

The Washington Redskins Will Change Their Team Name

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Key insight:

- Not every sports team with a Native American-inspired name or logo is following Washington's lead.

The NFL's Washington, D.C. team announced today it would change its name from the Washington Redskins.

"We will be retiring the Redskins name and logo" at the end of a review period that began July 3, the team said in a statement posted to Twitter this morning. Team owner Dan Snyder and coach Ron Rivera "are working closely to develop a new name and design approach." The statement did not offer a new name, nor did it offer a date on which the new name can be expected.

Twitter/Redskins

Requests for further comment to the team and the NFL were not immediately returned.

The news, first reported by Sports Business Daily on Sunday, prompted fans to take to social media and offer one last salute to the team under its former name. The hashtags #HTTR and #HailToTheRedskins trended as fans said goodbye and prepared for the new chapter.

The current name is a racial slur used to demean Native Americans, and a reference to a period of state-sponsored genocide. Seeing it retired marks the end of a decades-long battle by Native Americans and civil rights advocates to convince Snyder to end its use.

According to the group First Peoples Worldwide, the business-

focused Indigenous peoples advocacy group that initiated letters from investors and to the NFL commissioner urging the name change, the team had not made any attempt to contact Native American advocacy groups as of Sunday night.

Adweek's coverage of the Native American-led campaign against the team's name throughout June and July helped add urgency to the fight. The team had been subject to multiple lawsuits, saw protests outside of arenas, and had even been pressured by investors and shareholders that urged its corporate sponsors for years to drop the team.

On June 3, Adweek spoke with Native American advocates about the irony of teams with Native mascots issuing statements of support for the Black Lives Matter movement. The Washington team had tweeted in support of #BlackoutTuesday, and Roberto Borrero (Guainía Taíno), president of the United Confederation of Taíno People, told Adweek the statement rang "hollow" after so many years of resisting calls to address the racism of its own team nickname.

"If the team was really interested in standing in solidarity for racial justice," Borrero said, "they would change their name from the dictionary-defined racial slur they continue to use."

Later that month, the magazine reached out to apparel brands that license and manufacture apparel for the team; NFL licensee Alyssa Milano told Adweek that she had asked to be released from obligations to produce team merchandise because she disagreed with the continued use of a racist name, but was told she'd be held liable for breach of contract.

Then on July 1, Adweek broke news of a letter from shareholders worth \$620 billion asking FedEx, Nike and PepsiCo to discontinue brand sponsorships unless the Washington team agreed to change its name. As news of the investor letter spread, the following two-day period saw rapid change: Nike

removed the team's merchandise from its website, FedEx issued a statement urging a name change, and Snyder and Rivera announced they would begin a review "to determine the best path forward with regard to our team name."

Last week, a group of Native American leaders and advocacy nonprofits sent a letter to NFL commissioner Roger Goodell demanding that the league retire the Washington team's name and all Native mascots. That letter was initially signed by around a dozen leaders and groups. By week's end, the number of Native Americans and community groups to sign the letter to Goodell had grown to over 1,500.

Not every team is following Washington's lead

The controversy over the use of Native American people as sports mascots has reached an unprecedented fever pitch that seems unlikely to fade—one that hardly ends with the Washington team. The Cleveland Indians baseball team announced last week that it would review its name, the Atlanta Braves said on Sunday that it would work with Native American advisers on its controversial "tomahawk chop" fan salute, and numerous school-level teams across the country announced plans to review their own local Native mascots.

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