

Context

The North American Society for Sport History (NASSH) is a community of scholars engaged in research, writing, and the promotion of sport history. NASSH has a distinguished history of examining how sport affects individuals, teams, organizations, and communities. We celebrate and challenge our considerations of sport and society by recovering the stories of notable and hidden participants. We debate how sport has, and might, function for sporting institutions, the public, and ourselves.

As scholars, we observe the instrumentalization of sport as one step in a process that is intricately linked to a generalized attack on rights and civil liberties gained by various groups traditionally relegated to the margins. Transgender girls and women in sport are a small and incredibly vulnerable population with little to no political power. We are lending our voices to lift up theirs.

We cannot stand by as an academic society that has worked for decades to develop an inclusive historical record which illustrates, interrogates, and celebrates the myriad ways sport has expanded in scope, while government entities and sport governing bodies work to narrow the scope of sport, to target marginalized communities for exclusion from sporting culture, and to eradicate the experiences and accomplishments of marginalized communities from the historical record. We have seen examples of this harmful use of power in the past (and present) treatment and depiction of Indigenous athletes, women of color in sport, and Black athlete activists, to name but a few. These actions have repercussions extending beyond the mere removal of people from sport and physical activity cultural spaces. It also results in palpable harm to the mental and physical health of queer and transgender individuals.

We advocate for nuanced, evidence-based discussions of sex, gender, and sports participation that center the voices and experiences of queer and transgender athletes, and propose for membership consideration the following resolution:

NASSH Resolution in Support of Transgender Girls' and Women's Inclusion in Sport

WHEREAS, the purpose of the North American Society for Sport History is to promote, stimulate, and encourage the study, research and writing of the history of sport; and

WHEREAS, transphobia has been identified as a decades long, global issue that has proved dangerous and even fatal to innumerable transgender girls and women and robbed them of safety and dignity;

WHEREAS, transgender girls and women deserve our governments' and sport governing bodies' protection, not policing and surveillance; and

WHEREAS, there is a lack of scientific evidence that transgender girls and women represent a threat to anyone or to the integrity of sport; and

WHEREAS, sport has become a battleground, with misinformation and fear-mongering guiding public sentiment and sport policies; and

WHEREAS, the anti-trans movement in sport is being promoted under the lie that it is “pro-women”; and

WHEREAS, arbitrary and manufactured limits of natural variance in sport competitors of all sexes and genders have been enacted throughout history; and

WHEREAS, recent United States government executive orders and state laws concerning gender identification demonstrate an ominous trend towards eradicating transgender and non-binary identities well beyond sport; and

WHEREAS, opposition to transgender girls and women athletes is part of a larger hateful, pernicious movement against women, immigrants, and people of color, among others; and

WHEREAS, transgender girls and women - especially transgender girls and women of color – are an extremely isolated, small group excluded from political power facing even more isolation on the path to eradication; and

WHEREAS, government entities, sport governing bodies, and individual political stakeholders hide behind an empty rhetoric of protecting the sanctity of sport to exclude transgender girls and women from sport, thus scapegoating those individuals to avoid dealing with actual issues faced by all athletes including inequity, safety, chronic underfunding, athlete mental health, and other damaging practices; and

WHEREAS, there is abundant documentation of the benefits of sport participation for all, exclusionary practices deny these benefits to transgender girls and women; and

WHEREAS, bans on transgender girls and women in sport create harm for cisgender women who do not conform to the gender binary and/or white, Western normative ideals of femininity; and

WHEREAS, the [Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights](#), [Amnesty International](#), [Human Rights Watch](#), [Human Rights Campaign](#), [Athlete Ally](#), [GLAAD](#), [Sports & Rights Alliance](#), [North American Society for the Sociology of Sport](#), and numerous other NGOs and human rights organizations around the globe have called for all athletes to be able to participate in sports consistent with their self-determined gender identity, and have characterized bans against participation of transgender and intersex girls and women in sport as an infringement of human rights; and

WHEREAS, there is no evidence of actual harm posed by transgender athletes in sport, while plenty of evidence attests to the harm posed to transgender athletes by exclusionary practices; and

WHEREAS, as a community of scholars, NASSH believes it important to link the past to the present, to challenge the current war on history, to call out cultural and political strategies to silence queer/transgender communities and limit access to sport; be it

RESOLVED, that the North American Society for Sport History condemns prohibitions on the participation of transgender girls and women in sport; and be it

RESOLVED, that the North American Society for Sport History hereby supports the inclusion of transgender girls and women in sport and the protection of transgender, non-binary, and gender non-conforming girls and women in sport.

Supporting Evidence

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