



Change the Mascot!

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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During National Bullying Prevention Awareness Month, Change the Mascot Urges School Administrators Across America to Ban the R-Word Racial Slur

Oneida Nation Homelands (Oct. 23, 2014) The Change the Mascot campaign today announced that it will send letters to administrators at primary, middle and high schools nationwide urging the adoption of restrictive and educational policies regarding the disparaging R-word name of the Washington NFL team. Timed to coincide with National Bullying Prevention Awareness Month in October, the letter points to social science research identifying the dictionary-defined racial slur as a clear instrument of bullying.

The letter quotes clinical psychologist Dr. Michael Friedman, who published “The Harmful Psychological Effects of the Washington Football Mascot,” and recently summarized his findings in *Psychology Today*:

“When kids wear [Washington team] jerseys and jackets, use the R-word when referring to the Washington team and display the Washington team logo in their schools, Native American kids

are being exposed to racist acts. And when schools follow the Washington team's behavior by allowing the use and display of the 'R-word' in schools, they are forcing Native American children to tolerate racism, creating a 'racially hostile environment' and engaging in the very same behavior that schools are proposing to fight in their campaigns against bullying," Friedman wrote.

Change the Mascot's letter suggests specific policy and curriculum changes that schools can make to help stop the R-word from intensifying the effects of bullying. These include restricting dictionary-defined slurs (including the Washington team name) from student clothing and from school publications including student newspapers. It also suggests facilitating in-classroom discussions about the true meaning of the R-word and its known detrimental effects on people of color, as well as incorporating into history curricula lessons about the etymology of the team name.

"These are only some of the many ways you can help stop one of the most insidious - yet widely permitted - forms of bullying in our schools," the Change the Mascot letter states.

Also noted in the letter to school administrators is the fact that every major Native American and civil rights organization in the country, as well as several prominent educational and psychological organizations, have strongly spoken out about the damaging impact that the use and promotion of this epithet has on children. These groups include the National Education Association, American Psychological Association, American Sociological Association, American Counseling Association, NAACP, Anti-Defamation League, Leadership Conference of Human and Civil Rights, the National Congress of American Indians, and National Indian Gaming Association.

The grassroots Change the Mascot campaign, led by the Oneida Indian Nation and National Congress of American Indians, works to educate the public about the damaging use of the R-word on Native Americans. The group has reshaped the debate surrounding the Washington team's name and brought the issue to the forefront of social consciousness over the past year. Since its launch, Change the Mascot's civil and human rights movement has garnered support from a diverse coalition of prominent advocates including Member of Congress from both sides of the aisle, Native American tribes, sports icons, top journalists and news publications, civil rights organizations and religious leaders.

A complete list of Change the Mascot supporters can be found at:

<http://www.changethemascot.org/supporters-of-change/>.

The full text of the letter to school administrators is included below and can be found on the Change the Mascot website [here](#).



October 17, 2014

Dear School Administrator,

As you know, October is National Bullying Prevention Awareness Month. It is also the heart of the National Football League season. These two facts may seem unrelated, but they relate to your work in the nation's school system because of the Washington football team's continued promotion of a dictionary defined racial slur - one that social science research tells us is a clear instrument of bullying against Native Americans.

Clinical psychologist Dr. Michael Friedman has presented a review of this research in a scientific report entitled "The Harmful Psychological Effects of the Washington Football Mascot," which can be found at www.changethemascot.org. In a recent article in *Psychology Today*, Dr. Friedman summarized the horrifying examples and empirical data about the R-word's use as a tool of bullying and concluded:

When kids wear (Washington team) jerseys and jackets, use the R-word when referring to the Washington team and display the Washington team logo in their schools, Native American kids are being exposed to racist acts. And when schools follow the Washington team's behavior by allowing the use and display of the "R-word" in schools, they are forcing Native American children to tolerate racism, creating a "racially hostile environment" and engaging in the very same behavior that schools are proposing to fight in their campaigns against bullying.

Dr. Friedman's conclusions are consistent with previous resolutions by the National Education Association, American Psychological Association, American Sociological Association, and American Counseling Association, all of which have declared that the use of Native American team names and logos is a form of discrimination and is harmful to children. Further, every major Native American organization such as the National Congress of American Indians and National Indian Gaming Association as well as every major civil and human rights organization such as the NAACP, Anti-Defamation League and Leadership Conference of Human and Civil Rights has spoken out against the particular harm of the Washington football team name "R-word" which refers to the bloody scalp of Native Americans used as bounty.

In light of this, we are asking that during National Bullying Prevention Awareness Month, you consider addressing Washington team iconography in the policies and curriculum you adopt to combat bullying.

As evidenced by many other school systems' actions, there are many steps you can take to stop this dictionary defined racial slur from intensifying the effects of bullying. These include:

- Restricting students from wearing clothing with dictionary-defined racial slurs on them - including the Washington team name.
- Restricting school publications - including student newspapers - from promoting dictionary defined racial slurs.
- Facilitating in-classroom discussions about the meaning of the team name, and its known effects on people of color.
- Incorporating into history curriculum a lesson about the etymology of the team name - specifically, highlighting its origination as a term screamed at Native Americans as they were dragged at gunpoint off their lands, and its use as a team name by renowned segregationist George Preston Marshall.

These are only some of the many ways you can help stop one of the most insidious - yet widely permitted - forms of bullying in our schools.

If you would like to consult with Dr. Friedman or other experts about this, please feel free to contact us at 315-829-8311.

Sincerely,



Ray Halbritter
Oneida Indian Nation Representative



Brian Cladoosby
President, National Congress of American Indians

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To view this release online go to: <http://www.oneidaindiannation.com/pressroom/During-National-Bullying-Prevention-Awareness-Month-Change-the-Mascot-Urges-Schools-Across-America-to-Ban-the-R-Word-Racial-Slur-280190982.html>