



Change the Mascot!

There has been an outpouring of universal praise from all corners of the country following yesterday's landmark ruling by the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office to cancel the Washington NFL team registered trademark.

Native Americans and Native Organizations

Amanda Blackhorse, petitioner

"It is a great victory for Native Americans and for all Americans."

"I hope this ruling brings us a step closer to that inevitable day when the name of the Washington football team will be changed."

"The team's name is racist and derogatory ... I've said it before and I will say it again — if people wouldn't dare call a Native American a 'redskin' because they know it is offensive, how can an NFL football team have this name?"

Suzan Shown Harjo, advocate

"It's a good day to win! ... I could not be more delighted about their decision today."

Ray Halbritter, Oneida Indian Nation Representative and Jackie Pata, National Congress of American Indians Executive Director

"The U.S. Patent Office has now restated the obvious truth that Native Americans, civil rights leaders, athletes, religious groups, state legislative bodies, Members of Congress and the president have all echoed: taxpayer resources cannot be used to help private companies profit off the promotion of dictionary defined racial slurs."

Brian Cladoosby, President of the National Congress of American Indians

"We were pleasantly surprised that the Patent and Trademark Office came out with their ruling today recognizing that this is a disparaging and offensive name that is being used by the Washington football team."

"... genocide and racism is definitely connected with this name."

Olympic Gold Medalist Billy Mills (Oglala Lakota)

"The U.S. Patent Office should never be used to defend a slur. NEVER — you can use caps."

"The Washington Football team claims to listen to public opinions, but many of us question if we've been heard. Today's decision will be heard."

Elected Officials

Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV)

“Every time they hear this name, it is a sad reminder of a long tradition of racism and bigotry. The writing is on the wall. It’s on the wall in giant, blinking neon lights. The name will change.”

Referring to the team’s owner, Reid added: “Daniel Snyder may be the last person in the world to realize this, but it’s just a matter of time before he’s forced to do the right thing and change the name.”

House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-CA)

Said in a statement that “slurs have no right to trademark protections ... The team that represents our nation’s capital should be a source of pride to all Americans.”

She added “It’s long past time for the Washington football team to choose a new name.”

Senator Maria Cantwell (D-WA)

“We’re so excited to know that finally people are recognizing that this issue can no longer be a business case for the NFL to use this patent.”

“This is not the end of this case, but this is a landmark decision by the patent office that says that the NFL team here in Washington, D.C. does not have a patentable name and that this an offensive term not patentable by the Patent Office.”

Rep. Betty McCollum (D-MN)

“It is time for NFL team owners to have the courage to speak out and pressure Dan Snyder to change his team’s racist name. Any effort by Mr. Snyder to appeal this ruling can only be viewed as a bigoted attempt to continue to profit from this racist team name at the expense of the dignity of Native Americans.”

Rep. Henry Waxman (D-CA)

Said the patent office “got it exactly right,” and “the NFL should take this decision to heart and force the team to change its name.”

Del. Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-DC)

Said the ruling “was close to inevitable,” and urged the team not to appeal and to “put this issue to rest.”

Washington DC Mayor Vincent Gray

“I am a huge fan of the Washington football team, and I am also a huge fan of changing the name of the Washington football team.” ... “This is yet another step in that direction.”

Civil Rights Organizations

Hilary O. Shelton, Washington Bureau Director and Senior Vice President for Advocacy and Policy, NAACP

“The NAACP commends the Trademark Trial and Appeal Board for their strong opposition to the racist and discriminatory name of the Washington Football Team, as well as other sports’ team names that degrade American Indians. It is our hope that the team owner Daniel Snyder would heed the board’s ruling and refrain from the use of the name, images and mascots that are deemed harmful and demeaning to the American Indian community. The NAACP has called specifically for this name change since 1992, and will continue to stand with the Native Indian community until the derogatory moniker has been changed.”

Wade Henderson, President and CEO of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights

“Today’s decision should spur the team ownership and the National Football League to seriously reconsider their position on this issue and to realize that they are on the wrong side of history. Many other athletic organizations, professional and amateur alike, have eliminated the use of offensive names, logos, and mascots without affecting the success of their teams or the loyalty of their fans.”

Laura Harris, Executive Director of Americans for Indian Opportunity

“Overwhelmingly, Americans understand this term is inappropriate and it’s time to change.”

Media Outlets and Writers and Personalities

The New York Times Editorial Board

“There is no question that the term “redskin” has been used as a racial slur for American Indians for hundreds of years and is on par with offensive terms used to denigrate blacks and Hispanics. And it is also clear that federal law prohibits the Patent and Trademark Office from registering trademarks that disparage people or bring them “into contempt, or disrepute.”

The Seattle Times Editorial Board

“It’s time to ban the use of “Redskins,” the absurd, offensive and outdated name of the NFL team in Washington, D.C.” ... “Past time, actually.”

“We’re banning the name for one reason: It’s offensive. Far from honoring Native Americans, the term colors an entire race. Many Native Americans consider it an outdated label placed on their people.”

The Los Angeles Times Editorial Board

“If it was possible to embarrass Washington businessman Dan Snyder into changing the patently offensive name of his Redskins National Football League team, the name would have been changed long ago. But if a ruling Wednesday withstands the appeal, Snyder won’t be able to claim the name as a trademark.”

The Washington Post Editorial Board

“Trademark decision against the Redskins is a victory for tolerance”

“... Mr. Snyder would be smart to take this as an opportunity. He is kidding himself if he thinks concerns about the continued use of an offensive name can be waved away as easily as a reporter’s question.”

Rick Morrissey, Chicago Sun-Times Columnist

“We should always defer to the group that is being reduced to a caricature, and a deferring is exactly what the U.S. Patent Office did Wednesday.”

“It’s time for Washington owner Daniel Snyder to change the name of the team. It was time when he bought the franchise in 1999.”

Jarrett Bell, USA Today Sports Columnist

“The decision validates what Snyder and the NFL have fought tooth-and-nail against: the team name is a slur. With its ugly roots traced to efforts to extinguish Native Americans in this land, it is disparaging to American Indians and their heritage.”

Ann Killion, SFGate

“If insisting on an offensive nickname will cost the NFL money, the league will finally grow a conscience. It’s about time.”

Jay Caspian Kang, The New Yorker

“Perhaps the only dispiriting aspect of what, on the whole, represents a landmark decision on behalf of Native American rights groups is that this debate needed to be had at all.”

Robert McCartney, Washington Post Columnist

“Dictionaries, American Indian groups and now a board of sober judges. They all reach the same conclusion. When will it sway Snyder and the NFL?”

Simon Moya-Smith, CNN Contributor

“This movement is about the dehumanization of Native Americans on every level -- not just in sports, but in media and Hollywood, as well. This is about respect and about the mental stability of our children.”

Roger Groves, Forbes Contributor

“The NFL has been playing defense on this issue for over a year, and the criticism is mounting, not subsiding. The NFL knows or should know it is on the wrong side of history on this one. If the controversy continues to swell, the NFL may have to have a Donald Sterling-like meeting among the owners to discuss the future selection of names or ousting of this hold-out.”

Dave Rappoccio, The Guardian Columnist

“It’s not a matter of whether the Washington football teams’ name will get changed, but when. Fans need to stop making excuses.”

Howard Stern

“You know, it’s so foolish. It *obviously* is an offensive name.”

Keith Olbermann

“It’s very sad that Snyder doesn’t realize that he is becoming the modern incarnation of George Preston Marshall.”

Jon Stewart

“Get a new name already, it’s the 21st century.”

Calvin Hill, former Washington NFL team player

“I actually took the time and looked it up in the dictionary to see what Webster said, and not only Webster but several of the other dictionaries as well and every definition I’ve seen defines it as says it is a negative term,” Hill said. “It’s the ‘N’ word except the ‘N word’ applies to African Americans and the term Redskins applies to Native Americans.”