



## **Change the Mascot!**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media Contacts: Emily Schappacher  
United Church of Christ Communications Specialist  
(216) 571-8967  
[schappachere@ucc.org](mailto:schappachere@ucc.org)

Joel Barkin  
Oneida Nation V.P. for Communications  
(315) 361-8173  
[jbarkin@oneida-nation.org](mailto:jbarkin@oneida-nation.org)

### **United Church of Christ Central Atlantic Conference Passes Resolution Calling for Washington Football Team Name Change and Calls for Member Boycott**

*With support of Native American groups, the Central Atlantic Conference of the United Church of Christ calls for more than 40,000 local church members in D.C. region to boycott Washington football team and merchandise*

NEWARK, Delaware (June 14, 2014) The Central Atlantic Conference of the United Church of Christ passed a resolution at its annual meeting Saturday, June 14, pressuring the National Football League and the Washington Redskins franchise to change the team name and refrain from the use of any images, mascots, or behaviors that are, or could be, deemed harmful or demeaning to Native American cultures or peoples.

Among other actions, the resolution also urges the Conference's 40,000 members from 180 congregations in Washington, D.C., New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, and parts of Virginia and

West Virginia, to join a boycott of the team's games and to not wear, display, or purchase any items bearing its logo until the name changes.

“I hope this debate will continue to draw attention to an unhealed wound in our cultural fabric,” said the Rev. Dr. John Deckenback, conference minister of the Central Atlantic Conference, of the resolution’s passing. “Changing the name of the Washington NFL team will not solve the problems of our country's many trails of broken promises and discriminatory isolation of our Native American communities. However, a change in the nation’s capital can send a strong message.”

The Central Atlantic Conference’s resolution was supported by the Oneida Indian Nation, the federally-recognized tribe of the Oneida people headquartered in central New York, and the National Congress of American Indians, the oldest and largest organization representing more than 80 Native American tribes throughout the U.S. Oneida Indian Nation Representative Ray Halbritter attended the Conference’s annual meeting and delivered a statement in support of the resolution.

“It is truly an honor to partner with and have the support of the United Church of Christ, an organization that has such a historic record standing up for the cause of civil rights,” Halbritter said. “It is important to have the support of organizations like theirs as we work to relegate one of the last vestiges of racism to the historical scrap heap and come together to usher in an era where mutual respect finally becomes the norm, rather than the exception.”

“The name used by the Washington NFL team is widely recognized as a racial slur and promotes discrimination against Native Americans,” said Jacqueline Pata, executive director of the NCAI. “More and more organizations are joining our voices calling on team owner Dan Snyder and the NFL to change the name, and we are proud that the United Church of Christ and its members are standing with us.”

To read Ray Halbritter’s full remarks given at the annual meeting of the Central Atlantic Conference of the United Church of Christ, go to:

<http://www.changethemascot.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Ray-Halbritter-address-to-United-Church-of-Christ1.pdf>

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About the United Church of Christ:

The United Church of Christ (UCC) is a mainline Protestant denomination with nearly 1 million members and more than 5,100 congregations nationwide. The UCC is a church of many firsts, including the first mainline denomination to ordain a woman, the first to ordain an openly-gay man and the first predominantly white denomination to ordain an African American. The UCC’s motto (“That they may all be one,” (John 17:21)) and tagline (God is still speaking,) supports the Church’s long-standing commitment to social justice issues and its extravagant welcome to all, no matter who they are, or where they are on life’s journey. Headquartered in Cleveland, Ohio, the UCC has also been active in protests against the use of the Cleveland Major League Baseball team and its Chief Wahoo mascot.

The Central Atlantic Conference, one of 38 regional conferences of the United Church of Christ, comprises 185 UCC congregations in the Mid-Atlantic region, including New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, Washington, D.C., and parts of Virginia and West Virginia. It includes more than 40,000 local church members and approximately 400 ordained ministers.

About the Oneida Indian Nation:

The Oneida Indian Nation is a federally-recognized Indian nation in central New York. It is a member of the Haudenosaunee, known in English as the Six Nations or Iroquois Confederacy. The Oneida Indian Nation operates a variety of businesses to fund its government programs. The Nation is headed by Oneida Indian Nation Representative Ray Halbritter.

About the National Congress of American Indians:

The National Congress of American Indians, founded in 1944, is the oldest, largest and most representative American Indian and Alaska Native organization serving the broad interests of tribal governments and communities.

Learn more at [www.changethemascot.org](http://www.changethemascot.org)

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