

Why Should Media Outlets Stop Using The Name “Redsk*ns” ?

The Change the Mascot campaign is an effort pushing the NFL to stop using the dictionary-defined racial slur as the name of the Washington football team. In the last year, major media organizations have endorsed the central goal of the campaign. For instance, the Washington Post editorial board, the San Francisco Chronicle and Seattle Times have opted to stop using the R-word when covering the Washington franchise. So have sports journalists at USA Today, Sports Illustrated, the Washington Post, the Chicago Tribune and the Associated Press. As the campaign launches an initiative to push other media outlets and journalists to stop using the term, here is a review of others key aspects of the Change the Mascot campaign.

DICTIONARIES & THE U.S. GOVERNMENT DEFINE THE R-WORD AS A RACIAL SLUR: On top of every accredited dictionary defining the R- word as a racial slur, the U.S. government officially went on record saying the same thing in 2014. In early 2014, the U.S. Patent Office twice declared that the word is derogatory, and cancelled the Washington team’s R-word federal trademark registration.

THE NAME WAS GIVEN TO THE TEAM BY ONE OF HISTORY’S MOST INFAMOUS SEGREGATIONISTS: Though Washington officials claim the team’s name has always been a sign of respect, the name was given to the team by renowned segregationist George Preston Marshall. Current Washington team officials honor Marshall by not only continuing to slur Native Americans with the R-word, but also by continuing to name a section of FedEx field after him.

SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH SAYS THE TEAM’S NAME HAS SEVERE CONSEQUENCES: Social science research has shown that the continued promotion of the R-word has serious cultural and psychological consequences for Native Americans. This research was presented at a forum during the NFL owners meeting in Washington D.C.

TRIBAL GOVERNMENTS, NATIVE AMERICAN ORGANIZATIONS & CIVIL RIGHTS GROUPS SAY IT’S TIME FOR A CHANGE: Major Native American groups and civil rights organizations representing hundreds of thousands of people comprise the core of the Change the Mascot Campaign. These organizations include the National Congress of American Indians, the United South and Eastern Tribes, the National Indian Education Association, the NAACP, the Anti-Defamation League and The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights. Along with these organizations, several Tribes have passed resolutions, issued statements and sent letters to the NFL and the Washington team calling for a name change. In June 2014, the Yocha Dehe Wintum Nation paid for the airing of 60-second version of NCIA’s “Proud to Be” video during game three of the NBA finals on national television. The YouTube version of the ad has more than 3.1 million views.

REPUBLICAN AND DEMOCRATIC LAWMAKERS DEMAND A CHANGE: Republican and Democratic Members of Congress have been calling on the Washington team to change its name. In 2013, a bipartisan group of U.S. House members wrote a letter calling on the league to change the name. Later that year, President Obama publicly declared that he believes it is time for the Washington team to consider changing the name. In May of 2014, 49 U.S. Senators signed a letter written by the Senate Majority Leader reiterating the same message. A month later, senior Republican U.S. Senator John McCain cited the history of the R-word in declaring that the owners of the team should consider changing the name.

SCHOOL BOARDS, CITY COUNCILS & STATE LEGISLATURES SAY IT IS TIME FOR A CHANGE: As the Change the Mascot initiative has gained momentum, local and state officials are joining the campaign. State legislative bodies in New York and California have both passed resolutions denouncing the Washington team’s name. In Houston, the school board voted to ban the use of mascots that lampoon Native Americans. In Washington, D.C. the city council passed a resolution asking the Washington team to stop using the R-word. In Maryland - where the Washington team plays - the chief executive of Prince George’s County called on the team to change its name.

THE UNITED NATIONS SAYS THE NAME IS A HURTFUL REMINDER OF MISTREATMENT: In May of 2014, The United Nations independent expert whose job is to defend the rights of indigenous people called on the NFL to stop using the R-word because, as the UN said, it is a “hurtful reminder of the long history of mistreatment of Native American people in the United States.” The expert said: “(The term) is inextricably linked to a history of suffering and dispossession, and that it is understood to be a pejorative and disparaging term.”

ATHLETES & SPORTS ICONS SAY WASHINGTON MUST CHANGE: Athletes have always played a critical role in civil rights crusades, and the Change the Mascot campaign is no exception. From Hall of Famer Art Monk to star cornerback Richard Sherman to all-pro linebacker Jason Taylor, professional football icons have said it is time for Washington to consider changing its name. Additionally, civil rights icon and Olympian John Carlos. Olympic Gold Medalist Billy Mills and former PGA Tour professional Notah Begay III have joined the chorus of athletes calling for a name change. Additionally, icons in the sports industry have also said it is time for Washington to change its name. Those include former NBA

Commissioner David Stern, NBC announcer Bob Costas, former Oakland Raiders president Amy Trask, former Green Bay Packers and Seattle Seahawks Head Coach Mike Holmgren and ESPN's Bomani Jones.