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REBRAND WASHINGTON FOOTBALL

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE, Wednesday, February 2, 2022

NEW NAME FOR WASHINGTON FOOTBALL TEAM ENDS LONG CAMPAIGN TO END A RACIAL SLUR

The renaming of Washington’s professional football team ends a long struggle that gained an initial victory when the team dropped its old, racist name and now reaches completion with the adoption of the new name “The Washington Commanders” and a new logo.

The campaign against the team’s former name, a dictionary-defined racial slur, was begun by Native Americans and later joined by non-native allies such as Rebrand Washington Football (RWF).

“It’s appropriate this announcement took place on ‘Groundhog Day,’ because for many years demands from the public that the team change its racist name had the same result as the movie by that name – nothing ever changed,” said RWF co-founder Bill Mosley. “It took many years and the unfortunate murder of George Floyd, but Dan Snyder was finally forced to face reality. The credit goes to many activists, especially those in the Native American community, who kept this issue alive until the time was ripe for a change.”

Josh Silver, RWF co-founder, adds, “Native Americans and their allies have struggled for decades against a racist name. We are pleased that the WFT finally discarded a racist past. But their job is not done. The WFT motivated several high schools around the country to adopt either R-skins or similar names and mascots. The team should proactively help these schools rebrand. Also, considering that many of leaders of the rebrand movement were Native American women, the WFT team should meet with former female employees and determine how to fully compensate them for experiencing sexual harassment and how to make a contribution for fighting discrimination against women going forward. Only with these steps, is the team fully rebranding.”

“Today’s rebrand continues the positive trend of retiring anti-Indigenous mascots, beginning a half century ago at Stanford University,” said RWF co-founder Ian Washburn. “While there is still much more work to be done, we applaud the efforts of the Washington Commanders to evolve tolerance and human understanding.”

RWF was founded in 2015 to support a longstanding effort by Native American activists to change the team’s name. RWF circulated petitions that collected more than 11,000 signatures from the public demanding a change and delivered them to the team’s Ashburn headquarters annually between 2015 and 2021.

The group also campaigned for the removal of the monument at RFK Stadium to George Preston Marshall, the team’s founder who adopted its racist name and kept the team all-white until pressured by the Kennedy administration to integrate in 1962 as a condition for being



allowed to build the stadium on federally owned land. The DC government removed the monument in June 2020.

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