



Change the Mascot!

January 7, 2016

CBS Headquarters
51 W. 52nd Street
New York, NY 10019

Dear CBS,

As the network that will carry this year's Super Bowl broadcast, your company will be delivering programming to more than 100 million Americans, and tens of millions more across the globe. That is an enormous responsibility -- and we are hopeful that CBS will honor its own venerable legacy by doing what it can to make sure the program is respectful and civil -- and is not used as a platform to promote bigotry.

To that end, we are requesting that CBS right now commit to refrain from using the name of the Washington professional football franchise in its broadcast, because that name is a dictionary-defined racial slur.

As you know, Washington's football team has made the playoffs, meaning the team could ultimately play in the Super Bowl. By making this commitment now, CBS would be standing with a broad and growing coalition that believes the team's continued efforts to slur people of color with its chosen name is inappropriate and unacceptable.

Over the past two years, numerous sports icons, respected civil rights groups, leading media organizations, religious leaders from various faiths and denominations, Members of Congress from both political parties, governors and even the President of the United States have all said it is long past due for the National Football League to change the Washington team's name.

Among those who have stood with our Change the Mascot campaign and spoken out against this name are some of CBS' own top sports commentators. Phil Simms has vowed not to use the R-word during broadcasts, Greg Gumbel said he has not used the team's name in years, and James Brown has said the team should "do the right thing and change the name."

All of these groups and leaders and opponents of the name understand what social science research has proven: the marketing and promotion of this slur has destructive consequences for Native Americans.

What we are asking of CBS is not radical nor is it even rare: for many years, the television networks have used their discretion to prevent certain advertisements and messages from being broadcast during the Super Bowl. In some instances, those decisions have been controversial, but in this case it should not be. Just as other media organizations such as The Washington Post, The New York Daily News, The Boston Globe, The Kansas City Star, The Denver Post, The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, The Sacramento Bee, and many more have been able to cover the team while also not using the team's name, so can CBS make the same decision in its Super Bowl broadcast. CBS can, in other words, make sure its airwaves are not used as a weapon of bigotry against the network's diverse audience.

This request is particularly critical considering the Super Bowl's global audience. Today, America is working to promote itself as a tolerant, pluralistic society in the face of detractors who seek to portray our country as a haven of bigotry. During one of the biggest worldwide media events of the year, we as a nation should not be providing fodder for America's foes. Instead, we should be doing everything we can to make sure that -- at minimum -- we are not deliberately promoting across the globe hateful slurs against indigenous peoples.

The NFL has already decided that next season it will send the Washington football team to London as brand ambassadors for a special game at Wembley Stadium. In the coming weeks, we will be working with allies in Europe to spotlight deep concerns about the highly irresponsible move of proudly promoting a racial slur on the international stage.

We are hopeful that in advance of that game in London, CBS will have helped reassure our European allies by standing on the right side of history and refusing to use the name of Washington's football team during this year's Super Bowl broadcast. By doing so, CBS will be standing with the millions of Americans who do not want football to be used as an instrument of bigotry.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ray Halbritter". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "R" and a long, sweeping underline.

Ray Halbritter
Oneida Indian Nation Representative

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jacqueline Johnson Pata". The signature is cursive and elegant, with a large initial "J" and a long, flowing underline.

Jacqueline Pata
Executive Director, National Congress of American Indians