



December 8, 2018

Mr. Daniel M. Snyder  
Owner, Washington R-skins  
21300 R-skins Park Drive  
Ashburn, VA 20147

Dear Mr. Snyder:

Rebrand Washington Football (RWF) is delivering to you 1,800 signatures today asking that you change the name of the team. This is our fourth year of petition delivery; over that time period, we have gathered more than 7,140 signatures. We respectfully disagree with your position that the name of the team honors Native Americans. We ask that you consider the perspective of Native Americans and others that oppose the name.

Along with this letter and the petitions, we are enclosing a RWF report, “Will the Washington Football Team be the Last to Shed a Racist Name?” The report documents that 2,000 high schools across the country (nearly two thirds of the high schools with Native American themes) have changed their names and mascots. Also, over the past 25 years, 28 high schools have changed their “R-skins” name. Likewise, the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) passed a resolution in 2005 prohibiting any college team from “displaying hostile and abusive racial/ethnic/national origin mascots, nicknames or imagery at any of the 88 NCAA championships.” In response, several colleges have changed their names and mascots.

States have passed and considered legislation requiring or encouraging schools to eliminate racial stereotypes as mascots. The list of states eradicating or restricting these themes include Oregon, California, Michigan, Wisconsin, and Minnesota.

In 2005, the American Psychological Association (APA) passed a resolution calling for the immediate retirement of Native American mascots in schools and athletics. The APA determined that such mascots were detrimental to the learning environment of both non-Native and Native youth. The APA concluded that “the continued use of American Indian mascots, symbols, images, and personalities is disrespectful of the spiritual beliefs and values of American Indian nations. The continued use of American Indian mascots, symbols, images, and personalities is an offensive and intolerable practice to American Indian Nations that must be eradicated.”

In contrast to your assertions that Native American tribes involved with you and your foundation support the name, almost every instance of name changing on the state and local levels has involved Native Americans and often Native American students. In Michigan, the Nottawaseppi Huron Band of the Potawatomi has established a fund with several hundreds of thousands of dollars to help high schools and localities eliminate Native American mascots and racially insensitive statues. Rain Koepke, a former student at Mukwonago High School and a member of the Peoria tribe of Oklahoma, maintains, “There is not a single shred of verifiable scientific or



academic literature or data that states any kind of positive effect on the population that is being used as a mascot.” Non-Native American students have also changed their views in light of mascot controversies. One student remarks, “One of our school’s biggest rivals is the Calaveras R-skins. . . . The most offensive stuff doesn’t even come from the R-skins. It comes from their rival schools, mine included. I have heard my own friends yelling around me, ‘Kill the R-skins!’ or ‘Send them on the Trail of Tears!’ ”

This chanting at games may seem harmless but this racially charged cheering ingrains stereotypes. History teaches us that perpetuating racial stereotypes paves the way for inadvertent as well as intentional harm to minorities.

The first owner of the R-skins was an avowed segregationist and was the last to integrate his team. We are concerned that you are on the path to becoming the last owner in professional sports to rid his franchise of a racist past by changing the name. Change will continue as evidenced by the tremendous progress in the high school and college ranks. You have a chance to unite all of us by dropping a name that is a dictionary defined racial slur. Or you can increase the unpopularity of your team by clinging stubbornly to an ignominious and harmful tradition. Changing the name of a team that plays near the nation’s capital can have a profound influence across this country for multi-racial and ethnic understanding and harmony.

If the name remains a racial slur, it serves as a reminder of the dark and virulently racist epochs during which the nation engaged in genocide against Native Americans, enslaved African-Americans, and forcibly removed the Japanese to internment camps. In contrast, if you change the name, your action would reinforce the best of American history as a nation founded upon the ideal that all people are created equal and that diversity is its strength.

We can be contacted on [rebrandwf@gmail.com](mailto:rebrandwf@gmail.com), and we sincerely hope you reconsider your views on the name.

Sincerely,

Josh Silver  
Bethesda, MD

Ian Washburn  
Arlington, VA

Bill Mosley  
Washington, DC