**Speak Up-Kōrerotia**

**Sportswashing**

**24 July 2024**

**Plains FM**

This program was first broadcast on Canterbury's Access Media station, Plains FM and was made with the assistance of New Zealand On Air.

Coming up next, conversations on human rights with Speak Up – Kōrerotia, here on Plains FM

**Sally**

E ngā mana,

E ngā reo,

E ngā hau e whā

Tēnā koutou katoa

Nau mai ki tēnei hōtaka, Speak Up-Kōrerotia.

Tune in as our guests ‘speak up’, sharing their unique and powerful experiences and opinions and may you also be inspired to speak up when the moment is right.

We often hear – or at least, used to hear – that sports and politics don't mix. But today's topic, sportswashing, debunks that myth that sports is an apolitical endeavour and tells us that sports are actually intrinsically tied to politics and, by extension, to human rights.

This seems an appropriate topic as we head into the Olympics 2024, Paris 2024, due to kick off in just a few days. The Olympic Charter states, “The goal of Olympism is to play sport at the service of the harmonious development of humankind, with a view to promoting a peaceful society concerned with the preservation of human dignity” – so we can see the Charter contains aspirations for togetherness, global humanity, etc. Yet often the Olympics and other large sporting events, harm or at the very least render more invisible, minority or vulnerable communities. This can be through deliberate policies – for example, the French team has banned French Muslim women athletes from wearing a hijab for Paris 2024 – but also through other factors like the construction of stadiums, clearing space for stadiums, workers’ rights in relation to construction, etc.

This is Speak Up-Kōrerotia, I’m Sally Carlton, and today we're discussing “Sportswashing”. We have three guests who each bring a very different view on what is sports, what is sportswashing, and what does this mean in the context of human rights. Frankie, you’re first up on my screen so how about we hear from you?

**Frankie**

Kia ora. Thanks, Sally. Yeah. My name's Frankie Barclay. I'm the media and communications advisor at Amnesty International here in New Zealand for Amnesty. When thinking about sportswashing, we're thinking about human rights and the ways in which governments and corporations are using sports to present a positive PR campaign, often to convince people that they have a positive image when we know that behind the scenes there are really serious violations of human rights happening.

**Sally**

And I know Amnesty does a lot of work in this space, so it will be great to hear from you as we go through the show. And Holly, how about you?

**Holly**

Kia ora koutou. My name's Holly Thorpe. I'm a professor at the University of Waikato in Te Huataki Waiora, which is the School of Health, and I work particularly in sport, health and human performance. I'm a sociologist. My bread and butter, I would say, is working in sports sociology, which is very much around the workings of power and politics. You mentioned before, Sally, that old saying that sport and politics do not mix and so many people don't want them to, and yet they really do. And I think, you know, with the Olympics coming up, a lot of my research over the last decade has been alongside the IOC [International Olympic Committee] and some of their efforts to change the perception of the Games, particularly regarding youth, but also have spoken publicly about some of the issues around gender and how the IOC has approached understandings of gender and regulated women's bodies in the past through different sex testing, historically.

The Olympics are always such an interesting one because we have a lot of activism leading into the Games, and as soon as they kick off, everyone stops wanting to talk about it and just wants to lean in and enjoy it. I think there's something really interesting with that patriotism that comes in to develop at the Games. It's an incredible spectacle and a great opportunity to have these conversations, these critical conversations – because sport is always political.

**Sally**

That sounds like the perfect soundbite for the show: “Sports is always political” – that's it, we're done! And David is our final guest. It's nice to have you back on the show, David, it was years ago that I had you last on.

**David**

The area that I work in is business and human rights – in the main, the UNDP's Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights – and where the OECD is involved – which is always is, with major sports events – the OECD Responsible Business Guidance. I think it's really important to look at sport from a human rights perspective, what it is from a human rights perspective. At its most basic, it's an absolutely intrinsic part of the right to culture; it’s as much a part of the right to culture as language. Traditional sports and games are equally important to protect. And this does get lost, completely lost, in people being blinded by the Olympics or FIFA World Cup or events of that nature. Probably the biggest human rights issue in sport is actually the people who are excluded from sport, who don't get the benefits of health and other things that can come from sport. There are other human rights involved, but that right to culture is really important to understand. You know, that's how I see sport. I don't see it as a pyramid, I see it as a sieve: at the bottom of the sieve is things like Olympic Games, where less than 1% of the sportspeople of the world participate.

Sportswashing happens when people instrumentalise those events with the intention to cover up other environmental or social harms. In the last five years, there has been a significant shift in terms of recognition of human rights in sport, but it's been really interesting because from first five years of the UNGPs [United Nations Guiding Principles] which came in 2011, the athletes were completely missed in the human rights due diligence rights or the abuse of athletes that we would know so much about today was missed by the due diligence of major global NGOs, major global sports and governments. That is being done and now you can see, for example, with FIFA being challenged because of hosting the games in Saudi Arabia and needing to comply with its own policies in order to it to do so. And we'll see what happens in that space.

**Sally**

Frankie, you mentioned that you're interested in playing ‘Move on up’, which is from Bend It Like Beckham, because it kind of got you interested in some of these issues. It would be really great to hear about that song but also, I guess how you all got personally involved in this space.

**Frankie**

Yeah, absolutely. I mean, this song for me is a real feel good kind of anthem. Curtis Mayfield obviously was an amazing advocate for the rights of African-Americans for a number of years but this song, in the context of the soundtrack of Bend It Like Beckham, for me really captured some of the utter joy that comes from playing sports. Yeah, I think David mentioned, you know, one of the main human rights issues, when there's inequitable access to participating in sports, is the unequal enjoyment of the many social, emotional, psychological, physical benefits of playing sport, participating in sports. So Bend It Like Beckham for me – I must have been in my teenage years, that ages me immediately!, when it came out – but as a young person growing up female at an all girls’ school, the whole premise of the film resonated in terms of the structural barriers that girls and women face, and that actually is racialised. And as we're seeing in places like France and the ban on hijab, there are groups of women who face even greater structural barriers to participating in sport. So it's a feel good song in its in its vibe and its messaging but it also, yeah, it speaks to me of the great amount of work that still required to ensure that all people get to enjoy – and truly *enjoy* – the benefits of sport.

**Sally**

Is that similar to you, David, the fundamental wish to see people being able to participate?

**David**

That is fundamentally what drives my work in sport and human rights and business and human rights as it pertains to sport. It's the exclusions that concern me most: the poorer people who can't afford to play, the trans and intersex people that are excluded, indigenous people whose traditional games and sports are not even recognised and given the same attention. All those things are big issues. And if you look at just the health benefit of sport… you know, WHO [World Health Organisation] published data just recently to show that every country in the world was going backwards in terms of physical activity and wellbeing, the health cost of that.

**Holly**

Yeah, absolutely. Sport is a human right. Everyone should have opportunities to, but they absolutely don't. I guess my work has been driven by making sure people have opportunities to play and participate in the ways that are meaningful to them. It's also that the top-down workings of power from sports organisations, nationally and internationally, that control and regulate the ways that people can or cannot participate. And I think these sports organisations are incredibly powerful and terms of the rules and regulations that they see it in terms of who can participate, on whose terms. And if you don't like it, you're not included, go find somewhere else to play. A lot of my work is focussed on trying to understand the way these sports organisations use their power. It's hard to really pull this apart because a lot of people want to think sport is good, sport is healthy and actually getting into these critical conversations around sport, a lot of people don't want to have that. We can talk about politics and we're talking about business, so we can talk about, you know, NGOs or, you know, we can we can kind of get into some of those difficult conversations. But when it comes to sport, a lot of people just want to watch it or do it. They’re not recognising or not willing to open up those many layers of the workings of power that run through sport and sadly continue to marginalise, trivialise, exclude many people around the world.

**Sally**

We might have Frankie’s song then, and then we'll come back and think about what actually is sportswashing.

**SONG – Curtis Mayfield, ‘Move on up’**

**Sally**

This is Speak Up-Kōrerotia here, with David Rutherford, Frankie Barclay and Holly Thorpe, thinking about sportswashing. My first question is we really, as get into this is kōrero, what actually is sportswashing, for people who might not be familiar with the term or the concept?

**Frankie**

The definition we tend to draw on at Amnesty International is, I mean, it's a broad term, but generally it refers to a situation where typically a company or a government is trying to use the glamour of sport as a public relations tool to improve their image on the international stage. That might mean sponsoring – or in many cases, hosting – a major sporting event, both of which make these groups look good in the public eye and in doing so, can distract us from any number of harms that these groups might be responsible for, whether that's social harm, environmental harm, human rights violations.

**Sally**

That seems a fantastic summary. It might be great to think about some really well-known examples of sportswashing. And for me, for example, I wasn't so familiar with the term, but as soon as I looked at it and it cropped up with the Berlin 1936 Olympics, I thought, oh, of course, I know exactly what it means when I could think about it in that kind of historical context.

**Frankie**

That Berlin example is really interesting because people may not know that there's a piece of historical evidence from those Games here in New Zealand at Timaru Boys School. There's an oak tree that was planted by a graduate of the school who attended those Olympic Games. As you may know, Hitler gave all of the gold medallists an oak seed to take home and plant. That tree is still growing, I believe, in Timaru today.

There are countless examples of sportswashing around the world, but they often feel quite far away for us here in Aotearoa, which is why I got particularly passionate about the potential for sportswashing at the FIFA Women's World Cup last year, which was held between Aotearoa and Australia. And when we caught wind of the fact that Visit Saudi, the Saudi Arabian tourism board, were looking set to become a major sponsor of the event, we were having none of it. Women's sports events like the World Cup should be an amazing opportunity to celebrate female athletes and the progress that has been made to towards greater equality and participation in sport. And so the potential for a country like Saudi Arabia, which has an atrocious human rights record, particularly when it comes to protecting the rights of women and girls, the idea that they could effectively kind of gain financially and in terms of their reputation from this event was totally unacceptable. But we saw the amazing, the amazing things that happen when people come together and rally around a shared passion for sport and ultimately a number of players, various coaches, teams and everyday punters, fans and supporters, all spoke out against that sponsorship deal and it was dropped, which I think is a rare but amazing example of how we as citizens can stand up to these incredibly powerful corporations.

**David**

The interesting challenge for everyone in the space – not so much in sport, but it could happen in sport – is to ensure you understand the full consequences of what you're asking for. So just give you two really quick examples. Adidas continues to source material from my Myanmar. They have done significant due diligence on that and are not convinced any harm is being caused to the workers in their factories. Part of Adidas’s way of controlling modern slavery and forced labour is to create leverage. It does that by making sure that factories must produce 100% Adidas product, so if the owner of the factory doesn't supply Adidas, they haven't got a business. They face the choice there, which I think a lot of businesses face in these situations – you saw it with a lot of companies in Russia obviously, as well – in these challenging contexts, do I stay or do I go? What's the right thing to do? So it's not simple.

Likewise, another big example in the wider world was actually how Western companies, NGOs and governments encourage boycotting of food exports from the Soviet Union, including to Asia and Africa, which put 50 to 60 million lives at risk. You know, people I was working with at the time just say it was another example of Black Lives Don’t Matter to the West, coming on top of Covid vaccines not being distributed and decades of racism. So it's tricky stuff sometimes. It's not simple.

There’s a very good book by a guy called Malcolm Templeton, who was an MFAT guy on sporting contacts with South Africa from 1921 to 1994. It absolutely bears out what everyone said about sport being all about politics, there's no doubt about that. But at each stage of that, in a moment you would make different decisions on the basis of doing due diligence. Most of the time in the modern context, you'd say I wouldn't play, right? Because essentially the sports organisation would itself be entering into an agreement to play with a racially selected football team. But then it became not racially selected. Now should you play?

But generally, sportswashing is just like any other sort of corporate ‘washing’. And I think the other thing that is useful at the moment is that the securities regulators and the Commerce Commission-type organisations around the world are putting some pretty strong requirements on businesses who make these claims – so it doesn't affect the governments that make these claims – but if businesses are making environmental or social sustainability claims that are not true, then they could get caught up in securities law, you know, which is having an effect. Some of it probably drives things underground a little bit, that's not helpful, but some of it actually causes people to figure out we actually doing the right thing.

**Holly**

I think what’s personally very interesting, when we have international sports organisations or host cities hosting events like the FIFA World Cup or the Olympic Games, is often that inconsistency between the rhetoric and the realities. So what they tell the world they are valuing, and we get lots of media coverage and positive stories about that, but the realities of what's often going on behind the scenes is a lot more messy. And I think the more time we spend researching and understanding that messiness, I think we can tease apart some of those very rosy media stories.

And I think the upcoming Paris Olympics and Paralympics is a great example of this. They tell us that this is the first Olympics of gender equity. They’ve been working towards this for, you know, over a hundred years. And yet we might have 50% women athletes there but as we know, France is banning hijabs, which means *which* women are there. And there's so many layers when we unpack that statement around gender equity. We're so far from it in reality; it's so much more than just how many women are participating.

Another example for Paris would be around environmental claims. So a big part of Paris getting the Olympics was their claims of environmental innovation and entrepreneurialism and trying to do leadership. The stories we get are all these positive stories – but then when we dig deeper, we see that there are so many inconsistencies on that. And a piece I wrote just the other day with Belinda Wheaton was around the surfing being held in Tahiti and a very famous surf break called Teahupo’o. There's been months and months of protest around the hosting of the surfing there, the environmental impacts of hosting a mega event on this, you know, very fragile ecosystem. There was a tower that they wanted to build there. It was going to be drilling through the coral reef, which was going to have all this, you know, environmental impact.

And so we don't often hear about these stories. The IOC or the Paris Olympics tells us it's going to be the greenest Olympics ever; but actually, there's all these inconsistencies and contradictions. The IOC proclaims to be all about peacebuilding and we have this global truce when people have come together and we sing our anthems together and we celebrate athletes from all around the world. And yet there's all these inconsistencies in terms of the IOC and the Russian athletes not being able to carry the flag etc., and then they're not doing that for the Israeli athletes. And so some of my colleagues around the world, like Professor Jules Boykoff are really vocal in pointing out those inconsistencies in the IOC claims to be politically neutral so it doesn't have to take a stand on this. But by stating it’s politically neutral, that is a political statement in and of itself, and by not using this platform to make a stand for peace, which they say they're all about. So I think when we look at some of these bigger events, we can see those inconsistencies between rhetoric and reality. We need to remain critical in unpacking what sport does and what sport is being used for.

**David**

There’s a very good article this morning in the *New York Times*. It looks at the housing legacy of Olympic Games right back, I think, to Athens, from memory. Essentially, the story is so wonderful; the reality is it's not. That is a common theme. The legacy is virtually never what was promised.

**Holly**

And this is every Olympic Games, right?! When it comes to town, people get moved out. So we don't see the messiness or we don't see the homeless people. They get moved out, they get displaced. But it's also all the issues around surveillance that's going to be happening in Paris, and what that means for the people living there and the militarisation of the city as well. Jules Boykoff is speaking very vocally about those issues, and those are really important voices to listen to, I think.

**Sally**

I remember Rio and they were clearing some of the favelas out the way. So who does get moved? It's the most vulnerable.

**Frankie**

Yeah. And that point you made around surveillance, Holly, is really important. On the one hand, France is celebrating that innovative spirit when it comes to building eco-friendly accommodation for the Olympians, but they're also innovating in their use of mass surveillance technology in a way that's extremely alarming, because it sets a very bad precedent for the rest of the EU. That's something that is being branded as a security measure – and obviously ensuring the wellbeing and security of the thousands of people who go to the Olympics is an important priority – but not at the expense of international human rights law and standards, which France claims to be upholding. And again, in terms of who gets surveyed, we know that this is a really gendered, racialised issue. It's been well documented that surveillance technologies are disproportionately used to target marginalised and racialised groups. And when it comes to the kind of rationale for why they're going to be using these kind of facial recognition technology cameras, it's to fish out what they call suspicious or abnormal behavior – but who gets to decide what is suspicious or what's abnormal? Who gets to set the norm is a really important question in this context as well, in what is meant to be a really global and diverse event? It is alarming that there will be one powerful entity that decides what is acceptable and what is not.

Yeah, we are worried that this kind of legislation that they've passed for the Games might get baked in in the longer term. And that's why, I think, thinking about the legacy of the Olympic Games is a really important consideration when it comes to who gets to host these. It's not just what harm is done in the lead-up to the Games, as we saw with the FIFA World Cup in Qatar, but it's also thinking about what's the aftermath. And I imagine at that point, most of us who were enthralled in watching the sports have moved on to other interests and are less interested in and reading the stories about those who are left behind.

**Sally**

So many points that you've raised in this wee kōrero there! I think we're already getting a huge understanding of the different ways that sportswashing can occur. It's not just a simple kind of stick up a poster, but it's lots of different ways it's happening here. Holly, we might have your song you've chosen Franko’s ‘We are one’, and this was one you thought might be a good song to draw attention to the linkages between sports and national identity.

**Holly**

Yes. I think the tendency to celebrate the nation as if we are all one is really problematic and I think the song is sort of an opportunity for us to reflect on how those discourses of nationalism come to the fore around these types of events. I think that's part of when we get carried away with these events once they start: it's this idea of the nation and we're all celebrating our athletes. It's that kind of response that I think makes it harder for us to be more critical about the workings of power and all the things that we've been talking about.

**SONG – Franko, ‘We are one’**

**Sally**

We've just listened to Franko's ‘We are one’, which is a song that raises awareness of the linkages between sports and national identity and nationalism, which leads us really well into the next segment of our conversation, thinking about how sportswashing plays into some of these really big conversations about the benefits, I guess, that sports can bring in terms of coming together, togetherness, humanity, celebrating each other as we are – and the harms that we're talking about being covered up, and how do they sit alongside the potential benefits that sports and these mega sporting events can bring?

**Holly**

My students, I think they think I'm always down on sport, you know, I'm always kind of beating sport up and unpacking it and looking over the workings of power, and we're busy critiquing it all the time, right? But I actually come from a place of loving sport. I was an athlete, you know, it's a big part of my life, and I critique sport because I love it. That is the love that drives the critique. Sport can be very powerful in terms of raising awareness of social issues, social justice issues. We saw the power of athletes around the Black Lives Matter movement, athletes taking a stand, taking a knee. We’ve seen that historically. And athletes coming together and people coming together, can shine a light on really important issues in our societies, and I think we're seeing more and more athletes using their platforms to speak out on issues that are important to them. We've seen that historically – and often those efforts have copped a lot of abuse, actually, when they when they do that. From the 1968 Olympics, with the U.S. track athletes taking a stand – when athletes do that, people don't often like to see that. Later in time, they're often looked back on and celebrated for their activism – but often people don't like seeing athletes stand up for things because they're supposed to shut up and play. They're almost seen as robots who are there to do a job to entertain us. But I love to see more and more athletes speaking out about issues that are politically and socially important to them, and we see a lot of them using their social media followings to do that, where it's not necessarily controlled by their sports organisations. So I think we're seeing more and more athletes using those platforms to speak out. I'm excited by that. I think we're going to see more of that and Paris as well; it's going to be very politically active Olympics, I would anticipate, and I think we're going to see a lot of political activism from our athletes, which I think we should keep an eye on.

**Frankie**

Yeah, I read a really great article in the *Washington Post* earlier this year by the women tennis stars Chris Evert and Martina Navratilova, who were reflecting on the on the threats of sportswashing of women's tennis tournaments. I mean, I think they said it best when they wrote, “Like it or not, the fame and influence granted to top athletes inevitably makes us political”. And they, as individuals took pride in the kind of leadership responsibility that that that platform gives them. But it is something that they say – and I agree – that athletes actually need support in undertaking, because their life already involves a huge amount of hard work and significant sacrifice. So I do think while we should encourage and celebrate any efforts by athletes to raise awareness of political issues, it's also another pressure on them in a in a life full of pressures, and high demand. And so as organisations and as academics and representatives of different groups, you just need to think about how do we equip and support athletes to do that work and advocacy. Because it's a big job.

**Holly**

Absolutely. And I think we all kind of probably do that in different ways. But I think for a lot of athletes historically, just their presence is a form of politics; women's bodies in sport for a long time was controversial, transgender bodies. Just being there is a politic in and of itself. It doesn't always have to be a big bold statement. Just being there can be a political act at times.

**Sally**

Conversely, though, Holly, being there could also be seen as implicit or explicit support for whatever is trying to be covered up.

**Holly**

Absolutely. Yeah.

**David**

Within sport itself, the two most silenced voices are the voices of the athlete and the voices of the survivors of abuse. It is an incredible conforming machine. I mean, I agree, I think what athletes have been doing recently – and probably even more spectacularly, what survivors have been doing – in relation to demanding change and demanding they be part of the design of the change and also getting the support they need. We’ll probably see a bit of a tomorrow in the Royal Commission report on abuse in state care. I mean, survivors in that situation have been amazing, but how are they going to be able to continue to be the watchdogs and actually, do they want to be?

**Holly**

I think we've seen time and time again the power of sports organisations to silence those voices. They do not like being questioned, they’re very hierarchical. And when athletes speak out and share their stories and highlight problems, different forms of abuse of power, sports organisations do not look fondly on that at all, and like to try to silence those voices.

**Frankie**

Yeah, I think to me that highlights the importance of two particular groups: (1) us as sports fans and the and the power that we have in our voices, whether that's signing petitions or writing to MPs or, as we saw last year with the Women's World Cup, making it clear to our political leaders that they have a responsibility to use their global influence and power to stand up against violations of human rights and the silencing of whistleblowers or those speaking out about their own experiences. The second group is the crucial importance of the media in bringing some of these stories to light. And we're see massive threats to media, both here in Aotearoa and around the world. It's just a stark reminder of how important quality investigative sports journalism is in bringing those stories to light and really challenging the positive PR narratives that we're being fed. I'm yeah, I'm excited to see hopefully some really, you know, high integrity investigative journalism around this year's Olympics. And I hope that, yeah, I suppose those of us who are particularly passionate about sport and following sport, we will continue to put our money where our mouths are and support media too.

**Holly**

I think that's such an important point you're raising, Frankie, because some of my favourite sports journalist in New Zealand I know, have sadly lost their jobs or been forced out of their jobs, particularly when they've done the really hard emotional labour of those investigative journalist posts in terms of sports abuses, etc. and it's very sad to see those voices lost. So I think it is very connected to the media landscape, which we know is very threatened right now. So that's a tough one. That critical role, that critical piece is the media, I agree.

**Sally**

I imagine that ties in really well with this idea of sportswashing too, because media is such a vehicle for passing on these distractions or sanitising of the situation. You know, if the media is saying everything's rosy, then that's what a lot of people will be reading, seeing, watching.

**David**

Absolutely. I mean, I know some of the same people that Holly's talking about and, you know, the toll on some of those media people who's doing that work was massive. You know, if they're in more freelance roles, they probably won't get the support that they need. I used to be the Chief Executive of New Zealand Rugby Union, I know how easy it is for sports organisations to control the message. Those voices that aren't controlled are, you know, even more critical. And the current situation in New Zealand has been really sad to see.

**Holly**

And it's really insightful when you see how particular groups try to silence or critique dissent, whether that's online abuse, various types of violences that happen to silence those voices. Like, I think back to that point before, people don't want to think critically about sport, they don't want to expose the ugly underbelly of sport and how sport is used. So often when you do speak out or critique, people cop a lot of abuse, which makes it even harder to do that work.

**David**

Yeah.

**Sally**

Well, time for our final song now. David, you selected ‘Poi E’.

**David**

Yeah. I mean, for me, it's very personal. So I'm a boy from Pātea. My commercial practice and First XV coach was Sam Prime and, really, when I was offered the job as Chief Executive of New Zealand Rugby and I wasn't sure whether I wanted it, Sam had long passed, but I knew that he would never forgive me if I didn't actually try and do something. My first involvement in politics and sport was as a 13-year-old in 1972/3ish, getting involved in the apartheid stuff. It reminds me that I was brought up in two places at once: one was called Taranaki and one was called Taranaki. I was an immigrant’s son – my mum was Welsh or my dad was Irish – and like Holly, I loved it, but I also played it to fit in. And I'm very conscious of the people who don't fit in. So it's got all that in it for me.

Yeah, it takes it really back to the importance of indigenous sport and traditional sport and games, both in New Zealand but around the world. And most of the sport is not recognised by the Olympic movement, although there's a little crack in the door right now caused by lacrosse, which is a Canadian game, First Nations game. It's the peacemaking game; it's a game by which tribal groups made peace to settle their differences. And it's going to be part of Los Angeles Games programme and they are considering recognising First Nations as able to put teams in. And, you know, the work that was going on in Paris this week with the Commonwealth ministers is hopefully going to open up a more committed effort by the Commonwealth states on recognising traditional sports and games or indigenous sport – depending on where you are – you know, as part of sport, it needs to be given equal recognition.

**Sally**

Thanks, David. This is ‘Poi E’.

**SONG – Pātea Māori Club, ‘Poi E’**

**Sally**

Ko Speak Up-Kōrerotia tēnei, ko “Sportswashing” te kaupapa o te rā. Just as we finish up, it might be good to think about what are some of the tools and techniques we have to counter sportswashing. We’ve talked about the onus on the individual athlete to use their platforms; we’ve talked about the role of the media, that critical voice; Frankie, you touched on the role of the spectator, as well, and the way that we can use our voices. But any other ideas you have and would be really great, and anything else you think we need to say as we finish up?

**Frankie**

I suppose we all have a responsibility to be informed. And, you know, if we're really passionate about sport and eager to be entertained by sport, we should be equally willing to channel that passion into protecting what really matters in sport, which, you know, includes making sure that athletes are treated well and that all those involved in the preparation of a sporting event are treated in accordance with their human rights, too. It's tricky because there are so many difficult, devastating things happening in the world right now and for many of us, sport is as a means of escapism. It's a means of switching off our politically minded brains and retreating into a kind of comfort of your couch with your friends and your snacks. And I don't know if there's a term for it – you know, we don't want to be a downer on sports; I don't know if ‘sports downing’! – we absolutely want to be able to celebrate and enjoy the incredible work that that all of these athletes have put in to be able to perform at these amazing levels.

But I do think, you know, with rights come responsibilities. Those of us who are enjoying our human rights – for example, the right to participate in culture by watching sport – I think we should we should acknowledge that that comes with a responsibility to try our best to ensure that other people's rights are upheld and respected, too. So Amnesty International, you know, we work as part of a global coalition called the Sports and Rights Alliance. We put out research on reports where there's evidence of human rights violations occurring in relation to sport. At Amnesty, we love a good petition and so there are often petitions on our website that people can sign, and thereby, you know, add their voice to any calls that we might be making on global leaders. I think also those of us who use social media, we have our own platforms now to help inform and influence our peers as well, and that peer-to-peer campaigning is one of the most effective ways of truly making a difference. So, you know, if you're thinking about hosting a watch party for the Olympics, maybe make sure that as part of that event, you also have time to go throw around some of the human rights issues that you're aware of, whether that’s mass surveillance or the ban on Muslim women wearing the hijab or any number of human rights violations happening in the countries that are being represented at the Olympics – and just normalising sports. That combination of being able to both celebrate something while also acknowledge that there are still deep, deep problems to address.

**Holly**

That's a hard act to follow, Frankie, great ideas! They're really constructive. I think there is space to bring our joy and love for sport and critical thinking but you've got to sit with those tensions and that discomfort. And yes, I will be watching the Olympics. My daughter asked me last night because she knows how critical I am of sport. Yeah, we can watch the Olympics, but we're going to talk about some of the things going on behind the scenes that you're not seeing. You know, with my students, we talk about sport as a social construction: just because sport's always been this way doesn't mean we can't build it differently or unpack it and reimagine it so that it is responsive to our changing world. We don't have to keep doing it the way we've always done it. And there are so many people out there fighting for sport to be better, to be more inclusive, to be responding to the injustices of this world.

I'm going to give a little shout out now to an international research group that I'm working with called the Feminist Sport Lab, a sport lab that's just set up. This group rejects regulation and exclusion based on sexism, misogyny, transphobia, racism, classism, or ableism, and our focus combines theoretical and empirical work addressing sport as a feminist issue, challenging patriarchy, and intervening on intersectional social justice matters. And often sport, when we have these conversations, it gets quite siloed that we talk about women's sport, or we talk about disability, or we talk about racism or we talk about homophobia. It's at those messy intersections that I think we need to keep talking, because people's lives are messy and our identities intersect and injustices are intersectional as well.

**David**

The key thing for me that I try and keep in mind is that I love sport. I think you can be critical and still love support, but most of all, the opportunity for real change occurs locally. Not in Paris, or in Paris’ suburbs, not in the Olympic Games. That's where we need to focus more, because we have to take advantage to counter, the sportswashing, which tends to happen around these big events, obviously. But in terms of making a difference to people's lives, to children’s lives, and to the lives of people that are excluded, it's at the community level that we can make that difference.

It's like we need everyone doing their bit, you know, we need Amnesty and Human Rights Watch pointing sharp spears at people that are not doing the right thing and mobilising. We also have another member of the Sport and Rights Alliance, the Building and Woodworkers’ Union. One of the benefits of Qatar for them was that they got to establish a trade union office, the first time an international trade union office had been established in Qatar. You know, these are legacies that no one wrote down in the legacy of the games record, but certainly a legacy insofar as that trade union’s concerned and in terms of actually protecting workers that are still in Qatar, working in the construction industry.

I think a lot of the future in this area is going to be at the national and local level, because the complexity of unpicking sport actually requires you to understand that context. It's very different all over the world. The principles are the same, the issues actually are the same in terms of things like abuse and discrimination and things like that, but making a real difference needs to happen very locally and nationally. And I think that's where we're heading. I think we've got the principles sorted – or just about – Sport Integrity with its five parts: doping, corruption, good governance, prevention of abuse and anti-discrimination. If that actually does finally get the tick in about a year, that will be a big change for sport. I’m hopeful for the future, but we need governments that are pushing, the businesses that are pushing, and the NGOs that are pushing, and the academic community as well, that are pushing for change.

**Sally**

And actually that was a nice positive note to end on, David, thank you. It's nice to end with a bit of hope there, that's for sure. Thank you so much. I've learnt heaps in this kōrero and it's been really, really fascinating having your different perspectives, the advocacy for Amnesty and the academic stuff and the business and human rights and sports combination, it's been a really good mixture. So thank you very much. I hope everyone listening has learnt a lot as well.

**Holly**

Thanks to creating the space for that.