



WASHINGTON BUREAU · NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF COLORED PEOPLE

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**NAACP SUPPORTS AN END TO HURTFUL, DEMEANING AND RACIST
TEAM MASCOT NAMES**

Calls on the Washington football franchise to immediately change its name and demonstrate that racism, bigotry, and hatred have no place in America today.

“For nearly 108 years, the NAACP has been at the forefront of the struggle for dignity, equality and a protection of the civil and human rights for all Americans,” said Hilary Shelton, the Director of the NAACP Washington Bureau and the Senior Vice President for Policy and Advocacy. “For that reason, we have long been, and we continue to be, in strong opposition to the derogatory, demeaning, and cruel mascot names adopted by professional and amateur sports teams which mocks an entire culture. We call on the National Football League (NFL) to send a clear message that there is no place for demeaning or racist depictions against any group of Americans in professional sports. The NFL should swiftly urge a change in the name of the Washington, D.C. franchise.”

For more than two-and-a-half decades, the NAACP has had clear policy opposing the use of racist names, including those with a special focus on teams that use Native American monikers. A resolution was passed by the over 2,000 voting delegates to the NAACP convention in 1992 and ratified by the National Board of Directors later that year which states our opposition in clear terms. We are proud to continue to stand by that resolution today. In it, we pledge to use our influence and resources to bring to the attention of the nation the tremendous negative impact that such demeaning symbolism can have on all people of color. Our resolution also points out that images such as the Washington football franchise’s use of the “R” word mock the physical characteristics, religious and spiritual symbols of the Native American people.

American history is laced with the “R” being used in a manner that is derogatory, hurtful and too often horrific to an entire race, and it is often associated by many with the woeful history of Native Americans. Until the turn of the twentieth century, Indigenous Americans were hunted, killed, and forcibly removed from their lands by European settlers, railroad companies, and the federal and state governments. This was often achieved by bounty hunters who were rewarded for their actions by local or state governments, and sometimes even the railroad companies themselves. For example, an 1863 Winona, Minnesota, newspaper, the *Daily Republican*, reported that “The state reward for dead Indians has been increased to \$200 for every red-skin sent to Purgatory.”

Professional sports have tremendous power to inspire the American dialogue and influence the American mind-set. From Jackie Robinson to Billie Jean King, professional athletes have been a driving force for equality in our nation. Thus, the NAACP calls on the NFL to formally support a name change, and we urge the Washington franchise to change its name to something that is not offensive, racist, or demeaning to an entire race of people. Such a change would make a dramatic statement that racism and bigotry have no place in professional sports, or in American life.