

ISSA Proceedings 2002 - Whitey's Olympics: The Discourse Of Discrimination In International Sport



Sports and politics are popularly held as discrete, though sometimes overlapping, domains (Edwards, 1973; Hartmann, 1996; Hoberman, 1997). In contrast to the popularly held notion that sport is not, and should not be, political, Burstyn (1999) argues that sport is in fact central in dominant political and social systems. She adopts the term “sport nexus” as a cipher for the “multibranching transnational economy” surrounding Jhally’s (1984) “sport-media complex,” which articulates sport with “the mass media, corporate sponsors, governments, medicine, and biotechnology” (Burstyn, 1999, p. 17). In this paper, I further develop the claim that sport is, indeed, a political spectacle by examining the performative dimensions of two major grassroots Olympic boycott movements begun in the United States. The purpose of my investigation is to illustrate the ways in which grassroots U.S. Olympic boycott rhetoric advances a complicity theory of discrimination that, in conjunction with theories of social justice, has the potential to inform broader human rights campaigns.

Originally proposed as peaceful competition among individuals from many nations, the Olympics have evolved into nationalist spectacles (Guttman, 1992; Hulme, 1990). Grassroots U.S. American boycott movements in Olympic history, such as the Jewish boycott of the 1936 Berlin Games and the Black boycott of the 1968 Mexico City Games, offer critiques of Olympism, nationalism, and racial essentialism that contribute to a complicity theory of discrimination. I analyze the discursive strategies at work in the two boycott movements from a rhetorical perspective informed by McGary’s (1999) “theory of collective moral liability” (p. 87). I assert that the discursive strategies of the boycott movements are consistent with a social justice framework because they draw attention to social, political, and economic complicity in discrimination and provide a forum through which people can address their implication in, and moral liability for,

discriminatory practices and policies.

In the past decade, communication scholars have shown increasing interest in social justice research. Much of this recent work argues that social justice is a marginalized concern in the discipline and focuses on applied case studies and the difference researchers can make in the lives of others (e.g., Frey, 1998; Frey, Pearce, Pollock, Artz & Murphy, 1996; Pearce, 1998; Pollock, Artz, Frey, Pearce & Murphy, 1996). Wood (1996), however, interprets social justice broadly and argues that publications across the field demonstrate a commitment to the dismantling of social injustice. This study contributes to the development of social justice research within the field of rhetorical and media studies, and illustrates the ways in which discourse analysis can contribute to the development of material and discursive responses to social injustice.

The approach to social justice taken here is drawn from McGary's (1999) explication of a theory of collective moral liability. His conditional approach to moral liability is premised on the assumption that "the notion of community is crucial" insofar as individuals come together as free moral agents in order "to carry on a common struggle for existence" (p. 87). As free agents, the individual members of a collectivity are morally liable for a faulty practice if they know about the practice (or should know about it) and they identify with, or fail to dissociate from, the practice. The second condition is elaborated so as to encompass three distinct possibilities for liability. The first of these three possibilities deals with institutional, material, discursive, or psychological support "for the group that engages in faulty practices" (p. 89) such that the group is able to remain powerful and continue its unjust practices. The second disjunction of this condition "requires disassociation where appropriate" (p. 89). Disassociation requires public denouncement of the practice, at the very least, and direct action as well as refusal to accept enrichment that results from the faulty practice, at best. The third disjunction of identification/disassociation accounts for situations in which a moral agent "collaborates with a tyrannical power in order not to blow his [sic] cover as an agent set on destroying it" (p. 90); thus, a person who does not disassociate from a faulty practice because their solidarity is part of a reasonable strategy to prevent or decrease harm should not be held morally liable. McGary's two major conditions under which a moral agent can be held morally liable for a faulty practice, when satisfied, constitute "a moral basis for liability" (p. 88) that can be extended to discourse analyses of movement rhetoric

in order to demonstrate the ways in which consciousness raising, public denouncement and separation contribute to a complicity theory of discrimination.

McPhail (1991) defines complicity as a theory of negative difference linked to argumentative essentialism. He recommends a move “from argumentative essentialism to dialogic coherence as a rhetorical strategy for transcending the politics of complicity” (McPhail, 2002, p. 130). This study pauses in the space between complicity and coherence to consider the ways in which moral agents (in this case, proponents of grassroots Olympic boycott movements) discursively construct a complicity theory of discrimination in which individuals who fail to meet the conditions for social justice advanced by McGary (1999) are publicly acknowledged as accomplices in a wrongdoing.

Moreover, the rhetorical strategies evidenced in grassroots Olympic boycott movements illustrate the movement toward a dialogic conception of rhetoric as coherence, in which “diverse conceptions of reality” are synthesized and assumptions of essential difference are challenged (McPhail, 1996). In the next section, I provide an historical overview of the Modern Olympic Movement, focusing on the ways in which class, race, and gender essentialism contribute to International Olympic Committee (IOC) and American Olympic Committee (AOC) complicity in the maintenance of social injustice. I then consider the discursive strategies employed in the 1936 and 1968 Olympic boycott movements, respectively, in terms of their potential to inform a rhetorical perspective on social justice, before concluding with recommendations for future Olympic boycott movements.

In the late nineteenth century, athletic and artistic festivals in England inspired an aristocratic young Frenchman named Pierre de Coubertin to propose a revival of the ancient Greek Olympic Games. Coubertin was interested in the “vital connection between sports and life’s more serious contests” (Guttmann, 1992, p. 13). A gifted propagandist, Coubertin sold his idea to an unenthusiastic and often discouraging audience composed largely of statesmen and leaders of national athletic organizations. Writing his *Memoires Olympiques*, Coubertin poetically remarks, “If the Olympic Games have been reborn it was perhaps during those instants when every heart beat as one” (in Guttmann, 1992, p. 14). Despite Coubertin’s unfailingly optimistic vision of a peaceful international festival, the Olympics were a controversial political spectacle from the beginning. An examination of the political dimensions of Olympic rhetoric and ideology yields

insight into the sports context into which the proponents of grassroots boycott movements insert their political statements.

An early Olympic ideal, one that persisted for almost a century, defined the eligible athlete in terms of amateurism. The amateur status of the athlete continued an elitist and exclusionary practice formalized by many athletic clubs in the nineteenth century. Amateurism was first defined by the athlete's vocation. Anyone who performed manual labor for pay was excluded from participation. Later, the rules evolved to address sport directly, forbidding participation by anyone who received any material benefit associated with athletics. Arguments in favor of amateurism regulations exhibited the racism, and especially the class discrimination, of the time. Poor Whites and most people of color were unable to gain membership to the elite clubs from which amateur Olympians were selected. Moreover, many early U.S. American Olympians were required to pay their own traveling expenses to the Games, thus further limiting the participation of all but the elite members of the leisure class. Amateurism regulations developed throughout the first decade of the twentieth century but were most rigidly enforced in later Olympic Games, such as the infamous withdrawal of Jim Thorpe's two gold medals in 1912.

After a successful start in Greece in 1896, the Olympic Movement practically fell to pieces as bitter rivals and ad hoc organizations competed for control of the event. A poorly organized and advertised Paris Olympics of 1900 was marred by accusations of cheating and insulting behavior on the part of the French. On a brighter note, the 1900 Games were the first in which women were invited as competitors. Eleven female athletes participated in the Olympic Games in France. American Margaret Abbot won a gold medal in golf. British tennis champion Charlotte Cooper won the singles match and a mixed doubles match with Reginald Dougherty. Both women's golf and tennis, however, were subsequently dropped from the Olympic program (tennis would be included again in 1908). Figure skating, widely considered a more feminine sport than golf or tennis, was included in 1908 and swimming was added in 1912, due to the efforts of the Federation Internationale de Natation Amateur (Guttman, 1992).

In 1904, the Olympic Games moved to St. Louis, Missouri, after having initially been planned for Chicago, Illinois. Few foreign nations traveled to the United States for the St. Louis Games. Missouri was commonly considered "a wilderness settlement menaced by Indians" (Guttman, 1992, p. 25) by many Europeans. All but 122 of the participating athletes were Americans. St. Louis organizers had

successfully bargained for the Olympic Games as a complement to their belated world's fair celebration of the centennial of the Louisiana Purchase. The Olympic Games gradually gained recognition as a popular family outing and were incorporated into larger festivals.

These early Olympics provide interesting insight into popular culture at the turn of the century. Among the more notable incidents at the 1904 St. Louis Games was a festival called "Anthropological Days." The American Olympic organizers set aside August 12 and 13 for Anthropological Days, during which a number of "savages" from Asia, Africa, and the Americas were rounded up from sideshows at the fair and asked to demonstrate their native games and to compete among themselves in modern sports. The poor performances of the untrained Ingorots, Kaffirs, and Pagagonians were naively taken as evidence in support of the racist theories of the day (Guttman, 1992, pp. 25-26). Although the spectacle was planned in conjunction with the World's Fair and not the Olympic Games, the parody of Olympic track and field events suggests a deeper connection between the two events. The colonial gaze upon the native competitors in the "Anthropological" exhibition can be articulated to the nationalist impulse to contain and control the body of the athlete. Baron de Coubertin is said to have remarked "prophetically," that "such charades would lose their appeal when black men, red men and yellow men learned to run, jump and throw as well as, or better than, white men" (Arnold, 1983).

After two decades of reasonably successful Olympic Games, the IOC was ill prepared for the boycott debate that would challenge Germany's bid for the 1936 Games. The Olympic Games had been awarded to Berlin in the spring of 1931, when Heinrich Brüning was Germany's chancellor, to symbolize "the full reintegration of Germany within the world of international sports" (Guttman, 1992, p. 53) after the IOC's exclusion of Axis powers from the Antwerp Games. In the United States, the boycott debate began in 1933 as concern about the treatment of U.S. American Jews in Germany and the participation of German Jewish athletes (Gottlieb, 1972). Accompanying a more general movement to boycott Nazi goods and services in protest of the anti-Semitic policies and program of the National Socialist Party, the Olympic boycott movement was premised on the knowledge that German Jewish athletes were being barred from sports organizations and facilities. Thus, Germany could not hold to the Olympic ideal that demanded, in Avery Brundage's oft-quoted words, "no restriction of

competition because of class, color, or creed” (Bachrach, 2000).

The boycott movement expressed more than just U.S. American concern about the ethics of international sport; it provided a forum in which U.S. Americans could debate the developments in German social and political formations. Lipstadt (1986) argues that the “battle over the Games was, at least in part, a microcosm of the fight between interventionists and isolationists over how America should react, if at all, to developments in the Reich” (p. 64). This paper is premised on the belief that the Olympic Games, as a popular athletic festival and contemporary mass-media phenomenon, is an appropriate venue for interventionist forms of social protest in the form of grassroots boycott movements precisely for the reasons outlined in McGary’s (1999) theory of collective moral liability. The rhetorical strategies adopted by proponents of the 1936 boycott can illuminate some of the possibilities for action based on collective moral liability by demonstrating a discourse in which all members of society are seen as complicit in discrimination until and unless they engage in overt disassociation from, or the radical undermining of, oppressive social, political, and economic practices.

Among the earliest and most forceful proponents of a boycott of the Nazi Games were the American Jewish Congress (AJC), the Anti-Nazi League (ANL), the Jewish Labor Committee (JLC) the Jewish Welfare Board, the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), Brooklyn Congressional Representative Emanuel Celler, and prominent Jewish athletes and sports personalities such as Nat Holman (Levine, 1992). Before taking an official stance against the 1936 Olympics, the American Jewish Congress “conducted a series of mass protest meetings and public marches in an effort to rally America against the Hitler regime” (Gottlieb, 1972, p. 184). Rabbi Stephen Wise and Bernard Deutsch of the AJC also contacted the American representatives to the IOC to request American opposition to the Olympics in Nazi Germany. These initial public and personal actions meet McGary’s (1999) criteria for exemption from collective moral liability because they demonstrate both the knowledge of unequal opportunity for Jewish athletes and disassociation from Nazi persecution. Moreover, the public marches and meetings exerted social pressure by contributing to public knowledge about the Third Reich’s “stated objective of using the games as a means of showcasing Nazi accomplishment and power” (Levine, 1992, p. 220). The AJC and ADL initially found support from AOC representative Charles Sherrill, who vowed to support the use of American

pressure to change German policy against Jews and, at the very least, Jewish athletes. Eventually, however, Sherrill, who in 1935 openly espoused pro-fascist views, joined AOC president Avery Brundage in insinuating that the boycott movement was a communist conspiracy that would actually create anti-Semitic backlash against American Jews in the United States. Furthermore, both Sherrill and Brundage held fast to the conviction that the AOC should “not interfere in Germany’s internal political, religious, or racial affairs,” lest other nations be tacitly encouraged to intervene in America’s racial and political conflicts (Lipstadt, 1986).

The boycott debate also pitted Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) president Jeremiah Mahoney against Brundage who, incidentally, served as AAU president for every year between 1928 and 1935 except 1933. Brundage, who became IOC president in 1952 and later became famous for insisting “The Games must go on” after Palestinian terrorists threatened the 1972 Olympic Games in Munich, held tremendous influence with both the AAU and AOC. After German IOC member Karl Ritter von Halt led Brundage on a “carefully controlled” tour of German sports facilities in the fall of 1934, the AOC president “stated publicly that Jewish athletes were being treated fairly and that the Games should go on as planned” (Bachrach, 2000, pp. 47-48). Incidentally, Halt competed in the 1912 Olympics and served in both World Wars. During World War II, Halt was a major general of the SA storm troopers. After the war, Avery Brundage assisted Halt in securing a leadership position with the IOC, despite the general’s “close ties to the Nazi regime” (Bachrach, 2000, p. 47).

The day after Brundage arrived in the United States from his visit to Germany, the American Olympic Association (AOA) voted unanimously to attend the 1936 Olympic Games. Two days after Brundage’s arrival, the *New York Times* reported the Anti-Defamation League’s call for an Olympic boycott (Guttman, 1992, p. 58). Throughout the fall of 1934 and spring of 1935, numerous other organizations joined the boycott movement, voicing their opposition to the Nazi Olympics in the pages of the *New York Times*. In August of 1935, Congressional Representative Celler “introduced a house resolution prohibiting the use of public or semi-public funds to pay for the Olympic expenses incurred by participating athletes” (Gottlieb, 1972, p. 201) but the measure failed.

In September of 1935, almost exactly a year after Brundage’s visit to Berlin, the Nuremberg Laws were announced. The overwhelming evidence of Jewish

persecution and inequality reinvigorated opposition to American participation in the Olympic Games. Mahoney said that Nazi ideology – based on racial inequality – was the direct opposite of the Olympic code, which was based on the equality of all races and of all faiths in the area of sports. He warned, “I believe that for America to participate in the Olympics in Germany means giving American moral and financial support to the Nazi regime, which is opposed to all that Americans hold dearest.” (Bachrach, 2000, p. 49)

Mahoney was not alone in his continuing opposition to the Nazi Games. A localized but highly publicized boycott movement united Jewish organizations, liberal Catholic politicians, some Catholic and Protestant groups, trade unionists, college presidents, and many former Olympians in their opposition to the Nazi Olympics. American IOC member Ernest Lee Jahncke publicly decried the Berlin Games and was expelled from the IOC in 1936 for his “outspoken stance” (Bachrach, 2000, p. 52). In an open letter to IOC president Henri Baillet-Latour published in the *New York Times*, Jahncke (1935) argues:

However much you would like us to believe that the Germans have kept their pledges, the fact is that the Nazi sports authorities have dissolved Catholic sports clubs and have denied Germany’s Jewish athletes adequate opportunity to condition themselves for competition in the Olympic elimination contests, and this, of course, is equivalent to excluding them as a group from the German team.

However much you would like us to believe the contrary, the fact is that Jewish athletes, as a group, have been denied adequate opportunity for training and competition. . . . The Associated Press, an impartial news service, has reported: “In only a few German cities may Jews use public athletic fields. To build and maintain their own grounds is almost impossible because of the cost. Consequently many Jewish sportsmen have been forced to play in country fields and pastures where no facilities are available for many contests such as track events. Swimming also is impossible because nearly every municipality has adopted regulations banning the use of pools and beaches by Jews.” (“Jahncke,” 1935, p. 2)

Despite rational and impassioned pleas for American opposition to the Games, Avery Brundage succeeded in sending an American team to the Berlin Games and, in 1936, he was awarded Jahncke’s position on the International Olympic Committee. In part because of his support for the Berlin Games, Brundage is often characterized as an anti-Semite (Bachrach, 2000; Guttman, 1984;

Hoberman, 1986). Indeed, his lack of social and political savvy had an unmistakably racist character. In 1955, as IOC president, Avery Brundage wavered in his support of the Israeli National Olympic Committee's inclusion in Regional Games in Barcelona. The threat of Arab boycott of the IOC-sponsored Regional Games caused Spain to withdraw Israel's invitation. Appealing to the IOC and sympathetic IOC Chancellor Otto Mayer, the Israeli National Olympic Committee was disappointed by Brundage's claim that Regional Games organizers had the right to include or exclude any country and that the "IOC should not become involved in the administration of events other than the Olympic Games" (quoted in Guttman, 1992, p. 79). Shortly after, however, Brundage retracted this position and claimed that Spain had violated the terms of IOC sponsorship. His logic, as Guttman (1992) notes, betrays his prejudice:

"As a matter of principle," he (Brundage) wrote, 'we had to oppose them in 1936 and we may have to support them in 1955.' That Brundage was unable to distinguish between American Jews in 1936 and Israelis in 1955 was, unfortunately, typical" (p. 79).

Black athletes and the Black press constituted yet another voice in the boycott debate. The irony of a boycott of the anti-Semitic Nazi Olympics was exploited by Black journalists who criticized supporters of the boycott for ignoring problems of discrimination in America. Few sporting arenas and events were desegregated in the United States. The New York Athletic Club sponsored prestigious track and field competitions that were often won by Blacks and Jews who were otherwise denied entry and membership in the Club. The Olympic Games offered Black athletes a chance at international fame as well as an opportunity to prove themselves in a society that had prejudged them inferior. Nineteen Black athletes competed for the United States in 1936, and all were burdened with the responsibility of not only performing their best but also proving wrong the theory of "Aryan supremacy" advanced by Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party. The tendency to view individual Black athletes as representative of a Black community, or a Black race, continues to the present day. Most notably, however, is the way in which Jesse Owens has been rhetorically and historically constructed as the man who single-handedly discredited Hitler's racist theories by running and jumping well.

Fourteen gold, silver, and bronze medals in individual and team events were won by African Americans at the 1936 Berlin Games, among them Ralph Metcalfe,

Cornelius Johnson, David Albritton, Mack Robinson, John Woodruff, Archie Williams, James LuValle, Fritz Pollard, Jack Wilson, and the infamous Jesse Owens who won an unprecedented four gold medals and was dubbed, for a time, the “fastest human being” (Bachrach, 2000, p. 92). Despite their Olympic achievements, it would be more than a decade before these men, or any other Black athletes, could play in the professional baseball, football, basketball, and golf associations of the United States. Yet for decades following the Nazi Olympics, the plight of African Americans would be overshadowed in the Olympic venue by the discrimination against Blacks in South Africa and political upheaval in Eastern Europe and Asia.

Much to the chagrin of Avery Brundage, the 1940 and 1944 Olympic Games were cancelled because of World War II. After a lackluster 1948 Olympics in London, in which European athletes from war-torn countries struggled to compete with others who had not experienced the devastation of war, Brundage took charge of the Olympic Movement. In 1952, Brundage was elected president of the IOC, a position he would hold for twenty years (Guttman, 1992). During the Cold War years, the Olympic Games took on a new nationalistic air, particularly for the Americans and Russians. As Guttman (1992) explains,

In the rhetoric of the Olympic Charter, the games are contests among individuals, not among nations, but there is an apparently ineradicable tendency in all of us to transform the athletes into representatives of the Self with whom we can identify as they struggle against representatives of the Other . . . Theoretically, a wrestling match between two Americans or between two Russians should be as compelling for the sports fan as one in which the American grapples with the Russian, but it is not. The Olympics took on a new political dimension in 1952, one that was destined to grow increasingly important in the decades to follow. (Guttman, 1992, p. 97)

Political conflicts also threatened the 1956 Olympic Games in Melbourne, Australia. The Suez War, begun by Egypt’s seizure of the Suez Canal and Russia’s invasion of Hungary, led to Avery Brundage’s idealistic (and erroneous) assertion that, in ancient times, “all warfare stopped during the period of the Games” (Guttman, 1992, p. 99). In the end, Egypt, Lebanon, Iraq, Spain, Switzerland, and the Netherlands all boycotted the Melbourne Games. Thus, boycotts of the Olympic Games were nothing new, they had simply not been successfully waged in the United States. The African American boycott movement of 1968, like the Jewish boycott of 1936, was a grassroots movement that capitalized on the

visibility of the Olympic Games in order to call attention to social and political atrocities.

Beginning in 1960 when a reporter asked African American decathlete Rafer Johnson about the likelihood of an Olympic boycott in support of the struggle for civil rights in the American south, the world's international sports spectacle has been a tempting forum for Black social and political expression. As Hartmann (1997) points out, one of the factors "underlying the attractiveness of a boycott as an effective tool for forcing racial change was the importance of international, Olympic-style sport for American international relations concerns at the height of the Cold War" (p. 58). During the first half of the 1960s, several half-hearted Olympic boycott appeals were advanced. In 1963, comedian, civil rights activist, and former collegiate athlete Dick Gregory asked Black athletes to boycott an AAU track meet in Moscow. He argued that, without their contributions, the lackluster performance of the White athletes would "bring this thing into the open... push this thing out on an international level" (Gregory, 1964, p. 193). While the athletes were unenthusiastic, many began to examine the hypocrisy of competing in interracial meets abroad while being denied entrance into segregated sports facilities in America. In March of 1964, former Olympic gold medallist Mal Whitfield advocated a boycott of the Games in Japan unless "Negro Americans" were guaranteed equal rights and first class citizenship (Hartmann, 1997, p. 58). Despite these early calls for a boycott by African Americans, the racial apartheid policies of South Africa would provide the impetus for the IOC's official reconsideration of the role of racial and cultural politics in the Olympic forum.

The Rome Olympics in 1960 initially appeared a triumph in the wake of the upheaval of the 1940s and 1950s but the IOC was burdened with the political question of South Africa's participation. The South African National Olympic Committee (SANOC) was prohibited from sending a team to the 1964 Games in Tokyo as a result of its failure to demonstrate a change in official apartheid policy as it related to sports. Other African nations, such as Egypt and Ethiopia were admitted during the 1960s as South Africa was slowly forced out of Olympic participation. Despite unsatisfactory evidence of SANOC's compliance with IOC regulations, the committee voted early in 1968 to invite South Africa to the Summer Games in Mexico City. Immediately after the decision was announced, Algeria and Ethiopia threatened to boycott the Games. Within a few weeks, nations within the Organization of African Unity, the Caribbean, the Middle East

and Soviet Union all threatened to withdraw from the Games if South Africa's invitation was not withdrawn.

Black athletes in the United States also demanded the expulsion of South Africa from the IOC. In 1968, several collegiate athletes and their mentor, a San Jose State sociology instructor named Harry Edwards, organized a boycott movement. Their demands included the restoration of Muhammad Ali's title and right to box in this country, the removal of Avery Brundage from his position of leadership within the IOC, the appointment of Black coaches and Black USOC members, and the total desegregation of the New York Athletic Club (NYAC). Like African Americans throughout America, the Black student athletes and other members of the Olympic Project for Human Rights (OPHR) were disappointed by the lack of change accompanying social, economic, and institutional reforms. They viewed the plight of Black Americans as a cause worthy of international attention and had successfully used sport as political leverage in the past (Edwards, 1969).

In the fall of 1967, San Jose State University (then San Jose State College) was forced to cancel a football game against UTEP (then Texas Western) after protests by a recently formed campus organization called United Black Students for Action (UBSA) led to rumors of arson and boycott. Spearheaded by Harry Edwards and Ken Noel, UBSA sought the total desegregation of the San Jose State University campus and the surrounding student housing facilities. Their demands included public commitments from the San Jose State University Administration and campus organizations to enforce the desegregation of fraternities, sororities, housing, and all campus activities and groups. They also argued for minority recruitment, inclusion in student government and administrative decision making relevant to minorities, and reform of the Department of Intercollegiate Athletics (Edwards, 1969).

Particularly striking in the rhetoric of the UBSA was their demand for proof from campus organizations and university institutions that they had "ceased all racist discrimination at SJS" (Edwards, 1969, p. 45). Requiring proof that racial discrimination has ceased placed the UBSA in the politically convenient and powerful position of deciding what constituted evidence of egalitarianism. UBSA effectively shifted the burden of proof from the victimized to the victimizers. In the past, it would have been incumbent upon members of the UBSA to prove that campus organizations and housing facilities were, in fact, discriminating on the basis of race. By asserting an alternate logic, one that assumed the racism of such organizations and demanded proof of their commitment to equality, UBSA

subverted the structural and rhetorical practices of domination imposed by the university institution. A similar shift in logic can be seen in contemporary affirmative action discourses that assert an historically contingent, uneven playing field rather than the level field presumed by naïve theories of meritocracy.

Unfortunately, it is unlikely that UBSA's rhetorical ingenuity would have succeeded without their strategic use of popular and profitable sports as leverage. Working explicitly against the popular and racist White establishment view that Black athletes should be grateful for what sport has given them, young men such as Tommie Smith, Otis Burrell, Lew Alcindor, and Lee Evans assessed what they had given sport and found the returns lacking. These four, and numerous other Black athletes and activists, gathered at the Los Angeles Black Youth Conference to announce the organization of the Olympic Project for Human Rights.

On the 23rd of November, the OPHR officially announced the unanimous endorsement of, and participation in, a boycott of the 1968 Olympic Games by "Black men and women athletes" (Edwards, 1969, p. 55). At a press conference in December of 1967, Edwards presented the OPHR's official position as a list of demands:

1. Restoration of Muhammed Ali's title and right to box in this country.
2. Removal of the anti-semitic and anti-Black personality Avery Brundage from his post as Chairman of the International Olympic Committee.
3. Curtailment of participation of all-White teams and individuals from the Union of South Africa and Southern Rhodesia in all United States and Olympic athletic events.
4. The addition of at least two Black coaches to the men's track and field coaching staff appointed to coach the 1968 United States Olympic team. (Stanley V. Wright is a member of the coaching team but he is a devout Negro [sic] and therefore is unacceptable.)
5. The appointment of at least two Black people to policy making positions on the United States Olympic Committee.
6. The complete desegregation of the bigot dominated and racist New York Athletic Club. (Edwards, 1969, pp. 58-59)

Negative publicity denouncing the OPHR and its aims contributed to frequent harassment of those involved in the boycott and the Youth Conference meeting

(Carlos, 2000; Edwards, 1969). Like the radical Black activists that inspired them, however, the Black athletes and OPHR organizers were committed to social and material equality by *any means necessary*. The successful boycott of a New York Athletic Club (NYAC) indoor track meet at Madison Square Garden in early part of 1968 fueled both the OPHR and media interest in the Olympic boycott movement (Edwards, 1969). In order to use the mass media to their advantage, Harry Edwards and other members of the OPHR adopted much of the visual display that had proven effective for community and campus radicals. Reflecting on the boycott movement in his autobiography, Edwards (1980) admits, "It was [Louis] Lomax's flair for the dramatic and his abiding appreciation for the character and power of the electronic media that led him to advise me to discard my suit and tie" (p. 168). In their stead, he donned a black beret, dark sunglasses, a scarf, and black leather jacket. Drawing upon the militant style of the Black Panthers, Edwards captured the media's attention long enough to convince many Americans that the boycott was a reality, despite a lack of consensus among Black athletes. In much the same way, the OPHR became popularly affiliated with radical Black identity. As a result, African American Olympians, regardless of their involvement with the OPHR, were positioned as the arbiters of Black identity and U.S. American nationalism. Like the boycott of the 1936 Berlin Games, the Black boycott movement raised social consciousness about the plight of minorities, particularly those of African descent, in the United States and abroad. The OPHR urged collective moral liability for discrimination against African Americans in the United States, denying the efficacy of the model of individual achievement underlying athletic, and to a lesser extent Olympic, ideology.

Also like the Berlin boycott, the Black boycott of 1968 failed, but the aims of the OPHR were expressed in a silent demonstration by African American 200-meter medallists Tommie Smith and John Carlos. Standing on the medals platform, Smith and Carlos raised black-gloved fists during the playing of the national anthem in what was popularly described in the U.S. American press as a "black power salute." The raised fist demonstration by Smith and Carlos exemplifies the radical possibilities of resistance within a social justice framework premised on McGary's (1999) theory of collective moral liability. By working within the oppressive system in order to radically challenge its assumptions, the two athletes articulated a strategy for the articulation of sport and social justice.

Brosio (2001) argues that the answers to the problems posed by social justice research reside in grassroots community organizing revitalized by identity

politics. I argue that the 1936 and 1968 Olympic boycott movements provide a basis for considering what shape those forms of organizing may take. Specifically, I consider the ways in which a complicity theory of discrimination, informed by the theory of collective moral liability, positions us all as decision-makers about our collective social and political practices. Choosing not to act in response to reasonable knowledge about relations of domination and oppression is not an option, within this model, because it simply indicates tacit approval and assent for the practice of domination. Thus, we must look to the past, and to popular spheres such as the Olympic Games, in order to find strategies for disassociating from, and undermining, oppressive ideological and political structures.

In closing, I agree with McPhail (2002) that the problem of this century may, indeed, be “the conscience line” and that a reconsideration of “responsibility” and “character” must accompany any critical engagement of contemporary social and political formations (p. 199). I urge a consideration of complicity and implicature that takes into account McGary’s (1999) call for collective moral liability and coalitional politics. The two Olympic boycott movements discussed here provide the groundwork for the development of strategies of disassociation, for the refusal of personal enrichment as a result of a morally faulty practice, and for covert collaboration “with a tyrannical power” (p. 90) for the purposes of dismantling it. Moreover, they highlight the important role that popular sport, and the Olympic Games in particular, can play in appeals for social justice. Future critics and activists should consider the ways such strategies can be used to call attention to social injustice, such as the alleged human rights abuses, censorship, and denial of freedom of religion and assembly that marred the 2008 Chinese Olympic bid (Abrahamson, 2001).

REFERENCES

- Abrahamson, A. (2001, July 14). The 2008 Summer Games: For first time, China lands the Olympics. *Los Angeles Times*, A1.
- Bachrach, S. D. (2000). *The Nazi Olympics: Berlin 1936*. Boston: Little, Brown & Company.
- Brosio, R. A. (2001). Issues and arguments concerning class, gender, race, and other “identities.” *Educational Studies*, 31, 393-406.
- Burstyn, V. (1999). *The rites of men: Manhood, politics, and the culture of sport*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Carlos, J. (2000). *Why? The biography of John Carlos*. Los Angeles: Milligan Books.

- Edwards, H. (1969). *The revolt of the black athlete*. NY: The Free Press.
- Edwards, H. (1970). *Black students*. NY: The Free Press.
- Edwards, H. (1973). *Sociology of sport*. Homewood, IL: Dorsey Press.
- Edwards, H. (1980). *The struggle that must be: An autobiography*. NY: MacMillan.
- Farrell, T. B. (1989). Media rhetoric as social drama: The winter Olympics of 1984. *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, 6, 158-182.
- Frey, L. R. (1998). Communication and social justice research: Truth, justice, and the applied communication way. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 26, 155-164.
- Frey, L. R., Pearce, W. B., Pollock, M. A., Artz, L., & Murphy, B. A. O. (1996). Looking for justice in all the wrong places: On a communication approach to social justice. *Communication Studies*, 47, 110-127.
- Gottlieb, M. (1972). The American controversy over the Olympic Games. *American Jewish Historical Quarterly*, 61, 181-213.
- Gregory, D. with Lipsyte, R. (1964). *Nigger: An autobiography*. New York: Washington Square.
- Guttmann, A. (1992). *The Olympics: A history of the modern Games*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.
- Hartmann, D. (1996). The politics of race and sport: Resistance and domination in the 1968 African American Olympic protest movement. *Ethnic and racial studies*, 19, 548-566.
- Hoberman, J. (1997). *Darwin's athlete: How sport has damaged Black America and preserved the myth of race*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Hulme, D. L. (1990). *The political Olympics: Moscow, Afghanistan, and the 1980 U.S. Boycott*. New York: Praeger.
- Jahncke asks for ban on Olympic Games. (1935, November 27). *The New York Times*, 2.
- Jhally, S. (1984). The spectacle of accumulation: Material and cultural factors in the evolution of the sports/media complex. *The Insurgent Sociologist*, 3, 41-57.
- Levine, P. (1992). *Ellis Island to Ebbets Field: Sport and the American Jewish experience*. New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lipstadt, D. E. (1986). *Beyond belief: The American press and the coming of the Holocaust 1933-1945*. New York: The Free Press.
- McGary, H. (1999). *Race and social justice*. Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- McPhail, M. L. (1991). Complicity: The theory of negative difference. *The Howard Journal of Communication*, 3, 1-13.
- McPhail, M. L. (1996). *Zen in the art of rhetoric: An inquiry into coherence*. New

York: State University of New York Press.

McPhail, M. L. (2002). *The rhetoric of racism revisited: Reparations or separation?* Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.

Pearce, W. B. (1998). On putting social justice in the discipline of communication and putting enriched concepts of communication in social justice research and practice. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 26, 272-278.

Pollock, M. A., Artz, L., Frey, L. R., Pearce, W. B., & Murphy, B. A. O. (1996). Navigating between scylla and charybdis: Continuing the dialogue on communication and social justice. *Communication Studies*, 47, 142-151.

Wood, J. T. (1996). Social justice research: Alive and well in the field of communication. *Communication Studies*, 47, 128-134.