



WESTMORELAND CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

1 Westmoreland Circle • Bethesda, MD • 20816

Montgomery County Council
Council Office Building
100 Maryland Avenue
Rockville, MD 20850

Dear County Council:

It is our understanding that County Executive Marc Elrich will be introducing a resolution asking Mr. Snyder to change the name of the professional Washington football team. The name of the team is a dictionary defined racial slur that perpetuates stereotypes and demeans Native Americans. The Westmoreland United Church of Christ supports a resolution asking Mr. Snyder to change the name of the team.

In June 2014, the Central Atlantic Conference of the United Church Of Christ called upon the Washington Football League team to cease using the racially demeaning name of “Redskins,” its associated mascot, and its affiliated imagery. To bring pressure to bear upon both the Washington NFL team and the NFL itself on this issue, this resolution calls for — among other things — a United Church of Christ boycott of Washington NFL games and merchandise unless and until the team’s name and logo changes. Secondly, this resolution also asks the United Church of Christ “to call upon other sports teams to eradicate the use of names, images, mascots, and behaviors that are or could be properly deemed harmful or demeaning to Native American cultures or people.”

“This resolution will allow the United Church of Christ once again — through its General Synod — to demonstrate it’s progressive leadership on social issues through its participation in the vanguard of a burgeoning national movement to end a significant signal of racial discrimination in our nation’s very capital. In so doing, the national setting of the United Church of Christ will be enabled to speak with and to its various constituent churches on this important matter and to proclaim to the country it’s solidarity with its beleaguered Native American brothers and sisters.”

Westmoreland United Church of Christ is a liberal Christian congregation located in Montgomery County with much of its membership in Montgomery County as well as District of Columbia. Our Declaration of Purpose states, “ Westmorelanders have sought to respect the differences among us while attempting to bridge the barriers which have divided and estranged us from one another. We are an open and affirming church, welcoming all ages, races, abilities, sexual orientation and gender identity, who acknowledge Christ as our foundation and seek to embrace the mind and spirit of Jesus.”

The United Nations Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples concludes, “The use of stereotypes obscures understanding of the reality of Native Americans today and instead helps to keep alive racially discriminatory attitudes.” 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. 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.” Over 2,000 high schools have dropped Native American names and mascots and 28 have dropped the name R-skins.

In a 1992 resolution, the Central Conference of American Rabbis called upon the Washington football team to change its team name "and to renounce all characterizations based on race or ethnic background." That resolution noted that the "Redskins" moniker "persists in encouraging stereotypical thinking about Native Americans." In a letter to Rebrand Washington Football, the Washington Regional Office of the Anti-Defamation League states, “The Washington National Football League team name and branding is deeply offensive to Native Americans, reinforces racial stereotypes, and promotes bigotry.” The Religious Action Center (RAC) has likewise called upon Mr. Snyder to change the name, stating, “A name associated with a term that divides instead of unites, that causes pain instead of pride, is not a name that should be perpetuated.”

In our region, the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments passed a resolution in 2002 declaring that the term “‘R-dskins’ is viewed by many sensitive and progressive-minded individuals as a demeaning and dehumanizing racist insult that embodies a history of degradation and slaughter.” This was followed up by a resolution passed in 2013 by the District of Columbia Council and one passed in 2015 by the Arlington County Board asking Mr. Snyder to change the name of the team.

If Montgomery County also adopts a resolution, local governments would be sending a strong signal to Mr. Snyder that it is time to change the name. A resolution would also serve as a valuable educational tool, increasing awareness in Montgomery County about the harms caused by the name and logo of the football team.

Persecution against all religions have been aided and abetted by the use of stereotypes and name calling. It is with this perspective that we call on Mr. Snyder to change the name of the team. We are all made in the image of God and each of us deserves dignity and respect. Please pass a resolution asking Mr. Snyder to change the name of his team.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tim Tutt", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Timothy Tutt
Senior Minister, Westmoreland United Church of Christ