



# Change the Mascot!

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## **Oneida Nation Rep. Ray Halbritter to Speak at Columbia & Harvard on Washington's NFL Team Name/Native American Empowerment**

**Oneida Nation Homelands (March 25, 2015)** A leading figure in the national movement to change the Washington NFL team's mascot, Oneida Indian Nation Representative Ray Halbritter, will appear at Columbia University and Harvard University in the coming days to discuss the growing name change campaign and how it relates to other critical issues facing Native Americans today. Halbritter will visit Columbia on Thursday, March 26 and Harvard on Monday, April 6, participating in several events at each campus.

In his engagements, Halbritter will speak about how today's popular culture still seeks to denigrate Native Americans, and how the forceful push back against such disparagement empowers Native communities to reclaim their sovereignty in a country that for too long has tried to marginalize indigenous peoples. He will also discuss how the movement to change the name of the Washington NFL team has come to symbolize a larger civil rights crusade by and for Native Americans.

At Columbia, Halbritter will participate in an Indigenous Forum speaker series and present to a Native American Economic Development class. He will also meet with the Columbia students

who created AlterNATIVE Education, a peer-education and mentorship program that gives high school students a forum to discuss issues facing Native peoples and encourages them to consider higher education.

During his visit to Harvard, Halbritter will be featured on a Dean's Panel presentation moderated by Dean and Law Professor Martha Minow, meet with the University's Native American Law Students Association, and speak to a group of students about negotiation and the future of indigenous peoples and tribal nation relations with the state.

Late last year, Halbritter appeared at Penn State for "A Conversation about Nicknames or Not," part of Penn State's John Curley Center for Sports Journalism Conversation Series, to discuss the damaging impacts of the continued use and promotion of the R-word racial slur.

Led by the Oneida Indian Nation and the National Congress of American Indians, Change the Mascot is a grassroots campaign that works to educate the public about the damaging effects on Native Americans arising from the continued use of the R-word. Since its launch, Change the Mascot has garnered support from a diverse coalition of prominent advocates including elected officials from both parties, Native American tribes, sports icons, leading journalists and news publications, civil and human rights organizations and religious leaders.

In recent months, the movement and its mission have seen swelling nationwide support and a ripple effect of advocates taking action. Just last week, Lancaster High School in New York became the latest in a string of schools across the country to remove the dictionary-defined slur as their mascot.

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