



December 9, 2017

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 1,901 signatures today asking that you change the name of the team. This is our third year of petition delivery; over that time period, we have gathered more than 5,340 signatures. We understand you believe the name honors Native Americans but we respectfully disagree. The name has a sad history of oppression and is a dictionary defined racial slur.

Each year, the constituency for changing the name grows. We gather petitions at Metro stations, farmers markets, and other venues. We have interacted with thousands of residents of the Washington, DC metropolitan area. We will keep building and growing this movement for change.

In addition to the signatures, we are enclosing a documentary film called *More Than a Word* produced by two Native American brothers and artists, John and Kenn Little. Some have tried to use the Washington Post poll as evidence that Native Americans are not bothered by the name. We frankly do not understand the poll since every Native American that we know believes that the name is a fundamental insult to the core being of Native Americans and an affront to their culture.

RWF hopes you view *More than a Word* with an open mind and heart. As you watch it, you will see that thousands upon thousands of Native Americans not only oppose the name but will persist mightily in their efforts to eradicate the name and other stereotypical mascots. There is nothing more powerful than hearing in their own words how damaging the name is.

The film features informative and moving interviews of Native American activists who make it clear what the word represents. Suzan Harjo, the lead plaintiff in the first Supreme Court case against the use of the name R-skin by the professional football team, states that "Actions are preceded by thought. You don't attach rights to people that are less than humans." Tara Houska, another prominent activist, suggests, "As headdress characters, we are not in the modern dialogue." Indeed without respect, there is no justice. The rights of a minority can never be fully realized when the majority in society hold stereotypical views of them. Parading Native American names and sports mascots before millions of non-Native viewers will ingrain powerful and subconscious stereotypes.



While filming the movie, the Littles also made a shirt that has an advertisement from the Winona Daily Republican newspaper from 1863. This ad states, “The State Reward for Dead Indians has been increased to \$200 for every REDSKIN sent to purgatory.” Instead of honor, the name R-dskin is associated with genocide.

Defenders of the name should be reminded that the original owner of the team and bigot, George Preston Marshall, coined the name not out of honor but to pander to a racist fan base. Marshall used stereotypes of Native American and African-American culture and dance during his halftime shows. One of Marshall’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.” Mr. Battles is correct. The name is now a national embarrassment.

This year was marked by divisiveness and controversy surrounding players kneeling during the national anthem at football games. You have an appreciation for the seriousness of police brutality and racism as you stood with your players during one of the games as some of them kneeled during the anthem. The league is torn between proponents and opponents of the protests to such an extent that it is now considering keeping the players in the locker room next year during the anthem.

We appeal to you to show a similar regard for the controversy surrounding the name. The surest way to remove this controversy from the sport and to unite all fans is to change the name of the team. The Washington football team and its name is now sowing division within our community. During the Joe Gibbs era, the team united all races and classes through its winning ways. You can return the team to its role as a unifier by changing a name that is offensive to the original Americans. It would be one of the most patriotic gestures you could make in the interest of unifying all Americans. Our noblest national ideal is that diversity makes us stronger as we all contribute to our country in our unique cultural ways. With respect for our diversity, we stand stronger united. The best way to strive for this ideal is to respect all cultures and ethnicities.

We hope that after watching *More than a Word* that you are moved to change the name. We can be contacted on rebrandwf@gmail.com.

Sincerely,

Josh Silver
Bethesda, MD

Ian Washburn
Arlington, VA

Bill Mosley
Washington, DC