



Change the Mascot!

Sept. 16, 2014

Dear Owner:

As one of the 31 owners of the National Football League, you are part of an institution that has been granted special tax and regulatory treatment by the United States government. Such privileges, however, come with special responsibilities - one of them being to play a constructive role against prejudice and for equality.

With that in mind, we are writing today to request that you use your position of authority in the NFL to put an end to the league's promotion of a dictionary-defined racial slur as the Washington franchise's name.

Attached to this letter is a one-page document about the Washington team's name, but to summarize what you well know: the name is defined in every major dictionary - and by the U.S. government - as a racial slur. It is a term screamed at Native Americans as they were dragged at gunpoint off their lands. Not surprisingly, the team was given its name by George Preston Marshall, the former owner who was one of American history's most famous segregationists and who helped engineer the league's ban on African American players. Amazingly, despite that record, current Washington team owner Dan Snyder continues to promote Marshall's legacy by naming a portion of FedEx Field after him.

The NFL's continued promotion of this racial slur is not just about one particular team. The league is promoting this racial slur with the resources of every team, including yours, which makes it a league-wide crisis. Indeed, Congress has granted the league tax exempt status and anti-trust exemptions, in part, because it is a singular American institution - one in which you are a financial stakeholder. That status provides you both the opportunity and obligation to act so that your own resources - and taxpayer resources - are no longer being expended to promote this slur.

Under the league's bylaws, the league is empowered to initiate disciplinary action against any "owner, shareholder, partner or holder of an interest in a member club (who) is guilty of conduct detrimental to the welfare of the League or professional football." Clearly, Washington team owner Dan Snyder's continued

promotion of this racial slur represents such conduct. This is evident in the recent news that a majority of Washington, D.C. residents now oppose the name, and it is evident in the news that sales of Washington team merchandise is plummeting.

Put simply, in a country and sports fan base that is becoming ever more diverse, Mr. Snyder is jeopardizing the welfare of the league by promoting an epithet against people of color.

The NFL today confronts a rising tide of questions about its behavior - from the questions raised by former players facing health problems to questions about the league's attitude toward domestic violence. Out of all these serious moral questions, the ones about the Washington team's name should be the simplest for the league to answer. If owners like you finally stand on the right side of history and publicly demand action, the NFL can and will change the team's name. If the league continues to expect Congress to grant it and its teams special status, the least the American people should be able to expect is a league that refrains from promoting a racial slur against Native Americans.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ray Halbritter". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "R" and a long, sweeping underline.

Ray Halbritter
Oneida Indian Nation Representative

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brian Cladoosby". The signature is cursive and somewhat stylized, with a large initial "B" and a long, sweeping underline.

Brian Cladoosby
President, National Congress of American Indians