception of one person, supportive of the Rebels identity and nickname. However, this group did not favor Hey Reb!, claiming that he looks like a Confederate.

The only completely negative Listening Exercise session was one I held with Interdisciplinary Degree Programs (IDP) on August 17, which was the very first Listening Exercise session held. It was actually two sessions, as IDP invited me back on August 20 to speak with the full unit. These two sessions were the only ones in which a group rejected both the Rebels identity and Hey Reb! fully, with no equivocation. This group expressed its dissatisfaction with both the nickname and mascot in a very strident way.

The Alumni Association Board, by contrast, was every bit as positive as IDP was negative. Member after member attested to the preposterousness of the Rebels identity or Hey Reb! having any kind of Confederate connection. Hank Melton ('78) and John Hunt ('79) both indicated that they would present public commentary on behalf of both the Rebels nickname and Hey Reb! at the September 11

Board of Regents meeting in Reno, which they did—Mr. Melton via video-conference from Las Vegas and Mr. Hunt in person.

I felt it particularly important to include the voices of student-athletes from the Beauregard days as well as from the early Hey Reb! days, in order to acquire a sense of their feelings about representing the university as Rebels and about the mascot that was current when they played. I was able to connect with five student-athletes from a relatively broad swath of time (1968–1991): Bill Casey, Freddie Banks, Eldridge Hudson, Stacey Augmon, and Dave Rice. Although an admittedly limited sample, the results mirror the general sense of strong support for the Rebels identity and somewhat lesser support for Hey Reb! that I heard throughout the Listening Exercise.

Bill Casey (1968) was the quarterback on the first UNLV football team. That team had the Confederate Battle Flag on its helmets. Mr. Casey told me that he did not make any association of that flag with any sort of racist or segregationist attitude. He said that he considered the association of a west coast team such as UNLV with a southern racist impulse “a stretch,” especially after the flag was removed from the helmets. Mr. Casey said that as a football player he did not remember seeing the Beauregard mascot very much.

Freddie Banks (1983–1987) was a men’s basketball player. Mr. Banks was probably the most passionate of the former student-athletes I spoke with. He indicated that he was and remains “proud to be a Rebel.” A local high-school product, he said that could have gone to play college ball anywhere, but that he chose to be a Runnin’ Rebel. According to Mr. Banks, when the team went out of state everyone knew the Rebels and the exciting brand of basketball they brought with them. He said that “everyone wants to be a Runnin’ Rebel,” and he wondered what we would be if we stopped being Rebels—“the UNLV Coyotes?” Mr. Banks was firm in stating that he made no association between being a Rebel and any Confederate meaning.

Eldridge Hudson (1982–1983, 1984–1987), a former men’s basketball player, said that he “never thought about” any Confederate connection at UNLV, that being a Runnin’ Rebel was about “having a rebel attitude.” In his opinion, opponents would say of the UNLV team “here come those Rebels,”

bringing “94 feet of havoc.” In regard to Hey Reb!, Mr Hudson indicated that he didn’t think of him in any negative way, but rather that “he was like our little Rebel dude.”

Of the five student-athletes I spoke with, former men’s basketball player and current men’s basketball Assistant Coach Stacey Augmon (1987–1991) had the only negative comment about the nickname and mascot. Coach Augmon stated that a Confederate connection never occurred to him during his time as a Runnin’ Rebel, that it was tradition. However, given what “Rebels” stands for now for some people, he said that it was a good time for a change. Coach Augmon said that he “didn’t look twice at the Hey Reb! mascot” as a player, but that we should now take a look at changing it.

The final student-athlete I spoke with was former men’s basketball player and current men’s basketball Head Coach Dave Rice (1989–1991). Coach Rice stated that as a player he never thought of any connotation with actual southern rebellion. He said that it “never came up in the locker room,” and that “as players, they felt that they were Runnin’ Rebels.” When I asked him about the mascot having any Confederate connection during his time as a Runnin’ Rebel player, Coach Rice said that it “never entered anyone’s minds regarding Hey Reb!” Now especially, as men’s basketball coach, Coach Rice indicated that he is “very sensitive to these types of issues,” stating that he “would never agree to a name that was offensive.”

Section 4

Historical Analysis

The two questions this report strives to answer are simple, as are the answers to them. The difficulty lies in navigating the sea of misinformation and misperception that surrounds those questions, which again are:

(1) Is the Rebels nickname a Confederate reference?

(2) Does Hey Reb! have a Confederate connection?

As noted in the introduction to this report, the answers to the questions are “no” and “no.” Arriving at those answers requires an understanding of UNLV’s early history as well as an accounting of critical events at particular points in that history. I should say not merely an understanding, however; for on this particular topic one must insist on a full understanding, as far too many commentators have weighed-in with incomplete or even fully erroneous understandings. Indeed, the university is itself guilty of not doing enough to clarify that history, a shortcoming this report aims to rectify.

Resisting Authority

The common understanding is that UNLV developed its Rebels nickname as a result of fighting to break away from parent institution UNR, but the reality is far more complicated. Although UNR is of course implicated in UNLV’s enduring struggle against forces arrayed in opposition from its very inception as an extension site of UNR, that implication is far more indirect than most people are aware. While a healthy interstate rivalry has developed between the two institutions and their respective students over the decades, the originary sense of being Rebels was directed not toward UNR, but instead toward legislators in Carson City and toward the Board of Regents. The students of the University of Nevada, Southern Regional Division (nearly always referred to from the very beginning as Nevada Southern) in Las Vegas of course considered themselves to be students of UNR. There was no question about that, at not least initially.

It was northern legislators and Regents—not UNR—who tried to limit Nevada Southern to being a two-year rather than a four-year school, who fought the purchase of land for a Las Vegas campus, who demurred on funds for academic buildings and a dormitory, and who required students from Las Vegas to spend a portion of their academic careers physically in Reno attending UNR. James Bilbray, 1959 Nevada Southern Student Body President, Regent, State Senator, and US Congressional Representative told me that the limiting of Nevada Southern to being a two-year campus was particularly damaging to the Las Vegas community. Parents either did not want to send their students to Reno or could not afford to do so. As a matter of principle, Mr. Bilbray himself refused to spend his junior and senior years at UNR as would have been required, and instead moved to Washington, DC to attend American University, from which he graduated in 1962 with a degree in Government and Public Administration. I should, however, be a bit clearer in stating that UNR did have a budgetary self-interest in limiting Nevada Southern in these ways, and in fact participated in doing so; but publicly it was Carson City legislators and the Board of Regents making the decisions.

According to UNLV History Professor Michael Green, “from 1915 to 1965, Nevada had the ‘little federal plan’ where the state senate resembled the U.S. Senate.” During this time “the state senate included one member per county, so almost every vote on Las Vegas would be 16–1 against us, or 15–2 if the division was rural/urban, so Reno sometimes was with us, sometimes against us.” It is not difficult in such a scenario to understand how an “us against the powers that be” feeling became established in Las Vegas over the development of higher education. Moreover, considering that by the 1950s Las Vegas had become the most populous city in the state and was obviously going to continue that trend, the disparate treatment coming from the rest of the state was even more glaring. We might, looking back, understand that northern Nevada—and the State Legislature and Board of Regents were composed overwhelmingly of northern Nevadans—was having difficulty accepting the implications of the population explosion taking place in Las Vegas and Clark County, but the treatment was nonetheless still inequitable.

It will be useful to gain a sense of this disparate treatment by reviewing a bit of that early history. Beginning with construction of the Hoover Dam and then followed by the local impacts of World War II

mobilization and defense work, the Las Vegas valley began to see its population grow. According to UNLV History Professor Eugene Moehring's 2007 book, *UNLV: A History*: "The Desert Inn's debut in 1950 followed by the Sahara, Sands, Riviera, Dunes, Hacienda, Tropicana, and Stardust, coupled with the development of Nellis Air Force Base and the Nevada Test Site, only drove the population higher and higher as the decade progressed." Over the next several pages, I shall rely heavily on the first chapter of Dr. Moehring's book to set the stage for the development of the institution and the Rebel identity that was forged in that development.

Officials from Nellis approached the Board of Regents about providing college classes on base for airmen, but according to Dr. Moehring's book, "negotiations between regents and military authorities broke down when regents insisted that classes be conducted at the base and that civilians be allowed to enroll at no cost to the state." This was unacceptable to the base due to security concerns and the emerging Korean War. Significantly, and echoing the comments Mr. Bilbray made to me, Nellis officials "were also frustrated by Nevada's requirement that degree candidates live on the Reno campus for a year." Adding to the pressure was the fact that Clark County school teachers had to take classes in Reno in order to do graduate work and maintain their certifications. Seeking to find a solution, State Assemblywoman and former Las Vegas Union School District Superintendent Maude Frazier began authoring legislation to bring higher education to Las Vegas. Although her initial efforts were rebuffed, she nonetheless was someone who resisted authority or control. In other words, she refused to give up despite the clear opposition she was receiving from those in positions of higher authority. In addition to being perhaps the very first Rebel, Maude Frazier was a visionary who "dreamed of building a substantial college in Las Vegas for her beloved students."

A series of *Las Vegas Review-Journal* articles from 1951 documented the earliest beginnings of higher education in Southern Nevada. A July 18, 1951 *Review-Journal* article titled "Extension Courses By UN Faculty To Be Given Here," noted that:

Las Vegas residents will have an opportunity of taking advantage of an ambitious extension course program which will start on September 24 and run until December 14, it was reported by Dr. Harold N. Brown, director of extension service of the University of Nevada. Dr. Brown said

that 20 faculty members of the university representing 15 university departments, will tour the southern half of the state, giving the courses. A similar program will be carried out in northern Nevada in the spring. A \$7.50 fee will be charged for regular students [unreadable] the course, for which college credit will be given. Courses will be offered in subjects ranging from music and drama to agriculture and politics, Dr. Brown said.

In an August 27, 1951 article titled "University Offers Off Campus Program, the *Review-Journal* provided additional details:

A college program for high school graduates will be offered in Las Vegas by the University of Nevada beginning September 17. The announcement was made yesterday by Dr. Malcolm A. Love, president of the state university in Reno. "The university long has been interested in cooperating with the people of Las Vegas to provide an educational program on the college level. A program is being initiated for the first time this year as a result of plans formulated over a number of years. Through the efforts of Dr. Harold N. Brown, who is in charge of the university extension program, the college courses to be offered in Las Vegas have finally been made possible," Dr. Love said. The new program is designed especially for freshmen students in and near Las Vegas who desire to take a regular course and still live at home, university officials said. The work will be organized on the basis of eightweek terms with four terms offered per school year. Courses offered by approved instructors from the University of Nevada for the first term, September 17 to November 10, will be given in such regular freshman courses as history, English, and mathematics. A student may enroll for a total of eight credit hours in eight weeks on University level. The courses are expected to vary from term to term, but in general, the program is intended to fulfill freshman requirements at the University. A total of 32 credit hours may be taken in a full four term program. A beginning student will be enrolled in the University of Nevada through the office of Walter D. Johnson, superintendent of schools in Las Vegas and will be admitted the same as other university students. Official transcripts of high school records should be sent to Clarence E. Byrd, director of admissions, University of Nevada before September 10, and register with Johnson at Las Vegas high school by that date. The cost of enrolling in the special university offering in Las Vegas will be \$5 for the original registration fee plus \$7.50 per term. This is the same fee paid by University of Nevada students enrolled on the campus for the same number of credit hours. If laboratory courses are offered, the regular university laboratory fees would be added. All classes will be held in the high school building on a time schedule to be determined later.

Dr. Moehring points out that "although the *Las Vegas Review-Journal* and other local sources referred to this program in 1951 as a 'branch' or as the university's 'southern branch,' that was just wishful thinking. It was a program only and not an official branch of the university until 1954." He provides the further corrective that far from the extension program being the "result of plans formulated over a number of years," "actually, it resulted from intense lobbying by Frazier and other community leaders. The University merely acquiesced reluctantly to their demands and made no immediate commitment past the 1951-52 school year."

Despite this, the November 2, 1951 edition of the *Review-Journal* illustrated the strong demand for higher education in Las Vegas that led to the extension program likely being continued, in an article titled “UN Branch for Las Vegas is Said in Prospect”:

The Las Vegas branch program of the University of Nevada in which extension courses are offered to local residents, probably will be continued next semester, it was reported today by the administrative council of the university at Reno. The council, in a resolution to the faculty of the state institution, reported that the establishment of the Las Vegas branch is of far-reaching importance and that progress should be made cautiously and with full faculty thought and direction. Therefore “it is recommended to the faculty that it approve and recommend to the faculty and the board of regents that the Las Vegas branch program be continued next semester on about its present scale.” The council also suggested that members of the faculty give careful thought to the nature of the work that might be offered during the year 1952–1953. It was felt that possible extension of the program to include basic freshman and sophomore work for all colleges of the university....might be possible if the demand in Las Vegas is sufficient and enough money for the conduct of the branch would be appropriated by the legislature.

The little program grew—with drastically low enrollment for its first several years, but it did grow, gaining in addition to students a small number of regular and part-time faculty. Offering night courses at Las Vegas High School, mostly in auditorium dressing rooms, the program had to cancel classes whenever the high school put on a play. Despite the small number of students, and despite northern Regents’ disinclination to support the expansion of higher education in southern Nevada, the continued growth of Las Vegas caused those same Regents to fear “significant political backlash if they abolished the courses.” Additionally, Dr. Moehring infers that offering “a good freshman program at Las Vegas would erode support for activists like Frazier and regent Archie Grant, who preferred a separate state college in southern Nevada.”

The rapid growth of Las Vegas soon made clear that an actual campus would be required, and on May 8, 1954, UNR officials announced the creation of an actual southern branch of UNR in Las Vegas—the University of Nevada, Southern Regional Division, also referring to it in shorthand as “Nevada Southern.” At the same time, however, the Regents drastically reduced the program’s budget for the upcoming legislative session, including a reduction of the building request. As Dr. Moehring describes, “it was not just the penny-pinching approach of state legislators but also the growing concern of university officials and northern regents about the size of the Las Vegas program that determined the

extent of the cuts.” Yet “the board’s action served only to rouse the community.” The October 11, 1954 edition of *Nevso News*, Nevada Southern’s first student news instrument, reported on a recent Board of Regents meeting to “debate the issue of a campus for ‘Nevada Southern’ in the following years.” Dr. Moehring’s book, in describing that meeting, notes that UNR’s President and the Board of Regents,

while not averse to constructing a building to house southern Nevada’s program, had no intention of immediately buying land for a college campus. That all changed, however, at the first-ever regents meeting in Las Vegas on October 7, 1954. Besieged by an overflow crowd of 300 determined residents and impressed by chamber of commerce officials, who noted that the metropolitan population of 50,000 had surged to 86,000 that month and was projected to pass 100,000 by 1960, regents agreed to reconsider their position.

Northern Nevada opposition to higher education in southern Nevada was not at an end, however. Although the land for a campus had been identified, the state legislature refused to appropriate the \$35,000 necessary to purchase it (recall Dr. Green’s 16–1 ratio). Clark County State Senator Mahlon Brown worked hard to convince the legislature to “appropriate \$35,000 for the land and \$200,000 for the campus’s first building...but his northern colleagues insisted that with revenues tight, money should be spent only for buildings on the main campus in Reno.” Refusing to accept this setback, Senator Brown eventually brokered a deal in which the legislature would appropriate \$200,000 for the building if the people of Las Vegas, rather than the state, funded the \$35,000 to purchase the land. “Convinced that local residents would not raise the money, northern lawmakers passed Brown’s bill and Governor Charles Russell signed it.” However, the Las Vegas community did raise the money, and the land was purchased. The first classes on the new campus were held on September 10, 1957, in the campus’ first and only building—Maude Frazier Hall. According to Dr. Moehring, “later that year, Nevada Southern (still formally called the Southern Regional Division until 1965) became a college of the University of Nevada, thanks to Frazier’s determined efforts in the legislature.” Despite disappointments that would prove to be a regular occurrence for those pursuing the establishment of higher education in Las Vegas, those pioneering Rebels refused to accept any defeat as final.

Understanding Context

The sense of Las Vegas as Rebels in the context of founding, operating, and eventually expanding an institution of higher education was therefore established years before the inaugural, April 20, 1955 edition of the second iteration of a student news instrument (*Nevso News* was published only during 1954) confirmed “officially” that Nevada Southern students were Rebels. In fact, the paper’s exact words were that “Nevada Southern students are often called Rebels,” indicating clearly the reality that the Rebel identity was already in existence and recognized. That same edition of the student paper announced itself as the *Rebel Yell*, wrote of a Confederate Cotillion at which a Southern Belle would be crowned, featured a Confederate Battle Flag on its masthead, and introduced students to their mascot—one Beauregard Wolf (sometimes, albeit rarely, spelled “Beauregarde”). The student government also chose to name itself the Confederated Students of Nevada Southern (CSNS). This was a youthful dressing-up of the already existing Rebels identity in the clothing of the Confederacy in order to take advantage of the North-South geographical displacement, not so much of Reno and Las Vegas, but rather of Carson City and Las Vegas. While admittedly speculative, I would venture that had the relative geographical positioning of Carson City and Las Vegas been reversed, the use of Confederate symbolism would likely have never occurred to anyone at Nevada Southern, which one supposes in such a case would have to have been named Nevada Northern.

The origin of the Rebel identity and the relationship of that identity to UNR is a crucial point that has been lost completely in the ensuing decades, and that absolutely must be corrected. Despite the long-term vision of higher-education heroes such as Maude Frazier and Archie Grant for a stand-alone state college in Las Vegas, Nevada Southern students themselves could not have seriously seen their little branch as breaking away from anything in 1955. Nevada Southern had become a formal part of UNR only eleven months earlier, and in April of 1955 could not yet have even been considered to be a fully functioning community college. It had no campus of its own, and held classes in the auditorium dressing rooms of a high school. The notion that its students would have at that time considered themselves to be attempting to break away from UNR is ludicrous. Moreover, had they truly seen themselves as trying to

instigate such a break, they would not have chosen a wolf—albeit a different wolf than UNR’s—as a mascot. Rather, just like their Rebel parents who had in the first place made the branch possible, what they saw themselves in opposition to was the northern Nevada political power that was preventing their little branch from developing. That political power, not UNR, is what the Confederate symbolism was directed toward.

The appending of Confederate symbols to the already existing Rebels identity was of course unfortunate and to some extent immature. It was also inaccurate historically, as in 1864 Nevada entered the Union as a free state, which quite obviously was the only way it could gain entry. Dr. Moehring pointed out to me that “Abraham Lincoln pushed to make Nevada a state in 1864 (even though Nevada lacked the 60,000 people required by the Northwest Ordinance of 1787) just to get one more state to pass the 13th Amendment abolishing slavery. Nevada was the state that got Lincoln the one additional vote he needed to do it.”

Even if one ignores the reality that the historiography of slavery and the Civil War in the 1950s, at least in terms of popular understandings, was closer to the mythical and reconciliatory writings of Thomas Dixon, Jr. than to the later work of modern-era scholars such as Eric Foner, it nonetheless made little sense to dress the nascent Nevada Southern institution in the garb of the Confederacy except to— from an explicitly southern position on the map—stick a metaphorical finger in the eye of the Nevada’s northern concentration of political power.

I don’t want to gloss over the question of historiography, however, as it is indeed relevant to this discussion. Historiography is distinguished from history proper by being a close examination of *how* history is written, including evaluating sources and subjective intent. According to Dr. Green, “of course, you see movement in the historiography in the 1950s, but not a real flowering until the 1960s....In the mid-1950s, you finally begin to see the writing move toward what we think today, but it was a slow process.” What he means in terms of slavery, the Civil War, and the Confederacy is that until the mid-1950s, historians in general did not understand these things the way we do today. The worst of these narratives was one of a “misunderstanding” between Northern and Southern “brothers” that led to an

unfortunate “War Between the States” that both sides were almost forced into unwillingly. The understanding would have also downplayed the extent to which the Civil War was about slavery.

This somewhat sanitized view of the Civil War was developed in the early 20th century and was inspired by a national need to heal and unite the country some 50 years after the conclusion of the war, and was given great impetus by D. W. Griffith’s cinematically groundbreaking 1915 film, *The Birth of a Nation*, which was based on the novels of Dixon. If this is how historians thought, one can only imagine the average citizen’s knowledge of slavery, the Civil War, and the Confederacy in 1955. As a verification for the purpose of this report, I ordered through the LINK+ interlibrary loan system a 1951 history textbook written by I. James Quillen and Edward Krug; published by Scott, Foresman and Company; and titled *Living in Our America: History for Young Citizens*. I cannot tell for sure, but I would place this book somewhere on the 7th–10th grade level. From a certain quaint perspective, it is a delightful book to open and read, but it clearly lacks for completeness and accuracy. While it does mention the fact that Harriett Beecher Stowe’s novel *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* “pictured the most cruel features of the slavery system,” the textbook itself eschews any investigation of those particular features. Nor are American slaves themselves given any agency in the book’s pages, as the descriptions of slaves’ lives are taken from planters’ letters and publications.

This isn’t to say that slavery is not covered in this textbook, as it certainly is. However, the coverage is by today’s standards woefully inadequate, overly Eurocentric, and bereft of any significant perspective from slaves. The following brief passage serves as a good example of this: “For a time slavery didn’t make much headway, but when the large plantations began to want lots of cheap help, the planters turned to slave dealers. Slaves were better than indentured servants because they were owned for life.” From a purely economic and slaveowner perspective, these two sentences are certainly accurate; however, they lack any discussion of what owning a human being meant, of what it was like to be owned as chattel property, and it cries out for the voices of those so owned to be heard. It is within this context of widespread historical imprecision that one must evaluate Nevada Southern students appending Confederate symbols to their already existing identity as Rebels.

What Actual Confederate Values Do and Do Not Look Like

Certainly, the Confederate Battle Flag would have had a different and more salient meaning within the former slave states. It was those states that went through Reconstruction and Redemption, and that benefitted from the Compromise of 1877 that led to a federal hands-off policy on the South's management of its "Negro question," effectively condemning African Americans in those states to some eighty years of Jim Crow terror. This is to say that the meaning of a Confederate Battle Flag displayed at the University of Mississippi or the University of Alabama in 1955 would have been different than the meaning of the same flag displayed at Nevada Southern, where it would have been a symbol of "secession" only. To be sure, this is not to minimize the horrors of slavery or the Confederacy, but rather to make the point that we should guard against imputing to college students some 60 years ago our own much more nuanced and much more complete understanding of the Confederacy and all it stood for.

This is borne out by the crucial fact that Nevada Southern quite simply was in no way a segregationist institution, as were the University of Mississippi or the University of Alabama in the mid-1950s. According to Dr. Moehring, "in the first year or two there were only a handful (20–35) of students, so probably they were white kids. But by 1954 or so there were several hundred students; I assume that some were African American." Adds Dr. Green, "so far as I know, there was no rule against African American students, and there already had been a few—not a lot—at the Reno campus." In fact, Nevada Southern's first yearbook, 1957's *Le Reveil*, included several photographs of African-American students. By way of comparison, it is worth noting that 1957 was the year Arkansas Governor Orval Faubus ordered State National Guard troops to block nine African-American students from integrating Central High School, thereby initiating the critical Little Rock Nine crisis of the early Civil Rights Era. Finally, at least as early as 1959–1960, the Nevada Southern men's basketball team counted a few African-American students as players.

While Nevada Southern may have had a Confederate Battle Flag on its student newspaper masthead until 1962 (when it was replaced by an image of Beauregard), it provided a far more egalitarian and non-racist environment than the city in which it was located. Conversely, Las Vegas may not have

had Confederate imagery in its official materials, but it certainly embodied that spirit with its segregationist policies on the Strip that earned the city the infamous “Mississippi of the West” title. This is where people have failed to make the important distinction between Las Vegas the city on one hand, and Nevada Southern the institution on the other. Commentators think about Las Vegas in the 1950s as a segregated town, and they assume that because Nevada Southern used Confederate imagery to thumb its nose at northern Nevada it shared that same racist attitude. But that is a mistaken assumption. Nothing about Nevada Southern—its immature use of Confederate symbols notwithstanding—indicated acceptance of racism or segregation.

Students at an actually racist and segregationist institution such as the University of Mississippi would have doubtless found curious the suggestion that Nevada Southern shared any of that school’s core segregationist principles merely because it had a cartoonish Confederate wolf on its student newspaper masthead and as a mascot. The University of Mississippi, or Ole Miss, allowed the enigmatic African American James Meredith to register as a student on October 1, 1962 only at the hands of Federal Marshals and only after an onslaught of campus riots and violence the previous night that resulted in two deaths and over 300 injuries. When we talk about 1950s- and 1960s-era racism and segregation, we are talking about vicious and violent attempts to suppress the opportunities and the lives of African Americans. Nothing of this sort was in existence at Nevada Southern. In fact, the October 10, 1962 edition of the *Rebel Yell* contained an editorial titled ““Ole Miss”” that commented on an earlier refusal of the Mississippi Governor to allow Meredith to register:

We thought the Civil War was over, but it seems as if it hasn’t ended at all. Governor Ross Barnett committed the faux pas of the year when he defied President Kennedy and the U.S. Constitution, in order to keep “Ole Miss” segregated. It will be a long time before the state of Mississippi and its University regain the stature it held before September 24, 1962. We have compassion for the South, James Meredith, the University of Mississippi ... and Governor Ross Barnett.

The words of this editorial illustrate for us the clear fact that cartoon wolf or no, there was simply no correlation between the Rebels of the University of Mississippi and the Rebels of Nevada Southern. Note the organization of the final sentence. That organization and the earlier references to criticizing

Barnett, to his having “defied” the president and the Constitution, and to the ensuing loss of stature make plain that the ellipses before Governor Barnett’s name indicate the need for extra compassion in his case due to his moral failure. African American basketball player Silas Stepp, who played for Nevada Southern from 1962–1966, would not have even been allowed to be a student at the University of Mississippi, or have been allowed to represent the institution on the court. Nor did any Nevada Governor ever “stand in the schoolhouse door” at Nevada Southern as did Alabama Governor George Wallace at the University of Alabama in 1963 in order to make a show of denying admission to two African-American students attempting to register.

It is impossible to seriously imagine the student newspapers at the Universities of Mississippi or Alabama publishing the article by student Jim Beaver found in the March 26, 1964 edition of the *Rebel Yell*. That article recounted a three-day “Equality Conference” at Pomona College in California at which five Nevada Southern students and one faculty member were delegates, and that also featured speeches by such civil rights giants as author Louis Lomax, James Farmer of CORE (Congress of Racial Equality), and James Foreman of SNCC (Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee). The article noted the “superb organization” of the conference, the Nevada Southern delegates’ “enthusiastic and spontaneous response” to the speakers, and the delegates’ desire to “relate their experiences” from this event. Significantly, the February 12, 1964 edition of the *Rebel Yell* included a piece titled “Need Delegates To Civil Rights Conference,” that called for applications to the conference and noted further that “delegates expenses will be paid by CSNS.” These student government and student newspaper actions would be unimaginable at an institution that held actual Confederate values.

This research suggests that it is far past time to reject and correct the inaccurate notion of any “Confederate past” at Nevada Southern or UNLV that meant anything beyond a symbolic thumbing of the nose at the political powers of northern Nevada. What we see instead is a progressive institution whose practices were the exact opposite of the racist and segregationist institutions of the American South. To be sure, one may take the position that “the early Nevada Southern students used Confederate symbols, and therefore they were racist and evil,” but to do so would require ignoring the reality on the ground at

Nevada Southern. In fact, any equating of Nevada Southern on one hand, and the University of Mississippi or even the city of Las Vegas on the other, in regard to actual racial segregation is unjustified by the facts. All of this demonstrates that the immature and undeniably unfortunate Confederate symbolism at Nevada Southern was nonetheless confined to the idea of resisting the political power of northern Nevada, and had nothing to do with any sort of segregationist attitude regarding African Americans, a point that is woefully under-publicized.

Rebels Speaking Truth to Power

When one reads early editions of the *Rebel Yell*, one comes across complaint after complaint—not against UNR directly, but against Regents and Carson City legislators. Certainly, Nevada Southern did eventually develop a desire to separate from UNR and to become an independent, stand-alone, four-year institution in its own right, but the primary force that stood against that vision, at least at the beginning, was not UNR. The principal power that attempted time and time again to crush that Las Vegas dream emanated from Carson City and northern Nevada generally. A review of a few articles and letters from the student newspaper will be instructive here in illustrating that UNR was not perceived as a threat but that political powers were.

A November 14, 1956 article titled “MEMO TO THE REBELS,” demonstrated a spirit of cooperation with the parent institution:

Orchids to Nevada Southern’s faculty, student body officers, and student body because of the steady growth of school spirit since school started. With constant steady support of our school activities and administration, we cannot fail in rapid development of our campus. One of the most important projects is the development of an understanding between our campus and the Reno campus achieved in part by our active participation in the Reno homecoming. It was fun, and those of you who attended know you’ll find that the more you participate in school activities the more you will want to undertake. So until next time, I remain (very proudly so)

Beauregard Wolf

A September 4, 1958 article titled “RIVALRY” advocated a similar sentiment that does not conform to today’s typical, erroneous understanding of the early relationship between Nevada Southern and UNR:

It is rather stupid to become involved in any argument which involves Reno or Las Vegas and Las Vegas or Reno. There is no **or** involved. It is Reno **and** Las Vegas; if you live in the southern part

of the state it may be Las Vegas and Reno but at no time is there any reason to think of the two campuses in a spirit of rivalry.

To be sure, there was a concern about the continued build-out of Nevada Southern and the resources that would be devoted to that effort. In a somewhat tongue-in-cheek commentary on the UNR President from the October 10, 1958 edition, in a piece titled “Grounds for Fear?,” the paper articulated that concern. Note that Dr. Armstrong is referred to as “our President”:

While reviewing the quoted words of Dr. Armstrong, which were carried in the Sagebrush we could not help but view with alarm his statement, “...**Modernization of existing facilities and equipment should be considered before expansion...**” We can only hope our President, Dr. Armstrong did not intend his statement to cover the campus of Nevada Southern. After registration this fall we have student [sic] overflowing all existing facilities (such as we have). If we at Nevada Southern must wait until the mother campus in Reno is revamped, it is not at all improbable (that like a person suffering malnutrition) Nevada Southern could lose its excellent faculty and the majority of students, wasting away into nothingness from lack of attention when it was needed most.

The true vitriol was reserved for the powers that held the state’s higher-education purse strings, which would be the legislators in Carson City and the Board of Regents. As I have mentioned above, although UNR was of course implicated by virtue of being the parent school and the favored institution, it was not itself perceived initially as holding Nevada Southern back through any action of its own. In a December 15, 1961 article titled “Action Demanded for Nev. Southern,” Kathie Tobin made clear that powers other than UNR were working against her institution as she made the case for the importance of adequate funding support for both Nevada Southern and Clark County in general:

We should all be thinking about the immediate problem which exists between the Reno Campus and the Nevada Southern Campus. NSU is obviously getting the short end of the deal concerning financial assistance which is so badly needed. Our campus is in dire need of an adequate book store, cafeteria, and dormitories, etc. We must face the fact that if we wait for the minds in Reno to make the decisions and to allocate the money which is needed to handle NSU, we will all be grandparents. This same type of partiality exists not only in relation to the University, but also in allocation of State money for roads, buildings, etc., which favor the Reno area — giving Reno the gravy and Las Vegas the crumbs. Unquestionably the Southern Nevada and Reno areas will eventually be compared to Los Angeles and San Francisco. Clark County is going to outstrip Washoe County in the coming years. The financial benefits from the university to the community cannot be measured. Many towns in the country have grown and prospered, over a period of years, because of their university alone. The university provides a source of revenue for the local merchants. It also provides for a rise in population which results in an overall betterment of the community. A prosperous and growing university can do nothing but good for the community. NSU seems to be having a difficult time moving ahead as fast as it should.

The final example I shall draw on in this connection comes from a letter to the editor written by Janet Hadland, and published in the January 31, 1962 issue of the paper. Titled “Treat NSU Equally With Reno — Demands Student,” Hadland skewered the Board of Regents for its favoritism of UNR over Nevada Southern:

Hooray for Regent Ray Germain! Nevada Southern has at least one ally on the University Board of Regents! In a recent meeting of the Board of Regents, Germain voted against the budget proposed for the next fiscal year because only \$10,000 was appropriated as a salary for an assistant to Dean Carlson. Germain stated that he felt NSU was not getting the consideration it should since a top man could not be had for the post for that salary. “I think Nevada Southern deserves a quality person,” he added. Well, thank you Mr. Germain, so do we! However, we seem to be in the minority on that question. This move seems to us to be one more example of the subtle determination of the people up north to push Nevada Southern into the background. We may be mistaken, but really, is \$10,000 an ample salary for an assistant dean? Can the position be filled by a qualified person for this amount? Germain also stated at the meeting that both Reno and NSU are “quality institutions and deserving of equal treatment and consideration.” Is Mr. Germain the only regent who holds this opinion? Don’t the other members of the Board feel that NSU and Reno deserve equal consideration? Evidently not, or they would have taken action on their belief. Indeed, is Mr. Germain the only person **anywhere** who feels that NSU and Reno should be given equal consideration? He is the only person whom we have heard voice this opinion. No one seems to want to take a stand. Well, **should** Reno be given more consideration than NSU? If so, why? Because it is older? Are people opposed to the growth of Southern Nevada? If it should not be given more consideration, why has not anything been said about several obvious moves placing Reno before NSU in consideration? Mr. Germain stated that he is “firm and determined that we (the regents) shall accord the Nevada Southern campus the same consideration which should be given to the Reno campus.” We’re with you 100% Mr. Germain! And if we are not given fair and equal consideration with the Reno campus, we are prepared to fight for it! Our campus is still new and under-developed. We are experiencing growing pains and our unfair treatment only aggravates the condition. Our campus must be treated equally with the Reno campus if we are going to develop into a full-fledged university. All we want is an even break with Reno. It that too much to ask? We are not asking for **more** than our share of consideration — just our share.

These *Rebel Yell* pieces by Nevada Southern students illustrate their frustration over the development of the institution, a frustration that echoed the difficulties encountered by their elders in establishing the Southern Regional Division in the first place. They also demonstrate that the traditional account of “rebellion” against UNR being the source of a Rebels identity is unfounded, as the acrimony was actually directed against political forces in Carson City and Reno, not against the University of Nevada itself. The identity of Nevada Southern students as Rebels stemmed from these multiple frustrations. Commencing even before the first college students in Las Vegas were relegated to attending classes in Las Vegas High School’s auditorium dressing rooms, this foundational Rebel identity predated the adoption of the Confederate symbols used to express that frustration with the north, and it continued

to gain momentum through time—illustrated perhaps most notoriously by Nevada Southern University students hanging Nevada Governor Paul Laxalt in effigy in 1967 upon his suggestion that his state budget would be inadequate for expansion of the southern campus.

Over time, as a natural rivalry developed between the state's two higher education institutions, Nevada Southern students did begin to direct some of their ire at UNR, which is what people think about in their assumptions regarding UNLV's nickname as Rebels. But that redirecting of southern student anger began long after their official declaration of themselves as Rebels in 1955. In the February 14, 1991 edition of the student newspaper, W. Morgan Fisher wrote a retrospective article titled "Release from UNR's grip," in which he wrote that "all of the school's records were kept in Reno and although by 1961 NSU was one-third the size of UNR, it received one-tenth of the annual funding. Even for students to complete their degrees they would have to transfer to UNR; and, then after graduation it would still took [sic] nine months to receive diplomas." In 1955, Nevada Southern didn't even have a campus or a building of its own, and was not in any position to think about splitting from the UNR it had been joined to only eleven months earlier. But that began to change with the continued rapid growth of both Las Vegas and Nevada Southern.

Toward the end of the 1963 Nevada legislative session, the UNR student newspaper, the *Sagebrush*, published an editorial that was critical of equal funding between UNR and Nevada Southern. Commenting on Nevada Southern's determination to pursue equality, that editorial (reprinted in the May 1, 1963 edition of the *Rebel Yell*) declared:

Evident of this determination is the moniker they have tacked on the southern regional division—"Nevada Southern University"—although "NSU" is only considered on a par with any of the University's seven colleges. The latest move toward equality took the form of a 50-50 split on book appropriations. The Reno campus got \$125,000 and old "NSU" took in a like amount. If this action is any indication of things to come, then the main campus will be placed on a two-way appropriation dole with its southern fledgling in the future. This means two things: (1) Nevada Southern, even with a 50-50 split, will not be equal to the Reno campus in the foreseeable future, and (2) the University of Nevada will fall behind in its effort to raise itself to a competitive position with other universities. The University of Nevada is on the move in academic circles. It has Ph.D. programs, a library that is on the way up, improved faculty and academic standards, and some branches. It must be remembered that Nevada Southern is a branch—a southern regional division—and nothing more. If Las Vegas continue their pressure for equality, they will succeed only in weakening the University as a whole. The most sensible action on their part would be to

finance expansion themselves. The main campus, serving an entire state in all levels of post-secondary education, must not be weakened by the pressure of sectional interests.

In a preface to this reprinting of the *Sagebrush* editorial, the *Rebel Yell* editor, Wendell Johnson, wrote: “The editor of the SAGEBRUSH, Reno campus newspaper was hanged in effigy last week by a Nevada Southern student. I have this to say about that: It is too bad that he was not hanged for real.”

Nonetheless, despite a growing insecurity on the part of UNR that caused it to move publicly into the same oppositional territory that northern Nevada legislators and the Board of Regents had occupied previously, it is important to recognize that Nevada Southern students’ original identity as Rebels stemmed from the lack of support and outright antagonism they felt coming from Carson City and the Regents. While some might see this as a minor or trivial point, it is crucial in confirming that the Rebel identity predated the adoption of any Confederate imagery designed to later express students’ disaffection with the political power of northern Nevada.

Resilience and Affirmation of the Rebel Identity

The foregoing is not meant to suggest a lack of introspection on the part of Nevada Southern students regarding the name they gave their newspaper or the Confederate Battle Flag on its masthead. A brief review of some of that introspection will be useful. On April 20, 1955, the first edition of the *Rebel Yell* appeared. In an article titled “Rebel Yell Makes Debut On Campus,” the paper announced that “this weeks [sic] marks another ‘first’ for Nevada Southern. It comes in the form of the recently organized student newspaper, **The Rebel Yell**. We feel that **The Rebel Yell** is an appropriate name for the paper because Nevada Southern students are often called Rebels.”

A few years later, on September 4, 1958, the editor at the time revisited the issue of the paper’s name. Under a title asking, “How Come Rebels?,” the editor wrote:

Many persons including your editor have had misgivings regarding the rather ambiguous name that our paper bears, **The Rebel Yell**. The name seemed abnormally odd when one considers that the Comstock financed a good portion of the Union’s expense during the War between the States. We decided to investigate the matter and at last can place before you the facts and logic that led to the name, **Rebel Yell**. In keeping with all good college traditions every college has a nickname for its athletic teams and students; Nevada Southerners are known as The Rebels. We live in the Southern part of the state, we are removed from the home campus and would at times (when under

duress from the home campus) dearly like to secede from the home campus; we therefore, think of ourselves as Rebels.

Note the crucial importance of the fact that the first reason given was the already existing identity of Nevada Southern students as Rebels, and that the joke about seceding from UNR was the third reason. Significant also is that this was written in 1958, as the secession joke would not have even made sense in 1955.

A January 6, 1960 editorial highlighting the newspaper's history over the previous nearly five years allows us insight into an intriguing and instructive objection to the masthead's Confederate Battle Flag:

The first edition created much student enthusiasm and some public furor. It seems that a local woman's patriotic group objected to the confederate flag which appeared on the masthead of the paper. This group claimed that the flag was not in the least patriotic and even wrote a letter to the staff demanding that the flag be removed from succeeding editions. The demand was not taken lightly in as much as, at that time the public was being asked to contribute funds to purchase the land where Nevada Southern is now situated. The staff did not want to alienate any group which was helping in the fund drive. After much discussion the staff finally elected to keep the flag as a part of the REBEL YELL. It has remained with the paper ever since.

This example is instructive because it illustrates the very limited way in which the Confederate Battle Flag was understood by Nevada Southern students and, it would appear, by the public as well. Note that the women's group claimed that the flag was unpatriotic, which can only be a reference to the fact that the South seceded from the Union and eventually lost the Civil War. The flag of the United States of America would be the only flag this group would consider to be patriotic. Note also, in the stated objection, the absence of anything relating to slavery or civil rights. This may seem strange to us now, but as noted in the discussion of historiography, popular understandings of slavery, the Civil War, and the Confederacy are far more advanced today than they were in 1955.

Thinking back to that inaugural edition of the *Rebel Yell*, it is important to remember that in April of 1955, what we now understand as the Civil Rights Era was only barely beginning. The Brown Decision had of course been rendered by then, but all the remaining events we associate with that era had yet to occur. The Montgomery Bus Boycott; the murder of Emmett Till; the Little Rock Nine crisis; the Student

Sit-In Movement and the birth of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee; the Freedom Rides; the integration of the University of Mississippi; the failed Albany Campaign; the successful Birmingham Campaign; the murder of Medgar Evers; the March on Washington; the Birmingham church bombing; Mississippi Freedom Summer; Bloody Sunday in Selma; the Civil Rights Act of 1964; the murders of Chaney, Goodman, and Schwerner; and the Voting Rights Act of 1965—none of these historic events had yet taken place. Nor had the crucial strategy to invite violence against non-resisting civil rights workers and to then use television as a means to bring those embarrassing images (embarrassing to an America trying desperately to convince African and Asian nations that, unlike the Soviet Union, the US was a respecter of human rights) into America's living rooms been at that time adopted by Martin King, who in 1955 was still nearly two years away from founding the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. In this context, it is not difficult to see why the women's group would complain about the Confederate Battle Flag on the masthead of the *Rebel Yell* in terms of patriotism only, as opposed to civil rights.

Student introspection extended to the Rebel identity as well. In a fascinating display, Page 2 of the November 15, 1960 edition of the *Rebel Yell* contains a full-page banner asking "Should We Change Student Body Name?" The remainder of the page was taken up by three pieces titled "LET'S NOT BE REBELS ANYMORE!," "CHANGE OF NAME LEFT UP TO STUDENT BODY," and "WILL THIS CHANGE HELP US?" The first was an argument for changing the name, the second was merely informational, and the third was an argument for retaining the name. On the bottom of the same page was a questionnaire for students to fill-in, cut out, and turn in to 226 Grant Hall, which was the student government room. The questionnaire indicated that "Sidewinders" was a name that had been mentioned as a possibility. Unfortunately, the next issues either do not cover the outcome of the vote or are missing. However, we can infer quite obviously that the vote to change the name must have failed.

As the years passed, the Confederate imagery began to fall away without fanfare. Instead of the Southern Belle introduced in 1955, Nevada Southern students were by 1957 crowning a Cotillion Queen. Change was slow but steady, and the mounting civil rights incidents mentioned above surely contributed to a growing sense of awareness on campus that regardless of intention, Confederate symbolism could be

implicated in more than simple secession. By 1959, the Confederate Battle Flag and an image of a “winking, thumb-up” Beauregard were alternating on the *Rebel Yell* masthead. By 1962, the flag disappeared completely and only the Beauregard image appeared. The year 1968 in particular was a pivotal one for progressive thinkers and university students. That year saw protests at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago; race riots in Baltimore and Washington, DC among others; the Orangeburg Massacre in South Carolina; and most prominently, the assassinations of Martin King and Robert Kennedy. In 1969, Las Vegas suffered its own race riots on the Westside. By 1969, Beauregard was also off the masthead, replaced by the official university seal. In 1968, the first year Nevada Southern fielded a football team, the helmets sported Confederate Battle Flags; yet those flags were done away with quickly the following season. Nevertheless, two particular Confederate symbols proved to be more durable: the *Rebel Yell* student newspaper name and the mascot Beauregard. This situation would soon change, however, in an unprecedented and rapid campus upheaval.

Final Rejection of Confederate Symbols

In a November 3, 1970 “SPECIAL ISSUE,” the *Rebel Yell* reported that on October 23, a CSUN (now standing for the Confederated Students of the University of Nevada) “Rebel name change committee” had concluded that the Rebels nickname should be changed. The next issue of the *Rebel Yell*, published on November 16, 1970, contained three letters to the editor commenting on the proposed name change. A letter from African-American student Bert Babero, Jr. supported changing the nickname, also complaining about the Beauregard mascot and Confederate flag-waving at university athletic events. A letter from “A Thinking Student” supported the Rebels nickname. Finally, a letter from Assistant Professor Donald Hendon suggested that CSUN might be wise to “more explicitly state their reasons for the name change.” He also cited the recent decision of American Motors to change the name of one of its models from “Rebel” to “Matador.” Interestingly, Professor Hendon noted that “American Motors’ market research department found that many Americans of both liberal and conservative persuasions found the name ‘Rebel’ more associated with student radicals than with the south,” which was why American Motors decided to change the name of the car.

On January 19, 1971, the *Rebel Yell* changed its name to the *Yell*, and also announced that the vote to remove the Rebels nickname had failed. This issue featured a banner at the top that read “WE’RE STILL REBELS,” and contained an election recap of the student vote to retain the Rebels nickname. Additionally, the article made the tantalizing statement that the nickname “has been a controversial issue ever since the University of Nevada, Reno, tagged that name onto this university.” While I have not found evidence that it was UNR that “named” Nevada Southern students as Rebels prior to 1955, the assertion would be, if correct, yet one more piece of evidence that the nickname came first and the Confederate symbols afterward. It can most likely be attributed to yet another misunderstanding of Nevada Southern history, however; as it would have made no sense for UNR students to give that sort of notice to the tiny Las Vegas branch program at its inception.

When Nevada Southern University became the University of Nevada, Las Vegas in 1969, the student government changed its name from the Confederated Students of Nevada Southern to the Consolidated Students of the University of Nevada. Dr. Moehring reports in his book that “with President Baepler’s encouragement [which would have put it in 1973 or later] the CSUN Senate voted to amend its constitution and change the government’s name from the ‘Confederated Students of the University of Nevada’ to the ‘Consolidated Students of the University of Nevada.’” Thus was born CSUN as we know it today.

Another challenge to the Rebels nickname took place in the fall of 1973, when the *Yell*, in a September 4, 1973 article titled “Time For A New Nickname,” stated that it would lead an active campaign to change the name due a presumed Confederate connection. Two weeks later, in the September 18, 1973 edition, an editorial titled “YELL Signature Drive Begins,” announced a petition campaign for this purpose. According to the editorial, “CSUN elections for some Senate seats will be held during the second week of October, and by then there should be enough signatures to have the issue of a new name put on the ballot.” The same edition of the paper, in an article titled “Mascot Change Asked,” noted that “a move is afoot on campus to get rid of the UNLV mascot which has a negative connotation of the Southern Confederacy to many persons.” Over the following several weeks, there were a few

articles and letters suggesting alternative names; however, I found no coverage of a vote on the nickname in the October or November 1973 issues. It could be that there was a *Yell* elections special issue that has not been preserved, but to find nothing additional over those weeks suggests so little student interest that the petition did not garner the requisite number of votes to place the name change item on the ballot.

Whatever the reason might have been, we know that the *Yell* effort to change the Rebels nickname did not succeed. The “move afoot” to replace the Beauregard also faltered, although it is important to note that at some point in 1973 Athletics ceased using Beauregard on its printed materials. Despite this reprieve, however, the time remaining to the wolf mascot would not prove to be long.

In May 1975, the CSUN Senate deposed Beauregard. The October 17, 1975 issue of the *Yell* contained a column titled “CSUN Senate,” under which was the article “New Mascot for UNLV Rebels...”:

The death of Beauregard the wolf and the adoption of a new mascot was one of the decisions made in last week’s Senate meeting. Last May, the Senate voted that the Wolf symbol and its Confederate connotation, which has been the Rebel mascot since UNLV’s break with the Reno campus, had to go and should be replaced with something symbolic of the American revolutionary war. As a result, six sketches were drawn up and hung in Athletic Director Bill Ireland’s office during the summer. The rendering finally adopted, a militiaman with a longrifle, was the overwhelming favorite of students, athletes, regents, and faculty members alike.

Note that incorrect information was given regarding when Beauregard and the Confederate symbols were adopted, which was in 1955 and therefore well before any break with UNR, by which I presume is meant 1965—the year Nevada Southern became Nevada Southern University. In the October 29, 1975 edition of the *Yell*, under a section titled “Campus Update,” the paper noted:

The CSUN Senate has officially adopted the Colonial Rebel of 1776 as the new UNLV Rebels’ mascot. It replaces the old Confederate rebel, Beauregard the Wolf, which was considered offensive by some students, and will be more in keeping with the active Bicentennial celebration across the country.

Hey Reb!

However, despite Student Body President John Hunt having worn the Colonial Rebel costume during the NCAA Final Four, the east coast militiaman did not have the requisite staying power in southern Nevada, and UNLV went without a mascot for several years. So dire was this situation that there

were calls to reinstate Beauregard in order that UNLV would have some kind of mascot. This is where the 1982 Mascot Committee came in and began its work of developing a new, non-offensive, non-Confederate mascot. Despite the careless commentary that one comes across from time to time, Hey Reb! did not evolve from Beauregard, nor did he evolve from the militiaman. Hey Reb! was a brand new creation, born from scratch in 1982 as a Western pathfinder through the work of a local artist and a UNLV committee.

The committee had its first meeting in July of 1982. I do not have the minutes for that meeting, but I have read the minutes and memos of the committee's meetings from August 5, August 10, September 30, October 4, October 20, and November 4, 1982. Those minutes show the deliberations of the committee and its commitment that the new mascot must not have any Confederate connection. The August 5 minutes concerned the fact that initial acceptance of a design by Assistant Football Coach Williams Briggs would have to be rescinded, as Coach Briggs would not agree to relinquishing ownership of the design. According to the minutes, "Whatever mascot we accept in the future, the design must become the property of UNLV. To prevent exploitation of our trademarks/logos, this office has control responsibility for all UNLV trademarks and they are protected through registration with the Secretary of State." As of July 1, 1982, the licensed marks for UNLV were the "Sunburst Logo," "University of Nevada-Las Vegas," "Runnin Rebels," "UNLV," "UNLVino," and the "football helmet with special graphics on REBELS." A little known fact is that Beauregard was never an "official" mascot of either Nevada Southern or UNLV.

During the September 30 meeting, the committee decided that local artist Mike Miller's initial rough design should be pursued. This was because his design was seen as the best of the five designs submitted, and also because he was willing to do the work and relinquish ownership of the design to UNLV for \$1. Director of Alumni Relations Fred Albrecht is quoted in the minutes as having said that "whatever mascot design the committee picked, it would have to be kept synonymous with the Runnin' Rebels and anything identifying with the confederate symbol would still offend black students/athletes." Here at the beginning of the design and selection process it was clear that the new mascot would have to

be obviously non-Confederate. This commitment can be seen in the suggestion of Assistant Athletic Director Dennis Frinfrock that “the costume on the ‘Hey Reb’ figure be changed to look more western and less like the confederate figure,” and Mr. Miller’s response that he “would do another round of sketches using this figure and present it to the committee by Monday, October 4.”

Mr. Miller’s refined sketches were reviewed by the committee at the October 4 meeting. According to the minutes: “At this point all committee members present had a chance to observe refined sketches and all members were pleased. Dr. Daniels [Dean of Students] stated that he thought the ‘Hey Reb’ figure was a big improvement and doesn’t see any possible objection to that mascot figure.” The October 20 minutes noted that “CSUN ratified the basic mascot concept at Senate Meeting held Tuesday, October 19.” A November 4 memo from committee chair and Public Services Information Director Les Raschko addressed two important items. CSUN had been expected to pay for the costume, but unfortunately found itself unable to, leading to uncertainty as to when the new mascot could appear publicly. The memo noted that the Alumni Association had “offered the fund the construction of the mascot costume,” thereby removing that hurdle. Mr. Raschko also stated that “one date I’m looking at to publicly introduce the mascot is at the December 9 basketball game with UNR.”

The new mascot did debut on December 9, 1982 as planned, and I think it will be useful here to provide the introduction copy used by the public address announcer before the game:

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN: AT THIS TIME, WE WOULD LIKE TO INTRODUCE A VERY SPECIAL MEMBER--AND THE NEWEST MEMBER--OF UNLV'S LINE-UP OF OUTSTANDING ATHLETIC TEAMS. BUT FIRST, A BRIEF EXPLANATION TO SET THE SCENE: OUR NEW TEAM MEMBER ISN'T WHAT YOU WOULD CALL THE TYPICAL FOOTBALL, BASKETBALL OR BASEBALL STAR. NO, HE STANDS IN A CLASS BY HIMSELF. IN FACT, HE STANDS ABOUT SIX-FOOT-SIX, SPORTS A CLASSY RED AND WHITE UNIFORM, TOTES A MOUNTAINEER'S MUSKET AND WILL PLAY A KEY ROLE IN THE SUCCESSFUL OUTCOME OF EVERY REBEL SPORTING ENDEAVOR. BUT YOU WON'T FIND HIM ON THE FIELD OR COURT, DRIBBLING, PASSING OR CALLING THE PLAYS. INSTEAD, YOU'LL FIND THIS CHARACTER JUMPING UP AND DOWN BESIDE YOU IN THE STANDS, WAVING HIS 50-GALLON HAT IN THE AIR, AND IN GENERAL HOOTIN' AND HOLLERIN' TO BOOST REBEL SPIRIT ON THE SIDELINES. IF YOUR CURIOSITY IS GETTING THE BETTER OF YOU, TAKE A LOOK AT TONIGHT'S GAME PROGRAM. ON PAGE _____ YOU'LL FIND A PICTURE OF THIS NEW FACE IN THE REBEL ATHLETIC SCENE. AND YOU'LL FIND OUT A LITTLE OF THE LEGEND THAT HELPED CREATE THIS UNIQUE CHARACTER. BY NOW, WE HOPE YOU'RE REALLY CURIOUS TO FIND OUT WHO IT IS WE'RE TALKING ABOUT. BUT BEFORE WE OFFICIALLY INTRODUCE THIS MYSTERY MAN, A WORD OF

THANKS IS IN ORDER TO UNLV'S ALUMNI ASSOCIATION AND TALENTED LOCAL ARTIST MIKE MILLER, WITHOUT WHOSE EFFORTS THE NEW UNLV MASCOT WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN POSSIBLE. ALSO CREDIT TO UNLV'S DEPARTMENT OF THEATER ARTS AND COSTUME DESIGNER GAIL LEHTINEN. SO REBEL FANS, PLEASE JOIN ME IN WELCOMING OUR NEW UNLV MASCOT--HEY REB!

Taking most of its content from a December 3, 1982 press release written by Betty Van Winkle, the December 9, 1982 edition of the *Yell* also introduced the new mascot under the heading "Ra! Ra! Ra! 'Hey Reb' Premieres At UNLV-UNR Game":

UNLV's long awaited mascot will make his debut this Thursday, Dec. 9 in the Las Vegas Convention Center at the UNLV-UNR basketball game. His name is "Hey, Reb," or "Reb," or "Mr. Reb," if you prefer. He's no slouch at 6-foot-6 inches of Rebel strength and vitality. He's a mountain man with an oversize hat and rifle, dressed in a long coat with "Hey, Reb!" written on his back; pants with a tall pair of boots; a large belt buckle bearing the initials UNLV; and a large head with a huge handlebar moustache, hat and feather. "Hey Reb's" outfit was made by costumier Gail Lehtinen of the UNLV theater arts department. "It is a character that well represents a rebel, a mountain man," said Public Information Services Director Les Raschko. "We don't think it will be offensive to any particular group. I think this will be well accepted in many, many ways. It has been hyped and timed, and everyone has been very thrilled by what they have seen," Raschko said. "He has a collegiate atmosphere about him that fits in." "The character's trappings can easily be identified with the West. He is a rugged individual, the pathfinder of 100 years ago," said Mike Miller of Kelly-Reber and Miller Advertising. Miller provided the costume design and all rights to its use for a total fee of \$1. "UNLV has been a very good client, and I wanted to put something back into the university," Miller said. A committee of student government, athletic department, student services and university public affairs representatives selected Miller's design from a number of submissions. The committee chose "Hey, Reb" because it seemed to best represent the image of a Westerner, rather than a Confederate rebel.

The above description of Hey Reb! leaves no doubt whatsoever that everything about the way he looks was designed expressly to represent a 19th-century pathfinder. The claim that his outfit or anything about him is Confederate is simply inaccurate. The drawing accompanying the article—showing his shoulder, elbow, bottom-of-coat, and pant fringes, as well as the feather in his hat—negates the suggestion that he is a Confederate in any way. I spoke with committee chair Les Raschko and committee member Fred Albrecht, both of whom told me that the express goal of the Mascot Committee was to produce a mascot that would be accepted and embraced by all members of the UNLV community.

Ms. Van Winkle's press release also included several significant items that were not reprinted by the *Yell*. She noted the fact that "several figures have represented the UNLV Rebel as logo designs, such as the minuteman and a wolf in Confederate clothing, but there has been no official mascot, animal or

human, until now.” Additionally, the press release stated that “Explaining the Alumni Association’s decision to fund the costume, Bill Terry, association president, noted, ‘We were looking for a mascot that would put an end to past disagreements over the official mascot and would unify the alumni, student body and community. We decided all of these segments of the community could rally around the new mascot.’”

Finally, Ms. Van Winkle wrote that “UNLV adopted the Rebels name for its athletic teams a number of years ago, drawing the idea from the natural rivalry that accompanied the split between UNR and UNLV.” I have seen these exact words still in existence today on UNLV materials and websites. As is clear from my earlier findings in this report, I disagree with this assertion. Nevada Southern in 1955 was not seeking to break away or split from UNR. Housed in Las Vegas High School, Nevada Southern might have had a long-term vision of establishing itself as an independent institution one day; but it first needed its own campus, buildings, and dormitories. Its students considered themselves part of UNR and were happy with that relationship for the time being. What they were not happy with was the disparate treatment Nevada Southern was receiving vis-à-vis UNR from Carson City legislators and the Board of Regents. As we have seen, Nevada Southern quite understandably adopted the Rebels identity in response to that treatment. Suggestions to the contrary are the result of projecting the eventual rivalry between UNLV and UNR backward through time in an ahistorical way.

It is important to acknowledge that when Hey Reb! made his debut against UNR in Las Vegas on December 9, 1982, there was no criticism that he was a Confederate or looked somehow like a Confederate. Mike Miller and the Mascot Committee had accomplished their task of creating a non-Confederate, Las Vegas-themed mascot successfully. In a December 14, 2010 personal email to Senior Associate Vice President for Alumni Relations Jim Ratigan, Mr. Miller wrote about his conception of Hey Reb!:

I did some rough ideas based on the character that took into consideration Southern Nevada history. Few people really realize that Southern Nevada was an important part of the road west in the 1840’s. Mountain men and pathfinders took the southern route to the coast of California regularly. The old Spanish trail was the track taken by wagon trains, trail herds or horse to barter with the Mexicans as well as all the staples of life. All passing through stopped at the Springs and at Blue Diamond for the only sources of water. John C. Fremont on his military mapping, Kit Carson as a scout, Bonneville and many more. Just note all the streets that are named for them in

the downtown area. I fashioned the character after those pathfinders and explorers. His leathers, feather and robes were common for the times.

In order to understand the full significance of the fact that the new mascot was not Confederate-themed but was instead based on actual Las Vegas history, and the relation of these facts to the current debate, it will be helpful to put ourselves in the position of the UNLV students and employees of 1982.

Beauregard had been deposed some seven years earlier, the Patriot mascot lasted only a year, and the school has had no mascot the past several years. So unacceptable is this situation that a small number of people are actually calling for a return of Beauregard just so that UNLV can have a mascot. The entire campus understands why Beauregard was deposed, and as a result there is a hyper-sensitivity to Confederate symbolism. As the Mascot Committee begins its work of developing a new mascot, anything even remotely resembling the Confederacy in a new mascot would be sensed immediately by everyone. Thus, when Hey Reb! debuts and there is no complaint, concern, or suggestion that he is a Confederate, the campus community—including African-American students and employees—has thereby given its acknowledgment that the mission has been accomplished successfully.

The notion that the committee created a Confederate-themed mascot in the wake of UNLV having just deposed a Confederate-themed mascot simply doesn't make practical sense. According to 1977 Student Body President John Hunt and Professor Emerita Dr. Esther Langston—both of whom played major roles in the effort to depose Beauregard—UNLV students and employees wanted to be rid of all Confederate references and desired simply to be Rebels. Therefore, they went back to the idea of the original Rebel identity without it being dressed in any added-on Confederate symbolism. Any suggestion that it is not possible to disengage the already existing Rebel identity from the Confederate symbolism later appended to it is rendered false by the fact that Mr. Hunt, Dr. Langston, and thousands of others in the intervening decades have in fact done just that. The UNLV community accepted Hey Reb! upon his initial appearance, and it was a resoundingly positive response. There were not the complaints or protests about the new mascot one would have expected if people were in any way dissatisfied with the choice. I

reviewed the next several *Yell* editions following Hey Reb!'s debut and found not a single dissenting editorial, article, or letter.

It is important to remember that the people involved in and affected by this in the fall of 1982—students, employees, fans—were all “in the moment” in a way that we, 35 years later, cannot hope to be. This was the same generation of UNLV students and employees that had deposed and banished Beauregard. This generation was attuned to the need to rid the campus of Confederate symbols. In addition to there not being any note of protest in the student newspaper, I also spoke with students and employees who were present in the fall of 1982, and who stated unanimously that Hey Reb! was accepted by the campus community as its new mascot. It stands therefore as a particularly dissonant chord for some to suggest today that the UNLV community in 1982, having selected a new mascot to completely close the door on Beauregard, was incapable of distinguishing a Confederate mascot from a non-Confederate mascot. If any group of people would have been able to detect even the most remote trace of Confederate symbolism in a mascot, it would have been the students and employees of UNLV in 1982. The fact that the *Yell* was silent in terms of any complaints about Hey Reb! provides crucial proof of his having been seen and accepted as the Western pathfinder he was designed to be.

A final word about Beauregard will provide an interesting transition away from Hey Reb! Beauregard suffered a somewhat ignominious fate that ironically preserved him for historical purposes when UNLV's former gymnasium was converted into the Marjorie Barrick Museum in the 1970s. In 1978, Museum Director of Grants & Contracts Pattie Baldwin stepped in at the last minute and saved the image of Beauregard that was inlaid onto the basketball court from being sanded away into oblivion by a remodeling crew. Fortunately for the image, the crew had made only one pass with the sander. After being saved from erasure, Beauregard then spent more than ten years underneath the museum's first major exhibit, an ichthyosaur fossil. When the exhibit of the Nevada state fossil was dismantled in 1991 due to its not being displayed properly, the image of Beauregard was once again visible. The February 14, 1991 edition of the student newspaper (now named the *Yellin' Rebel*) contained the headline “Former UNLV mascot discovered,” and recounted the story of Beauregard's disappearance and reemergence. The

article also quoted UNLV President Don Baepler, saying that Nevada Southern and UNLV's past Confederate symbolism "had nothing to do with the Civil War....It was just the symbolic meaning of the South rising up against the North."

Upon rediscovery of the image, and despite some calls for its destruction, it was instead given a restoration that preserved it. The Fall 1993 UNLV Foundation Newsletter titled *it's academic*, documented the rediscovery and restoration under the heading "Beauregard Gets a Facelift." However, although housed in a museum the image existed in an uncontextualized state that left some visitors wondering what it was and why it was situated there. More recently, the decision was made to install interpretative signage that would provide some much-needed context. Some might argue that there is a measure of poetic justice or penance in Beauregard's having been forced to exist beneath the fossilized remains of an aquatic reptile for over a decade.

One by one, the Confederate symbols that had been appended to the original Rebels identity were stripped away until there were none remaining. Beauregard was the final symbol to be deposited, and once that was done in 1975—four decades ago—there was nothing left to erroneously link the Confederacy to the Rebels nickname. This insistence was maintained even through the occasional bump. Dr. Green reports an incident regarding someone having hung a Confederate Battle Flag in an athletic venue:

There was a confederate battle flag in the sports arena that Dean Daniels objected to and it was removed. This would have been in the 1980s, I think. Considering that a lot of people have continued to use the flag thoughtlessly, and that our school took it down when an objection was raised about 30 years ago, I think that speaks to the history of our sensitivity on the issue.

It is critical to acknowledge that in the midst of the introspective moments when Confederate symbols were eliminated—Confederate Cotillion from campus life, Confederate Battle Flag from the newspaper masthead, Beauregard from the masthead, the move from Confederated to Consolidated Students of the University of Nevada, the *Rebel Yell* title from the student newspaper, Beauregard from Athletics materials, Beauregard from campus altogether—the Rebels nickname also sometimes came up for debate. This happened in 1960, in 1970–71, and also in 1973, but in every case the Rebels name was maintained by students. It would seem that this is because Nevada Southern and UNLV students rejected

the allegation that the name had a Confederate connection, that Rebels represented to those students an identity that had nothing to do with Confederate ideals, and that they rightly saw the name Rebels as both preceding and transcending any presumed Confederate link.

In fact, in the mid-1980s, Athletics printed tee-shirts designed to reaffirm the Rebels identity that has always been associated with Nevada Southern and UNLV. The photo below of one of these shirts was given to me by Paul Pucciarelli, who has been UNLV's Athletics Equipment Manager for the past 31 years.



The definition on the shirt reads: “an individual’s aggressive attitude to fight for what one believes in.” Despite the indication of it being a noun on the shirt, the definition given is actually for the adjective “rebel,” as in someone having a rebel stance or outlook, but this does not impact the key point being made. Mr. Pucciarelli told me that he has seen many student-athletes come to UNLV over the years, sometimes with nothing in their possession but the bags slung over their shoulders. He told me that year

after year, he has seen those student-athletes embrace the Rebel identity as a confidence builder and motivator.

Scarlet and Gray

Prior to concluding this section, a note about school colors is in order. UNLV's scarlet and gray colors are sometimes assumed to have their origin in Confederate symbolism, but the situation is actually far more complex. In fact, there are as many as three competing theories. The first is, as mentioned, the assumed link to the Confederacy. However, I have been unable to verify this assumption through independent means. In an all-too-typical example of the frustrations of research, the October 25, 1954 edition (Issue 3) of Nevada Southern's first student news instrument, *Nevso News*, which was produced on a mimeograph or a spirit duplicator, contained a short piece titled "SCHOOL COLORS." According to the text:

At a recent meeting of the student body of "Nevada Southern", one of the topics discussed was the selection of school colors. The colors nominated were; Turquoise and Yellow, Sage Green and Gold, and Turquoise and Black. Every color suggested means certain characteristics of Nevada. Voting will be held this week in Mrs. Andrews office and the colors selected will go with the two representatives to homecoming in Reno, November 3 through the 6th. Be sure and vote for the colors you like best.

I sat at my table in Lied's Special Collections and reached, breathlessly I'm sure, for the next copy of *Nevso News* in the folder. Unfortunately, the immediately following edition of *Nevso News* (Issue 4) was missing and the next, and presumably final, copy of the "paper" (Issue 5) made no mention of the outcome of the vote in Mrs. Andrews' office. According to Dr. Moehring's book, "the entire student body therefore met to decide what the school's colors should be ... but there was no consensus. The familiar scarlet and gray colors of the old Confederacy came in the next year when CSNS adopted the Rebel name and mascot." This account of non-consensus does not seem to correlate with a vote, though, as unless the vote's outcome was a three-way tie between the already determined choices there must have been a winner. Unfortunately, Dr. Moehring no longer has his notes for the source of this statement, which I asked after, and so it must remain a mystery. So while we do know that scarlet and gray were chosen

ultimately, there is reason to doubt that they were chosen to represent the Confederacy, and the next two theories will explore those doubts.

The second theory comes by way of Barbara Givens, who enrolled at Nevada Southern as a freshman in 1955. In an oral history she provided in 2005, she talked about the early days of the school and about how a group of “about seven or eight” students turned a coffee shop on Tenth and Charleston into their student union. It was in that coffee shop that they formulated some of the earliest student aspects of Nevada Southern. While providing several examples of how some of those early aspects took on a “confederate motif,” Ms. Givens nonetheless explained that the school colors were determined this way: “Reno’s colors were silver and blue, so we picked silver and red.”

UNR’s official colors are indeed silver and blue, as are the state colors of Nevada; however, UNR’s colors are sometimes expressed as grey and blue. According to UNR’s Office of Marketing & Communications, “Since silver ink is difficult to read, PMS Cool Gray 10 (or an equivalent screen of black) is actually the preferred color for printed materials.” Again, despite the fact that some of the choices they made were based on a “confederate motif,” Ms. Givens’ explanation of the school colors choice sounds more like a case of those students simply choosing the color wheel opposite (or near opposite) of UNR—“Reno’s colors were silver and blue, so we picked silver and red.” In any case, it is an intriguing theory.

The most compelling of the three school color theories was related to me by Dr. Green, who indicated that he received it from a long-time Las Vegas resident who is a contact of his. As we know, Nevada Southern was located initially at Las Vegas High School. Until Rancho High School opened in 1955, Las Vegas High was the only public high school in the city of Las Vegas. Therefore, until Rancho High graduated its first senior class several years later, essentially all Nevada Southern students in the first years were graduates of Las Vegas High. This would have presented an interesting dynamic, as those students would have had a loyalty to their old high school and also to their new college branch, which were both located in the same building. Since the school colors of Las Vegas High were red and black, the Nevada Southern students chose scarlet and grey, as this would tie their new college to the local

community by giving a nod to Las Vegas High, but would also be different enough to distinguish it from the old high school that they of course were no longer students of. James Bilbray confirmed to me that his understanding upon arriving at Nevada Southern in 1959 was that the scarlet and gray school colors were based on the red and black of Las Vegas High, which he was also a graduate of.

Which school color theory is correct? Without some form of independent, documented verification it is impossible to say with certainty. People will have to determine for themselves which account is more likely or more reasonable. The official record, as it were, remains silent on this question.

Historical Analysis Conclusion

When one considers the post-Charleston impulse to interrogate and remove Confederate imagery where it still exists today, especially on public property, it is an absorbing panorama that would have seemed impossible just moments before the horrific incident that inspired it. Much has happened in a very short time. The Confederate Battle Flag was indeed removed from the South Carolina Statehouse grounds, the University of Texas at Austin removed a statue of Confederate President Jefferson Davis from its campus, and Ole Miss has removed the Mississippi State Flag—with its insert of the Stars & Bars (or Saint Andrew's Cross) portion of the Confederate Battle Flag—from its campus. Across America the names of buildings are being questioned, as people seem intent on taking advantage of the moment before it possibly expires. In the midst of this national reflection over Confederate symbolism, UNLV can take well-deserved pride in the fact that its students and employees stood up and performed the necessary work to resolve this issue four decades ago. Several generations ago UNLV underwent the self-reflection, it removed the symbols, it replaced them with better and positive symbols, and through it all the university community retained its original Rebel identity and its steadfast insistence on charting its own destiny with or without the concurrence of the rest of the state.

The foregoing historical analysis demonstrates that the Rebels nickname is not a Confederate reference and that Hey Reb! does not have a Confederate connection. These are indisputable historical facts; however, there are those who nevertheless insist that the opposite is true in one or the other, or both

cases. The next section will catalogue the most common arguments I heard made against the Rebels nickname and the Hey Reb! mascot during the Listening Exercise.

Section 5

Analysis of Common Arguments

Given that the Nevada Southern Rebel identity predated the use of any Confederate symbols to express dissatisfaction with the political power of northern Nevada, what accounts for the persistence of the claim that the nickname has a Confederate reference? And given that the Hey Reb! mascot was designed explicitly to have nothing whatsoever to do with the Confederacy—coming into existence as it did in the wake of UNLV students and employees having deposed Beauregard—what explains the claim that Hey Reb! has a Confederate connection? Some of that persistence can be traced to people not actually being aware of the history, and we can hope that this discussion allows more people to become conversant with the historical record. However, there are some who will acknowledge all or a significant portion of the facts and still make these claims. During my conversations in listening meetings and other venues, I came across several themes that tended to be repeated, that tended to comprise what one might call the most common arguments against the Rebels nickname and Hey Reb!

The most common argument by far that I encountered during the Listening Exercise was the claim that Hey Reb! either is or looks like a Confederate. So recurrent was this misperception that I feel it deserves an extended analysis. After that analysis, I shall consider the remainder of the arguments I heard.

Hey Reb! and the Argument from Appearance

It is an objective fact that Hey Reb! contains no Confederate references. This is unassailable, as was demonstrated in the Historical Analysis section of this report. Hey Reb! is not dressed as a Confederate; he is dressed as an 1800s Pathfinder. He does not look like a Confederate; he looks like an 1800s Pathfinder. Hey Reb!’s clothing is precisely Western in nature—not Confederate, not plantation, not cowboy, but Western. This was a point of emphasis for both creator Mike Miller as well as for the members of the Mascot Committee, all of whom wanted a character with a Las Vegas connection and that would also have absolutely no relation to the Confederacy. Nonetheless some people still claim that Hey Reb! looks like Confederate, an assertion that requires some unpacking.

What is actually meant by stating that Hey Reb! looks like a Confederate regardless of the fact that he is not wearing Confederate clothing? Unfortunately, this assertion leads down the path of a kind of racial stereotyping that would surely be considered outrageous if it were employed in other contexts. When people say that Hey Reb! “looks” like a Confederate despite the fact that he is not wearing Confederate clothing, they are saying that his face “looks” like a Confederate face, which is taken to be the face of a racist. In this sense, to say that Hey Reb! just “looks” like a Confederate is no different than saying—based on faces alone—that the man over here just “looks” like a criminal, or that the woman over there just “looks” like she is undocumented, or that the group of people up ahead just “look” like terrorists. That this is hugely problematic is obvious, as racial stereotyping should be odious to us regardless of who is applying the stereotype to whom. One brand of racial stereotyping is no more acceptable than another.

Despite the fact that it will enmesh us even deeper into racial stereotyping, it is necessary to go a bit further in interrogating why this use of racial stereotyping is in fact not even accurate in terms of what the stereotypers have in mind. We may begin to get at this with a question that the argument from appearance begs, but that it never asks outright. That question is, “Precisely what does a Confederate look like? like Jefferson Davis? like Alexander Stephens? like Robert E. Lee? like Rhett Butler? like Colonel Sanders? like Virgie Cary?” The question is as unanswerable as answering the question of what a Union supporter looks like. Obviously, Confederates have no particular “look,” and as we already know, Hey Reb!’s outfit certainly bears no resemblance to that of a Confederate soldier.

However, there is a particular “look” that is being invoked in the argument from appearance. That “look” is something along the lines of an imaginary, genteel, antebellum plantation owner, sipping a mint julep on the veranda prior to his taking up arms (likely as a Colonel) for the Confederate army. This person would have a droopy white mustache and petite goatee on his chin, and he would be wearing a stereotypical (often white) “plantation suit” (think Colonel Sanders here, or to a lesser extent Boss Hogg) with a string necktie or bowtie. He would also tend to be slender of figure, likely to reflect some sort of refined and graceful air. What we have here, then, is not a “real” Confederate, but a rather ridiculous and

stereotypical cartoon image of one. This is a key point, because if the argument from appearance is intended to be taken seriously, we are left with judging comparisons to cartoons.

One such cartoon that has been asserted to have a stunning similarity to Hey Reb! is the former mascot of the University of Mississippi. However, an actual evaluation of the claim reveals it to be insupportable. Excepting the mint julep, the former Ole Miss mascot looks exactly as I have described above: droopy white mustache, petite goatee, plantation suit, string necktie, and slender body. How does he compare to Hey Reb!? Muscles aside, Hey Reb! has an enormous white mustache and an equally enormous chin with not a single shaft of hair on it, both of which serve to cover nearly his entire face. We already know that Hey Reb! is not wearing anything close to a plantation suit, but instead is wearing strictly Western garb. Even leaving that significant difference in clothing out of account, it simply is not accurate to assert that Hey Reb! and the former Ole Miss mascot look anything like each other, let alone enjoy a stunning similarity.

Would anyone say that Hey Reb! looks like Santa Claus? Even apart from the red outfits and hats, they both have white facial hair, with Santa Claus having a mustache and large beard while Hey Reb! weighs in with his enormous hairless chin and gigantic mustache. But the comparison fails, as with or without considering the clothing, the idea that Hey Reb! and Santa Claus look anything alike would surely be seen as ridiculous; as would, one supposes, a claim that Santa Claus looks like a Confederate. What about the Terrible Herbst icon? He sports a red outfit and a large handlebar mustache. Since his mustache is black, does he therefore look like a young Confederate? The very question is, one hopes, rhetorical.

An example from actual life will be instructive here. Let us compare the appearances of two men who have been in the news in recent years—Herman Cain and Ben Carson. They are within five years of each other in age, both wear glasses, both are African American, both have or have had the highest political aspirations, but one has a mustache and goatee while the other has a mustache only. What would be the reaction if someone were to assert that Herman Cain and Ben Carson bear a stunning similarity to each other? The public outrage in response to such a clumsy return of the old, “all black people look alike

to me” stereotype would be instant and strident. No person could utter such an obviously preposterous statement in public without receiving considerable censure; yet Hey Reb! and the “cartoon Confederate” are at least as far apart in appearance than are Mr. Cain and Mr. Carson.

To continue the theme of what Confederates and trailblazers look like, in one listening meeting where the argument from appearance was invoked, English Professor Douglas Unger quickly reeled-off the names of a dozen Western pioneer-types who either through physical appearance (i.e., facial-hair-styling) or clothing bore an actual resemblance to Hey Reb! Professor Unger’s knowledge was useful, serving as a validation that Mike Miller and the Mascot Committee had indeed created a figure representing a Western pathfinder. To put it most plainly, this is the value of working from actual knowledge of historical fact.

Finally, it would bear well to mention an unfortunate consequence of the argument from appearance. At UNLV, we have employees who meet this presumed “visual criteria of Confederate-ness,” so to speak. We have employees, longstanding and upstanding employees, who have white hair and white mustaches or goatees, or both. If the argument from appearance is to be taken seriously, we must then necessarily agree that these employees look like Confederates, that they look like racists. Are we ready, as an institution, to tread down that road? Shall we shun those employees who have white hair and white mustaches or goatees? Shall we aver that they bear a stunning similarity to Confederates? Shall we declare as a result that these employees are unworthy of representing the university? One hopes not, as even asking these questions in a hypothetical context is distinctly distasteful.

Other Arguments

- The original Rebels identity cannot be disentangled from the Confederate symbols that were later used to denote Nevada Southern’s disaffection with Carson City and the Board of Regents. This claim is proven false by the fact that tens of thousands of UNLV students and employees have done just that over the past four decades, to say nothing of the external world that makes no link between the Rebels name and anything having to do with the Confederacy.

- If anyone misperceives the Rebels name or Hey Reb! to be Confederate references, then the institution should change the name and mascot. This is a version of the argument that perception is more important than reality. While there are indeed many contexts in which such an argument might be considered valid, one must in this case evaluate which of the following is more appropriate for an institution of higher education: (1) operating as though a misperception were actually true or (2) working to provide education as to the facts of the matter.

- The nickname and mascot are divisive. The problem here lies in misunderstanding the meaning of “divisive” in the current context. Mere disagreement, particularly disagreement that is enormously lopsided, is not divisiveness. If it were, opposition to gender-neutral restrooms on campus would be divisive. But such opposition isn’t divisive; rather, a tiny campus minority finds gender-neutral restrooms problematic.

- As the second most diverse campus in the nation, the Rebels nickname and Hey Reb! are inappropriate for UNLV. This criticism actually makes the opposite point, however. In addition to being tied for the second most diverse campus in the nation, UNLV has for the past five years placed in the top ten. Clearly, new students are identifying at an increasing pace with the nonconventional and nonconformist mystique of the Rebel identity and are embracing both that identity and the Hey Reb! mascot that embodies it.

- This issue has been confusing; therefore, UNLV should get rid of both the Rebels nickname and the Hey Reb! mascot. It is undeniable that the institution is responsible for some measure of the misunderstanding in regard to the nickname and mascot that this report aims to correct, but to assert that such confusion is a rationale for replacing the existing nickname and mascot would be counter to UNLV’s mission as an institution of higher education. One would hope that we do not react to student confusion surrounding calculus or advanced statistics by throwing our collective professorial hands in the air and declaring that it’s just too difficult to help students understand these subjects.

- Replacing the current nickname and mascot might result in a positive outcome. Indeed, it might, but we should ask seriously just how likely a scenario that would be. The Listening Exercise found

overwhelming support for the Rebels nickname and somewhat less but still strong support for the Hey Reb! mascot. Under what conditions might we imagine that taking those things away from a campus community that is enormously supportive of them would result in a positive outcome? The vast majority of UNLV students and employees would have the symbols they love removed—symbols that have been shown to have no Confederate connection whatsoever—and would then have to argue over and choose a new nickname and mascot. That is surely a scenario that would result in actual campus divisiveness.

- This examination of the nickname and mascot has taken so long that UNLV should replace them both. The fact is that the institution has been at this inquiry only since June 23, and for roughly half that time the campus was on summer break. One is hard-pressed to understand how a slightly more than four-month self-examination has somehow taken too long.

Analysis of Common Arguments Conclusion

History is at the heart of this inquiry into the Rebels nickname and mascot. History tells us what happened when, and it also tells us why. Those facts, as evaluated in the Historical Analysis section, are indisputable. The Rebels identity preceded any Confederate symbols; those Confederate symbols were used to indicate a fanciful desire for “secession” from northern Nevada political power only and had no connection to racism or segregation; and finally, the Hey Reb! mascot was designed explicitly to not have anything whatsoever to do with the Confederacy.

The present section has been concerned with claims made in spite of these facts. It has been concerned with claims that are either ahistorical or non-historical in nature, that either ignore the historical facts or do not depend on those facts for expression. In either case those claims have been shown to be unconvincing.

There remain, however, observations to make and suggestions to offer. Those observations and suggestions comprise the final section of this report.

Section 6

Observations and Suggestions

Misunderstandings and misperceptions surrounding the UNLV Rebels identity and nickname and the Hey Reb! mascot have been the primary drivers of the need for this report to have been written. Much of that confusion has been addressed in this report. In this final section, I offer comments designed to remove what might remain of those misunderstandings and misperceptions as UNLV moves forward.

The way the institution has until recently promoted Hey Reb! and also mentioned Beauregard should be changed, as it is one of the primary sources of confusion. Hey Reb! should be, not so much reintroduced to the university community; but he should be introduced more fully, in a way that was never actually done previously. His role as an 1800s pathfinder should be explained. What does he do? How does he live? Does he have a horse? What is the extent of his travel outside the southern region of Nevada? Is he multilingual? What does he eat? Does he prepare his own food? How difficult is it for him to find water? What is the purpose of his various articles of clothing and his accessories? Perhaps the History Department could be enlisted in providing some of the content for this introduction. Hey Reb! would then represent an outstanding and fun resource for teaching local children some significant facts about the history of Las Vegas and southern Nevada.

In order to heighten focus on Hey Reb! and who he is, mention of Beauregard should cease. I want to be absolutely clear here that I am not suggesting whitewashing of UNLV's history by any means. Rather, I am suggesting that Beauregard be left in the places he currently exists (the Barrick Museum, the pages of this report, and other historical documents) and not referred to constantly. I want to state also that based on what I have learned about him, Beauregard was a completely inoffensive fellow. There was nothing about him that would serve as a cause for criticism other than the fact that he was dressed as a Confederate soldier and waved a Confederate Battle Flag at athletic events. Those two things, however, are enough. Following is a current example of how UNLV has often kept Beauregard in the forefront:

Today it's Hey Reb! but some at UNLV still remember the first official Rebel mascot -- Beauregard. Dressed in a gray military field jacket and Confederate cap, Beau is a fanged, winking, black and white cartoon wolf. He came to be because the new school in Southern Nevada wanted to make a little jab at the Wolf Pack mascot of Nevada, Reno.

This sort of jovial treatment, especially reference to him as “Beau,” is inappropriate today. It is true that the Nevada Southern students who created Beauregard were not seeking to endorse the racist aspects of the Confederacy, but unless we are going to include with such text something akin to the full Historical Analysis section of this report to serve as context, the opportunity for misunderstanding is too great. Uncontextualized, such language gives the impression that UNLV today does not treat the topic of the Confederacy with the requisite seriousness, which is certainly an incorrect impression. Therefore, from media guides to web sites, I recommend that reference to Beauregard—at least the type of reference above—be removed. Finally, as another example of how the institution has itself contributed to misunderstanding, we know that Beauregard was not the first “official” Rebel mascot, as that distinction belongs to Hey Reb! UNLV should begin now to correct these misunderstandings wherever they exist.

Although the local Las Vegas media certainly does a less than adequate job of covering UNLV's history, whether in print or via broadcast, the primary blame for the inaccuracies of that history must be borne by the institution itself. The institution must become more aggressive in stating its true history and the meaning of its symbols. Any time a news article or television broadcast makes an incorrect statement concerning the institution's history or mascot, UNLV should insist on an immediate correction. Nor should UNLV feel any sensitivity about doing so, as local media tend merely to repeat what has been said about the institution rather than conducting actual investigative work. As such, it will take some time even with increased efforts at correctness for the historically accurate narrative to become established.

A word concerning the name of the student newspaper is in order here. While rebel and yell each are neutral terms, rebel yell on the other hand is a compound noun referring to the battle cry of the Confederate soldier. After being changed to the *Yell* beginning with the January 19, 1971 issue, the name of student newspaper was again changed to the *Yellin' Rebel* at some point, after which it alternated between *Yell* and *Rebel Yell*, as I have seen both names during my 18 years at UNLV. The current name is

the *Rebel Yell* once again, which, in the full context of the history examined in this report, must be seen as a disappointment. It is also important to understand that neither the UNLV administration nor the CSUN student government controls the student newspaper, making the best resolution one that can be obtained via cooperation with the paper.

In that connection, I am currently in talks with the newspaper's advisory board about changing the name to something else. Even *Yell* and *Yellin' Rebel* are problematic since they both invoke the idea of a rebel yell, which Penn State English Professor Craig Warren's new book (*The Rebel Yell: A Cultural History*), describes as "the ugliest sound that any mortal ever heard," and that "unnerved Union soldiers, who heard the threat before they could pinpoint its direction." Even though Warren's book notes that both Billy Idol's 1983 song "Rebel Yell," and "subsequent pop-culture references to the Rebel yell—a clothing line, a video game—also stripped it of a Civil War context, choosing to embrace a spirit of general rebelliousness," it seems to me that moving the name of the student newspaper away from anything having to do at all with the word "yell," while retaining Rebel if desired, is a necessary and positive step. As the only remaining vestige of the April 20, 1955 imposition of Confederate symbols onto the already existing Rebels identity (again, one that the university administration does not control), it should be removed. It would perhaps be a good exercise for UNLV students to choose a new name for their newspaper.

While there is near unanimous agreement that eliminating the Rebels nickname would be counter to the institution's best interest in terms of branding and marketing, there is less support (although still very strong support) for Hey Reb! One can certainly provide arguments for removing him. UNLV could do away with Hey Reb! because he is not particularly athletic, because he is a male, because he appears to be of European ancestry, because it is better for a mascot to be an animal rather than a human, or simply because he is kind of goofy looking (albeit in an endearing way). However, it is my view that UNLV should not get rid of Hey Reb! due to the incorrect criticism that he is a Confederate, either through his appearance or some other false connection. He is not a Confederate, he was designed explicitly to not have any Confederate connection whatsoever, and he does not look like a Confederate. To eliminate Hey

Reb! because he is a Confederate would be equivalent to eliminating him because he represents Cold War-Era Soviet global expansionism. Neither reason would be legitimate.

Yet the misperception, albeit among a small number of persons, persists. Throughout the many meetings I had with groups and individuals as part of the Listening Exercise, I attempted to gain a sense of why a minority of people feel that Hey Reb! looks like a Confederate. This became an important question to pursue since it is evident that his clothing is not Confederate, but Western; and also since he does not have any specific Confederate “look,” but instead looks like a 19th-century frontiersperson. Is there something that could explain this misperception? One thing that might possibly rise to the level of a theme is Hey Reb!’s hat. Although I am certain that artist Mike Miller knew precisely what a pathfinder’s hat looked like, people nonetheless tend to focus on the hat when pressed about their invoking of the argument from appearance. Perhaps some level of review should be given to the hat on Hey Reb’s head in order to see if a different, but still Western, hat could be introduced for him. Or perhaps it is the hat’s gray color. One could realistically make the hat brown or black without necessarily changing the school’s colors of scarlet and gray.

I have also thought that perhaps some of the misperception is initiated when Hey Reb! is not wearing his full pathfinder outfit; and is instead wearing something else, such as a men’s basketball uniform. When Hey Reb! is not wearing his red, obviously Western, fringed outfit and coat, and is instead wearing the white men’s basketball uniform, his gray hat may become more of a focal point. In such a case, the hat’s prominence may cause some people to become preoccupied with it, as opposed to the hat fitting in more aesthetically as it does with the pathfinder outfit. After all, a 6-foot-6 costumed character wearing a white basketball outfit and a large gray hat may present an internally incongruous appearance to some degree.

The pathfinder outfit v. sports outfit theory is an interesting one; however, having researched this history and having been a member of the UNLV campus community for the past 18 years, I must nevertheless say that I do not think the issue is the hat. It seems to me that what is happening is that some people are projecting onto Hey Reb! their incorrect belief that he is a Confederate, and are then justifying

that incorrect belief by claiming that either his outfit or his look is Confederate, which we know is simply not in alignment with the facts. As I have noted previously, the university is at least partially at fault in this misunderstanding by not having done an adequate job of explaining to the community who and what Hey Reb! is. People say that he is a Confederate and there is no subsequent call for correction. Local media report that Hey Reb! is Confederate-themed, and there is no subsequent call for correction. To my thinking, this is the real problem; but it is one that can in my estimation be corrected with a year's worth of focused communication explaining the facts about Hey Reb! and by leaving Beauregard in the museum drawer.

In a number of Listening Exercise meetings, I offered several suggestions for other changes or additions to Hey Reb! in an attempt to stimulate conversation along those lines. One suggestion I gave was to expand the possible skin tones for Hey Reb! from one to, say, four or five. The idea is that he would no longer be seen as being exclusively European-American. The different skin tones could be completely random, so that we might eventually lose the idea of Hey Reb! being a member of only one race or ethnicity. While perhaps a stretch in terms of the demographics of who might have actually served as pathfinders, it is nonetheless the case that a number of different groups were present in the 19th-century West. The end result, even if ambiguous historically, might be extremely positive in terms of more people feeling able to embrace Hey Reb! as representing them.

In the several sessions during which I mentioned this idea, it was received with some positive interest. However, one group rejected it on the basis of it being blackface, which was actually a misunderstanding of what blackface is. The ignominious practice of blackface—non-African Americans darkening their faces and engaging in buffoonish behavior—is certainly reprehensible; but this idea would not be a case of blackface. In fact, it would be something quite in the opposite direction, allowing African Americans, and others as well, to have a share in being depicted as the university mascot.

Another idea I mentioned to some groups was the creation of a Hey Reb! family, including “Hey Reba!” and “Baby Reb!,” the latter with a large mustache, of course. This family could even be “blended” by having the expanded skin tones applied to its members randomly if the university had the will to go

out on so progressive a limb. The same group that rejected the expanded skin tone suggestion also rejected this idea on the basis of the proposed family being heteronormative. Another idea, suggested to me just recently by someone else, was the notion of having Hey Reb! be a single parent to a “Baby Reb!” This idea came after the conclusion of the Listening Exercise, so I was unable to garner any reaction to it.

A final thought regarding Hey Reb! concerns the fact that his very large mustache has become something of an icon in its own right. The ‘stache has become as ubiquitous, if not more so, than Hey Reb! himself. Everywhere one goes on campus one sees tee-shirts, coffee cups, posters, and other materials having only the mustache on them, and it seemingly being enough to represent UNLV. It is as if Hey Reb!’s mustache has taken on a life of its own. Certainly, the mustache has become a kind of accessory icon to the Hey Reb! mascot. The suggestion could be made to eliminate Hey Reb! and keep the ‘stache, but I would think it unlikely that such an icon could survive the loss of its context, not to mention the difficulty (albeit perhaps not impossibility) of how a collection of hair could possibly represent the university at athletic events. To eliminate Hey Reb! would be to effectively eliminate both the mascot and his disembodied mustache.

In conclusion, this report, to my mind, disrupts and upends our own understanding of our history as an institution. It provides a panoramic assessment of the Rebels nickname, and of the Confederate symbolism that was used to express Nevada Southern’s anger at Carson City and the Board of Regents. It also provides a clear view of the fact that in contradistinction to that symbolism, Nevada Southern was a non-segregationist island adjacent to a sea of Las Vegas Strip racism. This is a story that has not been told, principally because no one has ever taken the totality of Nevada Southern’s early history and analyzed it along these specific dimensions. Somewhere along the way it became easier to focus on and magnify the symbols beyond their actual meaning on the ground at Nevada Southern, and that view then perpetuated itself without correction until UNLV found itself apologizing retroactively for attitudes and values it had never believed or expressed at any time during its as yet brief history. The time to correct those misperceptions is now.