



Press Statement

The Rev. M. Linda Jaramillo – Executive Minister of Justice and Witness Ministries and National Officer of the United Church of Christ

Cleveland (June 29, 2015) – Today, the United Church of Christ General Synod, meeting in Cleveland, passed a resolution calling upon the National Football League’s Washington franchise to change its team name and to refrain from the use of any images, mascots, or behaviors that are or could be properly deemed harmful or demeaning to Native American cultures or peoples. The use of the term “Redskins” for the team mascot and nickname of the Washington football team is offensive and causes direct harmful effects to the public health and well-being of the Native American population.

The UCC has a historic commitment to racial justice. As followers of Jesus, we are compelled by the Gospel to seek the elimination of racism within ourselves, in the church, and in the broader society. The UCC’s 19th-century Congregational ancestors were deeply engaged in the abolitionist movement, evidenced by the Amistad incident when John Adams defended captured African, would-be slaves in their struggle for liberation. The UCC, formed in 1957, continues this rich heritage to be a bold public voice in the face of injustice. As a new denomination, the UCC aligned itself with the Civil Rights movement in this country. Previous Pastoral Letters on Race claim that “racism is a sin and an evil that stands as an affront to the Christian faith... and remains a wound at the heart of our nation that cannot be wished away or treated carelessly.”¹

In 1991, General Synod, the biennial national gathering of the UCC, passed a resolution entitled “Negative Stereotyping of Native Americans,” which called upon its members to work for the elimination of negative stereotyping and to boycott those who use them in sports, the media and commercial and military products. For decades since, the UCC has spoken out in opposition to their usage, and been active in protests against such misuse.

God has put the body together, giving greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it (1 Corinthians 12:24-30).

Leading up to and during this General Synod, the UCC circulated a petition among members and community partners to join the movement that calls upon the Cleveland baseball team to change both its team logo (Chief Wahoo) and the team name (Indians). Hundreds have signed the petitions, which will be delivered to the headquarters of the Cleveland baseball team by General Synod delegates on Tuesday, June 30.

¹ UCC Pastoral Letter on Race, 1991; UCC Pastoral Letter on Race, 2008.



While U.S. race relations have changed and this denigrating language is no longer acceptable to Americans, stereotypical notions and ideas have been embedded in U.S. culture for hundreds of years. The UCC will continue to journey in solidarity with our Native American brothers and sisters until this part of our body of humanity is honored and respected.