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## **REBRAND WASHINGTON FOOTBALL**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE, Saturday, December 7, 2019

### **WASHINGTON FOOTBALL FANS DELIVER PETITION DEMANDING CHANGE IN TEAM NAME**

The grassroots organization Rebrand Washington Football (RWF) today continued a holiday-season tradition by delivering a special gift to Daniel M. Snyder, owner of Washington's professional football team: petitions bearing 1,884 signatures demanding that he change the team's name. The petition delivery took place at the team's headquarters, Inova Sports and Performance Center at Redskins Park in Ashburn, Va. on the 78<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor.

RWF was founded in 2015 by local football fans to advocate that the team adopt a new name because the current one is a dictionary-defined racial slur that disparages Native Americans. In addition to circulating its petition, RWF has worked with Native American allies, religious institutions, local-public sector officials, and civil rights organizations who are advocating a change in the name.

"Mr. Snyder continues to cling to a racial slur and a stereotype for a mascot and a name," said RWF co-founder Josh Silver. "We will be giving him a white paper that summarizes psychological studies showing the damage done by this insidious name. He still has a chance to lead and repent by changing the name. We hope he does so soon!"

"Seventy-eight years ago my grandparents learned of the attack at Pearl Harbor while in the stands at Griffith Stadium," said RWF co-founder Ian Washburn. "Despite victory in the 'war of all wars,' genocide and racism prevail with the Washington football mascot."

Commenting on the renaming of the team's headquarters and training facility, RWF co-founder Ian Washburn said, "The partnership between Inova Health and the Washington football team is a violation of medical ethics."

Silver, Washburn and RWF member Bill Mosley were joined by D.C Councilmember David Grosso and Native American allies in delivering the petitions bearing the signatures collected this year from 1,884 members of the public. Also attending the event and giving remarks were a number of Native American activists, including Mary Phillips (Omaha/Laguna), Joe Gaines (Choctaw), Nick Courtney (Makah), and Anthony Tamez-Pochel (Cree and Lakota).

This is the fifth time RWF has delivered petitions to team headquarters in support of a name change. Over that time, the group has collected 9,024 signatures from members of the public demanding that the team change its name.

In addition to the petition collections, RWF today [published a paper](#) by Silver highlighting research on the harmful effects of Native mascots and imagery. The paper cites psychological



studies which found that the mascots perpetuate negative stereotypes and harm the education of Native American and non-Native American youth.

In addition to circulating its petitions, RWF also has been campaigning to remove the monument to George Preston Marshall outside RFK Stadium, the former home of the football team. Marshall, the founder of the franchise, gave the team its racist moniker and kept the team all-white until pressured to integrate by the Kennedy administration in 1962 as a condition for using the federal land on which the stadium sits.

Along with the petitions, the group delivered a letter to Snyder, the text of which follows:

December 7, 2019

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 1,884 signatures today asking that you change the name of the team. This is our fifth year of petition delivery; over that time period, we have gathered 9,024 signatures. We respectfully disagree with your position that the name of the team honors Native Americans. We ask that you consider the perspective of Native Americans and others that oppose the name.

A national movement is gaining momentum to eradicate Native American mascots and logos. More than 2,000 high schools across the country (nearly two thirds of the high schools with Native American themes) have changed their names and mascots. Over the past 25 years, 28 high schools have changed their “R-skins” name. This year, school districts in states as diverse as Florida, Utah, New York, Arkansas, Connecticut, Florida, and Ohio have eliminated Native American mascots. The state of Maine banned Native American mascots and logos in all public schools this year. This fall, the City of Alexandria called upon all sports teams that play in Virginia to shed Native American mascots and logos.

Just in the last couple of months, a relief pitcher for the Cardinals who is Native American called upon the Atlanta baseball team to discontinue the Tomahawk Chop; he suggested that Native American logos and mascots including your team’s were demeaning. The Lieutenant Governor of Minnesota who is also Native American supported the protest against your team’s name when the R-skins played the Minnesota Vikings. She stated, “Dating back to American colonialism, there are different origin stories for the term ‘Redsk\*n.’ They are all deeply painful for Native people. At best, the term was a reference to the reddish tone of Native peoples’ skin and was commonly used to dehumanize them. At worst, it refers to the bloody scalp of a Native American.”



This year, we are enclosing a RWF report, *Native American Mascots Dishonor and Demean: The Psychological and Sociological Impacts of Racial Slurs as Mascots*, with the petitions. This report reviews psychological studies which conclude that Native American mascots lower the self-esteem of Native Americans and perpetuate negative and stereotypical attitudes non-Native Americans have about Native Americans. Even in cases in which Native Americans associated mascots with positive attributes like bravery, the studies found that mascots still lowered Native American self-worth and constrained their thinking about their future. Native American youth in particular reacted to stereotypical mascots by concluding that they are better suited for athletic pursuits featuring bravery and physical ability over academic endeavors.

Our report also discusses findings of the Department of Education which conducted focus groups across the country of Native Americans. Parents, educators, and youth discussed how Native American mascots lead to bullying, including instances of non-Native children saying to the Native Americans that they are mascots! The dehumanizing aspect of mascots led Native American youth in a national survey to resoundingly call for the discontinuation of these mascots.

Another parent at the Department of Education forum states:

The use of derogatory and stereotypical caricatures used to falsely depict Native Americans ... hold an eerie resemblance to the caricature-like pictures of people with exaggerated facial features ... used in old Nazi propaganda newspapers, ... which were used to influence and incite negative public opinion, and thus the dehumanization of Jewish people.

Despite your clinging to a name with an ignominious past, you still have a chance to lead and pave the way for a better future. Racism and oppression is a national dilemma; the name of your team that plays in the nation's capital symbolizes our struggles as a nation. If you change the name, you would be a leader repenting and illustrating the way to a better future featuring racial harmony instead of animosity. You would be making a patriotic gesture confirming that diversity is the source of our strength.

We can be contacted on [rebrandwf@gmail.com](mailto:rebrandwf@gmail.com), and we sincerely hope you reconsider your views on the name.

Sincerely,

Josh Silver  
Bethesda, MD

Ian Washburn  
Arlington, VA

Bill Mosley  
Washington, DC

-end-