



Change the Mascot!

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Change the Mascot and Diverse Coalition of More Than 100 Groups Urge Radio and T.V. Broadcasters to Cease Use of Washington Team's Disparaging R-word Name on Airwaves

Oneida Nation Homelands (Sept. 3, 2014) On the day the NFL kicks off its 2014-2015 season, The Change the Mascot campaign and a diverse coalition of supporters are issuing a letter to broadcasters asking them to refrain from using the Washington NFL team's racist name on public airwaves. The letter, co-signed by over 100 leading Native American, religious and civil rights organizations, is going out to reporters at national news networks, as well as thousands of reporters who cover sports in cities which have NFL teams.

Change the Mascot, led by the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) and the Oneida Indian Nation, has enlisted the support of dozens of Native American tribes and organizations since its launch. Many of these groups have passed resolutions and issued separate formal letters stating their stark opposition to the team's use of a dictionary-defined slur against Native Americans.

The letter to broadcasters encourages them to join dozens of fellow media organizations who are refusing to use the team's offensive name, including The Washington Post, The Boston Globe, The Kansas City Star, The Denver Post, The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, Washington City Paper and many more. Leading journalists including NBC Sports' Bob Costas, Sports Illustrated's Peter King, USA Today's Christine Brennan and The Washington Post's Mike Wise have been among the dozens of reporters who have individually spoken out against the team's name.

The letter states: "We are writing to ask you to join other media organizations in refusing to broadcast the Washington team's name on the public airwaves. The team's name is a dictionary-defined racial slur... Throughout history, this term has been used to disparage Native Americans. It is the term used by bounty hunters to describe bloody Native scalps, and it was the epithet screamed at Native Americans as they were dragged at gunpoint off their lands."

"Every time the slur is promoted on the public airwaves even in a non-critical way by a journalist, it is an endorsement of the continued use of this slur. In other words, using this word is not just to legitimize it - it is to endorse its use, to ignore its definition and to defend its message."

The letter to broadcasters comes at the same time Change the Mascot is preparing to air an ad on a national radio station, as well as a station in Houston, where Washington's team will play its first game of the season on Sunday. The ad explores the history of the offensive R-word and encourages the public to contact their local broadcasters urging them to stop using it during their reporting on the D.C. team.

Link to a PDF of the letter to broadcasters: <http://www.changethemascot.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/BroadcasterLtr932014.pdf>

Link to a PDF of the fact sheet for broadcasters: <http://www.changethemascot.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Broadcaster-FactSheet-932014.pdf>

The full text of the letter is below.

Dear Broadcaster,

As the new National Football League season approaches, we are writing to ask you to join other media organizations in refusing to broadcast the Washington team's name on the public airwaves.

The team's name is a dictionary-defined racial slur. As of 2014's U.S. Patent and Trademark Office ruling, it is also a government-defined racial slur. Those definitions are correct.

Throughout history, this term has been used to disparage Native Americans. It is the term used by bounty hunters to describe bloody Native scalps, and it was the epithet screamed at Native Americans as they were dragged at gunpoint off their lands. No doubt, the bigotry of this word is why the team was originally given the name by its longtime owner, avowed segregationist George Preston Marshall.

Civil rights organizations, religious leaders, sports icons, Members of Congress from both parties and the President of the United States have all called on the Washington team to change its name. At the same time, more and more news organizations and icons of sports media have decided to stand on the right side of history by refusing to continue repeating the team's name during their coverage of the NFL. Rather than repeat - and therefore promote - the racial slur in question, they have decided to use more generic descriptions when referring to the team.

Some might argue that objectivity requires broadcasters to continue promoting the racial slur as long as Washington team owner Dan Snyder keeps denigrating Native Americans by using the epithet as his team's name. But in this particular fight for basic equality and mutual respect, there is no "objective" position. Every time the slur is promoted on the public airwaves even in a non-critical way by a journalist, it is an endorsement of the continued use of this slur. In other words, using this word is not just to legitimize it - it is to endorse its use, to ignore its definition and to defend its message.

Last week, CBS sports anchor James Brown publicly declared that he believes the Washington team must change its name. That statement was particularly significant because it followed CBS Sports Chairman Sean McManus telling a magazine that his network has not forced its broadcasters to keep repeating this racial slur in their coverage of the NFL.

Though we would prefer networks institute rules prohibiting their resources from promoting dictionary- and government-defined racial slurs, we are hopeful that other sports media executives will at least follow McManus by allowing their individual employees not to promote this epithet. We are also hopeful that with such editorial freedom, more sports media figures will follow Mr. Brown and speak out clearly against this continued injustice.

Attached to this letter is a list of the news outlets and sports media figures who have already decided to take a stand on the right side of history. They have either editorialized against the R-word or refused to keep promoting the Washington team's name. We now ask you to do the same.

Sincerely,

Advancement Project
Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians
AFSCME American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, AFL-CIO
Ain Dah Yung Center
Alliance for A Just Society
American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO

American Indian Center Chicago
American Indian Community Council
American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC)
American Indians in Texas-Spanish Colonial Missions
Americans for Indian Opportunity
Anti-Defamation League
Asbury United Methodist Church
Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum
Asian American Psychological Association
Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC
Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance (APALA)
Association on American Indian Affairs
Association of Tribal Archives, Libraries, and Museums
California Association of Tribal Governments (CATG)
Carrizo/Comecrudo Nation of Texas
Center for Native American Youth
Center for Rural Strategies
Central Atlantic Conference of the United Church of Christ
Children's Defense Fund-Minnesota
Civil Rights Policy Planning Center
Common Cause
Community Coalitions in Action
Council for Native Hawaiian Advancement
Demos
Dine' Citizens Against Ruining our Environment
Eradicating Offensive Native Mascotry
Ewiiapaayp Band of Kumeyaay Indians
Faith Strategies
First Nations Development Institute
First Nations Oweesta Corporation
First Peoples Fund
First Peoples Worldwide
Four Directions
Housing Assistance Council
Indian Law Resource Center
Indian People's Action
Inter Tribal Buffalo Council
Japanese American Citizens League
League of Rural Voters
Llano Grande Center for Research and Development
MALDEF (Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund)
Midwest Alliance of Sovereign Tribes
NAACP
National Association of Tribal Historic Preservation Officers
National Caucus of Native American State Legislators
National Coalition for Asian Pacific American Community Development

National Collaborative for Health Equity
National Council of La Raza
National Council of Urban Indian Health
National Council on Independent Living (NCIL)
National Disability Rights Network
National Fair Housing Alliance
National Hispanic Media Coalition
National Indian Child Welfare Association
National Indian Education Association
National Indian Gaming Association
National Indian Health Board
National Indian Justice Center
National Korean American Service & Education Consortium
National Latina/o Psychological Association
National Latino Farmers & Ranchers Trade Association
National Native American Bar Association
National Organization for Women
National Urban Indian Family Coalition
National Urban League
Native American Contractors Association
Native American Finance Officers Association
Native American Rights Fund
Native American Television
Native Arts and Cultures Foundation
Native CDFI Network
Native Community Finance
Native Public Media
Native Voice Network
Native Youth Leadership Alliance
Oneida Indian Nation
Phoenix Indian Center, Inc.
Plymouth Congregational United Church of Christ
PolicyLink
Poverty & Race Research Action Council
Race Forward: The Center for Racial Justice Innovation
Rural Broadband Policy Group
Seattle Indian Health Board
Self-Governance Communication & Education Office
Service Employees International Union (SEIU)
Sikh American Legal Defense and Education Fund (SALDEF)
Society of Indian Psychologists
Sojourners
Southern California Indian Center
Stand Up for Rural America
The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights
The Morning Star Institute

Tribal Law and Policy Institute
Tucson Indian Center
United Church of Christ Central Atlantic Conference
United South & Eastern Tribes
United Spinal Association
United Tribes of North Dakota
Washington Indian Civil Rights Commission
YouthBuild USA

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