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**UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST**



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United Church of Christ calls for Washington NFL team to change team name, logo

CLEVELAND (June 29, 2015) - The United Church of Christ has passed a resolution calling for the National Football League and the Washington Redskins franchise to change the team name and refrain from the use of any images or mascots that could be harmful or demeaning to the Native American community. The resolution also calls on the denomination's nearly 1 million members to boycott all team games and merchandise until the name changes.

The decision was made on Monday, June 29, during the denomination's biennial General Synod gathering taking place June 26-30 at the Cleveland Convention Center.

"I am not a Redskin, I am not a mascot, that is not an honor," said Toni Buffalo, chairperson of the UCC Council for American Indian Ministry (CAIM), whose Native American name is Brave Flying Women. "I am a survivor of the genocide that has been committed against my people in the United States of America for the last 500 years. Do not tell me you're honoring me when you're cheering for that team."

"Today, the United Church of Christ General Synod 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 harmful or demeaning to Native American cultures or peoples," said the Rev. Linda Jaramillo, a national officer of the UCC. "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 resolution was supported by the Oneida Indian Nation, the federally-recognized tribe of the Oneida people headquartered in central New York, and the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI), the oldest and largest organization representing more than 80 Native American tribes throughout the United States.

In a joint statement about the resolution, Oneida Indian Nation Representative Ray Halbritter and NCAI Executive Director Jackie Pata said:

“We are honored to partner with the United Church of Christ in their effort to help relegate this offensive and outdated slur to the dustbin of history. An honorable organization with a historic track record of standing up for civil rights, the UCC has an important role to play in helping to bring this issue to the forefront of social consciousness and making a change for the good of all.”

Since 1991, the UCC has publicly condemned the use of Native American imagery for sports team mascots, names and logos, and has called on leadership of the Cleveland Indians Major League Baseball team to also change its team name and Chief Wahoo logo. On Tuesday, June 30, General Synod attendees will walk from the Cleveland Convention Center to the Indians’ team offices at Progressive field to hand-deliver a petition to team leadership calling for the name and logo change. The action will take place in partnership with the UCC Council for American Indian Ministries and the Cleveland Committee of 500 Years.

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About the United Church of Christ:

The United Church of Christ is a mainline Protestant denomination with nearly 1 million members and more than 5,000 congregations nationwide. Headquartered in Cleveland, Ohio, the UCC is a church of many firsts, including the first mainline denomination to ordain a woman, the first to ordain an openly-gay man and the first predominantly white denomination to ordain an African American.

The UCC and its members are tireless advocates for social issues such as immigration reform, racial equality, LGBT rights, marriage equality, environmental protection and economic justice.

About the Oneida Indian Nation:

The Oneida Indian Nation is a federally recognized Indian nation in central New York. It is a member of the Haudenosaunee, known in English as the Six Nations or Iroquois Confederacy. The Oneida Indian Nation operates a variety of businesses to fund its government programs. The Nation is headed by Oneida Indian Nation Representative Ray Halbritter.

About the National Congress of American Indians:

The National Congress of American Indians, founded in 1944, is the oldest, largest, and most representative American Indian and Alaska Native organization serving the broad interests of tribal governments and communities.