

## **NASSS Public Statement World Rugby Proposed Ban on Transgender Athlete Participation**

With a commitment to creating equitable and accessible spaces for all communities in sport, we, members of the North American Society for the Sociology of Sport, condemns the World Rugby's proposal to ban the participation of transgender athletes. This is a form of transphobia combined with aspects of homophobia, sexism, and misogyny that operate in sport and the larger sphere of national spaces across the world. In particular, with the increase in attacks on trans women of color across North America, the proposed ban on transgender athletes' participation demonstrates the policing of belonging that continues to marginalize and impact transgender communities.

The North American Society of Sport Sociology asks World Rugby to reconsider their stance on Transgender athlete participation. There is no legitimate research that demonstrates any group of athletes poses a greater risk to participants in rugby. Setting aside the ability enforce, alter, and evolve rules in ways that prioritize the safety and well-being of all participants, the targeted exclusion of specific athletes represents discrimination. The exclusion of non-cis gender women from World Rugby is inexcusable, unsupported by any legitimate scientific evidence, and harmful to people who are denied gender self-identification.

In addition, NASSS would like to continue to reaffirm its public stance against female eligibility rules that serve as effective forms of sex testing, policing of gender identities, stigmatization of non-normative identities, and the upholding of the heteronormativity and homonormativity. World Rugby's previous policy on transgender athletes followed the International Olympic Committee's (IOC) policy. Guidelines issued by the IOC in November 2015 are physically invasive and psychologically damaging. We urge the World Rugby to reconsider their stance on the exclusion of transgender female athletes, and to discontinue the use of findings from the "IOC Consensus Meeting on Sex Reassignment and Hyperandrogenism November 2015."

The continued imposition of gender binaries represents the ongoing impact of colonialization, the tyranny of Western views on gender, sexuality, and dualisms, and the erasure and silencing of other gendered identities. Inherent in these views is a denigration or devaluation of women. For example, IOC guidelines state: "To avoid discrimination, if not eligible for female competition the athlete should be eligible to compete in male competition." This effectively bars women whose bodies fail to meet arbitrary standards, regardless if cis or trans, from competition. It's time to protect all bodies, gender expressions, and self-identifications in sports, and to allow all bodies, gender expressions, and gender fluidity into sports.

Respectfully,

**NASSS Political Advocacy Committee**

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