

1 The Board of Directors recommends this resolution be sent to a Committee of the General
2 Synod.

3
4 **RESOLUTION TO CHANGE THE RACIALLY DEMEANING NAME,**
5 **MASCOT, AND IMAGERY OF THE WASHINGTON NATIONAL**
6 **FOOTBALL LEAGUE TEAM**

7
8 **Submitted by Central Atlantic Conference**
9 **A Resolution of Witness**

10
11 **SUMMARY**
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13 This resolution primarily calls upon the Washington National Football League team to cease
14 using the racially demeaning name of “Redskins,” its associated mascot, and its affiliated
15 imagery. To bring pressure to bear upon both the Washington NFL team and the NFL itself on
16 this issue, this resolution calls for – among other things – a United Church of Christ boycott of
17 all Washington NFL games and merchandise unless and until the team’s name and logo changes.
18 Secondly, this resolution also asks the United Church of Christ “to call upon other sports
19 teams to eradicate the use of names, images, mascots, and behaviors that are or could be properly
20 deemed harmful or demeaning to Native American cultures or people.”

21
22 **BIBLICAL, THEOLOGICAL, AND HISTORICAL GROUNDING**
23

24 As illustrated by its first five WHERAS clauses, the resolution is in keeping with the United
25 Church of Christ’s theological self-understanding and historical self-identity as a prophetic, Just
26 Peace Church that acts in word and deed against injustice anywhere and stands in solidarity with
27 its victims everywhere. The resolution’s call to do away with racially demeaning names and
28 imagery is a consistent application of the radically liberating implications of the apostle Paul’s
29 insight that we are all “members one of another” and of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s
30 dream of a beloved community, in which each person - regardless of race, color, or creed - is the
31 benefactor and beneficiary of all people and so realizes his or her fullest potential as a human
32 being; and, in particular, it is a concrete application of the UCC’s historical and historic stand to
33 confront all types of discrimination generally and to condemn all forms of negative stereotyping
34 of Native Americans specifically, as epitomized by its resolution to that effect at General Synod
35 18 (1991).

36 **MUTUAL ACCOUNTABILITY**
37

38 As made clear in certain of its Resolved clauses, this resolution seeks to participate in the
39 burgeoning national movement to change the name, associated mascot, and affiliated imagery of
40 the Washington National Football League team by, among other things: [1] articulating lucidly

41 and proclaiming powerfully its position on this matter to the wider United Church of Christ
42 (UCC); [2] calling upon the national setting of the United Church of Christ to communicate in
43 writing that position to both the owner of the Washington NFL team and the commissioner of the
44 NFL; [3] seeking to effect economic leverage by encouraging a denominational boycott of
45 Washington NFL team games and merchandise; and [4] assisting the Oneida Indian Nation’s
46 “Change the Mascot” campaign. Evaluation of this effort shall take place at least annually
47 through a collaborative process developed in conjunction with tribal and other partners. The
48 evaluation process shall be coordinated by the Executive Minister for Justice and Witness
49 Ministries.

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51 **INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY**

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53 The United Church of Christ’s Justice and Witness Ministries have assumed historic leadership
54 roles in addressing defamatory sports imagery. We anticipate that Justice and Witness will also
55 assume such leadership for this important cause. In addition, the Central Atlantic Conference is
56 willing to continue its efforts in this matter, in conjunction with Justice and Witness, the tribal
57 representatives of the Oneida Indian Nation, other United Church of Christ Conferences, and
58 other supporters of this effort.

59

60 **PROBABILITY OF INFLUENCING SOCIAL CHANGE**

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62 “The Resolution to Change the Racially Demeaning Name of the Washington National Football
63 League Team” – passed unanimously by the Central Atlantic Conference (CAC) at its June 2014
64 Annual Meeting and of which the resolution proposed herein is a slightly modified version – has
65 already garnered significant public attention by major news outlets and publications (e.g.,
66 MSNBC, the Associated Press, *USA Today*, and *The Washington Post*). In addition, momentum
67 to bring pressure to bear on the Washington NFL team and the NFL itself regarding this issue is
68 growing, not only from the public in general (as reflected in recent opinion polls) but also from
69 an increasing number of sportscasters who refuse out of principle to refer to the team by its
70 nickname. Moreover, a mounting chorus of governmental representatives and agencies have also
71 rendered their judgment on this matter: fifty senators recently signed a letter petitioning NFL
72 Commissioner Roger Goodell to remove the “racial slur” that characterizes Washington’s team
73 name, and the U.S. PTO’s Trademark Trial and Appeal Board recently canceled the Washington
74 NFL team’s trademark registration because of that team’s “disparaging” name and logo. The
75 resolution proposed herein will allow the United Church of Christ once again – through its
76 General Synod – to demonstrate its progressive leadership on social issues through its
77 participation in the vanguard of a burgeoning national movement to end a significant symbol of
78 racial discrimination in our nation’s very capital. In so doing, the national setting of the United
79 Church of Christ will be enabled to speak with and to its various constituent churches on this

80 important matter and to proclaim to the country its solidarity with its beleaguered Native
81 American brothers and sisters.

82

83 **TEXT OF THE MOTION**

84

85 WHEREAS, all human beings are created in the image of God (Genesis 1: 27);

86

87 WHEREAS, Jesus calls us to love one another as he has loved us (John 15: 12-17);

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89 WHEREAS, Paul admonishes us to work for peace and mutual upbuilding (Romans 14: 18-19);

90

91 WHEREAS, the United Church of Christ is committed to the elimination of all forms of
92 discrimination¹;

93

94 WHEREAS, the United Church of Christ adopted at General Synod 18 (1991) a resolution
95 condemning negative stereotyping of Native Americans²;

96

97 WHEREAS, the use of racist imagery is an affront to basic human rights, undermines basic
98 human dignity, and has a negative impact upon self image, self awareness, and self esteem³;

99

100 WHEREAS, the use of racist language and stereotypes continues to exploit and degrade Native
101 American culture;

102

103 WHEREAS, the abuse of Native American symbols, such as the headdress and sacred pipe, for
104 entertainment and profit is insensitive, insulting, and an affront to Native American spirituality
105 and is, therefore, unacceptable;

106

107 WHEREAS, not only many professional, semi-professional, amateur, collegiate, and high and
108 grade school sports teams throughout the United States but also (and particularly egregiously)
109 the highly visible professional football team located in our nation's capital still employs racially
110 derogatory and demeaning symbols, mascots, and names;

111

112 WHEREAS, the Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines "redskin" as a "usually offensive" term to
113 describe American Indians and this term, when used in reference to Native American cultures
114 and people, has a history of use as a pejorative and insulting name⁴;

¹ United Church of Christ General Synod 18 Resolution, July 1991, "Resolution: Negative Stereotyping of Native Americans."

² Ibid.

³ "The Harmful Psychological Effects of the Washington Football Mascot," Michael A. Friedman, Ph.D., October 16, 2013.

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155 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that members and churches of the Thirtieth General Synod of
156 the United Church of Christ are urged to join a boycott of games played by the Washington
157 National Football League team and not wear, display, or purchase any items with the
158 Washington National Football League team logo until the name changes;

159

160 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Thirtieth General Synod of the United Church of Christ
161 supports the Oneida Indian Nation’s “Change the Mascot” campaign and will contact its staff to
162 determine the best means of support and solidarity; and

163

164 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Thirtieth General Synod of the United Church of Christ
165 calls upon other sports teams to eradicate the use of names, images, mascots, and behaviors that
166 are or could be properly deemed harmful or demeaning to Native American cultures or people.

167

168 **FUNDING**

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170 The funding for the implementation of the Resolution will be made in accordance with the
171 overall mandates of the affected agencies and the funds available.

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173 **IMPLEMENTATION**

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175 The Officers of the Church, in consultation with appropriate ministries or other entities within
176 the United Church of Christ, will determine the implementing body.

177

178 **REFERENCES**

179

180 United Church of Christ Eighteenth General Synod Resolution, July, 1991, “Resolution Negative
181 Stereotyping of Native Americans”

182

183 “Negative Stereotyping As It Relates to the Native American Indian – A Position Paper for the
184 United Church of Christ,” developed and published by the Racial Justice Program of the UCC
185 Board for Homeland Ministries, Juanita Helphrey, Secretary for Racial Justice Programs,
186 December 1, 1991

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188 Position Paper of the United Church of Christ, Negative Stereotypes, Logos and Imagery of
189 “Chief Wahoo/Cleveland Indians,” prepared for the Task Force to Strategize Legal Aspects,
190 March 25, 1998

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192 “No More Racist Sports Names!” by Juanita Helpfrey, November 2000, for *United Church of*
193 *Christ News*
194
195 “The Harmful Psychological Effects of the Washington Football Mascot,” by Michael A.
196 Friedman, Ph.D., October 16, 2013
197
198 “Overture: Stereotyping Native American Names and Symbols,” by the Presbyterian Church
199 (USA), to be presented at its June 14-21, 2014, General Assembly (following on its 1999 GA
200 resolution that called attention to the stereotyping of Native Americans in U.S. culture)
201
202 “Resolution on the Washington, D.C. Football Team Name,” adopted December 12, 2013 by
203 The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights (with the UCC as signatory)
204
205 “Resolution Calling on the National Football League to End the Use of the Washington D.C.
206 Racially Offensive Slur Team Mascot Name,” passed by the United South and Eastern Tribes
207 (USET) –[USET Resolution No. 2014:015 (October 31, 2013)]
208
209 ChangeTheMascot.org website of Oneida Nation and press releases
210
211 “Sacking the ‘Redsk*ns’: Just Because Racism is ‘Tradition’ Doesn’t Make it Right,” by Peggy
212 Flanagan, *Sojourners*, February 2014, pp. 10-11
213
214 Encounter Gospel News: “DC Clergy Join Push to Change Redskins Name,” by Erik Brady,
215 *Religion News Service*, October 28, 2013
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