



September 26, 2020

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

Dear Mr. Snyder:

Rebrand Washington Football (RWF), a grassroots advocacy group of fans, is pleased with your decision to retire a racial slur as the name of your team. In the rebranding effort, you must steer clear of any Native American themes and mascots. RWF also believes that you must quickly commence discussion with Native American leaders, advocates, and their allies.

Along with this letter, RWF is delivering to you today:

- 1,536 petition signatures gathered this year asking for a name change. Since 2015, RWF has presented to you, 10,560 signatures demanding an end to Native American mascots and names for your team.
- A resolution recently passed by the [Montgomery County Council](#) asking that the team delete its Native American name, logo and mascot. Montgomery County [joins](#) the District of Columbia, Arlington County, and the City of Alexandria urging you to eliminate Native American mascots, names, and logos.
- A copy of a letter signed by [1,500 Native American tribes and leaders](#) demanding that the team not use Native American names, logos, or mascots. Including all the signatures, the letter runs 120 pages! We include all the names of leaders and organizations in the packet we are delivering to you today.
- Statements by the NAACP and the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism (RAC), a national Jewish advocacy organization promoting social justice, asking the team to steer clear of Native American mascots, names, and logos.

In the Washington Post article, [Rivera Hopes New Name is in Place before Season](#), it appears that you could repeat mistakes of the first owner that resulted in a dictionary defined racial slur being the name of the team. The interview with Coach Rivera suggests that you and he have already narrowed the choice to two or three names that combine Native American and military themes. Academic studies and Native American advocates have made it clear that any Native American images and mascots are unacceptable and are damaging stereotypes.

Even so called positive names such as Warriors are harmful as they constrain the public's view of Native American characteristics and their place in society. It is also sadly ironic to combine Native American and military themes, considering that the role of the U.S. military from the



colonial era, the Civil War, and in the post war decades was to further the extermination of Native Americans.

Native American advocates and civil rights organizations like the National Congress of American Indians have decried the use of all Native American mascots. We should follow the lead of Indigenous women like Suzan Harjo and Amanda Blackhorse who have dedicated their lives to Native American dignity.

[Academic research has found that Native American mascots and names demean Native Americans](#), lower their self-esteem, and lower their confidence that their own communities can improve their situations. In addition, non-natives that are exposed to Native American mascots are more likely to develop negative stereotypes of Native Americans and to engage in discriminatory actions against Native Americans. Supporters of Native American mascots were more likely to have prejudicial attitudes against Native Americans while opponents of Native American mascots at a university with a Native American logo had less of a sense of belonging and offered fewer donations as alumni.<sup>1</sup> In order to reduce amount of prejudice and division in society, these studies make clear that Native American logos and mascots must not be used.

A permanent switch away from Native American mascots, names, and logos would boost the efforts against racism and help repair harms inflicted by Native American stereotyping. Although [nearly 2,000 high schools across this country](#) have eliminated Native American mascots and names, more than 1,950 high schools still use these damaging names.<sup>2</sup> In the wake of your decision to drop a racial slur as the team's name and image, [high school districts across the county have accelerated their name changes](#) away from demeaning Native American mascots. A new name that does not include such stereotypes will continue the momentum in the rebranding of our nation's schools and will help promote racial harmony and understanding.

After declaring all Native American mascots off-limits, you should engage the community just as Abe Pollin did when he changed the name of his team from the Bullets to the Wizards. Mr. Pollin asked the community for suggestions. This generated excitement for his team. You can likewise make a name change a positive development for your team by engaging and reviving your fan base.

We sincerely hope that you engage the community in an inclusive manner with the needs and concerns of Native Americans foremost as you engage in your rebranding efforts. We are pleased that your team will be playing this year as the Washington Football Team while you search for a new name and logo. If you cling to old habits and adopt a Native American theme,

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<sup>1</sup> Laurel R. Davis-Delano ,Joseph P. Gone and Stephanie A. Fryberg, The psychosocial effects of Native American mascots: a comprehensive review of empirical research findings, June 2020, Race, Ethnicity, and Education – Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13613324.2020.1772221>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., regarding how many schools still use Native American logos and mascots.



you will simply be lurching from one controversy to the next and will be further diminishing the public reputation of your team and shrinking your fan base.

We stand ready to work with you in striving for a better future. We urge you to seek reconciliation with Native Americans after the team used a racial slur for more than eight decades. The first step would be to have a meeting with Native American leaders involved in the letter sent to the NFL Commissioner that we delivered to you today. We eagerly await your reply. You can reach us on [rebrandwf@gmail.com](mailto:rebrandwf@gmail.com).

Co-Founders

Rebrand Washington Football

Josh Silver, Montgomery County

Ian Washburn, Arlington County

Bill Mosley, Washington DC