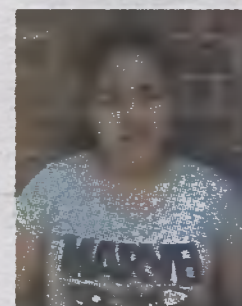


Gay propaganda ban raises questions about Olympics

The Winter Olympics in Sochi are still some months away, but they are already causing international outrage.

The Games themselves aren't the source of the problem.



BY VALERIA SOSA
STAFF WRITER

Russia is. Last month, Russian President Vladimir Putin implemented legislation that banned all "propaganda of nontraditional sexual relations around minors." The question is, how will this loosely construed legislation affect athletes and spectators of one of the greatest international competitions?

The International Olympic Committee reassured the world by stating that the latest anti-gay policies would not be enforced during the Games. Afterwards, the Russian government contradicted the IOC's earlier statement by confirming that the anti-gay legislation would

indeed be enforced during the games and argued that the law did not discriminate against anyone because it would apply to everyone, homosexual or otherwise.

Whether it applies to everyone or not is irrelevant. The legislation at its core is violating basic human rights. Because of it, a group of people is not free to live life naturally, and is instead coerced to limit self-expression. How is this not discrimination?

Even worse, the IOC seems to be slinking back and accepting this very lukewarm argument as sufficient. As a major international organization, it seems silly that they aren't doing more to protect people going to Russia and are accepting intolerance that goes against the core values of the Olympic Games.

Why the IOC is keeping such a low profile is strange indeed. In the past, the IOC has used their influence against other countries hosting the Olympics.

In 1988, the IOC helped bring about democratic elections in Seoul before the Summer Games. Again in 2008, the IOC used their influence to successfully urge China to

abolish its law requiring journalists to get special permission from the government before interviewing Chinese citizens. For the past decade or so, the IOC strongly encouraged countries hosting the Games to be more environmentally friendly.

So why can't the IOC do anything about the anti-gay policies in Russia?

Protests are cropping up all over the world. Bars are boycotting Russian vodka. A petition is circling to move the Olympic Games from Russia back to Vancouver. Queer Nation and other LGBTQIA activist societies demand that Coca-Cola, one of the biggest corporate supporters of the Olympics, boycott the Games.

Such boycotting, however, has historically proved ineffective. President Obama is strongly against boycotting the games.

He stated at a news conference earlier last month that, "One thing I'm really looking forward to is maybe some gay and lesbian athletes bringing home the gold or silver or bronze, which I think would go a long way in rejecting the kind of attitudes we're seeing there (in Russia)."

Similarly, Coca-Cola defended its sponsorship of the Olympics Games by stating that participating in the Games would further advance the advocacy for gay rights rather than "sitting on the sidelines" and passing the opportunity.

Robert Malekoff, associate professor of sport studies, commented on how hard it is to find a viable solution.

"It's hard for me to believe that no one would step up, and at least, in some way shape or form, try to voice ... their displeasure with these laws in Russia," said Malekoff.

Athletes are suffering from the pressure, he goes on to explain, because if they boycott the games they will lose the opportunity to compete after devoting years to training, and if they don't, people will criticize them.

What will actually happen during the Olympic Games is not beyond speculation. With intense protests already raging through the world, we can only expect an escalation as the Winter Olympics approach.

But one thing is for certain: such intolerance will not be tolerated.

An unfinished march: despite social progress, economic equality still elusive

Fifty years ago, Dr. King dreamt. He dreamt of a nation where his "four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character."



BY ADITYA GARG
STAFF WRITER

Half a century later, we stand as inheritors of a long-fought battle for justice at the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the March on Washington.

The nation since then made many significant leaps towards equality. Our society has become much more open and equal.

We are no longer subjected to the legal segregation that divided us in the past, and all people, regardless of race, have the same rights and benefits. In fact, we have become a beacon of equality for the world.

President Barack Obama said of the implications of the march, "The entire world drew strength from that example, whether it be young people who watched from the other side of an Iron Curtain and would eventually tear down that wall, or the young people inside South Africa who would eventually end the scourge of apartheid."

And yet, the dream remains deferred. "We still have much work to be done for Dr. King's dreams to be met," said Andrew Meshnick, Georgetown University freshman and gathering attendee, in a phone interview. "On that day in 1963, Dr. King spoke not just of social equality, but also of economic opportunity and equality — something that still eludes us."

Though we may have eliminated legal barriers to vote and segregation in schools and throughout our society, we have not been able to remedy the economic inequality between races.

Black unemployment remains almost twice as high as white unemployment, the wealth gap remains stubbornly high and upward mobility has only become harder.

"Schools still to a large degree remain segregated," explained Chair and Associate Professor of Political Science Maria Rosales. "Schools in predominantly black communities continue to be less funded and often have inadequate resources. Also, many blacks continue to have inadequate access to quality health care, making it harder for them to recover from accidents at work."

She went on to explain that "blacks and, in general, many other minorities are trapped in a cycle of generational inequality and immobility."

Latonia Etheridge, CCE student and organizer of the March on Washington in Greensboro, a gathering of local residents to reflect upon King's "I Have a Dream" speech and the current state of civil rights, also noted the slow yet continuing pace of change.

"We have acknowledged the road does not end," Etheridge said via email interview. "From the many things King stated in his 'I Have a Dream' speech, one was that 1963 is not the end, but the beginning. He was so right; he somehow knew that the movement would be one with several layers for many years to come."

"In other words, the path to equal justice is a long, long thorny road."

The march has left not just a legacy, but also an expectation of equal access and opportunity. We cannot say the march is over or the movement has ended until all members of our society have equal economic opportunity and access.

It is true that much has changed since the march — 50 years ago, nobody would have dreamed of a black president — but much work remains to be done especially in gaining equal economic opportunity.



Students Noelle Lane, Jodie Geddes, and Chris Roe participated in the March on Washington in Greensboro on Aug. 28.