



Change the Mascot!

The Change the Washington Mascot Campaign

The Change the Mascot campaign is a civil rights and human rights effort asking the NFL to stop using the dictionary-defined racial slur as the name of the Washington football team. In the year since the campaign launched, Native American groups, athletes, sports icons, school boards, city councils, state legislators, media organizations, civil rights groups, religious leaders, Members of Congress and the President of the United States have all said it is time for the Washington team to make a change.

DICTIONARIES AND THE U.S. GOVERNMENT DEFINE THE R-WORD AS A RACIAL SLUR: The R-word is a term screamed at Native Americans as they were dragged at gunpoint off their lands. It is a dictionary-defined racial slur. Indeed, as National Public Radio's ombudsman reported, "Every dictionary I could find describes the word today as derogatory." Additionally, the U.S. government officially went on record saying the same thing in 2014. In early 2014, the U.S. Patent Office twice declared that the word is derogatory.

THE UNITED NATIONS SAYS THE NAME IS A HURTFUL REMINDER OF MISTREATMENT: In May of 2014, The United Nations independent expert whose job is to defend the rights of indigenous people called on the NFL to stop using the R-word because, as the UN said, it is a "hurtful reminder of the long history of mistreatment of Native American people in the United States." The expert said: "(The term) is inextricably linked to a history of suffering and dispossession, and that it is understood to be a pejorative and disparaging term."

SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH SAYS THE TERM HAS SEVERE CONSEQUENCES: Social science research has shown that the continued promotion of the R-word has serious cultural and psychological consequences for Native Americans. This research was presented at a forum during the NFL owners meeting in Washington D.C.

NATIVE AMERICAN GROUPS ASK THE NFL TO TAKE ACTION: Major Native American groups representing tribes all over the United States have joined the Change the Mascot campaign. These include the National Congress of American Indians, the United South and Eastern Tribes and the National Indian Education Association. Find a full list of these groups at www.changethemascot.org

ATHLETES AND SPORTS ICONS SAY WASHINGTON MUST CHANGE: Athletes have always played a critical role in civil rights crusades, and the Change the Mascot campaign is no exception. From Hall of Famer Art Monk to star cornerback Richard Sherman to all-pro linebacker Jason Taylor, professional football icons have said it is time for Washington to consider changing its name. Along with players, icons in the sports industry have also said it is time for Washington to change its name. Those include former NBA Commissioner David Stern, NBC announcer Bob Costas, former Oakland Raiders president Amy Trask, and ESPN's Bomani Jones.

SCHOOL BOARDS, CITY COUNCILS AND STATE LEGISLATURES SAY IT IS TIME FOR A CHANGE: As the Change the Mascot initiative has gained momentum, local and state officials are joining the campaign. In Houston, the school board voted to ban the use of mascots that lampoon Native Americans. In Washington, D.C. the city council passed a resolution asking the Washington team to stop using the R-word. In Maryland - where the Washington team plays - the chief executive of Prince George's County called on the team to change its name. And in New York, Republican and Democratic legislators introduced a bill calling for an end to the use of dictionary defined racial slurs as team names.

CONGRESS AND THE PRESIDENT SAYS IT IS TIME FOR A CHANGE: Republican and Democratic Members of Congress have been calling on the Washington team to change its name. In 2013, a group of U.S. House members wrote a letter calling on the league to change the name. Later that year, President Obama publicly declared that he believes it is time for the Washington team to consider changing the name. Then in May of 2014, 49 U.S. Senators signed a letter written by the Senate Majority Leader reiterating the same message.

CIVIL RIGHTS AND RELIGIOUS GROUPS SAY IT IS TIME FOR A CHANGE: Over the course of the last year, religious leaders and major civil rights groups have called for the Washington team to change its name. These include the NAACP, The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, It also includes 60 clergy members who signed a letter asking the NFL to change the name.

MEDIA ICONS SAY IT IS TIME FOR A CHANGE: Major media organizations have endorsed the central goal of the Change the Mascot campaign. For instance, the Washington Post editorial board has called for a change, and the San Francisco Chronicle has opted to stop using the R-word when covering the Washington franchise. Meanwhile, individual reporters have said it is time for a change. These include (among others) writers at USA Today, Sports Illustrated, the Washington Post, the Chicago Tribune and the Associated Press.