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Oneida Indian Nation Launches “Change the Mascot” Ad Campaign Against D.C.’s NFL Team

In First Ad Oneidas Ask: Will the NFL That Condemned Bigoted Language by an Eagles Player Now End the Use of a Racial Slur in D.C.’s Team Name?

ONEIDA NATION HOMELANDS (September 5, 2013) The Oneida Indian Nation today announced a new advertising campaign to urge Washington, D.C.’s professional football team to change its name. The first ads will air on sports radio in Washington, D.C. in advance of Washington’s season opening game against the Philadelphia Eagles. As the first radio spot notes, the National Football League’s Commissioner Roger Goodell was right to recently condemn an Eagles player’s usage of a racial epithet.

During a recent interview with ESPN Radio about Riley Cooper’s offensive remarks, Commissioner Goodell said, "Obviously we stand for diversity and inclusion. Comments like that, they are obviously wrong, they are offensive and they are unacceptable. There is no one that feels stronger about that than the NFL, our teams and our players."

The ad asks whether Goodell will now do the right thing and join the campaign to stop the Washington team from continuing to use a racial slur as its mascot and team name.

"As a proud sponsor of the NFL, we are concerned that the NFL's continued use of such an offensive term is undermining its position as a unifying force in America," said Oneida Nation Representative Ray Halbritter, who is featured in the radio spot. "America is a society that values mutual respect. Using a slur and making a mascot out of our indigenous culture has no place in such a society. We believe that with the help of our fellow professional football fans, we can get the NFL to realize the error of its ways and make a very simple change."

The ads are available at www.changethemascot.org There is also a request at that site for football fans to contact the NFL in support of the campaign to change the Washington name. The ad campaign will run for the entire NFL season, airing in the Washington, D.C. market for the season opener, and then in the cities where the Washington team will play road games during those game weeks. The ads will tell NFL fans why the league must stop using an epithet for any team, much less the one that represents the nation's capital.

In recent months, the NFL has faced increasing pressure for it to change the Washington team's name. In April, high school students in Cooperstown, NY voted to change their "redskins" mascot to another mascot, prompting a wave of national headlines about the continued use of the epithet in the NFL. In May, congressional lawmakers formally asked the league to consider a name change. Then only a few weeks ago, Washington Hall of Famer Art Monk told a D.C. radio station that "[If] Native Americans feel like Redskins or the Chiefs or [another] name is offensive to them, then who are we to say to them 'No, it's not?'"

"More and more Americans are speaking out and saying that it is unacceptable to use hurtful language to describe whole cultures," Halbritter said. "This is particularly true when it is an organization as influential as a professional sports league. We hope that when NFL fans across the country hear these radio ads in advance of their teams' games with the Washington franchise, they will speak out and tell the NFL to do the right thing. The time has come for a change - one that lives up to the ideals of mutual respect."

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