

How To Fix Racist Team Names Like the Washington "Redskins"

by Stephen Elliott-Buckley - Monday, February 03, 2014

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"The Redskins Should Change Their Racist Name"

There's actually a [list](#) of racist team names. A few of them even.

If you think the oh-so-rich professional sports leagues are the pure [avenues of Everyman](#) in pursuit of recreation in a troubled world, get over yourself. They are brand-obsessed, like all corporations. Some brands stink with their racist team names, logos, mascots and symbols, even though there are those that attempt to reflect positive elements of race [Atlanta Braves?]. A variety of people are saying this: [#ChangeTheName](#) and [#ChangeTheMascot](#) and that they are [#NotYourMascot](#). Sounds like common sense to me.

But the only "good" reason I've ever heard about why some teams need to keep their racist names is...tradition. Maybe I've missed a few, but this one is so very sad. Tradition. Slavery was traditional as well. As well as keeping women from voting.

But let's not only "pick on" Washington [the seat of the government that fought for the emancipation of a race from this slavery thing]. Let's focus on the rest of the teams that have a rich tradition of sporting a racist team name!



Edmonton Eskimos, Atlanta Braves, Cleveland Indians, Kansas City Chiefs, Chicago Blackhawks, etc.

I think the NBA is doing ok. Any guesses why that is? Sociologists, anyone?

Here's the best [Superbowl commercial](#) that never was. Watch for the very powerful ending and how it fits into removing bigotry from sport!

A SOLUTION!

OK, here's a solution. Don't just change the name/logo/brand/iconography/mascot. Make a big deal about changing the name. Use it as a catalyst for a community-engagement rebranding, like New Coke, except for something worthwhile, so it can be the opposite: a success.

Through this process, you start by acknowledging the long culture of your team, which itself is bigger than, and not dependent on, racist names or names that objectify a people. And then you say something like, "our greatness is not dependent on a name that is offensive to some; our greatness of the past, present and future is because our commitment to [*insert your league/sport and iconic players/coaches here*] is eternal, so we need a new name to carry forward with us because no one wants to inadvertently be bigots."

Then you open it wide open and make a big deal out of crafting a new identity, one that can be shared proudly by everyone. You explore your greatness with those who love you. What has made you great? What non-bigoted symbols reflect that greatness? You explore your hopes and dreams and visions for a future of splendour and authentic integrity and the sincere desire to be role models for those seeking guidance!

How hard is that? Remember all the effort that went into New Coke? It can't be anywhere nearly as hard as that, and this has every chance of actually succeeding.

And you don't need to call out "Redskin," "Brave," "Chief," "Blackhawk," [etc.] lovers as anything at all.

Most/all probably aren't racists or wanting to be racists as they support their team. If they happen to be, **it's not because of the team name**. They're racists anyway. So don't worry about it. It's not your fault. And frankly, if they want to abandon your team because your community changed its name away from something racist, that should actually help you sleep better at night?

And in Vancouver, I see what we've got with this Canucks team name. Seems ok, except when people pronounce it Canooks. Imagine if we were, historically, the Vancouver Salish [or various racist slurs, which I won't type because you know what I'm talking about], or Vancouver Chinese [or racist slurs], or Vancouver South Asians [or racist slurs]? I'd quite hope we'd put a stop to that, [like the Nepean Redskins did](#)! See, they figured out how easy it was: "the controversy over the name has taken away from the outstanding work done by players, coaches and volunteers"!

So let's do what we can to support those communities to fix their racist/tokenistic team names/identities. Let's help them get to a new era where they won't be burdened and distracted by inadvertent bigotry.

Because I hope they'd do the same for us!

By the way, congratulations, Pacific Northwest on the Seahawks win yesterday. A long road, and no racism was perpetrated in the expression by the 12th man of your iconography.