

Opinion

The Olympic Games Between Patriarchy and Elitism

Ilka Oliva Corado

Thursday 18 August 2016, by [Ilka Oliva Corado](#)

The Olympic Games have been elitists since its inception. (Called Ancient Olympic Games from 776 BC, To 393 AD) They were also exclusive to men, something that has been changing as the years go by and more women enter fields that, 120 years ago (at the beginning of the Modern Olympic Games) the world had ever imagined. By breaking paradigms, female gender has shown that there is nothing in the world that is the exclusivity of one gender only (except giving birth), as patriarchy intends us to commit it to memory.

Tearing down the walls in sports has been a hard work for the pioneers who had to face all kinds of rejections and humiliations, so that today many women can participate and find fulfillment in something that was denied to the ancestress. Don't forget that in the Ancient Olympic Games women could not even participate as spectators much less as protagonists.

However the work for gender equality remains an uphill climb. Much remains for society, the system and the sports world in order to eliminate the patriarchal and misogynistic patterns to make room for a new humanity enriched by diversity and respect. This also includes the participation of the LGBTI community without it being insulted and discriminated with stereotypes and misogyny.

Also rejected in this type of competitions were men who for the patriarchy showed physical and mental weakness. These competitions were created exclusively for the man with all the characteristics of alpha male. For that reason it was so important to make woman visible when the Olympics returned to Athens in 2004. It will remain in history the image of that woman dressed in white, as host of the Olympic Games, sending a clear and direct message to the patriarchal world: gender equality ennobles our humanity.

The Olympic Games in Paris, also known as the II Olympiad, marked the first time the participation of women in tennis, golf and croquet (note that these are elitist sports, according with the social status, for the kind of material and economic resources needed to practice them. With this it is understood that the participants were women of a likely bourgeois social status. It would be many years before women from the slums could participate) which to date, from a social class point, remain elitists, let alone the color of skin, religion and culture. We can not deceive ourselves, we are knocking down walls but many still remain.

Placing ourselves in Rio 2016, we have seen the way the United States and its allies through the International Olympic Committee has politicized the participation of the Russian delegation, punishing the athletes by depriving them from participating in the games , as a result of Putin's political decisions. The anti-doping is more political than anything else, has little to do with the spirit of fair play.

The Rio 2016 Olympic Games made history at the opening, for the first time a transsexual person escorts a delegation, as was the case of the model Lea T, who pedaled a tricycle announcing the delegation of Brazil. This is due to the inclusion policies of the governments of Lula and Dilma by making the Equal Marriage a reality and defending the human rights of the LGBTI community -an example that must be followed for all countries with misogynistic systems. The change is necessary and urgent.

Soon the time will come also when the cobwebs in the minds of world society will fall and it will be common to see as protagonists in sport tournaments of international level, like the Olympics or World

Games, transgendered people because they have every right in the world. They can not be deprived on behalf of misogynistic religions, stereotypes and patriarchal norms.

So far we've seen everything in the Olympic Games, from sports commentators demanding gymnasts to use lower necklines, up to headlines in US newspapers, like the case of the Chicago Tribune, which ignored the athlete Cory Cogdell, who he won bronze medal in shooting, when it referred to her as the wife of a player for the Chicago Bears: "Wife of Chicago Bears player wins bronze medal at the Olympic Games in Rio".

The global shame must have been to see a team of refugees participating, where have we come as humanity that we have the nerve to accept any such thing? With our double standard we applauded them, we were excited, but we failed to see the depth of the message, namely, the plight of refugees around the world, because of wars imposed by a group of politicians who manipulate us at will.

The personal is political, and has been shown again and again. Brazilian athlete Rafaela Silva, first to win gold for Brazil, born and raised in the favela City of God (yes, the one in the film) could practice sports thanks to the Bolsa Atleta, a project promoted by Lula. A black woman from the slums who was insulted and discriminated against because of her color in London 2012, gave glory to Brazil on behalf of the favelas that Temer and the Brazilian middle class hates. Rafaela as well as Marta are with Dilma, of course.

We have also seen how the police arrest and imprison anyone who within the Olympic venues, where games are taking place, protests against the coup government of Temer. Something that never happened under Lula and Dilma, who let the people demonstrate wherever they wanted because it is their legitimate right.

The sadness of the images of children from the favelas watching the opening from the outskirts of the city, because for them there was no entrance ticket. That happens in Brazil and anywhere in the world. Sports as much as the arts have been the exclusivity of a social class and the patriarchal white man. We are knocking down walls, but many still remain.

A society that is more excited by the mention on Vogue about the uniforms of sports delegations than the participation of athletes and their circumstances and limitations imposed by the Olympic Committees of their own country to attend the games. Such is the case of the Guatemalan Olympic Committee that deducted salary to its athletes, but at the same time rewarded the administrative staff with an all-expenses paid trip and travel allowance. Injustice rubs our faces with its exploits and there is no way we as a society react.

The gold medal in Judo won by Majlinda Kelmendi from Kosovo, became an entirely political message when the athlete dedicated the medal to the childhood of his country, which still, and despite an atrocious war, dares to dream. There will never be in the history of medals of any country listed as a world power something comparable. The medal won through sacrifice and deprivation always tastes to glory, in contrast to possessing all the resources to achieve it. Let us not fool ourselves for the love of the sport.

For that reason is so valuable the participation of athletes from developing countries, because they were able to win seats against all odds. The simple act of being there makes them winners without the need of podium or medal. That must remind us, as a society, that we must elect governments that invest in development policies: Health, sports, education, culture, infrastructure and in creating bonds to help rebuild the social fabric of our countries, fragmented by the hatred of a few.

Rio 2016's motto is, "a new world", and we should not ignore climate change of which we all share the blame. A new world of inclusion, identity, respect, and sensitivity. A new world that transforms us from being manipulated to participants in the political and social reality of our environment. The Olympics Games, for its media visibility, are always the perfect setting so that we as political beings by nature move from passivity to action. They are the exemplification of the magnitude of global mafias corroding sport and politics, of patriarchy, misogyny and gender discrimination. They are the best cultural exposure that

can be given within two weeks of events, that if we pay attention spits us in the face what we are as a society.

The essential it is to have an educational system that includes physical activity and the arts as spinal cord to the integral development of a healthy society that does not exclude for any reason.

Finally, the most beautiful thing that has happened in the Olympic Games is the declaration of love on the part of a Brazilian volunteer to her girlfriend, part of the rugby national team, asking for her hand in marriage. A fact that was printed in the history of the Olympic Games in a country in grave political crisis due to a traitorous coup to democracy, shows the world that in policies of inclusion love always triumphs. And that is what Brazil owes to Dilma and Lula, and to nobody else. It is the duty of the Brazilian people to defend these achievements.

As you can see there is a lot to talk about the Olympics, from patriarchy, religion, politics, culture and the sport itself. Do not be silent, do not pretend not to see, we must not have the hypocrisy to ignore the humanitarian crisis of the millions of refugees around the world and shed tears at the sight of 10 of them parading in an overly elitist event. That the athlete from Kosovo, those who are participating wearing their hijab, the blacks females who have been discriminated against, the LGBTI community athletes, the athletes who are participating from the slums, constitute our motivation to create inclusive systems in our countries. Not for the Olympics Games or to participate in them, but for a healthy, happy and integral life with happy children who as adults are part of a transforming society. Always, always, sport and the arts must be political, as everything in life.

@ilkaolivacorado

contacto[AT]cronicasdeunainquilina.com

[Crónicas de una Inquilina](#)