

Change the Name Now

By Peter H. Michael

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For eighty-one years, the Washington, DC, franchise of the National Football League has blithely disparaged Native Americans with a racial slur, and now, under fire from all directions, tries to pass the practice off as "tradition." This year, the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office canceled the team's six registered trademarks, ruling that the word "redskin" is disparaging. It is beyond time that the name Redskins and the team logo be retired to the dustbin of racism past.

The only obstacle is team owner Dan Snyder with age-old racist excuses: "Fans love the name" (polls say most don't), "Native Americans aren't really offended" (they say they are), and "I love the name and logo" (too bad). Adding insult to injury, Snyder calls the team name "a badge of honor." Snyder's dwindling allies are mostly shrill far-right gasbags like Rush Limbaugh, Glenn Beck and Pat Buchanan.

The President of the United States, other elected officials, high majorities in public opinion polls, NFL players, coaches and officials, sports commentators, and both conservative and liberal columnists are calling for a new team name. As respected NBC football analyst Chris Collinsworth points out, "If it were the Blackskins or the Brownskins, the name would have already been changed." As Native American Bill Wetzel underscores, "Anybody still fighting for it is on the wrong side of history."

Players and coaches of the Washington team are ducking the issue, afraid of crossing the guy who signs their paychecks and has ultimate say over their jobs. But, as star receiver Pierre Garçon alludes, "It's all up to Dan Snyder."

The move to get the team name and logo replaced has been led by Ray Halbritter, leader of the Oneida Indian Nation. *Free Press* joins Halbritter in calling for the Washington team to drop the offensive name. Do it now, Mr. Snyder.

Free Press invites its readers to suggest a new name for Washington's NFL franchise. Email your entry to us at publisher@urfreepress.com. We'll send compiled entries to team management.