Resolution to Change the Racially Demeaning Name of the Washington National Football League Team

WHEREAS, all human beings are created in the image of God (Genesis 1: 27);

WHEREAS, Jesus calls us to love one another as he has loved us (John 15: 12-17);

WHEREAS, Paul admonishes us to work for peace and mutual upbuilding (Romans 14: 18-19);

WHEREAS, the United Church of Christ is committed to the elimination of all forms of discrimination¹;

WHEREAS, the United Church of Christ adopted at General Synod 18 (1991) a resolution condemning negative stereotyping of Native Americans²;

WHEREAS, the use of racist imagery is an affront to basic human rights, undermines basic human dignity, and has a negative impact upon self image, self awareness, and self esteem³;

WHEREAS, the use of racist language and stereotypes continues to exploit and degrade Native American culture;

WHEREAS, the abuse of Native American symbols, such as the headdress and sacred pipe, for entertainment and profit is insensitive, insulting, and an affront to Native American spirituality and is, therefore, unacceptable;

¹ United Church of Christ General Synod 18 Resolution, July 1991, “Negative Stereotyping of Native Americans.”
² Ibid.

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WHEREAS, not only many professional, semi-professional, amateur, collegiate, and high and grade school sports teams throughout the United States but also (and particularly egregiously) the highly visible professional football team located in our nation’s capital still employs racially derogatory and demeaning symbols, mascots, and names;

WHEREAS, the Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines “redskin” as a “usually offensive” term to describe American Indians and this term, when used in reference to Native American cultures and people, has a history of use as a pejorative and insulting name\(^4\);

WHEREAS, the term “redskins” would not properly be used by a person when visiting the home of a Native American and should not be used to market a professional sports team;

WHEREAS, the use of the term “Redskins” for the team mascot and nickname of the Washington National Football League team is offensive and hurtful to many Native Americans and causes direct harmful effects to the public health and well being of the Native American population\(^5\); and

WHEREAS, every major Native American organization, along with hundreds of clergy, churches, civil rights organizations, media outlets, sports writers and journalists, authors, and elected officials (including the President of the United States), has voiced support for changing the team name;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Central Atlantic Conference calls upon the National Football League’s Washington franchise to change its team name and to 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;

\(^4\) “Resolution on the Washington, D.C. Football Team Name,” adopted December 12, 2013, by The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights (with UCC as signatory).

\(^5\) Michael A. Friedman.
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Central Atlantic Conference will communicate in writing this resolution to the owner of the Washington Football League team, Daniel Snyder, and to the NFL Commissioner, Roger Goodell;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Central Atlantic Conference will communicate this resolution to the clergy, churches, and members in its conference and will use other social media to publicize these concerns;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Central Atlantic Conference will communicate this resolution to the national office of the United Church of Christ with the hope that it, in turn, will add its voice and inform the wider church;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that individual churches and members of the Central Atlantic Conference are urged to communicate their concerns regarding this matter to both the Washington National Football League team and the National Football League by writing to:

Daniel Snyder  
Owner  
Redsk*ns Park  
21300 Redsk*ns Park Drive  
Ashburn, VA 20147-6100  
703-726-7000

Roger Goodell  
Commissioner  
National Football League  
280 Park Avenue 15th Floor  
New York, NY 10017  
212-450-2000

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that members and churches of the Central Atlantic Conference are urged to join a boycott of games played by the Washington National League Football team and not wear, display, or purchase any items with the Washington National League Football team logo until the name changes;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Central Atlantic Conference supports the Oneida Indian “Change the Mascot” campaign and will contact its staff to determine the best means of support and solidarity; and
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Central Atlantic Conference calls upon other sports teams to eradicate the use of team names, images, mascots, and behaviors that are or could be deemed harmful or demeaning to Native American cultures or people.

REFERENCES

United Church of Christ General Synod 18 Resolution, July, 1991, “Negative Stereotyping of Native Americans”

“No More Racist Sports Names!” by Juanita Helphrey, November 2000, for United Church of Christ News


“Overture: Stereotyping Native American Names and Symbols,” by the Presbyterian Church (USA), to be presented at its June 14-21, 2014, General Assembly (following on its 1999 GA resolution that called attention to the stereotyping of Native Americans in U.S. culture)
“Resolution on the Washington, D.C. Football Team Name,” adopted December 12, 2013, by The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights (with the UCC as signatory)

“Resolution Calling on the National Football League to End the Use of the Washington D.C. Racially Offensive Slur Team Mascot Name,” passed by the United South and Eastern Tribes (USET) – [USET Resolution No. 2014:015 (October 31, 2013)]

ChangeTheMascot.org website of the Oneida Nation and related press releases

“Sacking the ‘Redsk*ns’: Just Because Racism is ‘Tradition’ Doesn’t Make it Right,” by Peggy Flanagan, Sojourners, February, 2014, pp. 10-11


This resolution has been endorsed by the Central Atlantic Conference Board of Directors