



Will the Washington Football Team be the Last to Shed a Racist Name?



George Preston Marshall: First Owner of Team and Last Owner in NFL to Integrate His Team



Daniel Snyder: Will He be the Last Owner to Shed a Racial Slur?



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A Report of Rebrand Washington Football (RWF) – December 2018

The Washington football team was the last team to integrate. The question for Mr. Daniel Snyder, the current owner of the Washington football team, is whether the team will be the last one to eradicate a racial slur as its name and mascot. As a team that plays in the nation's capital, the name of the team is not a trivial matter. It is a reflection of who we are as a country and the values to which we aspire.

If the name remains a racial slur, it serves as a reminder of the dark and virulently racist epochs during which the nation engaged in genocide against Native Americans, enslaved African-Americans, forcibly removed the Japanese to internment camps, and committed countless other acts of discrimination and atrocities against other ethnic groups. In contrast, if Mr. Snyder does the right thing and changes the name, his action would reinforce the best of American history as a nation founded upon the ideal that all people are created equal and that diversity is its strength.

We implore Mr. Snyder not to be the last team owner to do the right thing. This report documents that Mr. Snyder is on the path to be the last stubborn owner hanging onto a genocidal past. We focus on the nation's high schools because those institutions are particularly formative institutions instilling values and ethics into adolescents as they learn about the responsibilities of citizenship. While several high schools retain racist and stereotypical names, many others have dropped offensive names and mascots. States have also been active passing laws limiting and/or outlawing Native American logos, names, and mascots.

American Psychological Association Resolution against Stereotypes and Racial Mascots

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. For non-Native youth, these mascots reinforced negative stereotypes while for Native American youth they perpetuated a hostile learning environment and lowered self-esteem. In contrast to the mantra of Mr. Snyder that Native American imagery in sports honors Native Americans, the APA concluded that "the continued use of American Indian mascots, symbols, images, and personalities is disrespectful of the spiritual beliefs and values of American Indian nations." Furthermore, "the continued use of American Indian mascots, symbols, images, and personalities is an offensive and intolerable practice to American Indian Nations that must be eradicated."¹

¹ APA Resolution Recommending the Immediate Retirement of American Indian Mascots, Symbols, Images, and Personalities by Schools, Colleges, Universities, Athletic Teams, and Organizations, <https://www.apa.org/about/policy/mascots.pdf>



Excerpt of APA Resolution

APA Resolution Recommending the Immediate Retirement of American Indian Mascots, Symbols, Images, and Personalities by Schools, Colleges, Universities, Athletic Teams, and Organizations

WHERE AS the American Psychological Association has recognized that racism and racial discrimination are attitudes and behavior that are learned and that threaten human development;

WHERE AS the American Psychological Association has resolved to denounce racism in all its forms and to call upon all psychologists to speak out against racism, and take proactive steps to prevent the occurrence of intolerant or racist acts;

WHERE AS the continued use of American Indian mascots, symbols, images, and personalities undermines the educational experiences of members of all communities-especially those who have had little or no contact with Indigenous peoples

Sporting events are particularly emotive venues stirring up strong feelings of competition and team solidarity. In the context of a sporting event, it is particularly harmful for a team to wear Native American names and logos. In the heat of the moment, negative stereotypes of savage warriors intensify both for the team wearing the Native American logos and for the opposing teams and fans. It was probably for these reasons that 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.” As of 2005, the NCAA noted that 18 universities and colleges continued using racial or ethnic mascots and names while 14 had removed them.²

2,000 High Schools Take Action

States and high schools have also been active over the decades in eliminating racist names, mascots, and logos. According to a 2013 report by the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI), two thirds or about 2,000 high schools that had Native American names, logos, and mascots have eliminated them during the past 35 years. Also, over the past 25 years, 28 high schools have changed their “R-skins” name.³

A review of legislative and voluntary action across states over several years illustrates that schools and communities are grappling with and confronting the racist legacy of Native American names, logos, and mascots. Changing names and mascots have been highly controversial and heated in some locales, but the name changes have commenced nonetheless. In other instances, the effort to change the name was not successful. Nevertheless, countless

² National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) News Release, *NCAA Executive Committee Issues Guidelines for Use of Native American Mascots at Championship Events*, August 5, 2005

<http://fs.ncaa.org/Docs/PressArchive/2005/Announcements/NCAA%2BExecutive%2BCommittee%2BIssues%2BGuidelines%2Bfor%2BUse%2Bof%2BNative%2BAmerican%2BMascots%2Bat%2BChampionship%2BEvents.html>

³ National Congress of American Indians, *Ending the Legacy of Racism in Sports and the Era of Harmful Indian Sports Mascots*, October 2013, http://www.ncai.org/resources/ncai-publications/Ending_the_Legacy_of_Racism.pdf, p. 8



communities across the country are confronting the issue while Daniel Snyder remains obstinate in his opposition to changing the name.

State by State

Let us consider action on the ground in a number of states regarding high schools:

Oregon

In 2012, the state's school board banned Native American names, mascots, and logos in schools. In support of this action, Schools Superintendent Susan Castillo cited research that found harmful effects from "racial stereotyping and inaccurate racial portrayals." These are "particularly harmful to the social identity, development and self-esteem of American Indian young people." During 2013, the state legislature overturned the school board decision but the Governor vetoed the bill. In 2014, the legislature passed a law allowing a school district to retain Native American names and mascots if the district obtained consent from a tribe.

Following the 2014 law, eight districts decided to engage with tribes to see if they could obtain permission to continue with the Native American names, logos, and mascots. Four school districts decided to eliminate the Native American themes.

One school district had a protracted discussion with views expressed by all sides before deciding to eliminate Native American themes. Mohawk High School in the Marcola district northeast of Eugene had been named the Mohawk Indians since the 1920s. Town hall meetings and a survey prompted the school to change the name. Of the 100 people responding to the survey, 52 percent opted for a new name, while 48 percent wanted to keep the name.⁴ While RWF is uncomfortable using surveys to decide a civil rights issue, the point in this example is that the community engaged in a lengthy process to deal with a sensitive issue and then changed the name. Daniel Snyder, in contrast, has not engaged in a thoughtful process.

⁴ Alisha Roemeling, *Mohawk to Drop Longtime Indian Mascot*, The Register Guard, February 11, 2017, <https://www.registerguard.com/rg/news/local/35269980-75/mohawk-high-school-to-drop-indian-mascot.html.csp>



California

California went partial. In 2015, the legislature passed and Governor Jerry Brown signed the California Racial Mascots Act, which banned the use of the name R-skins as schools names and mascots. It did not ban the use of “Braves,” “Indians” or other names to refer to Native Americans, which are still used by dozens of schools in the state. Moreover, some schools found loopholes to defy the intent of the law and removed the name R-skins but not the imagery from their property. For example, soon after the law was signed, Calaveras High School principal Mike Merrill issued a public statement declaring, “The dignity and pride that we have maintained in the use of our logo will not change.”⁵

The deleterious effects of skirting the law becomes clear on the battlefield of the gridiron. As a student states, “One of our school’s biggest rivals is the Calaveras Redskins. . . . The most offensive stuff doesn’t even come from the Redskins. It comes from their rival schools, mine included. I have heard my own friends yelling around me, ‘Kill the Redskins!’ or ‘Send them on the Trail of Tears!’ ”⁶

Despite controversy, other high schools in California took the bold step to end the stereotypical use of Native American themes. This past August, the Napa Valley School District Board of

⁵ Andrew Wild, *Two Years Later, Effect of California Racial Mascots Act Looks Diminished*, The Daily Californian, October 9, 2017, <http://www.dailycal.org/2017/10/09/two-years-later-effect-california-racial-mascots-act-looks-diminished/>

⁶ Matt Hoyer, *The Psychological Toll of that Name*, Washington Post, October 5, 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/the-psychological-toll-of-that-name/2018/10/05/789928b0-b1f6-11e8-9a6a-565d92a3585d_story.html?utm_term=.75da28bab81a



Education banned the use of Native American themes and Napa High School became the Grizzlies. A committee of students is now creating a new logo.⁷

Michigan

In 2013, the Michigan Board of Education passed a resolution urging schools to drop Native American mascots, names, and logos. The resolution states in part, “People of all cultures, races, and religions have a right to be treated with dignity and respect. American Indian tribes, organizations, state and local officials, and private citizens find the use of American Indian mascots, nicknames, logos, and symbols within our public schools to be offensive, and further find that their use has a detrimental effect on the educational achievement of American Indian students.”⁸

Since the passage of the resolution, the Nottawaseppi Huron Band of the Potawatomi uses part of its gaming revenue to maintain a fund called the Native American Heritage Fund to finance the removal of offensive Native American imagery from local government and school property. This past July, the fund awarded \$415,000 to remove artwork in Kalamazoo, Battle Creek, and Belding. In Belding, the school board held numerous meetings and decided to change from the Indians to the Nights. Brent Noskey, superintendent for Belding Area Schools, affirms that this is “For our kids – and it’s really about the kids – for our kids this will help us move forward, to help us be proud of what we are now.”

Progress is not linear in Michigan. In Paw Paw, the school board decided to keep the name R-skins for its schools. This prompted the Native American advocacy coalition, the Michigan Coalition against Racism in Sports, to erect a billboard along a highway reminding motorists that the name is a dictionary defined racial slur.⁹

⁷ Napa High School Students and Staff Vote to Change Longstanding Mascot, August 20, 2018, KSRO, Sonoma County’s FM News Talk, <http://www.ksro.com/2018/08/20/napa-high-school-students-and-staff-vote-to-change-long-standing-mascot/>

⁸ State of Michigan School Board of Education Resolution: Use of American Indian Mascots, Nicknames, and Logos, June 26, 2003, https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mascots_69612_7.res.pdf

⁹ Kayla Miller, *I-94 Billboard Protests Schools R-skins Mascot*, Kalamazo News, August 15, 2018, https://www.mlive.com/news/kalamazoo/index.ssf/2018/08/billboard_outside_paw_paw.html



Wisconsin

In 1989, the state legislature enacted a law requiring accurate information about Native Americans in public schools. In 2009, the state legislature passed a law allowing citizens to petition the State's Department of Instruction regarding offensive mascots and names. The Department can then mandate a change if it finds that the name, mascot, and logo is discriminatory.¹⁰

Over the years, 34 schools have changed their names while 31 cling to the outdated and offensive imagery. While more than half of the schools have shredded their anachronisms, change needs to be complete according to Native Americans. Rain Koepke, a former student at Mukwonago High School and a member of the Peoria tribe of Oklahoma, maintains, "There is not a single shred of verifiable scientific or academic literature or data that states any kind of positive effect on the population that is being used as a mascot. Point of fact, every piece of evidence has proved that the imagery inflicts deep emotional and psychological harm on the individuals in question and helps to advocate discrimination and negative behavior by the power majority in control of the mascots."¹¹

Minnesota

Minnesota was one of the pioneers in the change the name movement. In 1989, the Minnesota Civil Liberties Union and the State Department of Education requested that schools discard

¹⁰ State of Wisconsin, 2009 Wisconsin Act 250, May 19, 2010, http://www.indianmascots.com/act_250_-_web.pdf

¹¹ Tom Dombeck, *A symbol of pride or racism? Native American sports mascots debate hot in Wisconsin*, USA Today, March 13, 2018, <https://www.htrnews.com/story/sports/high-school/2018/03/13/change-native-american-sports-mascots-has-been-slow-some-say/383863002/>



Native American names and mascots. That year, 56 schools had Native American themes. Today, only a few do.¹²

Massachusetts

In Massachusetts, a state legislator introduced a bill during 2017 to ban the use of Native American names and mascots. About 41 schools in that state still use Native American themed names and mascots.¹³ According to a member of the Tunica-Biloxi tribe, such mascots are racist and, “They minimize our culture and our contributions.”¹⁴

Ohio

Ohio is behind only Indiana and South Dakota in the percentage of high schools that use Native American names and mascots. One possible explanation is the low percentage of Native Americans; in states with more Native Americans, the pressure for change is stronger. Just about one half of one percent of the population in Ohio is Native American. Approximately, 85 schools or about 11 percent of the state’s high schools use Native American names and mascots. The laissez faire attitude of influential stakeholders is reminiscent of the NFL. For example, The Ohio High School Athletic Association is not engaged. Spokesman Tim Stried stated, “Mascot names and logos are entirely up to each school.”¹⁵

In a town of about 7,000, the Bellevue High School uses the name Redmen. The Superintendent has not eradicated the Native American name but converted the logo to a “B” to refer to the town. One of the former students was firmly entrenched in the previous mascot, dressing up in war paint to attend football games. However, actual contact with Native Americans and their customs convinced her that playing Indian was disrespectful. She comments, “I understand now that I was blinded by my privilege like so many others in this community. It wasn’t until last year that my eyes were opened and my entire viewpoint was changed, and it all happened in one discussion. It was an honor to be welcomed to witness [the Chanupa] ceremony as an outsider, and it will be something I never forget.”

The presence of Native American students can provide the margin needed to propel change. In Butler County, the school board recently voted 3-2 after hours of debate to change the name of the Talawanda High School from “Braves” to “Brave.” The impetus of change occurred about

¹² Matt McKinney, *For some Minnesota schools, little debate on Indian nicknames: Schools that keep Indian mascots cite historical and cultural links*, Star Tribune, November 20, 2015, <http://www.startribune.com/in-minnesota-indian-team-names-carry-historic-meaning/352444861/>

¹³ Boston 25 News, *New bill takes on Native American mascots in Mass. Schools*, June 6, 2017, <http://www.fox25boston.com/news/new-bill-takes-on-native-american-mascots-in-mass-schools/530275078>

¹⁴ WCVB5, *Massachusetts bill would ban Native American school mascots*, June 6, 2017, <https://www.wcvb.com/article/massachusetts-bill-would-ban-native-american-school-mascots/9981984>

¹⁵ Sam Allard, *There Are So Many Ohio High Schools with Native American Mascots*, Cleveland Scene, January 9, 2018, <https://www.clevescene.com/scene-and-heard/archives/2018/01/09/there-are-so-many-ohio-high-schools-with-native-american-mascots>



five years ago when Native American students requested the school board to change the name and mascots. A committee of parents and other stakeholders recommended that the Board change the name. One of the board members voting for the name change called the previous name a stereotype, an impediment to learning, and a dishonor to Native Americans.¹⁶

In contrast, Arcadia High School remains as the R-dskins. It is located in Hancock County, a town of about 600 people. The superintendent remarks, ““Being a small farming community, some of these people have been redskins for four or five generations. It would be interesting to see what it would cost to change over. It would be fairly expensive. We’ve got uniforms, templates, carvings, letterhead. It would have to be a serious financial commitment for a small rural district. I don’t know any superintendent in Ohio who would unilaterally make that move.” In a story about Native American themed mascots, the Toledo Blade hints that perhaps this superintendent should think about asking Adidas for a donation to change the name and imagery. Adidas announced a fund in 2015 to help high schools defray the costs of changing names.¹⁷



Mascot for the Mohawk High School Warriors in Wyandot, County, OH

Maine

After Nokomis High School changes its name and mascot, only one high school in the state will retain a Native American name and mascot. A survey was sent to 6,000 people in the town and the survey results indicated that people wanted to change the mascot. As stated above, RWF does not support surveys as being a definitive factor in changing names since civil rights issues should not be decided by survey. However, if a survey can uncover some of the reasons for resistance to a name change, perhaps survey results can be employed in a positive manner to address those concerns and reduce resistance to change as apparently was the result in this case. The superintendent of the district adds, “In my opinion, yes. Because if there’s that one kid who has

¹⁶ Max Londberg, *Butler County school board votes to phase out 'stereotyping' Native American mascot*, the Enquirer, November 20, 2018, <https://www.cincinnati.com/story/news/2018/11/20/native-american-mascots-talawanda-school-board-votes-out-braves/2073570002/>

¹⁷ Kyle Rowland, *Time for change? Schools wrestle with Native American nicknames*, The Blade, January 7, 2018, <https://www.toledoblade.com/local/2018/01/05/Time-for-change-Schools-wrestle-with-Native-American-nicknames.html>



reached out to the high school principal and I, and they feel as a Native American, that it's hurtful in some way to them, then, yeah."¹⁸

Washington R-Skins: More Disgraceful the More Resistant

Mr. Daniel Snyder claims that Native American mascots honor Native Americans. Thousands of high schools, the NCAA, and the APA do not agree with him. The history of the first owner, George Preston Marshall (GPM), and his racist antics further illuminates how the name does not honor Native Americans.

In the early years, when GPM's team played in Boston, the first coach was Lone Star Dietz, a shady character who may or may not have been Native American. In *Showdown, JFK and the Integration of the Washington R-skins*, Thomas G. Smith states, "Marshall promptly played on Dietz's Indian ancestry to entertain fans. Not only did he hire a Native American coach and recruit four Indian players..., he required Dietz and the players to wear Indian feathers and war paint before home games."

One of GPM'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."

Marshall was just beginning his embarrassing and craven career of racism and exploitation. In the late 1920s and early 1930s, a few African-American standouts played in the NFL, including Fritz Pollard, a running back and quarterback. In 1933, however, the NFL owners during their annual meeting agreed to an informal ban of African-American players that lasted until 1946. Of course, GPM was one of the ring leaders.

After the World War II, societal pressure to integrate was too much to resist in the NFL except for GPM. African-Americans fought for and died defending democracy abroad. Integration and democracy in the United States, at least in some areas of life, became hard to resist. As the NFL integrated, GPM resisted. His team suffered because of his segregation. When GPM refused to consider a wide swath of the talent pool during NFL drafts, he confined his team to mediocrity. During a 15 year stretch from 1946 through 1961, GPM's team had just three winning seasons, no title or championship games and went through eight coaches (sounds like the contemporary team).

GPM was finally forced to integrate his team in 1962 when he sought to lease DC Stadium and had to secure the permission of the federal government that owned that land beneath the stadium. The Kennedy Administration would not allow him to lease the stadium until he integrated. He relented and signed the African-American running back turned wide receiver Bobby Mitchell in

¹⁸ Doug Harlow, *RSU 19 leaving Native American mascot behind as new school arises*, Kennebec Journal Centralmaine.com, September 10, 2018, <https://www.centralmaine.com/2018/09/08/rsu-19-leaving-native-american-mascot-behind-as-new-school-arises/>



1962, who went onto to have a Hall of Fame career. GPM, however, was not a convert to integration. When he wrote his will, he established the R-skins Foundation and stipulated the Foundation “shall never use, contribute or apply its money or property for any purpose which supports or employs the principle of racial integration in any form.” The foundation was to help disadvantaged children and a court voided the anti-integration clause after GPM’s death.

Instead of following the legacy of an unrepentant segregationist, Mr. Snyder should instead follow the thousands of teams that have changed the name. Professional sports has not undergone a sea change like college and high school athletics and retains a handful of teams with Native American mascots like the Atlanta Braves, Cleveland Indians, Kansas City Chiefs, Chicago Blackhawks, and Edmonton Eskimos.

Winds of change, however, are starting to impact the professional ranks. For decades the Golden State Warriors had Native American mascots. They had a Native American mascot when they played in Philadelphia from 1946 through 1962. When they moved to San Francisco, they maintained a Native American logo until 1969.¹⁹



More recently, the Cleveland Indians announced that it will not use their infamous Chief Wahoo logo on their uniforms starting in 2019 but that they will still sell merchandise with Chief Wahoo. They will also not shed their name.²⁰ This is clearly a half measure and an unsatisfactory one at that, but it shows some responsiveness in contrast to the dismissiveness of Mr. Snyder.

In the Washington DC area, the late Abe Polin, former owner of the Washington Wizards, changed the team’s name from Bullets to Wizards because he was concerned that Bullets

¹⁹ Chris Cabrera, Do you know how the Golden State Warriors got their name?
<https://www.barrystickets.com/blog/golden-state-warriors-name/>

²⁰ Jordan Bastian, *Indians to stop using Wahoo logo starting in '19*, MLB.com, January 29, 2018,
<https://www.mlb.com/news/indians-to-stop-using-chief-wahoo-logo/c-265489544>



connoted violence.²¹ It is a shame that Mr. Snyder has not followed in the tradition of a well-regarded local owner of sports teams.

In a 2013 USA Today article, Mr. Snyder's obstinate refusal to change the name is epitomized when he says, "We'll never change the name," he said. "It's that simple. NEVER — you can use caps."²² Since that time, Mr. Snyder responded to the pressure for a name change by establishing the Original Americans Foundation that provides grants for economic development, health services, and educational initiatives in tribal communities.²³ However, the foundation appears half-hearted and mostly used as a public relations maneuver. Since 2014, the foundation has provided \$5.7 million in aid with the first year representing the most aid of \$3.7 million. Since then, the aid has been about \$500,000 annually. Moreover, some initial tribal recipients refused grants in subsequent years because of the name controversy.²⁴



If Mr. Snyder undertook a comprehensive examination of the mascot controversy, he would come to grips with the thousands of teams and institutions that have moved away from Native American mascots. He would encounter the numerous voices in the Native American community that have asked for the retirement of harmful mascots. He would understand that removing Native American mascots benefits both Native Americans and non-Native Americans by eliminating harmful stereotypes and caricatures. He would read the poignant testimony of non-Native youth and educators as well as Native Americans that have been involved in name changing efforts. Finally, he would realize that it is not glorious to be the among the last institutions changing anachronistic and harmful names and images. He would not want to resemble George Preston Marshall's legacy of being the last to integrate in professional sports. As an owner of a professional team in the nation's capital, Mr. Snyder should aspire to be the best in American tradition, not the worst.

When making the documentary, *More than a Word*, the film makers John and Kenn Little also made a shirt that has an advertisement from the Winona Daily Republican newspaper from 1863.

²¹George Vecsey, Say Goodbye To 'Bullets' As Nickname, New York Times, November 12, 1995, <https://www.nytimes.com/1995/11/12/sports/sports-of-the-times-say-goodbye-to-bullets-as-nickname.html>

²²Erik Brady, Daniel Snyder says Redskins will never change name, USA Today, May 10, 2013, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/sports/nfl/redskins/2013/05/09/washington-redskins-daniel-snyder/2148127/>

²³The Washington R-skins Original Americans Foundation, <http://www.washingtonredskinsoriginalamericansfoundation.org/who-we-are/>

²⁴John Woodrow Cox, Donations to tribes by Daniel Snyder's Redskins foundation plummet in second year, records show, Washington Post, April 15, 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/donations-to-tribes-by-daniel-snyders-redskins-foundation-plummet-in-second-year-records-show/2017/04/14/9cfa53ca-1fb5-11e7-ad74-3a742a6e93a7_story.html?utm_term=.55c43b09b18b



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. Isn’t it simple: the name, mascot, and logo of the Washington football team must be changed immediately!