

# TEAM USA



## Reclaim Team USA Sports from Activism

Policy Recommendations

JENNIFER S. BRYSON

FELLOW, EPPC

JUNE 2025

ETHICS  
AND  
PUBLIC  
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*The opinions and recommendations in this resource are  
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Authored by **Jennifer Bryson.**

Edited by **Hannah Rowan.**

Layout and design by **Ella Sullivan Ramsay.**

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Culture.*

1730 M Street NW, Suite 910  
Washington, D.C. 20036-4548  
Telephone: (202) 682-1200  
Fax: (202) 408-0632  
Email: [ethics@eppc.org](mailto:ethics@eppc.org)

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JENNIFER S. BRYSON  
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## Executive Summary

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Political, social, and cultural causes, whether of the left or the right, do not belong in sports. Our national teams, in particular, have a duty to represent the United States united, not divisive agendas.

At present, however, America's national sports teams are taking advantage of their national and international prominence to promote activist causes. They use their credibility and resources for these causes instead of prioritizing athletic excellence and the honor of our nation in sports. This report details this problem and recommends solutions.

This issue has two dimensions:

### 1. Team USA Uniforms and Other Team USA Attire

Over the past eight years, our men's and women's national soccer teams have demeaned Americans' sense of honor by supplanting or supplementing the U.S. flag on team uniforms and other team attire with the images, symbols, slogans, messages, and colors of activist causes such as LGBTQIA+, Black Lives Matter, and gun control.

### 2. Public Communication

The national governing bodies (NGBs) of many sports, including soccer, supplant or supplement representations of the United States and of their sport in public communication, both physical and online, with images, symbols, slogans, messages, and colors of activist causes. The governing body of American amateur sports, the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Committee (USOPC), instead of stopping the NGBs' misuse of their leadership role, sells its own "Pride Collection" of Team USA gear with the colors of the Pride-Progress flag.

A common thread in this mismanagement of American sports by the USOPC is its prioritization of the pursuit of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) over sports. The USOPC proclaims,

Our goal of diversity, equity and inclusion is to uphold our global purpose of building a better, more inclusive world through sport. We are invested in becoming a DE&I leader in sport by providing access and opportunity for all. Being inclusive and creating equitable opportunities, we will continue to inspire future generations of Olympians and Paralympians.<sup>1</sup>

Note the objectives: pursuing a "global purpose," "becoming a DE&I leader in sport," and "creating equitable opportunities." These are not the priorities of serious national sports leadership. We need sports governance that is willing and able to make American sports excellent, not "global," not "DE&I"-oriented, not "equitable." The executive

branch and Congress need to reform American sports governance to stop these examples of the misuse of Team USA sports.

The activist causes promoted by the NGBs and the USOPC at present in pursuit of these DEI objectives are all for “woke” movements. Yet, to be clear, the primary issue is not the nature of these causes (problematic as they are). It is the exploitation of American amateur sports to support *any* cause outside of athletics.

Two considerations add urgency to the recommendations in this report. The first is the approach of

upcoming international sporting events in the United States such as the men’s World Cup in soccer in 2026, the Summer Olympics in 2028, and the women’s World Cup in soccer in 2031. The second is the need to promote civic harmony and health in America; our national sports teams should unite Americans and inspire participation in sports, not foster division and shame.

The mechanisms to end the USOPC’s mismanagement of U.S. amateur sports and improve our nation’s sports governance lie within the authority of President Trump and Congress. Now is the time to act.

# I. Recommendations

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I advise the **executive branch** to

- Honor Flag Day on June 14, 2025, or Independence day on July 4, 2025, by supporting the value of using our flag for the uniforms of Team USA sports and denouncing the replacement of it with symbols and messages representing activist causes.
- Establish a Commission on Governance and American Excellence in Sports (GAmES) to advise the president on how to make American sports great again. The GAmES Commission should monitor amateur sports, identify misgovernance, and identify ways to return the priorities of American sports governance to *sports*, not activism.
- Require the USOPC and NGBs to limit the use of images, symbols, slogans, messages, and colors on Team USA uniforms, attire, equipment, and public displays (physical and online) to our flag, renderings of our flag, and our national colors of red, white, and blue.
- Require NGBs to focus solely on the sport they govern; they should not be using their time, resources, or public profile to promote causes outside of sports.

- Admonish all NGBs to abide by our nation’s laws and assure respect for the U.S. flag.
- Change the name of the USOPC back to its previous and more accurate name, “United States of America Sports Federation.” The task of the USOPC is the governance of all amateur sports, not solely the Olympics and Paralympics.

I advise **Congress** to

- Require the USOPC and NGBs to limit the use of images, symbols, slogans, messages, and colors on Team USA uniforms, attire, equipment, and public displays (physical and online) to our flag, renderings of our flag, and our national colors of red, white, and blue.
- Require the USOPC to enforce corrective measures for NGBs when they place images, symbols, slogans, messages, or colors on Team USA uniforms and other media (see Section III.2) other than renderings of the U.S. flag and our national colors of red, white, and blue. If the USOPC fails to comply, Congress should dissolve and replace the USOPC’s board of directors.

- Require the USOPC to enforce corrective measures for NGBs when players on national teams profane our flag or national anthem at official events of the team.
- Exercise the authority of Congress to dissolve the board of directors of the USOPC and terminate NGBs if the problems identified in this report continue.<sup>2</sup>
- Change the name of the USOPC back to its previous and more accurate name, “United States of America Sports Federation,” to reflect its duty to govern all amateur sports, not solely the Olympics and Paralympics.
- Protect athletes from being coerced to wear or use images, symbols, slogans, messages, or colors on team uniforms, other team attire, and sports equipment.
- Enforce corrective measures when NGBs place images, symbols, slogans, messages, or colors on Team USA uniforms and other media (see Section III.2) other than renderings of the U.S. flag and our national colors of red, white, and blue.
- Decertify NGBs that are repeat violators of these regulations.

I advise the **USOPC** to

- Establish clear regulations for the use of images, symbols, slogans, messages, and colors on uniforms and other sports media (see Section III.2).
- Ban the use of images, symbols, slogans, messages, and colors on Team USA uniforms, attire, equipment, and public displays other than our U.S. flag, renderings of the U.S. flag, pro-America messages, and our national colors of red, white, and blue.

I advise the **NGBs of individual sports** to

- Stop promoting activist causes.
- Make taking pride in representing the United States part of the NGBs’ mission.
- Lobby for the reform of uniform and equipment regulations within their respective international sports governing bodies to ensure bans on promoting causes on uniforms and other sports media.

## II. The Problem

### Examples of National U.S. Teams and the USOPC Pushing Activist Causes, 2017–2025

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Following are examples of the U.S. Men’s National Team and U.S. Women’s National Team in soccer exploiting the visibility of international matches to place the images, symbols, slogans, messages, and colors of causes on team uniforms, accessories (such as armbands), additional attire (such as anthem jackets), and sports equipment. Additional examples show ways other NGBs are using their public platforms and resources to promote activist causes instead of focusing on their sport.

#### U.S. Soccer:

- In June 2017 against Venezuela and in June 2018 against Ireland and France, the U.S. men’s team placed the LGBT+ rainbow on the U.S. jersey.<sup>3</sup>
- In June 2017 against Sweden and Norway<sup>4</sup> and twice in June 2018 against China,<sup>5</sup> the U.S. women’s team placed the LGBT+ rainbow on the U.S. jersey.



- In 2020 against El Salvador, the U.S. men's team placed the George Floyd/Black Lives Matter-inspired slogan "Be the Change" on the front side of its pregame anthem jackets.<sup>6</sup> Individual players wore slogans on the back side of the jackets such as "Black Lives Matter," "World Peace," "Equality," and "Anti-Racism."
- In June 2022 against Uruguay, the U.S. men's team wore orange armbands to oppose gun violence.<sup>7</sup> In this explicitly political effort, the team "implored the members of the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives to vote yes on stricter gun legislation." This was another instance of U.S. Soccer's participation in the "Be the Change" movement.



Goalkeeper Sean Johnson wears U.S. Soccer jersey with Pride Flag colors and an orange pro-gun-control armband at match against Uruguay in Kansas in June 2022. Kyle Rivas via Getty Images

- During the 2022 World Cup in Qatar, U.S. Soccer replaced the colors of America's flag with the colors of the Progress-Pride flag on the USA crest of our national men's soccer team at its training center in Qatar, to "bring awareness to these issues."<sup>8</sup> As *Outsports* not so subtly admitted, this was a way of "giving a big middle finger to FIFA and Qatar"—hardly a way for an organization representing our country to treat a host nation.<sup>9</sup> The flag colors displayed at the training center included the colors blue, pink, and white. These colors, which represent the transgenderism movement, sent the message that the men's team was advocating for the inclusion of males



OZAN KOSE via Getty Images

*The redesigned Progress-Pride crest used by the U.S. men's soccer team at its 2022 World Cup training center in Qatar and in June 2025 by the U.S. men's and women's teams as a social media icon.*

in female sports. The team did this as part of U.S. Soccer's participation in the Black Lives Matter-inspired "Be the Change" movement.

- The Official U.S. Soccer Store sells rainbow-colored LGBT+ pride-themed gear, including some with no connection to soccer, such as T-shirts with the slogan "Love is love" in rainbow colors.<sup>10</sup> Part of the proceeds of the pride-themed gear goes to You Can Play, a nonprofit in the United States and Canada that promotes programs helping "LGBTQ+ athletes have the ability to play as their authentic self."<sup>11</sup> These training programs include "Supporting athletes coming out" and "Trans athlete / attendee best practices."
- In 2024, U.S. Soccer auctioned off Progress-Pride-themed Team USA jerseys to raise money for and "celebrate and support [the] LGBT+ community."<sup>12</sup>
- In June 2025, the U.S. men's team and U.S. women's team replaced the red, white, and blue of the team crest on social media with the colors of the Progress-Pride flag.

Among the national governing bodies of sports, U.S. Soccer has been the most flagrant promoter of non-sporting causes via Team USA. Realigning U.S. Soccer to focus on soccer and represent the United States with dignity instead of promoting activist causes should be a priority of the president, Congress, and the USOPC as the 2026 World Cup approaches.

Many other NGBs use their national profile to promote activist causes under the official sanction of the NGB instead of focusing on governing their sport. Following is a small sampling of their actions.

#### **USA Field Hockey:**

- In 2024, USA Field Hockey announced that it would “celebrate LGBTQ Pride Month . . . highlighting resources for how to promote LGBTQ+ inclusion within your team all year long.”<sup>13</sup>
- USA Field Hockey’s website features articles from players about topics relating to identity politics such as “queerness” (but no non-left-wing causes).<sup>14</sup>
- USA Field Hockey is officially sponsored by a company that sells rainbow-themed wraps for hockey stick grips.<sup>15</sup>

#### **USA Hockey:**

- USA Hockey’s website features an article about using LGBTQ+ rainbow wrap tape on hockey sticks.<sup>16</sup>

#### **USA Lacrosse:**

- “In honor of Pride Month,” proclaimed USA Lacrosse’s website in 2024, “we are partnering with Athletes Unlimited and Outsports to share the stories of players, administrators and leaders of the women’s professional lacrosse league that are proud members of the LGBTQ+ community.”<sup>17</sup>

#### **U.S. Ski and Snowboard:**

- U.S. Ski and Snowboard’s website announced that it would be “celebrating the . . . (LGBTQ)

community in honor of National Coming Out Day.”<sup>18</sup>

- In 2020, an article about a training camp hosted by the U.S. Alpine Ski Team, instead of focusing on skiing, reported about a former Olympian teaching at the camp, who said, “We were having daily discussions about Black Lives Matter, policing, and legislation. I’ve talked about continuity and consistency in my skiing for a while and the same applies to social change. Let’s put the work in. Vote.”<sup>19</sup>

#### **USA Ultimate [Frisbee]:**

- USA Ultimate’s website boasts about its “support of the transgender community” and features a picture of the transgenderism flag.<sup>20</sup>
- The DEI goals promoted by USA Ultimate include “increasing participation of . . . LGBTQIA+ ultimate athletes.”<sup>21</sup>

#### **Team USA Shop:**

- The Team USA Shop, featuring the USOPC’s official logos of the U.S. Olympics and U.S. Paralympics, sells a “Pride Collection” that combines “Team USA” with the colors of the Pride-Progress flag.<sup>22</sup> The collection includes shirts with the slogan “Team USA is love,” a play on the “Love is love” motto of the LGBT+ movement, with “is love” printed in the colors



*Progress-Pride and Allstate signage on the field before a game between the Republic of Korea and US men’s soccer team at Allianz Field on June 4, 2024. Brad Smith/ISI Photos/USSF via Getty Images.*

of the Progress-Pride flag. The image also includes the colors of the transgenderism flag, thus suggesting that Team USA supports the inclusion of males in female sports.

In addition, a 2020 report by the Team USA Council on Racial and Social Justice, established by the USOPC, recommended far more extensive use of NGB and USOPC platforms and resources to promote

activist causes. For example, the council advocates for “incorporating moments of silence for victims of police brutality into the [Olympic] trials and Games.”<sup>23</sup>

It is time for the president and Congress to stop allowing the USOPC and NGBs to promote activist causes and reorient the sports governance of this country toward focusing on the sports themselves and representing the nation through excellence in athletics.

## III. The Harms of Rejecting Our Flag

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When a sports team representing our country supplants or supplements the flag and the colors of our nation on attire or gear with images, symbols, slogans, messages, or colors of activist causes, the team degrades the image of the United States. It distracts from the team’s primary mission and subjects athletes to coercion and even discrimination.

### 1. Damage to the Image of the United States

The image communicated in these situations is that of a country with chaos in sports governance; capture by activists suggests that no one is in charge. What the world sees is that our national sports teams are subject to the whims and fancies of activists.

The suggestion that some of our national teams are ashamed of the United States is explicit. National teams that advocate activist causes make the United States look like a nation that prioritizes promoting political agendas over honoring our country.

This is not an image of the United States in which American citizens can take pride. This is an image of sports that is unlikely to inspire Americans to participate in athletics.

### 2. Distraction from the Mission of Sports

The NGBs of individual sports should promote excellence in their sport and support the ways sports can foster civic engagement and physical health. The promotion of activist causes through the NGBs’ work is a poor use of finances, human resources, and the NGBs’ public image.

### 3. Coercion and Discrimination

When an NGB such as U.S. Soccer requires athletes to wear images, symbols, slogans, messages, or colors of activist causes on uniforms or other team attire, or places them on equipment used by individuals, the NGB in effect *coerces* each athlete to comply with promoting the NGB’s chosen cause. The player is not given a free choice. A player who refuses to comply could lose the honor of playing on the national team and is likely to face dire career consequences. These consequences, in turn, harm team unity and cohesion.

This coercion prioritizes ideological conformity over athletic merit in the selection of players. A team may lose a top-tier player if that player refuses to



allow his or her body to be a billboard for an activist cause that violates his or her sincerely held beliefs. An example of this consequence is when the soccer defender Jaelene Daniels (née Hinkle), an Evangelical Christian, declined to play with the U.S. Women's National Team in June 2017 when the team made the LGBT+ rainbow part of the national uniform in two international matches. The team sacrificed the contributions of one of the best female soccer defenders in the world for the sake of promoting the LGBT+ cause. Our national teams should try to win sports matches, not show off their political prowess.

Teams that promote causes in the ways outlined in this report risk discriminating against religious believers. Activist causes are inherently controversial and divisive. The whole reason there is activism for a cause is that the cause is not a universal norm; thus, promoting the cause is bound to meet with a mix of support and opposition. Moreover, some causes are controversial at a deep level; causes related to the Sexual Revolution are one example. When teams require the display of images, symbols, slogans, messages, or colors of causes that violate the beliefs of some players of religious faith, their actions place athletes who are religious at an inherent disadvantage in the sport. Such players face a choice of violating their conscience to play or harming their sports careers by refusing to comply.

The USOPC's "Equity and Diversity" policy statement claims to provide Team USA "Equal opportunity to participate without discrimination on

the basis of race, color, religion, sex, age, or national origin."<sup>24</sup> The USOPC has failed to uphold this principle by allowing NGBs to discriminate against athletes whose religious beliefs oppose endorsing LGBT+ causes.

For an amateur sports organization to be "eligible to be certified, or to continue to be certified, as a national governing body," federal law requires that it "provides an equal opportunity to amateur athletes, coaches, trainers, managers, administrators, and officials to participate in amateur athletic competition, without discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, age, or national origin."<sup>25</sup>

A team that makes the LGBT+ flag part of the team uniform, and thus something each player must wear, in effect discriminates against athletes who oppose affirmation of such causes out of sincerely held religious beliefs. This discrimination could apply, for example, to devout Christians, Jews, Muslims, and Hindus from a variety of traditions within each religion.

The Safe Sports Authorization Act of 2017 also requires the USOPC "to promote a safe environment in sports that is free from abuse, including emotional, physical, and sexual abuse, of any amateur athlete."<sup>26</sup> It is not implausible that applying fierce pressure to coerce players to wear non-sporting images, symbols, slogans, messages, and colors could constitute a form of "emotional . . . abuse."

## IV. How to Regulate Yes to the U.S. Flag and Colors

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For the regulation of appearance in sports, there are two general considerations. The first is what is communicated, e.g., images, symbols, slogans, messages, and colors. The second is where these are communicated, e.g., the surface on which these visuals are placed.

### 1. Regulating *What* Is Communicated

What belongs on Team USA uniforms, attire, equipment, and public displays is our nation's flag and our colors of red, white, and blue. Period.

I advise that regulations for Team USA uniforms, other team attire, sports equipment, and public communications should define and restrict what is allowed affirmatively, narrowly, and clearly, instead of relying solely on a list of what is banned.

What is allowed could, for example, include the flag of the USA, respectful renderings of the flag in fabric designs, and use of the colors red, white, and blue.<sup>27</sup>

Activists trying to use sports to promote their causes have shown themselves willing to hunt for lacunae in sports regulations. In international sports, listing what is banned has proven insufficient.<sup>28</sup>

## 2. Regulating Where Communication Takes Place

Regulations banning non-sporting images, symbols, slogans, messages, and colors must extend beyond uniforms alone. At present, American sports teams are using these five media to supplant or supplement national American images and colors with visuals representing activist causes:

1. Sports uniforms: The official uniform for playing the sport, as defined by the regulations of that sport.
2. Accessories to the uniform: Armbands, shoelaces (in sports in which shoes are not already regulated as part of the uniform), etc.<sup>29</sup>
3. Non-uniform team attire: Warm-up jackets, travel outfits, etc.<sup>30</sup>
4. Athletes' equipment: Sticks, bats, racquets, etc.
5. Public displays: Physical locations and on-line media.

In professional sports, the following are also being used to feature non-sporting images, symbols, slogans, messages, and colors. They also should be considered in new regulations for American amateur sports:

6. Match/competition equipment: Balls, corner flags, goal netting, goal posts, lane ropes, hurdles, etc.<sup>31</sup>
7. Field of play: Dyes on grass, ice, etc.

An eighth surface should also be included in any regulations:

8. Athletes' bodies: Body paint, temporary tattoos

# Conclusion

The 250th birthday of our nation should be celebrated with great national sports teams pursuing a focused mission of sports excellence—not political, social, cultural, or other causes. Achieving this goal will require leadership and sound structures of sports governance. I urge President Trump and Congress to enact reforms to solve the problems outlined in this report.

**JENNIFER S. BRYSON, PhD**, is a fellow at the Ethics and Public Policy Center in Washington, DC. She is the founder of the Sports Policy Initiative ([sportspolicy.org](http://sportspolicy.org)), advocating for excellence in sports governance. She lives in Lincoln, Nebraska.

# Notes

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- <sup>10</sup> “Show Your Pride,” Official U.S. Soccer Store, accessed June 3, 2025, [https://store.ussoccer.com/collections/show-your-pride?srltid=AfmBOooM3KbOivtxlS0vGPwDf2vrUb1GjKhO1\\_C\\_yTlD-TqekyiuWxlB](https://store.ussoccer.com/collections/show-your-pride?srltid=AfmBOooM3KbOivtxlS0vGPwDf2vrUb1GjKhO1_C_yTlD-TqekyiuWxlB).
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- <sup>23</sup> “Racial and Social Justice Demonstrations,” United States Olympic and Paralympic Committee, accessed May 15, 2025, <https://www.usopc.org/racial-and-social-justice-demonstrations>.
- <sup>24</sup> “Equity and Diversity,” United States Olympic and Paralympic Committee, accessed June 3, 2025, <https://www.usopc.org/equity-and-diversity>.
- <sup>25</sup> 36 U.S.C. § 220522, <https://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?path=/prelim@title36/subtitle2/partB/chapter2205&edition=prelim>.
- <sup>26</sup> Protecting Young Victims from Sexual Abuse and Safe Sport Authorization Act of 2017, Pub. L. No. 115-126, 132 Stat. 318.
- <sup>27</sup> The shades of red, white, and blue of the flag of the United States are specified in Federal Specification DDD-F-416F. This regulation for federal agencies should be applied to the USOPC as well.
- <sup>28</sup> Consider the example of soccer. What is placed on a player’s uniform is governed by Law 4 of the International Football Association Board’s Laws of the Game. In 2016–2017, Law 4 stated, “Equipment must not have any political, religious or personal slogans, statements or images” (*Laws of the Game 2016/17*, [International Football Association Board, 2016]: 43, <https://www.appi-online.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/FIFA-Laws-of-the-Game-2016-2017.pdf>). In this *same year*, the United States and the Republic of Ireland placed the LGBT+ rainbow on players’ shirts, and the Football Association of England required players to wear LGBT+ rainbow laces in an international game (See Jennifer S. Bryson, “Let All Play: Yes to Soccer, No to Politics,” February 2019, 2, <https://www.letallplay.org/fifa>).  
  
To circumvent the ban on “political . . . images” according to Law 4, some advocates claimed the LGBT+ rainbow was “not political.” The soccer governing bodies of the United States, the Republic of Ireland, and England faced no consequences for their actions from FIFA (the international soccer federation). In subsequent years, the placing of images, symbols, slogans, and colors of activist causes on soccer players’ uniforms and accessories, such as the team captain’s armband, has expanded rapidly and widely.
- <sup>29</sup> An example of an accessory being used for non-sporting purposes (also mentioned above) was when, in June 2022 against Uruguay, the U.S. men’s team wore orange armbands to oppose gun violence. In soccer, the team captain wears an armband, and these are often colored and marked to promote activist causes. At this match, every player wore one of these orange armbands.
- <sup>30</sup> An example of non-uniform team attire being used for non-sporting purposes (also mentioned above) was when, in 2020 against El Salvador, the U.S. men’s team placed the George Floyd/Black Lives Matter–inspired slogan “Be the Change” on the front side of its pregame anthem jackets. Individual players wore slogans on the back side of the jacket such as “Black Lives Matter,” “World Peace,” “Equality,” and “Anti-Racism.” The anthem jackets were used to circumvent Law 4, Section 5 of soccer, which says that “Equipment must not have any political, religious or personal slogans, statements or images.” In soccer, an official team warm-up jacket is not technically part of a player’s “equipment.”
- <sup>31</sup> In June 2017, during a soccer match between the national teams of Germany and Denmark in Denmark, the corner flags featured the LGBT+ rainbow instead of the standard white, neutral flags (See Jennifer S. Bryson, “Corner Flags Are for Soccer, Not for Political Symbols,” Sports Policy Initiative, June 23, 2019, <https://www.sportspolicy.org/post/corner-flags-not-for-political-symbols>). In professional sports, the equipment of individual athletes is used as a surface to display images, symbols, slogans, and colors of activist causes. Examples include ice and field hockey sticks, lacrosse sticks, and softball bats (See William Douglas, “Pride Tape Ingrained Part of Hockey Culture, Spreading to Other Sports,” NHL.com, June 25, 2021, <https://www.nhl.com/news/pride-tape-spreading-from-hockey-culture-into-other-sports-325441298>).