



Change the Mascot!

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Change the Mascot Calls on NFL Owners to Stand Against Washington NFL Team's Use of R-word Racial Slur

The grassroots Change the Mascot campaign announced at a Washington press conference today that letters will be sent to every NFL team owner calling on them to demand action against the Washington team's continued use of the R-word dictionary-defined slur, which reflect poorly on the league.

Oneida Nation Homelands (Sept. 16, 2014) At a press conference on Capitol Hill today, the Change the Mascot campaign announced that a letter will be sent to all NFL owners urging them to help end the Washington NFL team's use of the dictionary-defined R-word slur as its team name. The letter calls on team owners to uphold their responsibility to play a constructive role against prejudice and for equality by standing on the right side of history with regard to this important moral and civil rights issue.

Native American leaders were joined at their event by a diverse array of prominent Change the Mascot supporters. These included Senator Maria Cantwell, Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes

Norton, Congresswoman Betty McCollum, NAACP Senior Vice President Hilary Shelton, The Leadership Council on Civil and Human Rights Executive Vice President Nancy Zirkin, National Conference of American Indians (NCAI) President Brian Cladoosby, NCAI Executive Director Jacqueline Pata, Oneida Indian Nation Representative Ray Halbritter, Rev. John R. Deckenback of The United Church of Christ and Rev. Graylan Hagler of Plymouth United Church of Christ.

In the letter which was publicly released today, Change the Mascot cites the league's tax and anti-trust exemptions, noting that team owners are obligated to ensure that taxpayer resources do not promote racism – such as this dictionary-defined slur. The letter also highlights the growing opposition to the name and recent plummeting of Washington merchandise sales, and refers to NFL bylaws which empower the league 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.”

The letter states: “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... 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.”

Earlier this month, a diverse coalition of more than 100 Native American, civil rights, and religious organizations sent a letter to nationwide broadcasters urging them to end their use of the R-word in reference to the Washington team. In recent weeks, leading publications The New York Daily News and The Charlotte Observer have also added their names to the growing list of publications refusing to use the term.

The full letter to NFL owners can be found on the Change the Mascot website here:

<http://www.changethemascot.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Change-the-Mascot-NFL-Owner-Letter-Sept-16.pdf>.

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