

DISCUSSION STARTER

THE OLYMPIC SPIRIT



The Olympic Charter exalts a philosophy of life that seeks to use sport to communicate positive values of peace, understanding, fair play and other moral and ethical principles. In this way, Olympism shares many of the goals of other sports movements, such as Muscular Christianity, Muscular Judaism and Athleticism.

The Olympic Charter sets out this philosophy and includes the following key statements:



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Olympism is a philosophy of life, exalting and combining in a balanced whole the qualities of body, will and mind. Blending sport with culture and education, Olympism seeks to create a way of life based on the joy of effort, the educational value of good example and respect for universal fundamental ethical principles.

The goal of Olympism is to place sport at the service of the harmonious development of man, with a view to promoting a peaceful society concerned with the preservation of human dignity.

A key statement in the Olympic Charter states that sport is a human right:

'The practice of sport is a human right. Every individual must have the possibility of

practising sport, without discrimination of any kind and in the Olympic spirit, which requires mutual understanding with a spirit of friendship, solidarity and fair play. The Charter goes on to state that: Any form of discrimination with regard to a country or a person on grounds of race, religion, politics or otherwise is incompatible with belonging to the Olympic Movement.'

Such a statement is interesting; the IOC awarded the Olympic Games to Hitler's Germany in 1936, despite many reports that Jewish Germans, and Jewish athletes were being discriminated against. The evidence of discrimination towards Jews was clear, yet this did not stop the IOC from welcoming Hitler's Germany into the Olympic Movement.

Nevertheless there are also many positive examples of how the Olympic Movement are seeking to fulfil the terms of its Charter, via human rights initiatives and education. An interesting and notable feature is also the Olympic Truce.

The Olympic Truce is symbolised by the dove of peace, rings and the Olympic flame.

THE OLYMPIC TRUCE

In the framework of promoting peace through sport and the Olympic ideal, the IOC established an International Olympic Truce Foundation (IOTF) in July 2000.



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"Sport alone cannot enforce or maintain peace. But it has a vital role to play in building a better and more peaceful world."
Dr Jacques Rogge, IOC President, October 2007.

As a non-governmental organisation (NGO) belonging to the Olympic Movement, the IOTF defines its objectives thus:

- To promote the Olympic ideals to serve peace, friendship and understanding in the world, and in particular, to promote the ancient Greek tradition of the Olympic Truce¹;
- To initiate conflict prevention and resolution through sport, culture and the Olympic ideals, by cooperating with all inter and non-governmental organisations specialised in this field, by developing educational and research programmes, and by launching

communications campaigns to promote the Olympic Truce.

START THE DISCUSSION

- ❖ Do you think that the idea of an Olympic truce is realistic?
- ❖ Can you find examples of conflicts that have ceased during the Games?
- ❖ Russia and Georgia continued their conflict during the Beijing Games, even though Sochi had just won the right to host the 2014 Olympic Winter Games. Do you think this illustrates that some countries don't take the Olympic Truce seriously?
- ❖ What happens during Manny Pacquiao's boxing matches?
- ❖ What happened in No Man's Land during WWII that demonstrated the power of sport in reparations and peace?

FIND OUT MORE

The Olympics website

www.olympic.org

The Olympic Charter
(http://www.olympic.org/Documents/olympic_charter_en.pdf)

¹ The idea of a truce derives from the Ancient Games in 9th Century Greece, where political a treaty ('ekecheiria') would be signed, ensuring peace during the Games and thereby facilitating safe passage of participants to and from the Games.

CREDITS

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