



Written by [R. Cort Kirkwood](#) on February 9, 2024

## Lawsuit: Race-obsessed Writer and Deadspin Defamed Nine-year-old Boy, Parents With False Accusations of Hate, Racism

The family of an American Indian boy, whom a sportswriter falsely accused of wearing “blackface” and of learning “hate in the home,” has sued the writer and his publication.

The Armentas allege that Carron Phillips and *Deadspin* defamed the nine-year-old and the family and wrecked their lives.

The [Chumash](#) lad’s crime: He wore a traditional Indian war bonnet and painted his face red and black at a game of his favorite Kansas City Chiefs in November.

Phillips went off half-cocked and *Deadspin* pulled the trigger.



fabioderby/iStock/Getty Images

### The Lawsuit

The scene of the literary crime was a Chiefs-Las Vegas Raiders game. Phillips unloaded on the nine-year-old, the lawsuit says, after CBS showed the boy for a few seconds. It also showed a Raiders fan accoutered in his team’s regalia.

Phillips wrote a piece titled “The NFL needs to speak out against the Kansas City Chiefs fan in Black face, Native headdress” that included myriad falsehoods, the [lawsuit alleges](#).

Obsessed with the “racism” he sees in sports, the lawsuit alleges, Phillips wrote that the boy had “found a way to hate Black people and the Native Americans at the same time.”

“The Article made a series of false factual assertions,” the lawsuit alleges. “It asserted that H.A. was ‘in Black face’; that he was ‘doubling up on the racism’; and that ‘[o]n Sunday afternoon in Las Vegas, [H.A.] found a way to hate Black people and the Native Americans at the same time.’”



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# The NFL needs to speak out against the Kansas City Chiefs fan in Black face, Native headdress

They're doubling up on the racism. Are you going to say anything, Roger Goodell?

By [Carron J. Phillips](#) Published 9 hours ago



Chiefs fan on Sunday in Native American headdress and Black face. Screenshot: CBS

It takes a lot to disrespect two groups of people at once. But on Sunday afternoon in Las Vegas, a Kansas City Chiefs fan found a way to hate Black people and the Native Americans at the same time.

Phillips even went so far as to claim that the Armentas were racists, too:

The Article further made explicit, false statements about Shannon and Raul. It claimed that H.A.'s conduct of wearing blackface and a Native American headdress, and the NFL's failure to "speak out against it," indicated that the league was failing "to stop racism and hate from being taught in the home" — a clear accusation that Raul and Shannon taught H.A. to hate Black and Native American people out of a racist animus. The Article also stated that "[t]his [H.A.] is what happens when you ban books, stand against Critical Race Theory, and try to erase centuries of hate. You give future generations [H.A.] the ammunition they need to evolve and recreate racism better than before." This line had a double purpose: it further clarified Deadspin's intent to accuse Shannon and Raul of teaching "hate ... in the home," and implied that H.A.'s innocent costume was even worse than America's racist past, which includes slavery, Jim Crow laws, and lynching, by declaring H.A. to have "recreate[d] racism better than before."

H.A. wasn't wearing blackface — red and black are the Chief's colors — and his parents taught him no such thing. Nor does the Indian boy hate his own people.

On November 30, the lawsuit alleges, *Deadspin's* updated article mischaracterized a statement from the



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Chumash Indian tribe, and then refused to retract the article and apologize.

Amazingly, that update contained the original headline and photo of H.A., which defamed the boy again.

In yet another update, the editors removed “explicit references to H.A. but maintained the focus on the story on ‘a young fan’ who had allegedly committed wrongdoing — H.A. It also appended an “Editor’s Note” that called its targeting of H.A. ‘unfortunate,’ as its ‘intended focus was on the NFL and its checkered history on race’ — a backhanded and revisionist non-apology that left its core allegations unchanged.”

A third unsatisfactory update appeared on December 12, the lawsuit alleges, “making only minor edits to scrub two explicit references to ‘racism’ and one to ‘cultural appropriation.’”

Two days later, the Armentas again demanded a retraction. *Deadspin* “remained unrepentant.”

“It responded with a letter to the Armentas belittling them and downplaying the harm they have suffered,” the [lawsuit alleges](#):

Deadspin denied all culpability, stated that its updates “mitigate[d] any damages,” and then threatened to subject Shannon and Raul — the parents of a nine-year-old boy who *Deadspin* falsely accused of wearing blackface and hating his own Native American brethren — to “the possibility of paying our legal fees” should they elect to file a legal claim to vindicate their and their son’s rights.

## **Reputational Damage**

But smearing the Armentas wasn’t the only result of the Phillips-*Deadspin* hit piece.

The Armentas received death threats and “unhinged harangues” that called the boy a “p\*ssy,” a “n\*\*\*er, and a “motherf\*\*\*er.”

Raul’s work relationships have suffered, Shannon’s friendships are damaged, and the boy’s school performance has declined, the [lawsuit alleges](#).

“Since November, Raul has experienced a stark change in the behavior of his colleagues at work, colleagues who still have the misimpression that he has taught his child to hate in his home,” the [lawsuit alleges](#). As well, he “was once a highly-respected member of a close-knit team, and now is treated as an outcast. He has had to take significant leave from work to deal with the cascading crises and has expended significant funds to help H.A. navigate the harm. Raul has worried about his and his family’s future in the Chumash Indian community and among his friends.”

Shannon has lost friends because Phillips and *Deadspin* accused her of teaching her boy to hate. And she “has had to devote significant time to H.A.’s emotional and social well-being after the attacks from the Article and had to confront troubling incidents at H.A.’s school because of it.” The boy’s reading proficiency has suffered enough that a testing company recommended an “intervention.”

And somehow, Phillips shoehorned “racism” or “racist” into the article nine times, and “hate” appeared five times, “further bolstering the above statements’ defamatory intent and impact.”

Filed on February 6, the lawsuit seeks unspecified damages to be determined at trial.

Phillips, who so enthusiastically massacred the Armentas, hides his X feed.



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