

Joint Affinity Groups Stand in Unity to Address Racism in Philanthropy

August 14, 2014- In recent months, Dan Snyder, owner of the Washington football team, established the “Washington Redskins Original Americans Foundation.” Snyder has said he recognizes the tremendous inequities faced by Native American communities and has pledged to work in partnership with Native Americans to foster “genuine opportunities for tribal communities.” Unfortunately, these laudable philanthropic goals are undermined by the continued use of a racist slur in the name of the foundation and the franchise that founded it. As a coalition of philanthropic networks representing communities of color, LGBTQ communities, women, and young and emerging leaders, we believe that philanthropy can only address long-standing inequities if we work with underserved communities as respected and valued partners. Foundations rooted in tribal communities and some leading national and regional foundations have done exactly that, resulting in powerful philanthropic models for social change and partnership with Native communities. The Original Americans Foundation is treating Native communities disrespectfully, thus failing to follow these best practices from the start. Native Americans in Philanthropy, a founding partner of the Joint Affinity Groups and a leading philanthropic voice for Native Americans, has challenged the field regarding this issue and more deeply about its commitment to inclusiveness and equity. Our philanthropic community can only have a meaningful dialogue about how to advance equity, diversity, and inclusion if we listen to and lift up diverse voices. We encourage you to read and consider the statement below by Carly Hare, executive director of Native Americans in Philanthropy.

Native Americans in Philanthropy Statement

Native Americans in Philanthropy strives to power reciprocity and increase investments in Native communities by growing the circle of nonprofits, tribal communities and foundations committed to the beliefs, traditions and values of Native peoples. This includes advocating for more resources and funding for Native communities. While NAP encourages new resources, we must also assess the context in which these ‘gifts’ are given and if they expand our systems of reciprocity or exacerbates the charity/poverty model. On March 24, 2014, Dan Snyder announced the launch of the Washington DC football team’s Original Americans Foundation. With this announcement we encourage you to consider some the questions below that this foundation presents:

- Does using an identifiably racist/stereotypic mascot term really ‘honor’ Native communities?
- Is it exploitive to offer funds or other financial benefits to underserved tribal communities in exchange for tacit permission to continue using that identifiably racist/stereotypic mascot term?
- When does public relations outweigh racism?
- How will the foundation work with existing Native and Tribal foundations and long-term funding partners?
- What is the actual commitment by the foundation and how is that compared to other corporate foundation benchmarks?
- Can philanthropy leverage/increase investments to make foundations like the Original Americans Foundation irrelevant?

Insight from the Joint Affinity Groups Leadership

"The best way for Dan Snyder to honor and support the original Americans is to retire a derogatory racial slur from his team franchise and foundation. To continue the use of this offensive name is to ignore that most Americans would agree that it is not appropriate to describe Native Americans as redskins and therefore unacceptable to brand a racial stereotype. Leadership is knowing when it is time for a change."

-Cynthia Choi, Asian American/Pacific Islanders in Philanthropy (AAPIP)

"In the lesbian, gay, bi, and transgender community, we know how powerful words can be. Too many of us hear insults and slurs about our sexual orientation and gender identity from a young age. I hope Dan Snyder does the right thing and stops perpetuating this insulting language through his team and his foundation."

-Ben Francisco Maulbeck, President, Funders for LGBTQ Issues

"EPIP supports the inclusion of diverse voices in philanthropic practices and urges Dan Snyder to include Native American leaders at the decision-making table. Only when every community is fairly represented will we see real democracy at work."

-Rahsaan Harris, PhD, Executive Director, Emerging Practitioners in Philanthropy (EPIP)

"In the Black community, we often rally together to protest symbols of hatred and oppression that are rooted in this country's history (e.g., Confederate flags, etc.) and can count on our Native American brothers and sisters to stand with us. It's time for all of us to encourage the Washington football team and associated Foundation to make a change for the good."

- Susan Taylor Batten, President and CEO, ABFE

"Women have long been victims of labels and language that devalue their agency and humanity. Women's Funding Network encourages the Washington NFL team and the new Original Americans Foundation to demonstrate transformative leadership by abandoning the offensive racial slur, and create a franchise brand worthy of respect by all Americans."

-Michele Ozumba, President, Women's Funding Network

"It is disheartening that, in 2014, communities of color continue to confront such blatant examples of racism and discrimination. The use of racial slurs, especially in such a public sphere, breeds a cultural of intolerance that impacts us all. As an organization that has long fought for greater equity and inclusiveness for all, Hispanics in Philanthropy strongly urges Dan Snyder to read his own foundation's mission, which states that the foundation's goal, 'is to provide meaningful and measurable resources that provide genuine opportunities for Tribal communities'. What we would like to ask is, how can 'genuine opportunities' exist for Native communities in a society that readily accepts the use of the term 'Redskins'? The answer is: they cannot."

-Diana Campoamor, President, Hispanics in Philanthropy