



Change the Mascot!

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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National Congress of American Indians and Change the Mascot Respond to Disappointing Supreme Court Ruling Upholding Derogatory Trademark

Oneida Nation Homelands (June 19, 2017) The National Congress of American Indians and the Change the Mascot campaign today responded to the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling this morning that federal trademarks can be registered, even if offensive or derogatory.*

Change the Mascot leaders National Congress of American Indians Executive Director Jackie Pata and Oneida Nation Representative Ray Halbritter issued the following statement:

“We are gratified that this Supreme Court case amplified the intensifying public debate over the NFL's support for bigotry against Native Americans. The work of Amanda Blackhorse and other leading activists fighting against the use of the R-word has been tremendously successful and critically important. They have invaluable raised awareness about the problems with mascots such as the R-word epithet used by the Washington NFL team, and brought the important issue of mascotization to the forefront of social consciousness.

“This is an issue we have always believed will not be solved in a courtroom, and this ruling does not change some very clear facts. Washington's football team promotes, markets and profits from the use of a word that is not merely offensive – it is a dictionary-defined racial slur designed from the beginning to promote hatred and bigotry against Native Americans. This is a word that was screamed at Native Americans as they were dragged at gunpoint off their lands — and the hate-infused meaning of the word is precisely why this particular name was given to the team by avowed segregationist and first team owner George Preston Marshall.

“And the problems caused by the R-word epithet are still very real and present today. Social science research has shown that its continued use has devastating impacts on the self-image and mental health of Native Americans, particularly children.

“At a time when social and racial justice issues are woven into the fabric of our country's sports culture, there is growing need and desire to evolve away from such outdated standards. This is evidenced by the outcry we've seen for the R-word name to be changed, from a diverse coalition of supporters including Native American tribes, elected officials from both parties, civil and human rights organizations and religious leaders, sports icons, leading journalists and news publications.

“If the NFL wants to live up to its statements about placing importance on equality, then it shouldn't hide behind these rulings, but should act to the end this hateful and degrading slur.”

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. This civil and human rights movement has helped reshape the debate surrounding the Washington team's name.

*Supreme Court upholds offensive trademarks as form of free speech, 6.19.17,
usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2017/06/19/supreme-court-upholds-offensive-trademarks-form-free-speech/100618478/

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