

TITLE OF RESOLUTION: A Calling to All Local Congregations and Campus Ministries to Resist Negative Stereotypes of Native American Team Names in our Universities.

Class I Social Action

DATE SUBMITTED: February 28, 2002

SUBMITTED BY: Minnesota Conference Justice & Witness Ministries Committee.

BACKGROUND AND SUPPORTING STATEMENT:

The UCC has been called by the 19th General Synod (July 1991) to urge and encourage a variety of amateur and professional sports teams to discontinue use of names and/or logos that characterize the Native American Indian of the United States in a negative way. This also includes the use of racist language or stereotypes that exploit the Native American Indian culture to market products.

Locally, the University of North Dakota still uses the "Fighting Sioux" name for its athletic teams. These teams play in Minnesota at our universities. St. Cloud and Mankato State are protesting the use of the team name. University of Minnesota President Yudof states that UND's team name is "their internal matter". Some of us believe that racism affects us all and we do not welcome racism in Minnesota or anywhere.

The University of North Dakota accepted \$100 million in 1998 for a new hockey arena from an alumnus who said he would withdraw the funding if the team name was changed, so UND continues its disrespectful appropriation of the Sioux name and image in spite of pleas by the Tribes to discontinue it. Only 3% (or 350) of UND's students are Indian and 3/4 of them support changing the team name.

Minnesota high schools were ordered to drop Native American team names and logos and most have complied. The next step is to insist that our institutions of higher learning discontinue racist team names. The US Civil Rights Commission opposes "the use of Native American images and team names by non-Native schools." In 1991 the World Series had the Minnesota Twins playing the Atlanta Braves and the American Indian Movement (AIM) brought the issue of racist team names, caricatures, mascots and use of their cultural and religious symbols to national attention.

The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) is the sanctioning body for 1,200 college across the country. It has been studying this issue to "educate the public about issues sensitive to a group of people". Their recommendations on Native American Team names are expected in August 2002.

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WHEREAS, All human beings are created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27) Jesus calls us to love one another as he loved us (John 15: 12-17) and Paul admonishes us to work for peace and mutual upbuilding (Romans 14: 18-19)

WHEREAS, This disgraceful American sports history using racist imagery is an affront to basic human rights and undermines human dignity and has a negative impact upon the self-image and self-awareness of the Native American Indian culture, portraying them as violent, war-like and sub-human, we call for a new awareness in our media to more accurately portray and dispel myths and misnomers that are inaccurately portrayed.

WHEREAS, "Racism is a sin. It is contrary to God's will for love, peace, equality, justice and compassion for all. It is an affront to human dignity and a gross violation of human rights." -- World Council of Churches, September 2001

THEREFORE, LET IT BE RESOLVED BY THE 2002 ANNUAL MEETING OF THE MINNESOTA CONFERENCE OF THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST to urge the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) to take a stand and support a ban on Native American Indian Team names in our institutions of higher learning; and urge all UCC members to call for an end to derogatory, racist team names in our institutions of higher learning. The Minnesota Conference Justice & Witness Ministries Committee seeks approval to draft a formal letter to the NCAA with this request from the United Church of Christ of Minnesota.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED

- that we dialogue with one another and with Native American people about the effects of negative stereotyping and the positive history, culture and spirituality of the Native American peoples;
- that UCC members and clergy in the Minnesota Conference be encouraged to write to the NCAA and institutions of higher learning which still use Native American Indian imagery for team mascots and/or logos, expressing deep concern about the misuse of these names and images;
- to authorize the Minnesota Conference Justice and Witness Committee to ask Major League Baseball, the National Football League, the National Basketball Association and the National Hockey League to stop the use of team names and stereotypes that negatively impact whole cultures;
- that UCC members and clergy be encouraged to boycott professional and collegiate games in those leagues which refuse to engage in dialogue, and which refuse to commit to a process of movement toward the use of positive images;
- that UCC members and clergy be encouraged to contact television, radio, newspapers and other media that sponsor, cover sporting events, or accept

- advertising with racist stereotypes to not print the negative team names and logos;
- that UCC members and clergy be encouraged to refrain from purchasing products from companies using Native American Indian names such as Cherokee, Apache, Redman, etc. to sell or market products.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Minnesota Conference of the United Church of Christ calls upon each member to have an awareness and respect for all cultures and discontinue the use of racist or sexist language in their personal and professional lives.