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REBRAND WASHINGTON FOOTBALL

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ACTIVISTS PROPOSE TO DEMOLISH GEORGE PRESTON MARSHALL MONUMENT AT NO COST TO CITY

A group of local activists has offered to remove, at its own expense, a monument to the founder of the Washington professional football team – a marker that the group said honored an unrepentant bigot who gave his team a name that dishonored Native Americans and refused to integrate the team until pressured to do so in 1962 by the federal government.

Rebrand Washington Football (RWF), founded in 2015 to advocate that the team adopt a new name because the current one is a dictionary-defined slur that disparages Native Americans, said in a letter to DC Mayor Muriel Bowser that it would pay for the removal of the monument to George Preston Marshall that stands in front of RFK Stadium, the team's former home that is slated for demolition in the near future. RWF said the removal would cost \$1,500, none of it borne by DC taxpayers.

"George Preston Marshall was an avowed segregationist whose monument reminds us of the sad legacies of Jim Crow and genocide of Native Americans," said RWF co-founder Josh Silver. "Just as with statues paying homage to Confederate generals, it is time for Mr. Marshall's monument to come down."

Over the past five years RWF has circulated petitions which have garnered nearly 9,000 signatures in favor of changing the name. Each December since 2015 it has hand-delivered the petitions to the team's headquarters in Ashburn, Va. The next petition delivery is scheduled for Saturday, December 7 – Pearl Harbor Day. "Just as this day was a beginning of World War II and a fight against racism and genocide, RWF is fighting racism and a genocidal legacy associated with a name of a football team," Silver said.

Ian Washburn, RWF co-founder, adds, "My grandparents were at the Pearl Harbor game, and twenty years later the first game at DC Stadium, where they encountered members of the American Nazi Party rallying in support of Marshall to 'keep the R-dskins white.' The monument is a misrepresentation of American values at the very least. A town of champions deserves better. DC Sports!"

In addition to gathering petitions, RWF is engaged in an education campaign to inform the public of harms of racial stereotype mascots, seeks letters of endorsements from religious and civic institutions, and works with local councils to pass resolutions asking owner Daniel Snyder to change the name of the team. RWF also works with Native American allies to change the name.

The text of the letter to Mayor Bowser follows.



November 4, 2019

The Honorable Muriel Bowser
Mayor, District of Columbia
John A. Wilson Building
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Mayor Bowser:

Rebrand Washington Football (RWF), a grassroots group advocating that the professional Washington football team change its name, has a deal for you. RWF will fund the removal of the George Preston Marshall monument that stands in the front entrance to RFK stadium.

George Preston Marshall was an avowed segregationist whose statue reminds us of the sad legacies of Jim Crow and genocide of Native Americans. Just as with statues paying homage to Confederate generals, it is time for Mr. Marshall's monument to come down.

RWF has no budget and is run as a volunteer group. The funding for the removal of the monument will come directly from the personal finances of the co-founders of RWF. RFK Stadium will be demolished soon, so we are offering the District assistance in this project by paying for the removal of the monument. In *Showdown, JFK and the Integration of the Washington R-skins*, Thomas G. Smith makes it clear that George Preston Marshall (GPM), the first owner of the team, was an unrepentant bigot whose name for the team had nothing to do with honoring Native Americans but everything to do with pandering to the prejudices of a white fan base.

In the early years, when GPM's team played in Boston, the first coach was Lone Star Dietz, a shady character that may or may not have been Native American. Smith states, "Marshall promptly played on Dietz's Indian ancestry to entertain fans. Not only did he hire a Native American coach and recruit four Indian players..., he required Dietz and the players to wear Indian feathers and war paint before home games."

One of GPM's former players, Cliff Battles states, "In the thirties, we would, at the urging of George, put on war paint before a game and do a little Indian dance to entertain the customers. None of us liked it very much. The showmanship was so overdone, it was embarrassing."

In addition to exploiting Native Americans and their traditions, Mr. Marshall was the last NFL owner to integrate his team in 1962. He was forced to do so by the Kennedy Administration who would not allow



Marshall to lease the land beneath the stadium, then known as DC Stadium, unless he integrated his team. His bigotry did not end with this episode. When he wrote his will, he established the R-skins Foundation and stipulated the Foundation “shall never use, contribute or apply its money or property for any purpose which supports or employs the principle of racial integration in any form.” The foundation was to help disadvantaged children and a court voided the anti-integration clause after GPM’s death.

GPM’s legacy is a dishonor to Native Americans, African-Americans, and all the citizens of the District of Columbia. His monument must no longer soil the ground on which it stands, which is the ancestral home of the Piscataway nation. At no taxpayer expense, RWF offers to relieve the city of this ugly past. Jim Crow and genocide must no longer literally stand on sacred ground.

We hope you take us up on our offer. Please contact us via rebrandwf@gmail.com.
Sincerely,

Ian Washburn
Arlington, VA

Josh Silver
Bethesda, MD

Bill Mosley
District of Columbia



Neo-Nazis in support of Marshall’s efforts to keep team “white.”

RWF

