



BLACK, FEMALE, AND COMMUNITIES ENCOMPASSING SEXUAL MINORITIES IN SPORT. OLYMPIC GAMES AS A MEANS OF FIGHTING FOR EQUALITY

Abstract – After an arduous fight for the rights of women and black people practically throughout the entire twentieth century, the voice of members of community encompassing sexual minorities and other individuals with non-normative genders has been increasingly appearing in the public discourse. This is another group that began to demand respect and acceptance. Their actions are carried out at different levels. One of such ventures are the Olympic Games, whose range of influence and popularity is regularly increasing. Is there, therefore, a time-dependent correlation between the biannually held (alternately summer and winter), most recognized international sports competitions and the actions of people belonging to sexual minorities whose orientation is not heterosexual and people with gender identity different from their assigned sex? The following analysis shows the Olympic history in that regard, which, supplemented with numerous sport threads about the fight for the rights of women and people with a skin color other than white, is designed to verify the presented hypothesis.

Keywords: Olympic Games; Olympic politics; Women in sport; Equality; Sexual minorities

NEGROS, MULHERES E GRUPOS DE MINORIAS SEXUALMENTE DIVERSAS. OS JOGOS OLÍMPICOS COMO UMA FORMA DE LUTA POR IGUALDADE

Resumo - Após uma árdua luta pelos direitos das mulheres e das pessoas negras durante praticamente todo o século XX, a voz dos membros da comunidade que abrange as minorias sexuais e outros indivíduos com gênero não normativo, vem aparecendo cada vez mais no discurso público. Esse é outro grupo que começou a exigir respeito e aceitação. Suas ações são realizadas em diferentes níveis. Um desses empreendimentos são os Jogos Olímpicos, cuja gama de influência e popularidade aumenta progressivamente. Existe, portanto, uma correlação dependente do tempo entre as competições esportivas reconhecidas internacionais realizadas bianualmente (alternadamente verão e inverno) e as ações de pessoas pertencentes a minorias sexuais cuja orientação não é heterossexual e pessoas com identidade de gênero diferente de seu sexo designado? A análise a seguir mostra a história olímpica a esse respeito, que é complementada com inúmeras linhas de pesquisa do esporte sobre a luta pelos direitos de mulheres e das pessoas com uma cor de pele diferente de branca, é projetada para verificar a hipótese apresentada.

Palavras-chave: Jogos Olímpicos; Política Olímpica; Mulheres no esporte; Igualdade; Minorias sexuais.

NEGROS, MUJERES Y GRUPOS DE MINORÍAS SEXUALMENTE DIVERSAS. LOS JUEGOS OLÍMPICOS COMO UNA FORMA DE LUCHA POR LA IGUALDAD

Resumen - Después de una ardua lucha por los derechos de las mujeres y los negros durante la mayor parte del siglo XX, la voz de los miembros de la comunidad que abraza a las minorías sexuales y otros individuos de género no normativos aparece cada vez más en el discurso público. Este es otro grupo que ha comenzado a exigir respeto y aceptación. Sus acciones se realizan en diferentes niveles. Una de esas empresas son los Juegos Olímpicos, cuyo rango de influencia y popularidad aumenta constantemente. ¿Existe, por lo tanto, una correlación dependiente del tiempo entre las competiciones deportivas bienales reconocidas internacionalmente (alternativamente en verano e invierno) y las acciones de personas de minorías sexuales cuya orientación no heterosexual y personas con una identidad de género diferente a su género designado? El siguiente análisis muestra la historia olímpica a este respecto, que se complementa con numerosas líneas de investigación deportiva sobre la lucha por los derechos de las mujeres y las personas con un color de piel diferente al blanco, está diseñado para verificar la hipótesis presentada.

Palabras-clave: Juegos olímpicos; Política olímpica; Mujeres en el deporte; Igualdad; Minorías sexuales.

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Introduction

Over the past few years – due to political and socio-cultural changes in the world – the voice of members of community encompassing sexual minorities and other individuals with non-normative genders has been increasingly appearing in the public discourse. After an arduous fight for the rights of women and black people practically throughout the entire twentieth century, this is another group that began to demand respect and acceptance. Its purpose is usually to come out of hiding and create an integrated group whose social significance is ultimately to be expanded while gaining greater acceptance among the heterosexual part of society. These actions are carried out at different levels; however, in order to get additional high media profile, large international events, including sports events, are very often used to present their declarations. One of such ventures are the Olympic Games, whose range of influence and popularity is regularly increasing. Is there, therefore, a time-dependent correlation between the biannually held (alternately summer and winter), most recognized international sports competitions and the actions of people belonging to sexual minorities whose orientation is not heterosexual and people with gender identity different from their assigned sex? The following analysis shows the Olympic history in that regard, which, supplemented with numerous sport threads about the fight for the rights of women and people with a skin color other than white, is designed to verify the presented hypothesis.

Women's fight for participation in the Olympic Games

Due to the fact that issues related to broadly understood aspects of sexual orientation have been raised in scientific literature relatively recently, it is extremely difficult to relate this topic to the time of the first Olympic Games, taking place at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. The activists of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) – an organization founded on the initiative of Baron Pierre de Coubertin in June 1894 in Paris, leading the Olympic movement and undertaking the organizational coordination of the Olympic Games – spent this period, as a rule, on discussions related to, inter alia, tense diplomatic relations between countries, as well as topics of amateurism or gender. In the case of the latter, one group of activists opted for complete equality of participants and enabling women's participation in the Olympic

Games, while the other, headed by Coubertin himself, was against their participation in the Olympic Games and even after several years of witnessing sport competitions their opinion did not change. Evidence of this comes from the IOC founder himself, who said in 1912: “We believe that the Olympic Games must be reserved for men... We must continue our efforts to achieve the following definition [of the Olympic Games]: serious and periodic exaltation of male physical fitness, with internationalism as the basis, loyalty as a means, art as a setting and female applause as a reward (p. 711-713)”¹. Therefore, for instance, the fact that women were not allowed to participate in the Olympic Games in 1896 should not be surprising, although there is a legend saying that a competitor named Melpomene ran the marathon route one month in advance of the event, and another – Stamata Revithi – completed the same race route the day after the official end of the competition². Yet some researchers, starting with Athanasius Tarasouleas, emphasize that the inconsistency of scientific data in this regard may be misleading, and both heroines could in fact be one and the same person³. Eventually, the foundation of the Fémina Sport Club after the end of World War I, the French Federation of Women’s Sports Clubs, as well as the International Women’s Sports Federation played an important role in improving the situation of women in sport. Alice Milliat was a pioneer in this field – a sportswoman who participated in the sport of rowing, as well as an avid swimmer and hockey player, thanks to whom in 1922 an international meeting of athletes in Paris was initiated, which resulted in the first Women’s World Games⁴. Her action can be considered a protest against the policy of the most influential people in the world of sport, restricting women from practicing many universal sport disciplines⁵. Thus, despite the difficult and long-lasting struggle for women’s rights to participate in the Olympic Games, over the years they managed to gain access to more and more sports. Because of this, the number of participating women also increased, from several participants in 1904, to over 300 in 1936⁶. Unfortunately, even in the 21st century, often abstract and completely incomprehensible arguments appear in connection with women’s performances at the Olympic Games. One recent evidence comes from 2006 when female ski jumpers were not allowed to participate in the XX Olympic Winter Games in Turin, because, as it was argued, from a medical point of view ski jumping is not a sport suitable for women. Such a situation recurred four years later, and the sport was still not made available to female

competitors⁷. It was only at the XXII Olympic Winter Games in Sochi in 2014 that the discipline was officially recognized, and the first Olympic champion was Carina Vogt, one of the most successful female German ski jumpers in the country's history⁸.

Racial discrimination at the Olympics

Another group that was discriminated against over the years, from the very beginning of the Olympic Games, were black people, who at first were not welcome as participants in Olympic sports competitions. During the Games of the III Olympiad, held in St. Louis in 1904, a series of contests was organized for them, but it was not an official part of the Olympic Games. These were the so-called “anthropological days,” an additional event accompanying the Louisiana Purchase Exposition. Among the participants, there were representatives of the Yakuts from Russia, the Moro people from the Philippines, the Ainu from the Kuril Islands, the Inuit, the Sioux, and other Native American tribes. Deliberately brought from their natural environments, they did not know the rules and principles of sports in which they participated, and therefore spectators could observe their awkwardness, while confirming the inferiority of races other than white⁹.

The 1930s showed nonetheless that people with a non-white skin color could win sports competitions of the Olympic Games the same way as previously privileged contestants. It has been thoroughly documented that at the Games of the XI Olympiad in 1936 in Berlin the German organizers, to a very large extent inspired by racism and anti-Semitism policies, wanted to display Aryan features while humiliating different-looking sportspeople¹⁰. This is why the sports leader of the Reich, Hans von Tschammer und Osten, proposed that the winners go to the lodge of the leader of the Third Reich, Adolf Hitler, to receive personal congratulations from the chancellor. The activist assumed that any success for black contestants was impossible because German athletes were perfectly prepared for the competitions, breaking sports records, and winning the largest number of Olympic medals. Thus, when an American, Cornelius Johnson, surprisingly for the Germans, won in the high jump, Hitler was no longer in the lodge, which was regarded by many of the Führer's opponents as a kind of an affront to non-Aryan competitors. It also outraged the then IOC president Henri de Baillet-Latour, who obliged Hitler to congratulate all the winners, not only the selected ones, which the

chancellor agreed to, once again quickly going back on his word because of the victory of the next black athlete – Jesse Owens. Owens humiliated the “master race” and discredited Nazi theories about the superiority of the Aryan race; he won four Olympic gold medals: in the 100 and 200 meters run, 4 × 100 meters relay (in which Ralph Metcalfe, Foy Draper, and Frank Wykoff also competed), and long jump¹¹. The most unexpected loss was the one of Luz Long, an athlete who competed in the latter discipline and was the personification of an ideal representative of the Aryan race, who took only second place and won the silver Olympic medal¹². Due to this, the Reich Chancellery issued a statement justifying Hitler’s absence from some of the final competitions and declared that in the future only German Olympic medalists would be presented to the Führer¹³. Indeed, the Germans were trained to win for the regime’s glory, and not to glorify the concept of the Olympic Games beyond all borders.

Just like the role of women – as exemplified in this article in the story of Carina Vogt – also the role of athletes with a skin color different than white is regularly strengthened even in the 21st century, since in this case various paradoxes occurred as well. One of them was the participation of a black cross-country skier, Mathilda Amivi Petitjean from Togo, who at the XXII Olympic Winter Games in Sochi in 2014 was the first female representative in the history of West Africa (and also the flag-bearer). She proved that black female competitors can represent their countries in winter disciplines that seem unusual for athletes from the African continent because of geographical conditions and climate. Although she finished in 68th place in the 10 km classical race, she became – due to her commitment and self-confidence – an inspiration and a role model for many other female representatives of Africa¹⁴.

The rainbow color of the Olympic Games

The LGBT community was another group demanding equal rights at the Olympic Games. Although homosexuals and bisexuals could, in principle, take part in the Olympic Games from the very beginning (and they certainly did, but in a covert manner), the problem arose, for example, in the case of intersex or transsexual people, whose gender identity was inconsistent with their assigned sex. It is difficult to unequivocally point to specific cases of athletes representing these groups before World

War II, however, in this context, competitors such as Dora Ratjen and Stanisława Walasiewicz are worth mentioning.

The first of them turned out to be a man who, before the outbreak of World War II, competed in numerous athletics events and claimed to be a woman. Although he was a favorite to win the gold Olympic medal in women's category during the XI Olympiad in 1936 in Berlin, he finished the high jump in fourth place. Two years later, at the European Athletics Championships in Vienna, he broke the women's world record in high jump (with a score of 1.70 m) and won the first place. After the event, on the way back to Germany, unshaven and drunk Ratjen provoked a Gestapo officer and was arrested. It turned out that he had male genitalia, although some researchers define him as intersex¹⁵. In 1939, at a secret trial, he was officially recognized as a man, and his record, due to an official violation of amateur rules, was erased by the German Athletics Association and he was stripped of his champion title. Almost twenty years later, the athlete claimed that behind his "sex fraud" was the Nazi organization Bund Deutscher Mädel, whose sole aim was to increase medal opportunities for the Third Reich during the Games¹⁶.

The other was one of the most famous Polish female athletes of the interwar period, who – as it turned out later – had intersex features, because she had not fully developed both female and male sex organs, so she – with sexual characteristics intermediate between a man and woman – did not fit the typical definitions for male or female bodies. It is highly probable that she hid her intersexuality throughout her entire sports career as she won all medals in women's sports. Thanks to her, Poland could enjoy a gold medal at the 1932 Summer Olympics in Los Angeles and a silver medal at the XI Olympiad in Berlin four years later. The truth about her "otherness" was revealed during an autopsy after her death in 1980, when she was shot by an attacker during a shop robbery in Cleveland, OH, USA, where she lived. Genetic studies showed that she had a Y chromosome and both male and female genitalia, therefore was an intersex person. Despite subsequent discussions about whether she should be stripped of medals and records, the IOC and the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) have not made any binding decisions¹⁷.

Chromosome testing as a reliable sex verification technique was introduced in 1966 during the 8th European Athletics Championships. The first sportsperson who was

found to have anomalies related to sex verification was another Polish runner – Ewa Kłobukowska, gold and bronze Olympic medalist at the Games of the XVIII Olympiad in 1964 in Tokyo. She suddenly and unexpectedly disappeared from the running track in 1967, ending her sports career at the age of 21. As it turned out later, the sports federations of the USSR and the German Democratic Republic reported her to the IAAF, raising doubts about the athlete's sex. It was revealed – a case similar to that of Walasiewicz – that some of Kłobukowska's cells contained Y (male) chromosome. As a result, because of the lack of Poland's reaction to such accusations, the sprinter's results and achievements were erased¹⁸. It was not until the 1990s that it was bindingly decided that chromosome testing was not a reliable sex verification technique. Both the IAAF and Polish sports activists accepted this resolution, but without referring to the past, and recognized the case of the Polish athlete as closed.

Given all of the above, however, it should be noted that regardless of the decisions made by the IOC, the Federation of Gay Games has been organizing the Gay Games (founded as the Gay Olympics) since 1982 (the original name of the competition was changed due to legal disputes with the United States Olympic Committee settled by American court). The idea was born in 1980 in San Francisco thanks to an American physician, decathlete, and participant in the 1968 Summer Olympics in Mexico, Tom Waddell, in order to strive for personal development and promote the spirit of integration and participation¹⁹. By 2018, ten editions of the games had already taken place, in which between ten and thirteen thousand contestants regularly compete. Another similar sporting event is the World Outgames, open to all who wish to participate, regardless of their sexual orientation. The Outgames are licensed by the Gay and Lesbian International Sport Association. By 2017, four editions of the event had already taken place, and the first of them, held in 2006 in Montreal, gathered over a dozen thousand athletes, making it the largest international sports event in Montreal since the Games of the XXI Olympiad in 1976²⁰.

A new opening and a breakthrough in Rio

During the XXI Olympic Winter Games in Vancouver in 2010, the first pavilions of LGBT community modeled on the existing national pavilions were opened on Bute Street, as well as in the center of the Olympic Village in Whistler. It was a way

to pay tribute to people belonging to sexual minorities and other people with non-normative sexuality. The initiative was immensely popular and was replicated at the Games of the XXX Olympiad in London in 2012, where the so-called London Pride House was opened. Discriminatory law against LGBT communities in Russia resulted in the resignation from continuing the concept of installing such a pavilion in Sochi during the 2014 Winter Olympics²¹.

The Games of the XXXI Olympiad in Rio de Janeiro in 2016 represented a multifaceted breakthrough for numerous social groups, which was perfectly reflected by the Olympic motto, which was *Un Mundo novo*, i.e. the New World. In 2015, the IOC presented new guidelines that liberalized previous bans on transgender athletes prior to gender confirmation surgeries. Because of this many such athletes could participate in the Olympics, which significantly increased their number during the Olympic Games in Rio. Interestingly, testosterone levels were to be thoroughly tested only in transwomen assigned male at birth and seeking feminizing surgery, but not among people undergoing transitions the other way. This decision was met with many criticisms, although it was considered better than the necessity of undergoing a full gender confirmation surgery, supplemented with a two-year hormone therapy, a resolution that applied since 2003. However, some controversy was raised by a participation of South African runner Caster Semenya, who identifies herself as a woman, although she is often referred to as a transgender and hyperandrogenic person due to excessive amounts of testosterone in her body²². The IAAF's abolition of the limit on naturally occurring testosterone in sportswomen's bodies enabled the athlete to win the Olympic gold medal in the 800-meter run²³. Right behind her was Francine Niyonsaba from Burundi, followed by Margaret Wambui from Kenya. The result of the race was widely commented in the press, media, and websites. Poland was one of the country's most vividly discussing this topic – its representative, Joanna Jóźwik, took fifth place and after the race stated bluntly

The three runners on the podium raise much controversy. I must admit that it is also a bit strange for me that the authorities do nothing about it. The fellow runners have very high levels of testosterone, similar to male, hence their appearance and results. Semenya is unbeatable this season and if the authorities of the International Association of Athletics Federations do not do anything about it, do not restore the permissible blood testosterone levels, she will still be unbeatable, and

continued: On my way to the stadium, Wambui walked ahead of me, she is three times bigger than me. How should I feel? She has a big calf, a big foot, she takes one step when I have to take three. I saw Melissa Bishop, who was fourth and was very disappointed with this race, she ran her personal record and was fourth, so it's a shame. I think she should be the gold medalist. I feel the silver medalist. I am also very glad to be the first European and the second white athlete. Runners who run 800 meters have a hard time, therefore being fifth in the final – it's everything I could have wished for. And the athletes on the podium are a bit different league. Especially Semenya²⁴.

These words were construed by some as a sign of intolerance and racism, while others agreed with the opinion of the Polish runner. Interestingly, the topic of Semenya was on everyone's lips also in the summer of 2019, when a Swiss court decided that, as a result of hormonal anomalies, the athlete would not be able to take part in the 2019 IAAF World Athletics Championships in Doha, where she was to defend her championship title in the 800-meter race²⁵.

The Games in Rio have certainly revolutionized the world of sport also in other areas. Intersex people identifying with the female sex were no longer called hermaphrodites. This approach was achieved thanks to Lea T, the first transgender model who took part in the opening ceremony, who led the Brazilian national team. Another sportsperson who made history was Chris Mosier, who began his career in triathlon as female. In 2010, he decided to undergo a gender confirmation surgery, in so becoming the first American transgender athlete. Although he did not take part in the Olympic Games in Rio, he appeared in an advertisement for the Nike brand that was launched and showed to the public during the 2016 Summer Olympics²⁶.

In addition, more women took part in the Rio 2016 Summer Olympics than ever before in the history of Olympic games. It marks a great improvement from the huge disparity between the sexes at the 1900 Summer Olympics in Paris, where women constituted only 2.2% of all competitors. At the 2016 Summer Olympics in Rio, 4700 out of 10444 contestants were female, i.e. they constituted about 45% of the total number of athletes²⁷. This is due, *inter alia*, to the fact that a record number of women's sports were added to the list of Olympic sports, including golf, one of the first disciplines in which women took part during the Games of the late nineteenth century.

Conclusions

One of the seven fundamental principles of Olympism set out in the Olympic Charter states that, “The practice of sport is a human right. Every individual must have the possibility of practicing sport, without discrimination of any kind and in the Olympic spirit, which requires mutual understanding with a spirit of friendship, solidarity and fair play (p. 13)”²⁸. This record is extremely important and universal. Nevertheless, the cross-section of events that took place during the various Olympic Games showed that we have often encountered a kind of imbalance in the application of the above rule. A number of social groups had to fight a battle to eventually get their right to participate in the Olympic Games. The problems of over 120 years of the Olympic movement existence have been revised on an ongoing basis and it now seems that the next Games should be free from controversy regarding any social exclusion. The example of the Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro showed that it was an exceptional and, in many aspects, record-breaking sports event. And although there were plenty of indications that they would no longer generate any misunderstandings, the issue of white and black female runners’ rivalry has revised this vision. Thus, it is difficult to anticipate what will happen during the upcoming Games of the XXXII Olympiad in Tokyo in 2020, because even the best preparation for the event can cause unexpected situations.

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