

On March 30, 2021, Sarah Hirshland, CEO USOPC published a letter defining respectful demonstrations on the topic of **Racial and Social justice**. The recommendations adopted came through a USOPC athlete-led standing committee representing athletes from all NGBs. The USOPC approved and communicated the recommendations that athletes may use their voice in support of Racial and Social (R&S) justice demonstrations.

USA Volleyball, in concert with the USOPC, is extending support to athletes, coaches, and staff who choose to respectfully demonstrate in support of R&S justice efforts.

Athletes, coaches, and staff who engage in respectful demonstration for the purpose of supporting R&S justice efforts may do so, in accordance with USOPC guidelines, without fear of sanctions. Below is an overview including content taken directly from USOPC policy with some language adapted for USA Volleyball sanctioned events.

Key Terms

(a) Racial & Social Justice Demonstration:

("R&S Demonstration"): A Demonstration, which does not include any Impermissible Elements, that is explicitly aimed at (1) advancing R&S justice; or (2) promoting the human dignity of individuals or groups that have historically been underrepresented, minoritized, or marginalized in their respective societal context.

Examples of conduct that will be considered a R&S Demonstration include:

- Wearing a hat or face mask with phrases such as "Black Lives Matter" or "Trans Lives Matter" or words such "equality," "justice," "peace," "respect," "solidarity," or "inclusion."
- Orally advocating for equity/equal rights for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) individuals, or other historically underrepresented, marginalized and/or minoritized populations.
- Holding up one's fist on the podium and or during the national anthem.
- Kneeling on the podium or during the national anthem.
- Advocating for equal treatment of historically underrepresented, marginalized, and/or minoritized groups around the world, or against systemic barriers to such equal treatment.
- Advocating for communities free from systemic police discrimination against Black individuals or other marginalized populations.

(b) Impermissible Elements:

Any element of a Demonstration that (a) advocates specifically against other people, their dignity, or their rights, which may include Hate Speech; Racist Propaganda; or threatening, abusive, or Discriminatory Remarks; (b) physically impedes or discourages participation; (c) causes physical harm to others or to property; or (d) violates applicable laws. Impermissible Elements include but are not limited to the use of slurs, discriminatory remarks or gestures that denigrate, ridicule, or mock a person or persons based upon their race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, economic status, nationality, or country of origin.

Examples of conduct that will be considered an Impermissible Element:

- Wearing a hat or face mask with a hate symbol or hate speech on it. *A list of recognized hate symbols can be found at <https://www.adl.org/hate-symbols>.

- Using language expressing hatred or Discriminatory Remarks towards a historically minoritized or marginalized group, including but not limited to BIPOC, LGBTQ+ individuals, and individuals with disabilities.
 - Making hand gestures affiliated with hate groups, like white supremacist or terrorist signs.
 - Violent protests or acts that damage property at the USA Volleyball sanctioned event venues or physically threaten or harm other people.
 - Actions/behaviors physically impeding athletes' right to compete or otherwise interfering with a competition.
 - Display of historically discriminatory signs or flags, such as the Confederate flag.
 - Defacing, distorting, or causing physical harm to a national flag.
- Protests aimed explicitly against a specific country, organization, person, or group of people.

(c) Demonstration:

Any verbal or non-verbal communication that involves expression of views or grievances, engaged in by one or more persons, for example speech, hand gestures, the posting or wearing of signs, flags or banners, messages communicated via clothing, or body tattoos, that express or communicate a point of view or grievance.

(d) Discriminatory Remarks:

Acts, behaviors, or speech that jeopardize the equitable treatment of individuals and groups, with particular focus on those that have historically been underrepresented, minoritized, or marginalized in their respective societal setting.

(e) Hate groups:

Any group that promotes hatred, hostility, and/or violence towards a historically underrepresented, minoritized, or marginalized population.

(f) Hate Speech:

Any kind of communication in speech, writing or behavior that attacks or uses pejorative language or Discriminatory Remarks with reference to a person or a group on the basis of their religion, ethnicity, nationality, race, color, descent, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, ability, or other identity factor.

(g) Historically underrepresented, marginalized, and/or minoritized groups:

Groups in a given societal context that have been the target of systematic injustice, inequitable treatment, and limited access to societal representation.

(h) Racial Justice:

Intentional actions for the equitable treatment of racially minoritized individuals and groups with the goal of eliminating racial inequities, deconstructing systemic racism, and counteracting racist narratives that target racially minoritized individuals, including BIPOC.

(i) Racist Propaganda:

Acts, behaviors, or speech relying on racist beliefs and ideas that promote racial injustice, cultivate racist narratives, disguise systemic racism, and/or target the human dignity of racially minoritized individuals or populations.

(j) Social Justice:

Intentional actions for the equitable treatment of individuals and groups that have historically been underrepresented, marginalized, and/or minoritized in their respective societal setting.

Any retaliation against an athlete who engages in a R&S Demonstration is prohibited.

While R&S Demonstrations have the support of the USOPC and USA Volleyball, other third parties may have different reactions.

Benefits and Risks of Participating in a R&S Demonstration:

Potential Benefits	Potential Risks
Positive fan reaction	Negative fan reaction
Demonstration sparks conversation and influences change	Demonstration is misunderstood or misinterpreted
Personal fulfillment	Potential alienation from teammates or sport community

A demonstration may be halted if deemed necessary in the interest of safety.