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Raccoons: A Dive into the Misrepresented Representation

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The power of 15 raced toward the silhouette of a large weiner into the sunset. An anxious loom of defeat filled the air as the pack stopped at a red light on the corner of Lincoln Way and Beach Avenue. “We are law abiding,” explains Cody, one of the elder Raccoons who sat down with me to debunk the misinterpreted image Iowa State University students have attributed to his pack. Cody, much like the other Raccoons who live around campus must deal with the hardships of constant slurs, violence and extreme oppression.

It all started circa 2003 when a pack of 15 raccoons followed the scent of an Oscar Meyer Weiner truck into town, but lost the trail after admirably following Ames community pedestrian laws. “Not only did we lose the truck, we lost Cleetus son of Cooper son of Chad too. He was sideswiped by an ’88 Mercury Sable as we waited at the stoplight…” Cody trailed off to gain back his composure, “it’s been a hard time. We were lost, we had no choice but to make do with our surroundings and reacquire supplies until we were ready to leave Ames. In the meantime, we’ve had to deal with fitting in with the human population, which is violently oppressive.”

Cody’s emotion was evident and his intelligence was strong as he kept his pack positive yet firm. “I don’t understand why anyone would treat others this way. Discrimination is wrong. No one deserves to be treated less than another, it’s not right and it’s not okay,” says Cody.

“YEAH!” yells Cevin, another pack member, from the back row. “YOU DON’T INTERRUPT US TALKING, YOU DAMN SKUNK BABY!” casts down Cody, showing his stern leadership, and in startlingly unity the pack chants, ‘COON POWER’ in staccato.

However, a difficult past makes it even harder to accept Raccoons as equals on campus. Raccoons have had bad PR representation in the past due to an outbreak of rabies in 1987. “It ain’t those ‘coons’ fault! They got into a bad batch of Sunset Strips covered in sunscreen making them Heat Wilde but we’ve changed now. We should be viewed as equals in this world! I mean, it’s not like we’re skunks or something,” explains Cody as his pack nods in agreement.

Morale isn’t low, though. Raccoons all over campus are staying unyielding as they fight to be accepted as inhibitors of campus. A civil rights group within the pack of raccoons has upstarted with hopes to have a rally at the free speech zone by the library, fully equipped with informational pamphlets and Skittles. The pack has adopted the SHAMU Project, an acronym that stands for Staying Humane And Maintaining Understanding, a project that wills to inspire the passion in the hearts of those who understand their struggle, pain and most of all, optimism. “We’re just trying to get the student body involved in our efforts to be accepted on campus and not feared when seen,” Cevin says, who was allowed to speak by Cody. Cevin acts as the SHAMU Project’s marketing director.

The Raccoons hope that one day, all will hear the origin story of their arrival and understand the great lengths the group has endured and the hopes that discrimination will become a thing of the past. It hasn’t been an easy road, but it’s been a road nonetheless. If you know what we mean.