



# The Olympics and Human Rights: Lessons Learned from the Modern Games

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The Olympics and Human Rights: Lessons Learned from the Modern Games

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A Thesis in the Field of International Relations  
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## Abstract

The modern Olympic Games are a global phenomenon and a billion-dollar industry. The International Olympic Committee (IOC) has maintained, since the inception of the Olympics in 1896, that the Games are an apolitical symbol of global unity designed to make the world better through sport. However, throughout its 126-year history, the Games have been used by athletes, activists, nations, and the IOC itself to make political statements and engage in political negotiations. The highly visible nature of the Games, its mission of global betterment for all, and participation from all nations makes them uniquely situated to address human rights concerns in host cities, participating nations, and at the Games themselves.

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## Chapter I.

### The Modern Olympic Movement

The modern Olympics is a global sensation. Its symbols and ceremonies are world renowned: the Olympic flame and torch relay, the Olympic flag with its five interlocking rings, athletes marching into the arena for the opening and closing ceremonies, and victorious competitors, being awarded gold, silver, and bronze medals on the podium. Host cities plan for the Games many years in advance. They spend vast amounts of money to host spectators and athletes from around the world and execute the Games. Every two years the world watches as thousands of athletes compete to become global champions and exemplify the Olympic values of excellence, respect, and friendship in a new host city (IOC Principles 2022).

Pierre de Coubertin formed the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and charged it with executing his vision of the Games: an athletic competition for men to showcase athletic excellence on an international stage. Their efforts produced the 1896 Athens Olympics. The location and many of the events, including the marathon, were a tribute to the ancient games. Altogether, 241 athletes raced, swam, and wrestled in 43 events at the first modern Olympics (Athens 1896).

The Games grew in popularity throughout the first half the twentieth century. The number of participating athletes and nations grew with each Olympiad. Paris 1900 welcomed 1,226 athletes, from 26 nations, to compete in 96 events (Paris 1900). The 1948 Games in London saw more than three times the number of athletes, from 33



additional nations (London 1948). Radio broadcasts, newspaper coverage, and, eventually, television broadcasts brought the Olympics to a wider audience and helped elevate the competition internationally.

Today, the Olympics have evolved into a billion-dollar industry governed by the IOC. Among its responsibilities, the IOC awards contracts for broadcasting rights to the Games. These contracts are the IOC's primary revenue source. Rome 1960 was the first Olympiad whose broadcast rights were sold for profit. The IOC earned \$1.2 million USD from the sale. Sixty years later, the broadcast rights for Tokyo 2020 brought in \$3.1 billion USD (Olympic Marketing Fact File 2022).

### Summer Olympics Broadcast Revenue

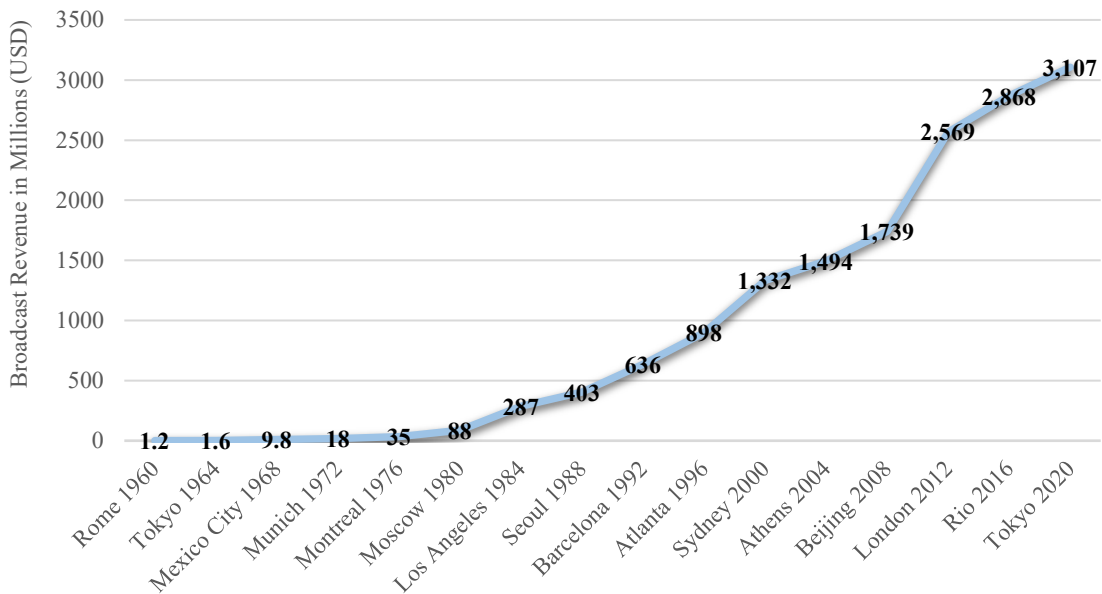


Figure 1 Source: Olympic Marketing Fact File 2022

## Winter Olympics Broadcast Revenue

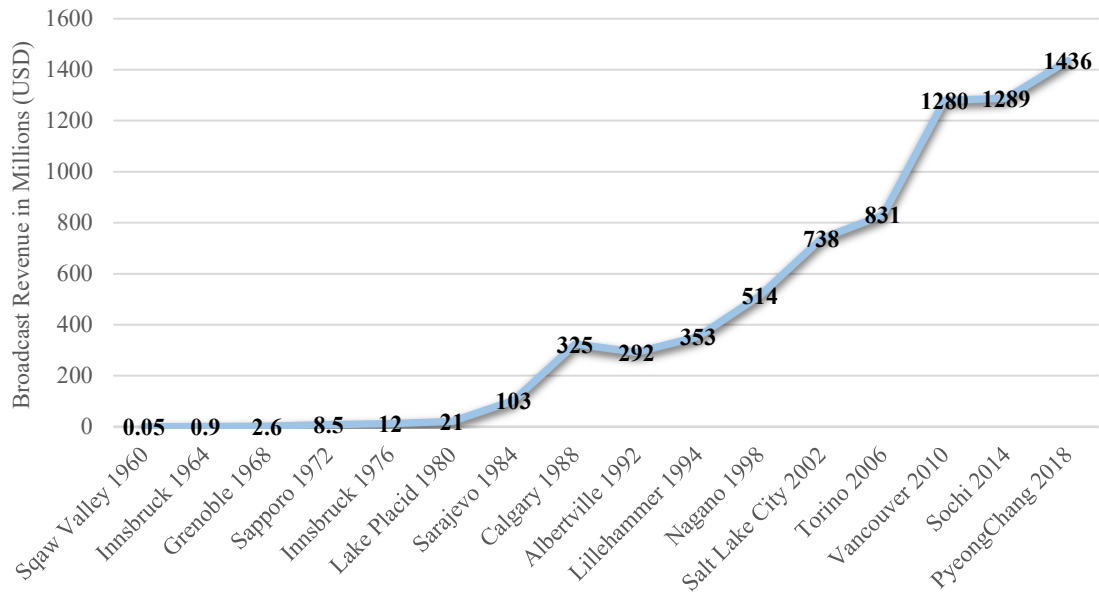


Figure 2 Source: Olympic Marketing Fact File 2022

## Broadcast Rights Fees

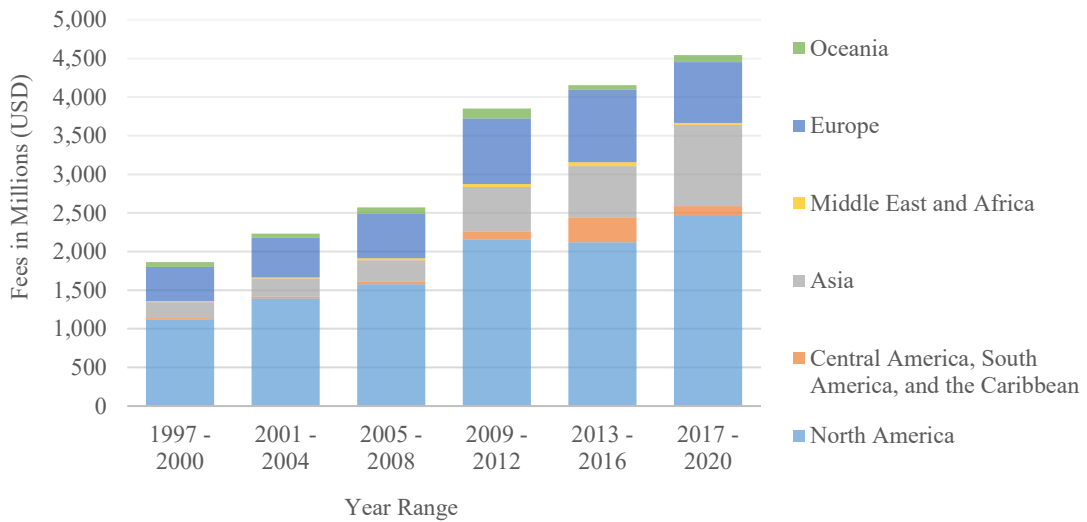


Figure 3 Source: Olympic Marketing Fact File 2022

Figures 1 and 2 show the increasing revenue earned by the IOC for the Summer and Winter Games. The Summer Games are consistently more profitably than the Winter Games, but both have seen revenues steadily increase over time. There is a noticeable jump in profits starting in the 1980s. This may be attributed, in part, with technological advances. Cable television became increasingly accessible, and the VCR was released in the 1980s.

Figure 3 illustrates that the majority of revenue comes from broadcast sales in North America. The combined revenue from broadcast rights sales in Central America, South America, the Caribbean, the Middle East, Asia, Europe, and Oceania is \$405 million USD less than the total revenue from North America in 2017 - 2020. The significant financial incentive for the IOC and financial investment for the broadcast rights owners, particularly in North America, are strong motivators for the continued success of the Games. Failure would mean staggering financial losses.

Extensive media coverage brings the Olympics to billions of people around the world, primarily through television broadcasts and internet coverage. Globally, the 2020 Tokyo Games reached 3.05 billion viewers through televised broadcasts and 2.24 billion unique users followed coverage online (Olympic Marketing File 2022). The highly accessible media coverage focuses viewers' attention on both the athletic competitions and the host city (Rowe 2012).

### Human Rights and the Olympic Movements

The international exposure focuses the world's attention on the host nation. The attention can be harnessed by state actors, non-governmental organizations, activists, and athletes to frame and control a narrative. Host cities have used the exposure to frame

themselves as emerging cosmopolitan arenas. Tokyo 1964 and Seoul 1988 were viewed as platforms for Japan and South Korea to emerge as global powers after periods of war and economic struggle. In contrast, the exposure has been used to scrutinize nations. Activists launched a campaign to ruin Beijing's bid for the 2000 Olympics. The city was a frontrunner to be awarded the Games in the preliminary votes, but ultimately Sydney was named Host City. The change in direction is credited to activists' campaigns that juxtaposed China's human rights records alongside the Olympic values (Keys 2015).

Beijing, however, was later named the Host City for the 2008 Olympics. As part of its contract, the IOC ensured that journalists will be given the freedom to report on the Games without restriction and activists could demonstrate without fear of punitive action (Rueters 2008). The IOC, an organization that declares itself politically neutral, does engage in political negotiations if it feels they are necessary for holding a successful Olympiad. The Olympics can be a vehicle to address human rights issues within nation states, as illustrated by Beijing's 2000 and 2008 Olympic campaigns, even though the IOC staunchly maintains that it is an apolitical entity (Keys 2016).

The Olympics are charged with the dual missions of athletic excellence and international cooperation. The mission of the IOC is to "build a better world through sport." (IOC Principles) In contrast to these ideals, there is extensive history of human rights violations associated with the Games which include, but are not limited to, racial equality, gender equality, labor rights, and land rights. Human rights violations are connected to the host country, athletes, and the production of the Games. (Rowe 2012).

The IOC publicly maintains a position of political neutrality and generally does not interfere in political matters. It also does not want the Olympics to be used by

athletes, activists, and nations as a vehicle to address political disputes and human rights concerns (Duckworth 2021). If the IOC appears to have a politically motivated agenda, it will risk alienating participating athletes and their nations.

In order to enforce political neutrality at the Olympics, Rule 50 of the Olympic Charter states “no kind of demonstration or political, religious, or racial propaganda is permitted in any Olympic sites, venues, or other areas.” (IOC Athlete’s Commission 2020) Political statements are not to be made while residing in the Olympic Village, participating in Olympic ceremonies, and while competing in Olympic events. Under Rule 50, athletes can face punitive measures if they make political, religious, or racial statements while participating in the Games (IOC Athlete’s Commission 2020, Team USA 2020).

In direct opposition to Rule 50, some athletes have intentionally used the visibility of the Olympics to make a political statement. One of the most famous examples comes from Mexico City 1968. Tommie Smith and John Carlos, two sprinters from the U.S., each raised a closed fist in the air while standing on the medal podium. They gave the Black Power salute in front of a stadium full of spectators at an event covered by both televised and print media sources. Both athletes medaled in the 200 meter; Tommie Smith placed first and John Carlos was third. Along with the silver medalist, Peter Norman from Australia, the three athletes wore Olympic Project for Human Rights pins. The gesture and the pins were a coordinated effort to raise awareness about racial disparities in the U.S. (Mexico 1968). The media coverage of the Games makes them a desirable vehicle for making a far-reaching, impactful statement.

The IOC is working to counter criticisms of its neutrality policy. The IOC drafted the Olympic Agenda 2020, a series of 40 recommendations designed to protect Olympic values of excellence, friendship, and respect. These recommendations seek to address gender equality, sustainability, preventing sexual orientation discrimination, accessibility for athletes of different abilities, and reforming the host city bidding process (Conseil de l'Europe 2020). The Olympics have been long criticized by activists for a history of human rights violations linked to the production of its events. Human rights violations have been directly and indirectly linked to the Olympics in host cities. They include labor exploitation, human trafficking, public health issues, sustainability concerns, environmental degradation, and gender and sexual orientation discrimination (Heerdt 2018).

Rule 50 was amended in 2021 to allow some political statements by athletes. Thomas Bach, the current IOC president, released a statement on January 10, 2020, which reconfirmed the Olympics' commitment to political neutrality in future Games in light of the change (Nocita 2020). Moving forward, athletes can make a political statement or gesture prior to the start of a game, as long as the action is not disruptive and does not critically target a specific nation or group of people (Chappell 2021).

A number of athletes and teams took the opportunity to share their own messages which ranged from solidarity with indigenous groups to support for racial equity at Tokyo 2021. The women's soccer team from New Zealand took a knee on the field, prior to the start of their match against Australia, in support of social justice. The Australian athletes linked their arms together to visually state their solidarity with the Aboriginal groups in their home country (Chappell 2021). Raven Saunders (USA), the silver

medalist in the shotput, raised her arms in an “X” on the awards podium. She stated in an interview that the symbol was meant to visualize the intersection of all who are oppressed (Barajas 2021).

#### Australian and New Zealand Show Support for Social Justice and Aboriginal Rights



*Figure 4 New Zealand's Women's soccer team took a knee before their game against Australia to advocate for social justice. Australia's team linked arms to show solidarity with Aboriginal people. Source: Chappell 2021; The New Zealand Team 2021*

A comprehensive look at the human rights violations associated with the modern Olympics will draw a complete picture of the IOC's relationship to human rights. This lens will provide concrete lessons to learn from past Olympiads along with a future path for the Olympics to better uphold the human rights of its athletes, its spectators, the citizens of the host nation, and those who labor to build and execute the Games.

## Chapter II.

### History of the modern Olympic Games

In order to gain a better understanding of the Olympics Games and their relationship with human rights, it is necessary to take a look back on the history of the modern Games. Their evolution has taken the Olympics from a relatively small, elite competition to a global athletic spectacle. Thousands of athletes, representing every nation, spend years training to qualify for the Games. Those who are able to surpass the rigorous qualification standards are able to compete in the Olympic arena, watched by billions of people around the globe.

The IOC declares the Olympics to be politically neutral. Theoretically, athletes compete without the influence of outside political forces. However, since their inception, the Games have regularly been used to make political statements by the IOC, participating athletes, and the nations they represent.

The IOC issued a statement, in February 2022, directing all international sporting events scheduled to be held in Russia or Belarus to find another host country. Russia's invasion of Ukraine violated the Olympic Truce, a period of time before, during, and after each Olympiad, in which all participating nations pledge to remain peaceful (IOC Executive Board 2022). It is observed for each Olympiad to ensure that athletes and spectators can safely travel to and from the host city. The IOC's directive is a public response to a political event. It encouraged other sporting events to take action that will economically punish Russia and Belarus, nations which compete in the Olympics, through the loss of revenue from athletic competitions, sponsorships, advertising, and tourism from spectators.



As the Games grew in popularity and became more accessible through media coverage of each Olympiad, the symbolic and direct messages were able to be transmitted to international audience. Televised events, starting in 1936, brought the Games and their ceremonies outside of the stadium. As technology improved, the reach of the Olympics expanded around the globe. Increased viewership brought provided the IOC with a consistent revenue stream. Broadcast licensing fees now account for the majority of the IOC's funding. Today, billions of people watch televised coverage of each Olympia and internet streaming has also increased the visibility of the Games (Olympic Marketing File 2022).

### The Olympics before 1916

The first iteration of the modern Games was the culmination of the vision of Pierre de Coubertin', a French aristocrat, and the efforts of the newly established IOC. The committee was founded to inspire young men to improve themselves and the world through sport. There had been efforts in several European nations to revive the Olympic tradition of athletic competition, but none matched the impact of Pierre de Coubertin's competition. The IOC created an international sports competition rooted in the ideals of excellence in athletics and international cooperation. The first modern Games were meant to embody the first Olympic motto: *citius, altius, fortius* (faster, higher, stronger). The regulations for the Games required all athletes to be amateurs and, as a result, the participants were predominantly wealthy, male, white, and European.

Athens, Greece, hosted the first modern Olympic Games over 10 days in April 1896. The location was selected as an homage to the ancient games. Almost 250 athletes, representing 14 nations, competed in 43 athletic events. Media outlets from European and

North American newspapers reported on the Games for their local readers (Olympics.com 2022).

The following two Olympiads, held in Paris and St. Louis, were held jointly with each city's World's Fair. Events in both cities were spread out over almost five months and were not prominently advertised. The Games were overshadowed by each city's World's Fair, but they gained enough traction to be held as an independent event in 1908, in London. More than 2,000 athletes, more than twice the number of competitors in the 1904 St. Louis Olympics, competed in Olympic events. The Games had momentum to become a permanent fixture in the sporting world (Olympics.com 2022).

Beginning in 1908, Olympic athletes were required to compete as part of a NOC. Previously, athletes were allowed to register as individuals or teams and teams could be comprised of athletes from different nations. Athletes had occasionally formed competitive teams with delegates from other nations in the 1896 Athens Olympics, 1900 Paris Olympics, and 1904 St. Louis Olympics. Prior to 1908, an athlete's participation in the Olympics wasn't viewed primarily as a representation of their home country. The national distinction drawn by the 1908 London Games scored a political division between competitors because they were identified as a representative of their country. For the first time in Olympic history, athletes marched together, under their nation's flag, as part of the Opening Ceremony (Olympics.com 2022).

The political distinction pulled external struggles for political autonomy into the Olympic arena. Finnish delegates protested being told to march and compete under the Russian flag. Similarly, a number of Irish delegates refused to compete when they were informed that they were competing under the British flag (The History Press 2022).

The 1908 regulatory changes didn't slow the growth of the Games. Stockholm 1912 attracted athletes from six continents to compete in an increasingly varied slate of summer and winter sporting event. The 1916 Olympics, slated to be held in Berlin, were canceled because of World War I (Olympics.com 2022).

## 1920 - 1936

The Olympics returned in 1920, after a hiatus during World War I. Athletes and nations were invited to compete in in Antwerp, Belgium. The IOC stressed a message of unity and peace in the wake of World War I and reinforced its message through two new Olympic symbols: the Olympic flag and Olympic oath. The flag was designed with five linked rings to represent unity between all athletes, regardless of their home country. Victor Boin, a Belgian fencer, swore the Olympic oath at the Opening Ceremony on behalf of all competing athletes. The first Olympic Oath stated,

In the name of all competitors, I promise that we shall take part in these Olympic Games, respecting and abiding by the rules that govern them, in the true spirit of sportsmanship, for the glory of sport and the honor of our teams (Olympics.com).

Over time, the Olympic oath changed in response to the evolving sports landscape, but the Olympic flag and Olympic oath remain symbolic elements of unity and peace at each Olympiad (Olympics.com 2022).

Notably absent from the participating nations were Austria, Hungary, Germany, Bulgaria, and Turkey. The 1920 Olympiad, designed to be a symbol of international cooperation and unity in the aftermath of World War I, didn't attract nations who lost the war. Their absence limits the extent to which the 1920 Antwerp Olympics can be interpreted as a symbol of global unity.

The number of participating nations and Olympic athletes rose quickly in the post-World War I years, but the athletes themselves remained overwhelmingly male. Pierre de Coubertin strongly believed women should not be athletes. He structured the IOC's policies and regulations to limit the extent to which female athletes could participate. Women were restricted to participating in "feminine" sports to prevent injury and were required to wear modest, ankle-length dresses in competition. There were no rules governing men's athletic attire nor were they restricted to a select number of events (Mitchell 1977).

In the early twentieth century, it was feared that women who participated in sports were more likely to injure compared to male athletes. It was also thought that women would prematurely age if they competed in athletics. These highly sexualized and biologically unsubstantiated views were used to limit women's participation in athletics, including the Olympics (Padawer 2016).

A close reading of the original Olympic Charter clarified that women had the right to compete in their own competitions as part of the Games. A small number of female athletes competed in mixed-gender events at the 1900 Paris Olympics, the 1904 St. Louis Olympics, the 1908 London Olympics, the 1912 Stockholm Olympics, and the 1920 Stockholm Olympics. IOC delegates put the question of female participants to a vote. Most representatives voted to formally allow female athletes to participate in the Games starting in 1924. Delegates from the U.S., France, Turkey, and Japan voted against their inclusion (Olympics.com 2022).

The IOC's historic vote and global women's rights movements provided the momentum and opportunity for female athletes to have a larger presence at the 1924

Games (Mitchell 1977). 135 women competed in Paris 1924, more than twice the number of women who competed in Antwerp just four years earlier. However, female athletes represented less than 5% of the total number of athletes competing in Paris (Olympics.com 2022).

There were also other changes. Technological advancements and growing global popularity contributed to a stronger media presence in Paris. More than 1,000 journalists attended and reported on the Games. Coverage was also broadcast on radio for the first time, albeit to a limited audience. Prior to 1924, information about the Games was available only through news articles and reels. The 1924 Olympiad was the first that people outside of the stadium were able to follow along in real time (Larrosa 2016).

Due to the rapidly growing popularity of the Games and its increasing accessible media coverage, Olympic host cities began to see the Games as an economic stimulant. Hosting the Olympics created jobs, facilitated investment in the city's infrastructure, attracted tourists, and imbued or cemented the host city with a reputation as a global metropolis (Siegel 2019).

Berlin hosted the last Olympiad prior to the start of World War II in 1936. The world was becoming aware of Germany's genocidal plans. The host nation's actions muddled the mission of the Games with human rights violations. However, the IOC moved forward with their host city selection. Changing host cities is a costly venture for the IOC and the expense can be motivation for it to use the city initially selected. Two nations boycotted the 1936 Games: Ireland and Spain. Ireland boycotted the Games because Northern Ireland was participating separately, and Spain refused to participate because it opposed the political regime in Germany (Olympics.com 2022).

Spain organized the Popular Olympics to provide athletes with an alternative to the Games in Berlin. It was planned in only three months and scheduled to be held July 22 - 26, 1936, in Barcelona. The Popular Olympics attracted more than 20,000 attendees and encouraged both male and female athletes, of all races, to compete (Searcy 2014). Billed as antifascist, the alternate Games attracted athletes and spectators from a broad spectrum of political backgrounds. The organizers, athletes, and spectators chose this event because it was a direct counter to the 1936 Berlin Olympics. They could come together in the name of sport while denouncing the atrocities occurring in Germany. Their choice was driven by concerns over human rights and genocide (Flakin 2021).

The Popular Olympics were canceled because of the Spanish Civil War started the day the Olympiad was scheduled to begin. Most delegates returned to their home country, but some, like Alfred Chakin and Bernard N. Danckick from the US, elected to fight alongside the Spanish Republic (Searcy 2014).

In Berlin, the Games moved forward. Hitler was determined to showcase what he believed to be Aryan superiority on a global stage. An element of his vision included broadcasting the Games live, for the first time (Strout 2021). The televised broadcasts could only be watched in viewing rooms near the stadium due to technological limitations. Despite the short range, the broadcasts were viewed by 162,000 people. Television expanded the IOC's media platform through which it could reach a global audience (Larrosa 2016).

Significantly, Jesse Owens, a Black sprinter from the U.S., placed first in four track and field events. His victories were viewed as a refutation of Hitler's Aryan supremacy theory (Olympics.com 2022).

In the years between World War I and World War II, the Olympics saw rapid growth. The number of participating athletes and nations grew, women were allowed to compete in their own events, and radio, newspaper, and televised coverage spread news of the Games around the world. The Olympics were becoming a well-established athletic competition that captured the attention of an international audience.

The growth and media attention garnered by the Olympics also established a pattern of the Games being used as a political tool. The absence of the defeated nations from World War I, the boycotts of Ireland and Spain at the 1936 Olympics, and the creation of an alternate competition, the Popular Olympics, are all strong political statements by nations and athletes. The IOC's choice to move forward with Berlin as the host city of the 1936 Games illustrates its failure to connect its mission, bettering the world through sport, clashed with a nation carrying out genocide.

#### 1948 - 1988

Due to World War II, the Olympics weren't held again until 1948 in London. The Olympiad was promoted as an image of international cooperation and unity through sport (Beck 2012). However, not all nations were welcomed to the Games. Germany and Japan were not invited to participate, and the USSR declined its invitation. Similar to the 1920 Games in Antwerp, nations that were not victorious in World War II did not compete. (Beck 2012, Rider 2013).

The USSR and Israel competed for the first time at Helsinki 1952 (Olympics.com 2022). The USSR's participation was contentious because its athletes were supported by the state, jeopardizing their amateur categorization, and the country's NOC did not

operate independently from its government, as required by the Olympic Charter, to ensure political neutrality (Guttman 1988).

The IOC feared that Cold War tensions would find their way into the Olympic arena. Its official account of the Games states these concerns were unnecessary and the Cold War did not negatively impact the Olympics (Olympics.com 2022). Other accounts of the Games share that competitions between the U.S. and the USSR were often viewed as de facto Cold War arenas over the following four decades. As tensions between the two nations and their allies escalated in the political arena, they correspondingly increased at the Games (Daley 1952).

The 1956 Melbourne Olympics saw the first major boycotts of the Games since World War II. Adding politics to the games, Egypt, Lebanon, and Iraq abstained from the Games in protest of the Suez Canal crisis. The People's Republic of China refused to participate because the IOC recognized Taiwan as a separate, independent nation. Liechtenstein, the Netherlands, Spain, and Sweden also refused to participate as a protest of the USSR's invasion of Hungary (Olympics.com 2022).

The political protests were met with derision by the IOC's president, Avery Brundage, who stated:

Every civilized person recoils in horror at the savage slaughter in Hungary, but that is no reason for destroying the nucleus of international cooperation. In an imperfect world, if participation in sports was to be stopped every time the politicians violated the laws of humanity, there will never be any international competitions. (The New York Times 1956)

The IOC and National Olympic Committees, including the US and Australian Committees, vocally urged the protesting nations to reconsider participating (Olympics.com 2022).



Amongst the boycotts and political tension, there were two intentional symbols of unity at the Games. The first was Germany's presence at the Games. East and West German athletes competed together under a flag designed specifically for the Olympics and Beethoven's IX Symphony was substituted for a national anthem (Olympics.com 2022). Critics of the arrangement viewed it as a move by the IOC to limit the presence of communism at the Games (Guttman 1988). The second symbol was a change to the format of the closing ceremony. In prior Games, nations marched in alphabetical order. In the 1956 Melbourne Games, all athletes entered together as a symbol of unity. The suggestion to change the format is attributed to John Ian Wing, an apprentice carpenter from China who was living in Australia (Olympics.com 2022).

Rome 1960 was the first Olympiad to be commercially televised. The Games were broadcast in 18 European nations, Canada, the U.S., and Japan, greatly increasing the visibility of the Games, particularly in Western nations (Larrosa 2016). The coverage helped some athletes vault to celebrity status in their home country and around the world. Two American athletes, sprinter Wilma Rudolph and boxer Cassius Clay, became instantly recognizable in their home country because of their achievements in Rome (Walker 2020).

The 1964 Tokyo Olympics was the first to be hosted by an Asian nation (Olympics.com 2022). Politically, the Games were seen as Japan's emergence to the global community after World War II. The Olympic Flame was lit by Yoshinori Sakai, a student born the same day the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima. Tokyo intended the action to be a symbol of international peace and used the Games themselves as a way to share a national narrative of Japan ("Torch Runner from 1964" 2014).

South Africa was banned by the IOC from participating in the 1964 Tokyo Olympics because of the nation's apartheid policy. The governing body determined that South Africa's racist policy was not in line with the Olympic Movement's goals of global unity and peace through sport. The ban lasted for almost 30 years (Olympics.com 2022). The action clearly illustrates a concern for human rights, but it is also notable that the ban was imposed upon an African nation while Germany was still permitted to host the 1936 Olympics.

Gender and antidoping tests were introduced in 1968. Female athletes had to prove that they were not men masquerading as women and all athletes had to prove they weren't taking performance enhancing drugs. Both tests were intended to protect the integrity of the Games (Olympics.com 2022). Evolving education about gender and science lead to the gender test requirement being dropped in 1999. While the policy was in effect, it did not expose any male athletes attempting to compete as women.

In 1968, Mexico City became the first Latin American city to host the Olympics. The IOC called the host city choice controversial due to its high elevation (Olympics.com 2022). News coverage of the Games illuminates two other controversial events: the Tlatelolco Massacre and the Black Power salute (NPR 2008, Olympics.com 2022).

Ten days before the Games were scheduled to begin, Mexican police and military fired upon thousands of unarmed students protesting in Tlatelolco Plaza. The students were attempting to use the increased media attention, resulting from the Games, to bring global awareness to injustices and human rights violations suffered under their authoritarian government. Initially, the Mexican government stated only four students were killed, but the numbers are believed to be significantly higher. Based on eyewitness

accounts, it is believed that hundreds of students died, and thousands were injured. The specter of the massacre hung over the Games which began a week and a half later (NPR 2008).

At the Games themselves, a visual statement by Tommie Smith and John Carlos on the Olympic podium was amplified by the media. The two Black sprinters from the US raised a fist while they received their medals for finishing first and third in the men's 200-meter sprint. The athletes were trying to bring awareness to the treatment of Black citizens in the US and their struggle for civil rights. The silver medalist, Peter Norman from Australia, wore an Olympic Project for Human Rights patch in solidarity with the athletes (Godin 2020).

For their actions, the US athletes were immediately forced to return home. Peter Norman was allowed to remain at the Games, but he was denied a place on the 1972 Australian Olympic Team, despite qualifying (Godin 2020, Montague 2012). The Australian Olympic Committee confirmed with CNN that "Peter was not sanctioned...we are not sure why he missed selection in 1972, but it had nothing to do with what happened in Mexico" (Montague 2012). Peter Norman states he qualified for the 1972 team 13 times for the 200 meter and five times for the 100 meter races, but was not invited to represent Australia at the Games as a result of his actions in Mexico City (Montague 2012).

The 1972 Summer Games, in Munich, were marked by tragedy. On September 5, 1972, 11 Israeli Olympians were attacked by members of the terrorist group Black September. Negotiations for release of the Israeli athletes in exchange for Israeli

prisoners fell apart. As a result, 17 people died- 11 Israeli athletes, five Palestinians, and one German police officer (Olympics.com 2022).

The Games were widely televised and helped spread the word of the hostage situation to the global community. Television coverage was available in 98 countries (Larrosa 2016). The events of September 5 and 6 were viewed by more than 600 million people around the globe. One of the surviving members of Black September stated that the Munich Olympics was strategically selected because of its extensive media coverage (“Black September” 2002).

The Games were paused for a day and half to honor the Israeli athletes who lost their lives. After the memorial service, Avery Brundage, the IOC’s president, famously declared “the Games must go on” (Olympics.com 2022). He felt the Games were the antithesis of Black September’s terrorist attack and continuing to compete would be the best way to honor the dead.

Montreal was named the host city of the 1976 Summer Olympic Games after Denver declined the offer. South Africa was still banned from participating in the Games because of its apartheid policy. However, New Zealand’s rugby team toured South Africa earlier in the year and they were also slated to compete at the Olympics. In response, Tanzania organized a boycott in which 22 African nations refused to participate in the Games (Olympics.com 2022). The boycotting nations wanted to enforce that supporting South Africa through passive or direct acts, like sending a touring rugby team, was effectively supporting its racist policy.

The 1980 Summer Olympics, hosted in Moscow, was boycotted by 65 nations. The US led the boycott in response to the Soviet Union’s invasion of Afghanistan in

December 1979. The US Department of State acknowledged “the Olympic ideal was to place sport above politics, in reality there were often political goals and messages promoted through the games.” (Department of State 2008) Athletes from the US were not permitted to compete. Other nations, like England and Australia, diplomatically boycotted the Games and permitted their athletes to choose whether or not they would compete in Moscow (Olympics.com 2022).

The 1984 Winter Olympics were hosted in Sarajevo and selling television broadcasting rights was quickly becoming profitable for the IOC. The sale of broadcast rights netted a profit of more \$102 million USD. Four years earlier, broadcasting rights for the 1980 Lake Placid Games only sold for \$20 million USD (Olympics.com 2022). The rising profits were a testament to the popularity of the Olympics.

The 1984 Summer Games were hosted later that year by Los Angeles. In response to the US-led protest in 1980, the Soviet Union boycotted the 1984 Games alongside 17 other nations: Bulgaria, East Germany, Mongolia, Vietnam, Laos, Czechoslovakia, Afghanistan, Hungary, Poland, Cuba, South Yemen, Ethiopia, North Korea, Angola, Albania, Iran, and Libya. In comparison to the 1980 boycott, the 1984 boycott’s impact was a minimal disruption.

Los Angeles 1984 netted a \$223 million dollar profit. It was the largest profit in the history of the Games and partly due to the expanded media coverage. The 1984 Olympics were able to be viewed by people in 156 countries (Larrosa 2016). The success of the Los Angeles Olympics was used as a model for future host cities.

The 1984 Games were notable for an increase in women’s participation and events. Several events, including the marathon, synchronized swimming, and road

cycling, debuted female competitions. The new events allowed more women to participate, and female athletes represented almost 25% of all competing athletes. Following the Games, nations around the world saw an uptick in women's running competitions along with an increase in the design and production of women's athletic gear (Olympics.com 2022). These changes are a testament to the influence of the Olympics on national and local athletic competitions.

Seoul hosted the 1988 Olympics. The Games were seen as South Korea's emergence as a democratic nation. North Korea, Ethiopia, Cuba, and Nicaragua boycotted the Games because the host country was a political opponent. The IOC provided additional security out of concern that North Korea would violently intervene. Generally speaking, host cities supplied their own security for the Games (Olympics.com 2022).

For almost four decades, participating nations routinely used the Games and their media coverage to make political statements. Primarily through boycotting, nations drew the lines as to which nations were their allies and which were political adversaries. Activists and terrorists leveraged the media coverage as a well to issue their own political statements. The IOC's insistence on maintaining a politically neutral athletic competition was clearly ignoring the numerous boycotts, protests, and acts of violence that plagued the Games in their post-World War II years.

Although the IOC worked towards integrating more symbols of global unity into the ceremony of the Games, their efforts were largely overshadowed by the numerous boycotting nations. By its own hand, the IOC instated a ban on South Africa because of its apartheid policy. The IOC showed a willingness to take political action to defend

human rights when it viewed the action necessary to preserve the spirit of the Games. However, its inaction to discipline New Zealand's rugby team, which competed in South Africa, illustrates the IOC's reluctance to issue far-reaching consequences.

#### 1989 – 2021

In 1991, the IOC established a new policy to foster female athletic participation at the Games. Moving forward, all new Olympic sports must hold women's competitions. They could not be designated only for male athletes. Women's competitions were slowly being added to existing Olympic events, but female participation still lagged behind their male counterparts. The new policy was enacted force the field of events for women to expand faster and bring more female athletes into the Olympic arena (Olympics.com 2022).

The 1992 Barcelona Games saw a break in the parade of boycotting nations. None of the invited nations declined to attend the event. Newly recognized nations, formerly of the USSR, competed as a unified team. Germany joined the roster of National Olympic Committees (NOC). South Africa's decades long ban ended because its apartheid policy had ended. In a symbolic gesture of unity, Deratu Tulu, the winner of the 10,000 meters from Ethiopia, and Elana Meyer, a white South African, ran an additional lap after their heat while holding hands. Neither athlete was penalized for their political statement, it was viewed as a message of hope for all of Africa. The global events of the late 1980s and early 1990s were on full display at the 1992 Olympics (Olympics.com 2022).

Sydney hosted the 2000 Olympics. Their bid showcased a rich cultural history with specific emphasis on the indigenous culture of Australia. Cathy Freeman, a member of the Kuku Yalkanji, was chosen as the face of the Sydney Olympics. She lit

the Olympic Cauldron and went on to earn gold in the 400 meters. The lighting ceremony was the most viewed event in the history of the Olympics with 3.6 billion people tuning in to watch it (Olympics.com 2022).

In 2000, the IOC created a new policy that prohibited officials from visiting cities that are bidding to host the Games. As part of the host city selection process, each delegate to IOC votes for the city they want to host the next Olympiad. Almost 10 officials were indicted in a bribery scandal to name Salt Lake City as the host of the 2004 Winter Games. The new policy was intended to eliminate contact between delegates and prospective host cities, thereby protecting the delegates' votes from outside influences.

The IOC conducted an internal audit and determined that cash payments and gifts, valued at \$1.2 million, were sent to voting delegates from Salt Lake City. Their audit also discovered a pattern of gifts and payments sent to delegates by prospective host cities. Atlanta (1996), Nagano (1998), and Sydney (2000) were all found to have sent lavish gifts in the hopes of gaining votes. The bribery scandal tarnished the image of the Olympics and eroded the public's trust in the IOC (Longman 2000).

Part of what makes the Olympics a unique, multi-sport event is their dual focus on athletics and betterment of the world as a whole. For its second goal, the IOC relies on its reputation as an apolitical, trustworthy entity. Athletes and governments have come to trust that the IOC is only motivated to pursue excellence, it is infallible to individual interests. The bribery scandal illuminated that the IOC's external image is at odds with the processes that it employs to govern the Olympics. Trust between the IOC, athletes, and NOCs was undermined, and it will likely make it harder for the IOC when it needs to negotiate with or mediate between nations.



The IOC earned increasingly higher profits with each new Olympiad. It profited almost \$1.5 billion in 2004 through the sale of broadcast rights (Olympics.com 2022). Record profits in the wake of the Salt Lake City bribery scandal raises additional concerns about the credibility of the IOC. Will it pursue a path that will be most profitable, whether that path aligns with its values? Can its motivations be corrupted? Increasing profit margins make changing the course of the Games financially risky for the IOC and its sponsors.

Torino 2006 was the first Olympiad that could be streamed live on mobile phones. Mobile phone video streaming, coupled with internet coverage of the Winter Games, elevated the Olympics to a new level of accessibility while keeping pace with emerging technology trends. Mobile streaming is often accessible in places where wired internet coverage is spotty or unreliable. The IOC reported that the olympic.com received 32 million views and torino2006.com received 700 million views during the Games (Olympics.com 2022).

Beijing was named as host city for the 2008 Games. The IOC selected Beijing city over four other finalist cities: Istanbul, Osaka, Paris, and Toronto. Activists protested China's candidacy because of the nation's poor human rights record, but their efforts were unsuccessful. The IOC believed that awarding the Games to China would motivate them to remedy their human rights record (Pound 2004). Jaques Rogge, president of the IOC, cautioned Western nations to hold their criticism of China's policies. He argued that the nation is relatively young and hosting the Olympics will be a positive social influence as it continues to grow. Prior to the start of the Games, China agreed to diplomatic talks with the Dalai Lama to discuss protests in Tibet, drafted a plan to allow activists to safely

demonstrate during the Games, and confirmed it would not restrict the media's right to free speech (Reuters 2008).

The Games were a signal that China has succeeded in becoming a global superpower. Like Japan and South Korea before is, China took the opportunity to frame its narrative for the world to see. It told a story of a modern nation with roots deep in tradition and culture.

Saudi Arabia sent female athletes to compete, for the first time, to the 2012 London Games. In an effort to promote women in sports globally, the IOC required Saudi Arabia to send female athletes, or risk being uninvited to the Games. Jaqueline Rogge, president of the IOC, stated that he negotiated with Saudi Arabia and, as a result, Sarah Attar, a sprinter, Wodjan Ali Seraj Abdulrahim Shahrkhani, a judo competitor, represented the nation in London. The 2012 Games were the first in the history of the modern Olympics in which every competing nation had both male and female athletes (Byrd 2012). This is another example of the IOC intervening in diplomatic relations to, from its perspective, improve the Games.

The Russian Federation hosted the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi. Several Western nations, including the U.S., England, and Germany, chose not to send high-ranking government officials to the opening ceremony in protest of a 2013 law that criminalized discussing non-heteronormative relationships with children. The U.S. elected to send two openly gay athletes as their delegation for the Opening Ceremony (Walker 2014). Typically, heads of state or high-ranking officials from each competing nation attend the Opening Ceremony.

Rio de Janeiro hosted the 2016 Olympiad. From the outset, the Games were a concern for human rights activists. Accounts of increasing police violence, dangerous construction conditions, the forced relocation of Vila Autódromo's 700 families to make way for new Olympic venues were frequently reported in the media's coverage leading up to the start of the Games.

The 2016 Rio de Janeiro Olympics saw a new NOC join the growing list of competing nations. However, this group didn't represent a nation because it was composed of refugees. Historically, athletes had to compete under the flag of their nation which effectively barring refugees from participating. Increasing media coverage of refugee crises, including those in South Sudan and Syria, combined with increasingly vocal criticism of the IOC's resistance to political statements may have given energy to the prospect of a refugee team. At the Opening Games, the team of ten athletes marched in the stadium under the Olympic flag. The athletes were originally from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, South Sudan, and Syria (Clayton 2016).

PyeongChang hosted the Winter Games in 2018. The location proved to be strategic for the IOC because the city provided "access to a young and fast-growing youth market...[and] exposed new generations of potential athletes to the power of winter sport." (Olympics.com 2022) The Olympics were hosted by three eastern Asian nations from 2018 - 2022: South Korea, Japan, and China. The locations are a stark contrast compared to earlier host cities which were almost exclusively convened in European cities. The IOC is engaging with the Asian market to secure the continued success of the Olympics for future generations.

The 2020 Tokyo Olympics were pushed to 2021 due to the covid-19 pandemic (Olympics.com 2022). The IOC relaxed restrictions on athletes expressing their political views. Previously, athletes were not permitted to make any political statements at the Games. Those who violated the rule were often stripped of their medals, forced to leave the Olympic Village, and jeopardized being able to compete in future Games. The IOC worried that some athletes may be coerced by their home country to endorse policies or beliefs that they do not hold if they could make any political statement of their choosing. However, allowing athletes to raise awareness about issues that concern them in an effort to improve it is in line with the IOC's mission to improve the world through sport (Wamsley 2021).

The IOC's choice to award the Olympics to nations with questionable human rights records, like Brazil and China, have called to question its commitment to bettering the world through sport. The IOC firmly believes that the Games can be a mechanism to encourage social change, but these changes won't organically happen without incentives for the host nations. The 2014 Sochi Olympics didn't cause the Russian Federation to repeal a homophobic law nor did the 2008 Beijing Olympics enshrine journalist freedoms in China. But, the IOC has shown it is willing to take strong measures in cases where there exists strong global support, as in the case with female athletes from Saudi Arabia

Throughout the history of the modern Olympics, the Games have been used as a platform for political expression by athletes, participating nations, and the IOC. As the Olympics grew and technological advances brought coverage to spectators around the world, nations and athletes harnessed the media coverage as a platform to bring light to political conflicts, struggles, and human rights concerns. Occasionally, the IOC itself

used its influence to address political issues, like barring South Africa's participation during apartheid and entering closed-door discussions with Saudi Arabia to demand that they send female athletes to the Olympics. All other NOCs were sending women to compete, and it aligned with the policies adopted by the IOC in the early 1990s to encourage gender equity.

The Olympic Agenda 2020 specifically names addressing human rights as a concrete action that the IOC can take to “promote a better world through sport” (“Olympic Agenda 2020”). A thorough look back at the history of politics and activism associated with the Games illustrates that the IOC, Olympic athletes, and nation states are all willing to use the Olympics as a platform to amplify a message. The IOC can learn from these historical experiences and use them to inform its pathway to address human rights through sport and its global influence.

## Chapter III.

### Human Rights

The modern-day Olympics were born out of an earlier vision of athletics for athletes who were white, wealthy, and male. The concept of who an Olympian is has evolved over time alongside an ever-changing social environment. However, the roots of the Games and the IOC's steadfast resistance to political statements have truncated the development and ability of the Games to truly elevate human rights through sport.

No modern Olympiad has been without human rights concerns. They impact the athletes, residents of the host city, and workers, from around the world, who provide necessary labor to execute the Games. In order to best gain an understanding of the breadth of the human rights violations associated with the Games the human rights violations should be examined in relation to race, class, and gender.

#### Race

Hosting the first modern Olympiad in Greece was a natural homage to the ancient games used as its inspiration. The modern Olympics were envisioned to be an athletic competition where athletes would compete out of a love of sport and a desire for excellence. However, the IOC invited a small portion of the global population to participate in Athens 1896. The only non-Western nation to participate in the first Olympiad was Chile. The majority of athletes came from France, Greece, Great Britain, and Germany (Olympics.com 2022).

Future iterations of the Games were intended to be held in other prominent European cities. The IOC did not envision awarding the Olympic Games to a non-

European nation (“The New Olympic Games” 1896). The IOC designed an exclusive, high-profile athletic event that catered predominantly to wealthy, white men.

### Racial Superiority

The Olympics were used, by some countries (e.g., Germany), as a tool to prove racial superiority theories. At the 1904 Games in St. Louis, William J. McGee and James Sullivan designed a special two-day event, Anthropology Days, to add to the slate of Olympic programming. On August 12 and 13, 1904, people from cultural exhibits at the World’s Fair were asked to compete in the Games events alongside Olympic athletes. The exhibits showcased peoples from the Arctic, Asia, and sub-Saharan Africa in what have been termed “human zoos”. Anthropology Days was designed to prove the racial superiority of white athletes over other races.

The events from the first day were Olympic track and field events, including the long jump and 100-yard dash. None of the second day’s events, archery, tree climbing, and lacrosse, were Olympic events. They were offered because these events were thought to be more accessible and culturally relevant to the non-Olympian competitors. The newly recruited athletes received limited training and instruction. What instruction they did receive was offered in a language foreign to them. Because of the lack of instruction and truncated preparation and training period, the recruited athletes, predictably, underperformed compared to their Olympic counterparts in all events. The outcome was used as evidence by William J. McGee and James Sullivan to confirm their racist hypothesis. The Anthropology Days experiment did not prove to be popular with World’s Fair attendees and was not repeated (Brownell 2008, DiMeo 2008).

Germany used the Olympics as a tool to confirm its racist Aryan superiority theory. The 1936 Winter Games were held in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, in February, and Berlin hosted the Summer Games over a 17 period in August. The Games were used in Nazi propaganda and were later given the moniker “Nazi Games” (Olympics.com 2022). It was well-known by the mid-1930s that Germany was targeting its Jewish citizens and political opponents with violence and began sending people, by the thousands, to concentration camps. In light of this information, there were motions by a subset of athletes and nations to either relocate the Games to another host city or cancel them altogether. Avery Brundage, the president of the IOC, did not wish to move the Games’ location. He cited the Olympics’ policy of political neutrality and Germany’s commitment to not discriminate against Jewish athletes as reasons to keep the Olympics in Germany (Kass 1976).

In Germany, Jewish athletes were barred from national athletic competitions and training facilities within Germany. The national government promised that they could participate in the Olympics, but Germany erected significant barriers to the Games. Jewish citizens were stripped of their citizenship in the 1930s and, according to the German regime, this prohibited Jewish athletes from representing Germany at the Games (Kass 1976).

Spain was the only nation to boycott the 1936 Olympics because of the atrocities underway in Germany. However, individual athletes chose not to compete in the Games because they personally did not want to compete in a nation trying to systematically eliminate part of its population. Instead, a number of athletes traveled to Barcelona to participate in the Worker’s Olympiad. Two days before the competition was scheduled to



begin, the Spanish Revolution broke out. The 1936 Workers' Olympiad was canceled (Flakin 2021).

Jesse Owens, a Black track athlete from the U.S., won four gold medals in the 100 meters, 200 meters, 4x100 meters relay, and the long jump in 1936. His success in these events was portrayed as a refutation of Hitler's racial agenda (Olympics.com 2022). However, Black citizens still faced discrimination, harassment, and violence in Jesse Owens's home country, the U.S. While the athletic successes of Owens were used to refute racial pseudoscience from Germany, the hostile social landscape in the U.S. remained unchanged for Black Americans, including Jesse Owens (Strout 2021).

The examples from St. Louis 1904 and Berlin 1936 highlight the casual use of athletes to further an agenda by those in powerful positions. The Anthropology Days events provided the non-Olympian athletes with a set of circumstances in which they would be highly unlikely to succeed in order to support racist theories about athletic prowess. Jesse Owens became a symbol to refute Hitler's theories on race, but his home nation had a structure of formal and informal policies designed to control and exploit its Black citizens.

Interestingly, two of the non-Olympic events from the second day, archery and lacrosse, have become official Olympic events. Archery was formally approved in 1972 and lacrosse will debut at Los Angeles 2028 (Olympics.com 2022).

### Rights of Indigenous People

The U.S. and Canada recruited indigenous athletes from residential schools. The schools were designed to assimilate indigenous children by violently stripping them of their ties to their families and culture. Students were given white names, forced to change

their dress and physical appearance, and forbidden to practice traditional religious ceremonies and speak their native language. The schools were deeply traumatizing for the students and members of their communities (Carlisle Indian School).

A handful of Carlisle Indian School students who exhibited exceptional athletic abilities were offered a chance to represent the U.S. at the Olympics. Louis Tewanima, Hopi member, represented the U.S. in the marathon at the 1908 and 1912 Olympics. While he was able to compete in the Olympics, Louis Tewanima had to endure racist aggressions like the moniker “Chutney Rice”.

Jim Thorpe, Sauk and Fox member, was another legendary athlete recruited from the Carlisle Indian School (Gilbert 2012). He endured similar treatment despite earning two gold medals at Stockholm 1912 and was famously called “the greatest athlete in the world” by King Gustav V of Sweden (Olympics.com 2022).

Jim Thorpe’s medals were stripped by the IOC in 1913, after it was discovered that he had played minor league baseball for one summer (Wu 2022). The Olympic Charter requires that all Olympians be amateur athletes. Athletes generally used their own money to finance their training, athletic club memberships, and travel expenses (Siegel 2019). Jim Thorpe was not, by the IOC’s standards, an amateur athlete. It wasn’t until 2022 that his medals were reinstated (Wu 2022).

Clarence “Taffy” Abel, Chippewa member, competed as a member of the U.S. ice hockey team at the 1924 Olympics. He was named team captain, carried the U.S. flag in the Opening Ceremony, and brought home the silver medal. Out of fear of being sent to a residential school, Clarence Abel concealed his indigenous lineage and passed as white. It wasn’t until 1939, five years after the end of his hockey career, that he publicly

announced his Chippewa lineage because he was no longer in danger of being sent to a boarding school and risking a successful hockey career (Hedgpeth 2022).

At the start of Clarence Abel's hockey career in northern Michigan, white and indigenous players skated together. The hockey rink was the only place where both groups interacted more or less as equals. In contrast, outside of the rink, indigenous Americans faced discrimination and violence. By the time Clarence Abel publicly announced his ancestry in 1939, attitudes in the U.S. were slowly becoming more tolerant of non-white racial identities. His announcement was a public vehicle to proudly claim his ancestry and inspire other Chippewa to also find joy, support, and community in their common heritage (Hedgpeth 2022).

The U.S. forced members of indigenous groups to the periphery of society unless there was a way for them to be used for the nation's self-interest. In the case of athletes from residential schools, they were used to promote the U.S.'s interests in a global athletic arena while being denied the right to live safely and practice their culture at home (Gilbert 2012).

Indigenous rights came to the forefront with the 2000 Sydney Olympics. The city's Olympic bid centered on showcasing Australia's indigenous culture. However, there were few indigenous people involved in preparing the bid and preparations for the Games themselves. Indigenous communities and rights activists reacted strongly to Sydney's Olympic campaign because it used them as a bargaining chip in negotiations without implementing positive, lasting changes for Aboriginal people. Prior to the Games, their organizing efforts resulted in marches and a domestic reconciliation effort (Olympics.com 2022).

Historically, the Aboriginal people suffered under racist and violent policies implemented during colonization. The British utilized murder and imprisonment as a tool to establish their presence in the region and control the existing communities. Children were taken from their families and forced to assimilate culturally. These practices laid the groundwork for present-day conditions in Australia. A disproportionately high number of Aboriginal Australians are incarcerated or die in police custody, and their community mourns the Stolen Generations, the children forcibly removed from their indigenous homes (Khalil 2020).

Cathy Freeman became the face of the 2000 Sydney Games. She is a member of the Kuku Yalanji, an Aboriginal group in Australia. Her participation was used by the IOC as evidence of progress in reconciling Australia's colonial past. Critics saw her participation as a prop to support an inaccurate narrative of reconciliation (Olympics.com 2022). A formal apology to the Aboriginal people wasn't issued by the Prime Minister until 2008, 16 years after Sydney was awarded the Games. It wasn't accompanied by policy measures to address the painful past of colonization and to help address the lasting repercussions it has on present-day Australia. Aboriginal Australians comprised 25% of those incarcerated while only being 3% of the nation's total population in 2020 (Khalil 2020).

The 2010 Winter Olympics were hosted in Vancouver. Like the 2000 Sydney Games, the theme of the Games drew heavily from indigenous groups in the area. Unlike Sydney 2000, Vancouver sought input from four indigenous groups whose historical territory the Games would be held on: Líl'wat, Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh. Collectively, they were known as the Four Host First Nations. They were valued

contributors to many aspects of the planning and execution of the Games (Olympics.com 2022).

In 2007, Canada launched the Truth and Reconciliation Commission to investigate the lasting impacts of the Indian Residential schools and to allow survivors to share their stories. The residential schools, in the U.S and Canada, were private or government-run programs that separated indigenous children from their families and forced them, often violently, to assimilate to white American and Canadian culture. Survivors of the residential schools report of living in an environment rife with abuse, violence, and neglect. Students died while in the care of these institutions. One of the most well-known residential schools in the U.S., the Carlisle School, was open for 39 years. While it was open, children from more than 140 tribes were forced to attend and the school recorded 186 student deaths. Residential schools in both nations have a lasting legacy of generational trauma and pain (Carlisle Indian School Project 2022).

In Canada, residential schools directly impacted 150,000 students and their families. The last federally funded schools weren't closed until the 1990s. At the close of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's work in 2015, it issued a report with its findings and recommendations. A group of recommendations advocates for reconciliation through sport and states, specifically stating:

We call upon the officials and host countries of international sporting events such as the Olympics, Pan Am, and Commonwealth games to ensure that Indigenous peoples' territorial protocols are respected, and local Indigenous communities are engaged in all aspects of planning and participating in such events. (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada 2012, 10)

The Four Host First Nations, alongside Vancouver and Whistler, are once more considering a bid for the 2030 Winter Games. They are currently soliciting feedback from

their members to determine if they should move forward with a formal proposal. In support of the bid, the Squamish Nation states that hosting the 2030 Winter Games could be a vehicle to facilitate the reconciliation process (Squamish Nation 2022). The Four Host First Nations are once more seeking to submit a bid for the Winter Olympics is evidence that they valued the experience and believe a future Olympiad would further heal and enrich their communities.

Throughout the history of the modern Olympics, indigenous athletes have participated in the Games. As attitudes have shifted, both globally and in individual nations, and it became safer to publicly claim an indigenous identity, athletes proudly shared their lineage. Some nations have found hosting the Games to be a vehicle to help indigenous communities heal from historic trauma provided that members of the indigenous groups are involved in all stages of the planning and execution of the Olympics. When indigenous perspectives are not included, the hosting process can be traumatic and exploitative for indigenous communities.

#### Experiences of African and Black Athletes and Spectators

The St. Louis World's Fair, site of the 1904 St. Louis Olympiad, should be critiqued for its racist treatment of non-white attendees and participants. Anthropological exhibits, designed by William J. McGee and James Sullivan, showcased people and cultures from Asia, the Arctic, and sub-Saharan Africa. The exhibits were designed to show the racial inferiority of non-Western cultures to white American culture. They were referred to as human zoos and used words like savage, primitive, and uncivilized to describe the cultures and people showcased (1904 World's Fair 2020).

Non-white attendees at the 1904 World's Fair also experienced racism. Officially, there weren't any discriminatory practices endorsed by the World's Fair. However, Black attendees reported that they were discriminated against by being refused service and exhibit access despite no official policy of racial discrimination (Friswold 2018).

Abebe Bikala, of Ethiopia, made headlines for taking gold in the marathon at the 1960 Olympics in Rome. He was the first athlete from East Africa to win a gold medal and he did it barefoot. It was a powerful moment as 1960 saw 14 African nations gain independence and the Civil Rights Movement was fighting for racial equality in the U.S. ("1960" 2008). Reports of Abebe Bikala's win were marred by racist microaggressions. The New York Times described Abebe Bikala as an "outsider" and "little" in its coverage of his historic win (Danzig 1960).

Wilma Rudolph, from the U.S., earned gold medals for her performance in the 100-meter, 200-meter, and 4x100-meter relay. She faced similarly racist coverage. European media nicknamed her the "Black Gazelle" (Olympics.com 2022). In the U.S., female athletes were not typically covered by the media. Wilma Rudolph's life story of overcoming polio to become an Olympian proved to be an inspirational tale that was covered by the media around the world. Her inspirational story and success at the Games rocketed her to fame (Maraniss 2008).

The Civil Rights movement of the 1960s started in the U.S. and its ripples were felt around the world. In the U.S., Black Americans demanded an end to racist policies that reduced them to second-rate citizens in all aspects of life, including athletics and track. The Olympic Project for Human Rights (OPHR) was founded to demand better conditions for Black athletes. It had four main objectives: bring attention to racial

injustice in the U.S., illuminate how the U.S. benefits from systemic racism, show patterns of exploitation of Black athletes in the U.S., and elevate Black athletes. The OPHR utilized boycotts as its primary organizing method (Edwards 1979, Zirin 2012). Similar to the treatment of indigenous athletes in the U.S., Black athletes were used as a tool to promote the nation's agenda while simultaneously being denied rights at home.

OPHR took the spotlight at the 1968 Olympics when Tommie Smith and John Carlos raised their fists from the Olympic podium (see Figure 5). Almost immediately, they were stripped of the medals and sent back to the U.S. Their image was widely circulated by the media in the U.S. and often coupled with disparaging, racist reporting. Journalists accused the athletes of being un-American, publicity opportunists and thousands of letters to the IOC and U.S. newspapers echoed similar sentiments (Zirin 2012).



## Mexico City 1968 Olympic Podium Protest



*Figure 5 Source: Dines 2020*

The organizing and activism from the OPHR did produce concrete changes for Black athletes. The U.S. Olympic Committee (USOC) hired Black coaches and Black members were included in its membership. Boycotts critical of the New York Athletic Club produced changes in its operations. The message of the OPHR was clear, Black athletes are not pawns. They should be included in all aspects of athletics, from the track to the coach's clubs and on committees (Edwards 1979).

Black athletes are not well represented in the Winter Games. It wasn't until 2002 that Black athletes would win gold medals at a Winter Games. Vonetta Flowers, from the U.S., placed first in the women's bobsleigh and Jarome Iginla, from Canada, earned a gold medal in ice hockey (Olympics.com 2022). This could be partly credited to limited access to resources and opportunities in athlete's host countries. If young athletes are not

given the opportunity to explore sports in a safe, supported environment, they are less likely to discover and perfect their athletic passions. The more visibility diverse athletes have, particularly underrepresented athletes, could also inspire a new generation of athletes from a wide range of backgrounds.

### Experiences of Asian Athletes and Spectators

Los Angeles 1932 was poorly attended, but the three Chinese athletes who participated were an inspiration for the Chinese-American community living in California. The Chinese delegation was a reminder of their home country and culture that they left, or, in some cases, had only heard of. Many Chinese Americans proudly and enthusiastically cheered for the Chinese athletes when they competed. Athletes competing in the Olympics not only represent their home nation, but they can be a cultural link for those living in the diaspora.

Japan was the first Asian nation to host the Olympics in 1964, a time massive change in the wake of World War II. Host cities often use the Games as a tool to share their national story and highlight cultural traditions and innovations. As a nation, Japan had to contend with Western stereotypes of Asia. Japan chose to showcase its modern advancements and shied away from reminders of its past. Subsequent Asian host nations have used the Olympics to highlight their rich histories and cultures (Tagsold 2010).

One of the best examples of a host city using the Games to share a national narrative is the Beijing 2008 Opening Ceremony. It began at 8:00 pm, China Standard Time, on August 8, 2008. The number 8 is considered auspicious in Chinese culture. The performance included images from China's history, 2,008 fou drummers, and tai chi

masters and lasted for more than four hours. The ceremony was acclaimed globally for being a masterful, awe-inspiring performance (Olympics.com 2022).

Beijing placed a strong bid to host the 2000 Olympic Games and the initial rounds of voting favored it as the host city. However, a global campaign was launched to bring to light China's human rights record. Activists believed that awarding the Games to Beijing would signal acceptance of its well-documented violations, including media censorship, silencing activists, and its occupation of Tibet. The campaign juxtaposed China's human rights record next to the IOC's values and principles. It argued that awarding the Games to Beijing would be failing to uphold the values and principles. The campaign succeeded in its mission and the IOC named Sydney as the location of the 2000 Summer Olympics (Human Rights Watch 2009).

The campaign was the first of its kind in its size, coordination, and goal. It raised the question as to whether or not a nation's human rights record should be considered when naming a host city (Keys 2016). The campaign argued that naming a location as an Olympic site meant that the IOC was unconcerned about the rights violations and their potential impact on the Games. However, no host nation has a perfectly clean human rights record. Sydney's selection led to a reckoning with its difficult relations with indigenous populations. The reconciliation work is ongoing.

Secondly, an important part of the Games is showcasing the host nation's culture. Historically, host nations have been predominantly Western nations. Naming an Asian nation as a host city would enrich and diversify the cultural tapestry of the Olympics. Athletic traditions that have roots in east Asian cultures, like karate, judo, and taekwondo are relatively recent additions to the list of Olympic events. Judo has been an Olympic

sport since 1964, karate was added in 2000, and the first taekwondo competitions were held in 2021 (Olympics.com 2022).

A similar human rights campaign was launched to derail Beijing's bids for the 2008 and 2022 Olympics. This time, the IOC awarded China the Summer 2008 Games and the Winter 2022 Games. As part of an ongoing effort from the IOC to grow and evolve the Olympics, host city contracts now include language to protect human rights of the athletes. The recommendation came from the Olympic Agenda 2020, a report that offered recommendations to make the Games more sustainable and socially responsible (Conseil de l'Europe 2020). Building human rights language into the contract will give the IOC more control over potentially negative repercussions from the Games.

Asian athletes continue to face racism in the athletic world. Prior to the start of Beijing 2008, Spain's men's basketball team was photographed using their fingers to make slanted eyes. The photograph was subsequently used in an advertisement for one of the team's sponsors. The team insisted that the photograph was not meant to be insulting, but a number of Chinese groups condemned the photo as racist (Yang 2008).

### Class

From the outset, the Olympics was designed for wealthy athletes and spectators. A special correspondent for The New York Times penned an article sharing their experience at the first Games. They wrote,

As early as 2 o'clock the multitude of citizens and guests began crossing the new stone bridge over the Ilissus to the Stadium, and by 3 o'clock, in spite of threatening clouds and even a little dash of rain, this vast, open-air theatre, which can seat 40,000 people comfortably, was two-thirds full, while outside on the hillsides that overlook it, as well as in the broad avenue leading to it from the palace gardens, were thousands more who

were quite as eager to see, though many of them perhaps too poor to pay even the nominal entrance fee of one drachma (p. 16).

The author also wrote of the opulence of the Game's primary benefactors, King George and Queen Olga of Greece. They privately funded the historic stadium's restoration project which the author described as "the finest amphitheatre in the world" (p. 16). Spectators in Athens included European royalty and successful businessmen, athletes were solicited from world renown colleges and athletic clubs ("The New Olympic Games" 1896, "Olympic Games at Athens" 1895).

The IOC solicited participation from elite institutions in the Western world that catered to white, wealthy men. These men had access to resources that would allow them to train for the events, pay for equipment and travel, and leisure time to pursue sports as a hobby. Professional athletes were not permitted to participate, the IOC mandated that all athletes must be amateurs.

The Games' growth in size and popularity continued its upward trajectory towards Stockholm 1912. Nations came from all continents to compete in an increasing number of both summer and winter competitive events. There was a growing population of ethnically diverse athletes representing nations in the Games. Jim Thorpe, a member of the Sac and Fox Nation and delegate from the US, competed in 15 events and earned two gold medals at the 1912 Olympics. He was subsequently stripped of his medals by the IOC for having played semi-professional baseball. In the eyes of the IOC, this rendered him a professional athlete and, therefore, ineligible to be an Olympian (Jenkins 2012). The IOC's decision was overturned in 1982 and Jim Thorpe was named co-champion, despite having won both events outright. It wasn't until 2022 that the record was

amended to show only one champion, Jim Thorpe, and his gold medals were reinstated (Wu 2022).

In response to the elitism associated with the Olympics, the first International Workers' Olympiad was held in 1921 in Frankfurt, Germany. 100,000 participants, from 12 countries, partook in the inaugural games. The event brought people together to participate in athletic competitions, attend or give lectures, appreciate art, and compete in games of strategy. There were no qualifying standards for competitions and anyone welcome to compete, regardless of an individual's gender, race, and ability. Gender, race, ability, and class were typically seen as barriers to participating in the Olympics. The International Workers' Olympiads were held every four years through 1937 (Flakin 2021, Halpren 2021).

The IOC ruled in 1936 that ski instructors were considered professional athletes and therefore unable to compete at the Olympics. The ruling inspired a handful of European athletes to boycott the Games (Olympics.com 2022). The ruling created a barrier for those who were inspired to train for athletic excellence, but also needed financial support to pursue their passion. It reiterated that the Games were designed only for the wealthy.

Some nations, notably the USSR, established training facilities for athletes it viewed as exceptional. Athletes who trained there weren't directly compensated, but they often received housing and board as a perk. Valery Brumel, a competitive high jumper for the USSR, reportedly received housing and transportation assistance. The arrangement allowed the athletes to focus on their sport without necessarily worrying about affording housing and food. Robert Lipsyte reported "because of economic

pressures, few American athletes are able to continue competing internationally very long after they are graduated from college” (1964, p. 58). Western nations bristled at the arrangement and viewed it as a loophole in the Olympic Charter that the USSR exploited (Lipsyte 1964, Herman 1976).

The Games saw an official end to the ban on professional athletes competing in 1992. The U.S. sent 12 professional basketball players, including Magic Johnson, Larry Bird, and Michael Jordan, to Barcelona. The team was nicknamed “The Dream Team”. This change opened the door for athletes to receive corporate sponsorships and be paid to compete (Olympics.com 2022).

### Migrant Labor

Two new facilities, the Bird’s Nest and the Water Cube, are modern, architectural buildings constructed for Beijing 2008. The modernity of these two structures contrasted with the Forbidden City and the Great Wall, ancient sites easily accessed from the two new venues. But the new Olympic structures in Beijing came at a high human cost. The construction workers who built the structures were generally immigrants. They faced unsafe working conditions and were often underpaid for their labor. Most workers were unsuccessful in seeking working condition improvements and back pay because there weren’t avenues through which their grievances could be addressed (Human Rights Watch 2009).

Russia relied heavily on migrant labor to construct new Olympic venues in Sochi. Laborers who worked on Olympic sites reported that they were often underpaid and worked in dangerous conditions. If workers tried to file a grievance, they would be threatened and intimidated. A large portion of the laborers were migrant workers from

Eastern European nations. Migrant workers were the most vulnerable and were exploited by the companies contracted to build the Olympic sites (Human Rights Watch 2009).

Similar working conditions were reported by laborers who constructed Olympic venues in Rio de Janeiro. Laborers, particularly migrant laborers, are vulnerable to unscrupulous business practices. Their immigration status often leaves them with little legal recourse for rectifying issues, like improving worksite safety, receiving back pay, and protection from abusive practices.

#### Impact of the Olympics on Host City Residents and Neighborhoods

Hosting the Olympic Games requires extensive financial resources. The 1932 Olympic Games in Los Angeles were held in the midst of the Great Depression. It can be argued that the resources routed to the Games could have been used to help the city's struggling citizens. At the time, the Games were viewed as a symbol of the host city and host nation's global prestige. Jobs were generated as a result of labor demands related to the Games, like new construction projects. The Games were also expected to provide a financial return to the host city because they brought thousands of people to it. Los Angeles did not see the same level of moderate financial success enjoyed by previous host cities, it did receive an elevated status worldwide (Siegel 2019).

Denver was selected as the site for the 1976 Winter Olympic Games, but withdrew as a host city in 1972. The city officially cited ecological concerns as their reason for forfeiting their right to host the Games, however financing the Games was a growing concern for Denver's population. Austria stepped in to host the Games at Innsbruck, the site of the 1968 Winter Games (Olympics.com 2022). This is the first example in the history of the modern Games of a city reversing their commitment to host



the Olympics because its citizens did not believe the cost of hosting the Games was worth the benefits associated with them.

The proposal for the 1980 Lake Placid Olympics Games had a controversial proposal for the Olympic Village. Funds secured to help construct the Olympic Village stipulated that once the Games concluded the housing would be converted into a federal prison. In response, some participating nations rented houses in the area to house their athletes because they believed that prisons do not live up to the Olympic ideals of peace, unity, and reconciliation. However, most athletes did elect to stay in the Olympic Village instead of privately secured housing (United States Olympic & Paralympic Museum 2020).

There are many accounts of residents being forced to leave their homes in order to accommodate the construction of new Olympic venues. South Korea removed more than half a million people from Sanggyedong. Thousands of Chinese residents were evicted from their homes in order to clear space for new venues for Beijing 2008. The Chinese residents were unable to appeal the decision and often didn't receive adequate compensation for the loss of their homes. 450 residents from Clays Lane housing complex were forced to move so their neighborhood could be developed for the 2012 London Olympics. Residents from Vila Autódromo, in Rio de Janeiro, were given notice that they needed to relocate because their neighborhood was slated to be redeveloped as one of the main sites of the 2016 Olympics (Donahue 2020, Naughton 2008).

Residents impacted by construction projects for the Games are asked to leave their established homes and neighborhoods. A lifetime of personal histories, memories, and networks are disrupted for a competition that will last for just two weeks. In cases

where residents resist leaving their homes, they can face violence and abuse at the hands of the police or military (Donahue 2020).

Former host cities that reflect on the legacy left by the Games often see a mix of positive and negative impacts. Prior to hosting the Games, cities often invest heavily in neighborhood revitalization projects. These projects, if executed thoughtfully with community input, can help elevate marginalized communities and cement lasting, positive effects. However, marginalized communities are often either left behind or removed entirely to make way for Olympic projects (Hallerman 2021). During the Games, and shortly thereafter, cities are energized with an influx of tourism. However, the energy fades as the focus of the Olympics is moved to the next host city. Large, empty venues are often left behind with few plans for future use (Donahue 2020).

### Gender and Sexuality

Female athletes participated in the 1900 Paris Olympics. Twenty-two women competed in five events: croquet, tennis, sailing, equestrianism, and golf. They competed alongside 975 male athletes and they were required to compete in ankle-length skirts. Male athletes did not have uniform requirements (Olympics.com 2022). At the time, women in many Western nations were denied rights, like the right to vote, own property, and manage their finances, that their white, male counterparts freely enjoyed. The ability to compete in the Olympics was, therefore, progressive for the time period.

Sheila Mitchell suggests that the inclusion of women was not necessarily an intentionally progressive act. Individual NOCs directed the structure and organization of the Olympics in its early years. The decentralized power structure created confusion and, in its wake, accidentally permitted female athletes to participate. Female participation in

athletics was in a fledgling stage at the start of the twentieth century. There was a small, but growing number of women who participated in athletics. There was a concern that competition would nurture non-feminine qualities, like aggression or highly developed muscular structure, in women. Therefore, female athletes were restricted to participating in “feminine” sports (1977). The events that women participated in set a precedent for future Games. They could not be barred from events they had previously participated in and, as more women became involved in sports on a national level, it was less difficult to make an argument for their inclusion on an international level (Mitchell 1977). The IOC officially allowed women to compete with an historic vote in 1921.

After that, women’s sports slowly gained momentum. There were few female athletes competing for a large part of the twentieth century. There were few women’s events, particularly when compared to the suite of events offered to male competitors. The first women's team competition, volleyball, debuted at the 1964 Tokyo Olympics (Olympics.com 2022). It came 64 years after the first women competed in the Olympics and 40 years after the IOC voted to allow women’s athletic competitions as part of the Olympics.

The USSR’s gymnastics team debuted at Helsinki 1952. The team excelled and they medaled in 13 out of 15 gymnastics events. The strength and success of the USSR’s gymnasts caused some to speculate that the female athletes were actually men. A number of female athletes from the USSR withdrew from the Olympics after the IOC began to require sex confirmation tests for women in 1966. The athlete withdrawals fueled the rumor, however, there hasn’t been any evidence to substantiate the claim. The USSR athletes may have been intersex. While the sex tests have not uncovered men pretending

to be women, it would likely have prevented female-presenting intersex and transgender athletes from competing (Pawdan 2016). Regardless of the withdrawn athletes, the dominance of the USSR in gymnastics continued through the late-1980s (Olympics.com 2022).

In 1981, the first two women were named to the IOC. Pirjo Häggman, from Finland, and Flor Isava Fonseca, from Venezuela, joined almost 100 male colleagues to form the IOC membership. The 2022 IOC's membership has significantly more women, but male members are still in the majority. Women represent 47.7% of all members and chair 36.7% of committees (Olympics.com 2022). While the number of women in the IOC is growing admirably, women are still noticeably underrepresented in higher positions of power. The IOC has yet to have a president who is not male and white.

The 2012 London Olympics was the first Olympiad that had female athletes representing Saudi Arabia. In an effort to promote women in sports globally, the IOC required Saudi Arabia to send female athletes, or risk being uninvited to the Games.

The IOC created the Women in Sport Commission to create a more equitable community of athletes. The commission seeks to promote, elevate, and sustain opportunities for female athletes, of all ages, around the world (Olympics.com 2022).

### Gender Certifications

The 1940s saw an emerging trend to require female athletes to provide certificates that would confirm their sex. This coincided with the steadily rising number of female athletes. The number of women athletes competing at the Olympics grew by more than 3,500 in the span of 20 years. Only 1,332 women competed in the 1932 Los Angeles Olympics and 4,955 female athletes competed at the 1952 Helsinki Olympics

(Olympics.com 2022). Female athletes challenged the idea of what a woman's physical appearance should look like. Some female athletes had defined muscles or square jawlines, physical traits there were considered exclusively male. Two female athletes, Stella Walsh, from Poland, and Helen Stephens, from the U.S., competed in the 1936 Olympics and were later accused of being male because their bodies were considered too muscular. Well-defined muscles, a trait considered synonymous with Olympic athletes in the twenty-first century, was considered a male trait. Helen Stephens endured a genitalia examination by an Olympic official who confirmed that she was female (Padawer 2016).

A rumor began circulating, in the early 1960s, that the USSR planned to have male athletes disguise themselves as women and compete in female events. Under the guise of protecting the integrity of the Games, the IOC introduced a gender certification requirement for female athletes that debuted at the 1968 Mexico City Olympics (Padawer 2016, Thomas 2008).

Gender confirmation tests were humiliating for female athletes and had little scientific rigor. The first gender tests required all women athletes to remove their clothing to prove they possessed female sex organs (Thomas 2008). The regulation came at a time that women's sports were gaining a larger presence at the Games. Female athletes comprised more than 14% of competitors at the 1968 Mexico City Olympic Games. This was a jump compared to the previous two decades. Female athletes comprised just under 10% of all competitors in the previous two decades (Olympics.com 2022).

Athletes complained that that tests were invasive and humiliating. In response, the International Association of Athletics Federation (IAAF) designed a new gender test. Female athletes could have their blood drawn to confirm that they only have XX

chromosomes, a test method that was viewed as faulty by the scientific community (Padawer 2016).

In 1999, as a result of the advocacy from numerous groups and members of the scientific community, female athletes were no longer required to pass a gender certification test. Male athletes have never been required to certify their sex. The logic in relying on chromosomal tests is based on the belief that gender is simply female, with two X chromosomes, or male, an XY chromosome combination. However, geneticists and endocrinologists refute this assumption. The scientific community contends that sex is expressed through a combination of factors, including hormones and genetics, and relying on only chromosomal screenings draws an incomplete picture. Going forward, individual female athletes could still be asked to confirm their sex by testing their levels of testosterone if they are believed to possibly be male (Thomas 2008, Padawer 2016).

The gender tests administered by the IOC have not revealed a single case of a male athlete intentionally disguising themselves and competing as a woman. The test originated from sexist ideas about how women should look and their physical abilities (Padawer 2016). These attitudes live on in the present day through testosterone tests that are administered to female competitors only. The amount of testosterone a female competitor can have is capped, but there are no upper bounds of testosterone for male athletes. If a female athlete's testosterone level exceeds the limit, she can reduce her levels by taking medication or choose not to compete (Thomas 2008). Caster Semenya, a South African sprinter, was denied a place at the 2021 Tokyo Olympics because her testosterone levels exceed the limit for female athletes. She refused to reduce her

testosterone medically and is fighting the ruling in the European Court of Human Rights on the basis that the requirement is a violation of her human rights (Semenya 2021).

The IOC removed the testosterone regulations for female athletes in November 2021. While the IOC was applauded for the change, the ruling came three months too late for Caster Semenya (Lavietes 2021).

### Transgender and Intersex Athletes

The 2021 Olympics were the first Games that had openly transgender and nonbinary athletic competitors. Laurel Hubbard made history as the first openly transgender female athlete. She represented New Zealand in a weightlifting competition and medically reduced her testosterone levels in order to compete against other women (Lavietes 2021). Quinn, a transgender and nonbinary Canadian soccer player on the women's team, helped her team bring home a gold medal (Solpesa and Yurcaba 2021). Alana Smith, a skateboarder from the U.S., became the first nonbinary athlete to compete in the Olympics. Their debut was marred by their repeated misgendering by media coverage, including coverage by NBC, the official Olympic broadcaster in the U.S. (Bell 2021).

The gender tests mandated by the IOC likely didn't prevent gender fraud. They almost certainly prevented transgender women and female-presenting intersex athletes from competing (Padawer 2016). The 2004 IOC ruling that permitted transgender athletes to compete, the visibility of openly transgender and nonbinary athletes at Tokyo 2021, and the removal of testosterone requirements validate transgender and intersex athletes and may influence national and local athletic organizations to follow suit. As the

Olympics are a highly-regarded, international event, these conditions may also lead to tolerance in other, non-athletic areas.

### Sexuality

Athletes have, historically, not publicly declared their sexuality. If an athlete was gay, lesbian, or bisexual, they generally concealed it. If their sexuality was made public, it was usually disclosed by a third party in an effort to discredit them. Globally, many nations have had laws and regulations that classified relationships that weren't heterosexual as illegal. While attitudes towards the lesbian, gay, transgender, bisexual, and queer (LGBTQ) community are beginning to change, there are many areas of the world where LGBTQ identities are dangerous and expose the individual to potential violence (Sayler 2018).

It is not definitively known when the first LGBTQ athletes competed in the Olympics. A handful of athletes began disclosing their sexuality publicly in the 1980s and 1990s. The public statements were usually made after their Olympic careers ended and they no longer feared their sexuality would inhibit their athletic careers (Sayler 2018).

The Gay Games, first held in 1982, was organized to provide a space for LGBTQ athletes to compete against one another in a safe, supportive environment. The first Gay Games was held in San Francisco in 1982. 1,350 athletes from 12 countries competed in 17 sports. The most recent Gay Games, held in Paris in 2018, had a suite of 36 sports and attracted 10,317 athletes representing 91 nations (Federation of Gay Games 2020).

Human rights activists raised concern about the treatment of openly LGBTQ Olympians competing in nations that are hostile to members of the community. A 2013



Russian law made it illegal for minors to be given information about “nontraditional” relationships. The law was dubbed the “gay propaganda law” by Western media outlets and activists. Historically, gay and lesbian Russians have faced discrimination and bullying due to prevalent homophobic attitudes. The new law enforced a fine for those who violate it and encourages homophobic attitudes and potential violence (Belyakov 2018). In defiance of the law, seven athletes who openly identify as members of the LGBTQ community competed in Sochi. The number of athletes who publicly identify as members of the LGBTQ community continued to climb. Fifteen openly LGBTQ athletes competed in the 2018 PyeongChang Olympics and 35 openly LGBTQ athletes competed in the 2022 Beijing Olympics (Hart 2021).

Likewise, the number of openly LGBTQ athletes competing in the Summer Olympic Games is also on the rise. At the 2021 Tokyo Olympics, 185 athletes publicly identified as members of the LGBTQ community (Hart 2021). There are likely many more athletes who privately identify as a member of the LGBTQ community. Safety in the host country and safety in their home country are chief among the reasons why an athlete may not publicly disclose their gender identity or sexuality.

## Chapter IV.

### Looking Back to Move Forward

The Olympics have become a global phenomenon. Their exclusive beginnings have grown into a mega-sporting event celebrated every two years with thousands of athletes, millions of spectators at the Olympic venues, and billions of people following coverage of the Games through televised and internet-based coverage. The Olympics generate billions of dollars in revenue, the majority of which comes from sales of broadcasting rights.

Throughout their growth, the IOC has maintained a stance of political neutrality. However, the Games have not been able to insulate themselves from external political factors. Nations have used the Olympics to send political messages. The US-led boycott of the 1980 Moscow Olympics and the 22 African nations who walked out of the 1976 Montreal Olympics are two examples of nations using the Games as a platform to send messages about another nation's policies or actions (Olympics.com 2022).

Athletes themselves have used the Games as a highly visible platform send strong messages to a captive, global audience. The 1968 racial justice protest by U.S. Tommie Smith and John Carlos in Mexico City is one of the most renowned examples to date (Dines 2020). The IOC itself could use its global recognition and status to champion human rights. Media coverage of the Games reaches billions of people, primarily through television broadcasts and internet coverage.

The Olympics can, therefore, be used to provide strongly visible momentum for social change. The IOC recognized this in its adoption of the Olympic Agenda 2020 and commitment to human rights. These efforts are most successful when there is existing

work being undertaken that efforts from the Games can complement. The indigenous rights work undertaken by the Canadian Olympic Committee, the city of Vancouver, and the Lílwat, Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh communities that complemented Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commissions' recommendations. The Games were viewed as a success by these communities and have begun initial exploration to potentially host the 2032 Winter Games (Musqueam 2022).

Each iteration of the Olympics has its own unique challenges. It is necessary to approach each host city with cultural humility to understand its history, motivation for hosting the Olympics, the potential positive and negative impacts on the city. The IOC should have a deep understanding of these aspects when debating if a city should be named as a host city. The IOC should also be prepared to reverse its decision if a host city either becomes unable to host or it comes to light that a city should not host. Because the Olympics is a billion-dollar industry, the IOC should be prepared to weather financial setbacks. Additionally, the IOC should be aware of its own impact on host cities. There are accounts of migrant labor abuse, forced displacement, and other human rights violations as a direct result of the planning and execution of the Games.

Eight years of planning, building, and organizing culminates in a two-week sports extravaganza. After the athletes and spectators leave, the host city is left with vacant athletic venues. The human cost to construct Olympic venues is high and, generally speaking, disproportionately impacts those most vulnerable. The Olympics should consider the impact of its demands on host cities. Where there were once vibrant neighborhoods, there are now massive, empty sports arenas. The IOC should consider the

impact it will have on communities and be willing to change course if local communities are bearing a heavy, long-term cost.

The Olympics have been a way for people to connect with the roots, regardless of where they live in the world. The Olympics is particularly powerful tool to bridge distance. This is most acutely felt by immigrants and those living in the diaspora. Also, the addition of a Refugee team was a powerful statement for those who have been forced to leave their home. Allowing them to compete validates their experience and raises awareness of global political struggles.

Additionally, representation of all races, genders, and abilities at the Olympics is inspiring. Historically, the Olympics have been white, male, and wealthy. Underrepresented identities embodied by world-class athletes can inspire the next generation of diverse athletes.

The Games needs to take care to ensure the safety of its athletes, spectators, and the residents of the host cities. It has the ability to make and enforce policies to ensure that those who are vulnerable will be protected. The IOC should be prepared to challenge policies and entities that threaten or actively endanger these populations. Some entities that are critical of the Games have thoughtful, concrete ideas to improve them. Identifying key organizations to collaborate with will improve upon the Olympic experience.

Athletes who compete at the Olympics are the best in the world, but they do not all have access to equal resources to help them train and prepare. The IOC can thoughtfully engage in removing barriers to sports and providing more equitable access for current and future athletes.

The IOC, despite its claims of being a neutral entity, has engaged in diplomatic negotiations to preserve its own interests. Incorporating human rights into its core framework will cement them as part of Olympics. Instead of reacting to concerns as they arise, the IOC will be proactively addressing them at all stages of the Games. The IOC could utilize its media coverage and resources to bring human rights concerns to billions of people around the world. The IOC could truly make the world a better place, through both sport and public awareness.

Public information campaigns through the media, including traditional formats, like newspapers and radio, as well as social media platforms, are already used by government and non-governmental organizations as effective tools for change. Human rights campaigns can be particularly effective when they

target individuals who possess a set of prior beliefs and are situated in a specific societal context. Campaign elements thus interact with individuals' previous attitudes as well as broader social structures and norms. (Heger 2017, p. 35)

Cultural sensitivity should be a cornerstone of all human rights campaigns (Heger 2017).

Public opinion has the power to influence policy. The Female Inheritance Movement launched a campaign in the 1990s to allow women in Hong Kong to inherit land from their family members. Prior to the campaign, women were not permitted to inherit land because they were female. Rural women, in particular, were negatively impacted by this practice because the land provided their livelihood and sustenance. Without the right to inherit land, widows lost access to a vital source of food and income when their husbands died. The campaign successfully passed new legislation because the majority of the population believed in gender equality and, therefore, supported a law that codified gender equality in relation to land inheritance (Herger 2017). Public opinion is a

powerful too that can be utilized by human rights campaigns to change existing legal practices (Cavallaro 2008, Herger 2017).

The IOC and Olympic athletes, particularly through the media, have the ability to use their voice to amplify human rights concerns, in both their host and home nations. Megan Rapinoe, the captain of the US Women's Soccer team, regularly posts on her social media accounts about issues related to the LGBTQ+ community along with ways for her 2 million followers to engage with the issues (Rapinoe 2022). Athletes who perform well or are particularly charismatic often see their social media following drastically grow as a result of their exposure through the Games (Walker 2020). In contrast, the verified Instagram account of the Olympics has 5.5 million followers, and its Facebook account reaches 22 million people (The Olympic Games (@olympics) 2022, The Olympic Games 2022). While these numbers are small compared to the billions of people who watch the Games through Broadcast television, streaming the Games online is rapidly growing in popularity and, presumably, its social media following will increase with its rising number of unique streaming viewers.

There is concern for the safety of athletes who use their platform to speak out about human rights concerns. It can be argued that the high-profile nature of the Olympics helps ensure the safety of the participants because host cities do not want international scandals linked to them. This is particularly true for host cities who are using the Olympic platform to shape their narrative for the international community (Spinelli 2022). However, there are an unknown number of athletes who are members of the LGBTQ+ community who do not publicly identify as such because it could endanger

their lives in their home country, or the Olympic host city (Belyakov 2018). The celebrity of world-class athletes does not make them immune to all threats to their personal safety.

The IOC could use its influential media presence to advocate for LGBTQ+ athletes, as well as other human rights issues. It has proven throughout the history of the modern Olympics that it can advocate for human rights and engage nations in diplomatic negotiations. Historically, it has done this under the auspices of the success of the Games. Going forward, the IOC has the potential to expand its scope to for the betterment of all.

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