



NATIONAL CONGRESS OF AMERICAN INDIANS

The National Congress of American Indians Resolution #DEN-18-044

TITLE: Opposing the Washington NFL Team's Return to the District of Columbia until the Franchise Changes Its Offensive Name and Opposing the Negative Terminology it Engenders

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WHEREAS, we, the members of the National Congress of American Indians of the United States, invoking the divine blessing of the Creator upon our efforts and purposes, in order to preserve for ourselves and our descendants the inherent sovereign rights of our Indian nations, rights secured under Indian treaties and agreements with the United States, and all other rights and benefits to which we are entitled under the laws and Constitution of the United States and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, to enlighten the public toward a better understanding of the Indian people, to preserve Indian cultural values, and otherwise promote the health, safety and welfare of the Indian people, do hereby establish and submit the following resolution; and

WHEREAS, the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) was established in 1944 and is the oldest and largest national organization of American Indian and Alaska Native tribal governments; and

WHEREAS, the use of racist imagery is an affront to basic human rights, undermines basic human dignity, and has a negative impact upon self-image, self-awareness, and self-esteem; and

WHEREAS, the Washington team's R-word name derives from policies of colonization in which bounties were paid for the bloody skins (need to add edits) of American Indian and Alaska Native men, women and children as proof of their killings; and

WHEREAS, every major English language dictionary defines "redskin" as an offensive term to describe American Indian and Alaska Native peoples, and this term, when used in reference to Native peoples and cultures, has a long history of American use as a pejorative and insulting term; and

WHEREAS, the continued use of racist language and images, stereotypes by national sports franchises detracts from the proud indigenous history and traditions of Native peoples and perpetuates inaccurate and harmful stereotypes about American Indian and Alaska Native peoples, exploits and degrades our culture, and relegates our people as vestiges of the past or cartoonish caricatures; and

WHEREAS, the use of the R-word as the name and mascot of the Washington National Football League team is offensive and hurtful to American Indian and Alaska Native people and causes direct, harmful effects on the physical and mental health and academic achievement of the American Indian and Alaska Native populations, particularly youth; and

WHEREAS, despite the team's arguments to the contrary, the R-word is not a term of honor or respect, but rather, a term that still connotes racism and genocide for Native peoples and for all others who know of this history and recognize that it is wrong to characterize people by the color of their skin; and

WHEREAS, the term "redskin" would not properly be used by a person when addressing an American Indian or Alaska Native person and should not be used to market a professional sports team; and

WHEREAS, the use of such stereotypes exemplifies the continued practice of outright commodification of American Indian and Alaska Native peoples and our unique cultural identities; and

WHEREAS, the abuse of American Indian and Alaska Native symbols for entertainment and profit is insensitive, insulting, and unacceptable; and

WHEREAS, the limited and sparse representation of American Indian and Alaska Native peoples in the media and popular culture comprises a significant portion of what children and society at large learn about American Indian and Alaska Native peoples and their cultures, and impacts children's identity formation by reinforcing outdated notions and stereotypes about American Indian and Alaska Native cultures from the past and present; and

WHEREAS, every major national native organization, along with hundreds of native and hundreds of thousands of allies including clergy members, churches, civil rights organizations, media outlets, journalists, authors, and elected officials have voiced support for changing the team's name; and

WHEREAS, the Washington NFL team has chosen to continue using its offensive and discriminatory name and mascot and engage in ongoing cultural appropriation despite great efforts to educate the NFL and the team about the substantial harm that the name, mascot, and resultant behaviors cause; and

WHEREAS, the team's ongoing use of a racial slur is directly at odds with the values, actions, and racial justice legacy of former U.S. Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy, in whose honor RFK stadium is named, and which is the location of a proposed site for the team's future stadium.

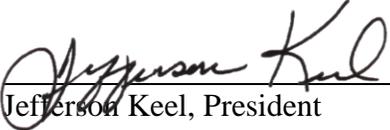
NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, national sports franchises, such as Washington's NFL team, should not be vehicles of institutionalized racism, be used to indoctrinate the American public with the idea that it is acceptable to typecast, and should not continue to promote disparaging and diminishing terminology like, "political tribalism," "being on the war path," or "beating the tom tom," that dehumanize and seek to impugn the reputation of our nations and peoples; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) reaffirms its categorical opposition to the use of the demeaning R-word by the Washington NFL team and does hereby call on the District of Columbia’s governing leaders, including the D.C. Council and Mayor, to oppose and refuse to approve a move back to the District by the franchise until it changes its offensive name; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that this resolution shall be the policy of NCAI until it is withdrawn or modified by subsequent resolution.

CERTIFICATION

The foregoing resolution was adopted by the General Assembly at the 2018 Annual Session of the National Congress of American Indians, held at the Hyatt Regency in Denver, Colorado October 21-26, 2018, with a quorum present.



Jefferson Keel, President

ATTEST:



Juana Majel Dixon, Recording Secretary