

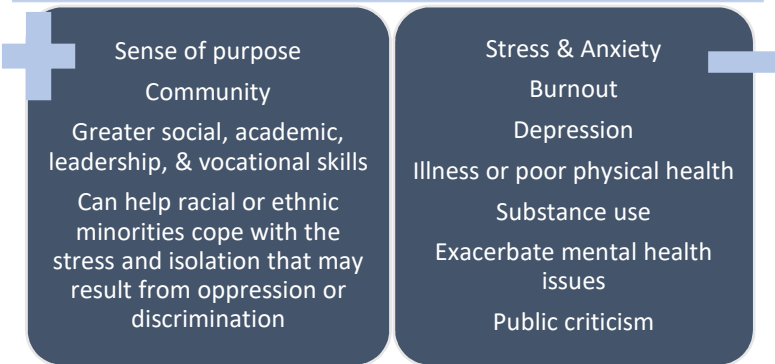


Athlete Activism: Social Change Through Sport

Athlete activism occurs when athletes use their platform (visibility, inherent social power, and wealth) to speak out or build awareness about a cause or issue. Current trends in athlete activism include focus on racism, gender discrimination, the rights of disabled individuals, and inequalities related to LGBTQ rights (Agyemang, Singer, DeLorme, 2010; Kauffman & Wolff, 2010; Smith, Bundon, & Best, 2016). Athletes demonstrate before games, make statements during press conferences, start foundations, and raise awareness.

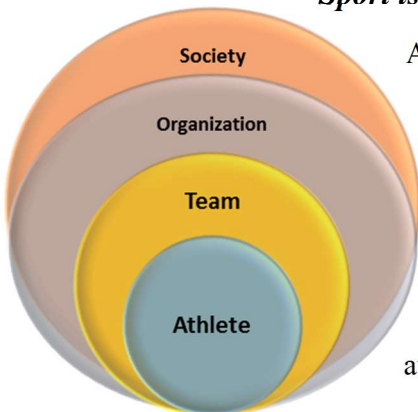
Activism can have positive impacts on an athlete's life, such as providing a greater sense of purpose and community (Hope et al., 2017). Activists are susceptible to burnout because they invest time and emotion into activism (Goodwin & Pfaff, 2001). Engaging in activism may have negative consequences, such as criticism and loss of playing time, endorsements, or contracts (Kaufman, 2008).

Potential Positive and Negative Impact of Athlete Activism



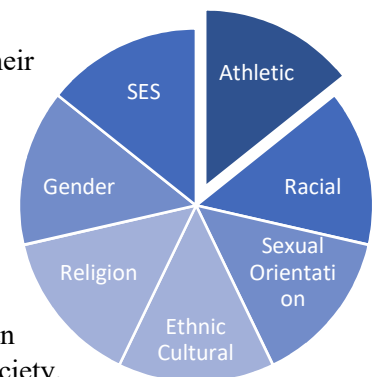
- Jack Johnson, Paul Robeson and others overcome racism to become elite athletes (early 1900's)
- After women's track and field events were dropped from mainstream Olympics in the 1920's, Women's Olympic movement was created as an alternative
- Jesse Owens stands up to Hitler's white supremacy by winning multiple gold medals (1936 Olympics)
- John Carlos and Tommie Smith raise gloved fists during medal ceremony to bring attention to racism in the US (1968 Olympics)
- Muhammed Ali uses platform to raise awareness surrounding racism, anti-war sentiments, etc.
- Venus Williams (and others) lobby for equal prize money between genders (2000's)
- NCAA refuses to hold championships in North Carolina due to transphobic legislation (2016)
- Kaepernick is one of many athletes to take a knee during the national anthem to highlight racism in the US (current)

"Sport is a microcosm of society" – Billie Jean King



Athletes navigate multiple environments within and outside of their sporting domains. When supporting athletes' desire to engage in activism, it's important to see them as people first.

Seeing athletic-identity as the only role for an athlete to develop can have negative implications for sport-performance and personal development. Supporting development of many different roles and participation in the community around those roles, can positively influence how an athlete navigates performance, relationships, organizations, & society.



Something Greater Than Self: Examples of Activism

Billie Jean King Former top tennis player	Russell Wilson Quarterback for the Seahawks	Roberto Clemente Former pro baseball player
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 1973, created the Women’s Sports Foundation to ensure that all females have the opportunity to play sports. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2014, created a social media campaign titled “Pass the Peace” in an effort to assist victims of domestic violence. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 1973, died tragically when his plane crashed carrying relief supplies to Managua, where there had been an earthquake.

How can I Support and Facilitate Athlete Activism?



Where can I learn more about Athlete Activism?

Agyemang, K. J., Singer, J. N., & DeLorme, J. (2010). An exploratory study of Black male college athletes’ perceptions on race and athlete activism. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 45, 419–435.

Chen, C. W., & Gorski, P. C. (2015). Burnout in social justice and human rights activists: Symptoms, causes and implications. *Journal of Human Rights Practice*, 7(3), 366-390.

Kaufman, P., & Wolff, E. A. (2010). Playing and protesting: Sport as a vehicle for social change. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, 34(2), 154-175.

Sanderson, J., Frederick, E., & Stocz, M. (2016). When athlete activism clashes with group values: Social identity threat management. *Social Media, Mass Communication and Society*, 19(3), 301-322.

Smith, B., Bundon, A., & Best, M. (2016). Disability sport and activist identities: A qualitative study of narratives of activism among elite athletes with impairment. *Psychology of sport and exercise*, 26, 139-148.

Warner, S., & Dixon, M. A. (2011). Enhancing the sport experience: Understanding sense of community from an athlete’s perspective. *Journal of Sport Management*, 25, 258-272.

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