

Pastors, Native Americans Target NFL's Washington Redskins for Racial Slur

More than 60 clergy members have signed a letter to the NFL and Washington team owner Dan Snyder calling for D.C.'s football team to change its name.

The letter, highlighted in the latest radio ad from the Change the Mascot campaign, asserts that the faith leaders have a moral obligation to take a stand against "the offensive and inappropriate name of Washington's NFL team."

The latest ad will air on Washington's WTOP-FM (103.5) and WPRS Praise-FM (104.1) this weekend in the lead-up to Sunday's home game against Kansas City.

D.C. Rev. Graylan Hagler circulated the letter and rallied support from clergy members representing a diverse range of communities through the D.C. metro area and beyond. The senior minister at Plymouth Congregational United Church of Christ and a longtime critic of the name of Washington's NFL team, Hagler will narrate the newest ad from Change the Mascot.

"Faith leaders and organizations from a variety of faith backgrounds are increasingly voicing their disapproval of the team's name and making it clear that the time to change the name is now," says Oneida Nation representative Ray Halbritter. "These clergy leaders have sent a powerful message to the NFL that no group deserves to be treated as the target of a hurtful racial slur and that Native Americans should be treated as what we are: Americans."

In the new Change the Mascot ad, Rev. Hagler notes his decades-long opposition to the team name given by former team owner and avowed segregationist George Preston Marshall.

"This is not just a **civil rights** issue; it is a moral issue," Hagler says. "I hope that whatever your particular religious tradition, you will also join this campaign."

In recent weeks, two leading rabbis published a CNN op-ed taking a strong stand against the Washington team's use of the R-word. The Council on American-Islamic Relations has also called for a name change from the team.

The radio spot is the latest from the Oneida Indian Nation's Change the Mascot campaign, which has aired similar ads in Washington and all cities where the team has played road games throughout the NFL season.

Text of the clergy members' letter and audio of the advertisement can be found at [, along with further information about the Oneida Indian Nation's ongoing campaign. To listen to the new radio ad, titled "Moral Issue," click here.](#)

Following is the full text of the "Moral Issue" ad:

HAGLER: "I'm Reverend Graylan Hagler. As a member of the Washington-area clergy, I feel a responsibility to stand up for the **biblical** principles of love, dignity, respect and compassion. That's why for more than 20 years, I have spoken out against the owners of our city's professional football team for promoting a racial slur against Native Americans.

"This word is defined in the dictionary as a slur and was made the team name by George Preston Marshall, one of the nation's most famous segregationists. In 2013, this is a word that should not be publicly marketed and celebrated in America.

"As we all know, words can cause great pain, even when there is no intention to offend or demean. This is especially true with a word like the R-word, which has been used to demean Native Americans as subhuman.

"This week, more than 60 Washington-area clergy members signed

a letter to the National Football League and Daniel Snyder, asking them to end the use of the R-word as Washington's team name. You can see that letter at [. We are joining with D.C. political leaders, members of Congress from both parties, top sports figures and even the President of the United States, all of whom have said it is time to end the use of this painful slur.](#)

"This is not just a civil rights issue; it is a moral issue. I hope that whatever your particular religious tradition, you will also join this campaign. Talk to your friends and family, write a letter to the editor, send an email to the NFL or bring a sign to a Washington game. Whatever you can do will be a big help in finally turning the page on this chapter of history and moving down the path of inclusion and mutual respect. It is time for a change."