



Written by [Dr. Duke Pesta](#) on April 23, 2021

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Woke Sports

In the contemporary West, we live in a culture where virtue has been replaced by display. In other words, the trumpeting of virtuous attitudes — the endless boasting about our good intentions and motivations — is too often confused with actual virtue. This kind of “peacock” virtue, or “virtue signaling,” is long on talk and short on action. Nor is it new. It has been a hallmark of socialism down through history, where members of the collective were required to repeat and disseminate the wise and virtuous actions and slogans of the state, whether true or not.



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The Christian understanding of virtue, by contrast, is anchored in the actual behavior of individuals. It is a personal decision to choose right behavior over wrong. We need look no further than the Gospels to find the antithesis of socialism’s self-serving politicization of virtue. In the sixth chapter of Matthew, Jesus makes the case for a very different approach to virtue: “So when you give to the needy, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by men. Truly I tell you, they already have their full reward. [But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing](#), so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.”

By comparison, modern sporting culture is all about virtue signaling, where every success on the field or court becomes an opportunity for individual display. In today’s sporting events, multi-millionaire football players produce choreographed dances to commemorate two-yard touchdown receptions, and even wealthier basketball players celebrate flamboyantly over “gimme” breakaway layups on the basketball court.

As the kudzu-like creep of socialism continues to expand implacably across the landscape of American culture, it is no surprise that organized sports have rapidly and with great fervor ceded themselves to the new woke order. The ubiquity and theatricality of professional sports have long provided athletes the wealth and cultural capital so attractive to socialist reformers. The performative nature of sport, once brought to ideological heel, offers broad and socially diverse stages on which to play out the lessons of collective thinking and socialist virtue signaling. And as is the case for Hollywood culture as well, the huge payoffs in money, access, and opportunity granted to celebrity athletes for little more than playing games breeds a legitimacy gap. In the psyches of athletes who are rewarded so well for doing so little, the distance between their humble origins and spectacular wealth and privilege is easily filled with preachy “look at me” virtue signaling and politically correct boasting that in many ways resembles socialist displays of virtue. It is no surprise that kneeling and attention-seeking athletes such as Colin Kaepernick couch their public displays of virtue in the language of socialistic change.



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MLB: From All-American Pastime to Globalist Preoccupation

Of course, it has not always been this way. For almost two centuries, sports in America generally celebrated our national history and way of life. Again, like Hollywood actors up until the last few decades, the great athletes of the 20th century tended to be quite patriotic, especially during war time, putting lucrative careers on hold to enlist, as did legendary Boston Red Sox slugger Ted Williams. Or Jesse Owens, who was able to look past the glaring imperfections of his own country and stand against the evil ambitions of Nazism. The all-American story that was the rise of Major League Baseball, so unique to the United States, offered the model: Any tow-headed farm kid could grow up to be president, or even Shoeless Joe from Hannibal, MO. And with each decade that passed, it became less clear which dream job was more glamorous and significant.

And that small-town, working-class dream was not limited to waspy Mickey Mantle-ish native sons, but included the swarthier immigrant-class masses of Jolt-in' Joes and Yogi Berras, as well as the great Negro leaguers who were finally integrated on ball fields, years before they were welcomed fully into primary schools and private diners. You would need to travel back but a few decades to recall when baseball was as American as apple pie, hot dogs, and Chevrolet. Now MLB is a global brand and an Olympic sport, with much of the game's best talent arriving from foreign shores. Yet baseball is still in the most precarious situation in terms of youth participation and cultural clout among the big three American sports (football, basketball, and baseball), and is therefore the most susceptible to virtue signaling, given that demographics seem to be moving against them, as fewer and fewer African-American kids are participating. Only according to today's racially obsessed protocols can you have a league under crisis for lack of African-American involvement, despite huge numbers of Latin players and growing representation from Asians.

All of which makes Major League Baseball's ill-considered decision to strip Atlanta of the 2021 All-Star Game the more head-scratching. In March, Georgia's Republican Governor Brian Kemp signed into law the "Election Integrity Act of 2021." Kemp explained that Georgia was taking "another step toward ensuring our elections are secure, accessible and fair" in the wake of numerous reports of election irregularities during the fall 2020 presidential vote. Kemp was careful to articulate that "ensuring the integrity of the ballot box isn't partisan, it's about protecting the very foundation of who we are as Georgians and Americans."

Predictably, and led by race-baiting activist and failed Georgia gubernatorial candidate Stacey Abrams, the media immediately branded the act as an overt attempt to suppress black voters from casting ballots, largely due to the burden of requiring valid identification to participate in voting. Abrams, who has claimed that any challenge to Joe Biden's 2020 election win over Donald Trump — despite the many complaints and irregularities — is a form of racist voter suppression, nevertheless still insists without evidence that the 2018 election for governor of Georgia was stolen from her. Despite the fact that 18 other states require ID for voting, the ACLU insisted, "Many Americans do not have one of the forms of identification states [deem] acceptable for voting. These voters are disproportionately low-income, racial and ethnic minorities, the elderly, and people with disabilities. Such voters more frequently have difficulty obtaining ID, because they cannot afford or cannot obtain the underlying documents that are a prerequisite to obtaining a government-issued photo ID card." In a statement rife with white paternalism and "white-knighting," the tone-deaf ACLU can't even see their own racism at work. African-Americans need IDs to drive, to fly, and to cash their government COVID payouts, but they are



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supposedly unable to muster them for voting.

This manufactured outrage boiled over in less time than it takes to boil a Georgia peanut, even though a recent Rasmussen report showed that “75% of likely U.S. voters believe photo identification should be required to vote,” including 60 percent of Democrats and 69 percent of black voters. Scenting Republican blood in the red-state waters of Georgia, some critics — whose positions in government and media should have taught them better — made the hyperbolic leap to Jim Crow: Senator Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.) claimed that this “despicable voter suppression bill” will “take Georgia back to Jim Crow.” MSNBC’s Joy Reid described the bill as a “Georgia Jim Crow law” aimed at “suppressing Democratic votes.” And even Vice President Kamala Harris’ niece spoke out, calling the bill “The new Jim Crow, except that it’s actually the old Jim Crow.”

Corporations, too, went on the attack, with both Coca-Cola and Delta demanding changes, “or else.” But it was Major League Baseball that rushed to be the first to punish Georgia for demanding transparency in elections. Commissioner of Baseball Robert D. Manfred, Jr. exclaimed, “Major League Baseball fundamentally supports voting rights for all Americans and opposes restrictions to the ballot box.... Fair access to voting continues to have our game’s unwavering support.” The league further announced that it was moving the 2021 All-Star Game from Atlanta — a majority black city and the playing home of recently deceased hall of famer Hank Aaron — despite the fact that neither Stacey Abrams nor Georgia Democrats called for a boycott of the game. President Biden tottered precariously toward the nearest microphone to insist that the Georgia bill “makes Jim Crow look like Jim Eagle.”

Shortly after Biden threw his weight behind Major League Baseball’s decision to punish Georgia, the league moved the All-Star Game to Colorado. The precipitous and unprecedented move underlines how potentially fraught such decisions are with the American people in general, most of whom believe that sports leagues should stay out of politics. MLB’s decision was immediately hammered for a whole litany of hypocrisies, failures to do due diligence, and ham-fisted contradictions. For starters, Colorado *already has voter ID laws on the books*, which completely undercuts the politically correct messaging that MLB was pushing. A simple visit to the Colorado secretary of state’s website would have explained to MLB that “all voters who vote at the polls must provide identification. If you are voting by mail for the first time, you may also need to provide a photocopy of your identification when you return your mail ballot.”

Further, the move to Denver’s Coors Field is a move to a much-less racially diverse city and state. Many have pointed out the stark disparities: Atlanta is roughly 51-percent black, and only 41-percent white. Denver, on the other hand, is 76- percent white and only nine-percent black. Statewide, Georgia is 60-percent white and 32-percent black, while Colorado is 87-percent white and less than five-percent black (4.67 percent), which means that Georgia has more than three times the nationwide percentage of blacks, while Colorado has almost three times less. According to estimates, Atlanta’s Fulton County, where the game would have been played, will lose about 100 million dollars in revenue because of the move, and much of that money would have gone to black and other minority small-business owners. The percentage of black citizens in Fulton County is over 44 percent. Not only is Major League Baseball’s decision to move the game going to devastate black communities in Atlanta, it will also disproportionately benefit primarily white businesses in Colorado.

An editorial in the *Colorado Springs Gazette* entitled “Other View: Major League Baseball Errs in Moving All-Star Game” lays out in stark terms the intended and unintended consequences of MLB’s



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decision to go full woke, with a clarity seldom found in legacy media:

As irrationality so often manifests in irony, Manfred and his organization did all of this because the Georgia Legislature updated its voting regulations. In doing so, it established an election system with similarities to Colorado's. It means protecting outcomes for the majority of law-abiding, taxpaying, upstanding Atlanta residents who deserve fair elections that reflect majority will. In Atlanta, most of those voters — people who deserve equal protection in the democratic process — are Black. Maybe this is news to the MLB, and we hope not, but Black people have picture IDs just like white voters in Colorado.

The closing line is devastating and all too true: "As we have seen too often, white liberals often proceed with just enough information to cause trouble for minorities they claim to care about."

Major League Baseball has teams in red cities and blue cities, in liberal states and more conservative ones. Clearly, the league overreacted to the racial shakedown tactics of people such as Stacey Adams and Georgia Senator Raphael Warnock, who wanted MLB's support and pressure, not its outright boycott. As so often happens in the rush to tout one's wokeness, the first corporate organizations to the front of the virtue-signaling queue are the ones who reap the most progressive kudos, despite being the ones to make life much more difficult for the very minority communities they are pretending to support. But no amount of facts or evidence slows down the corporate virtual-signaling stampede, and, the Daily Wire reports, "More than 100 corporate leaders met ... to plot their opposition to voter integrity laws across the United States following [false statements](#) made by far-left activists and top politicians like Democrat President Joe Biden," including leaders from American Airlines, United Airlines, Levi Strauss & Co., Walmart, ViacomCBS, Ariel Investments, LinkedIn, Twitter, and AMC Theaters.

And like the other major American sporting leagues, Major League Baseball is very keen on calling out the perceived mote in the eye of Georgia's voter accountability law, and very blind when it comes to addressing the Louisville slugger-sized beam in their own eye. The league operates a Player Development Center in Communist China that, according to its website, focuses on "academics, baseball, and the social and cultural development of each of the participants to come through the doors." MLB's hypocritical double standard is especially egregious, given China's horrendous human-rights record. The U.S. government and international organizations have accused China of enforcing slave labor and engaging in genocide against their Muslim minority Uyghur population. But rather than target China with the same smugly ferocious threats of boycott, MLB praises its Chinese-based development center on its website: "MLB has formed a complete talent training pathway in China, comprised of learning centers, MLB Cup, and connections with domestic and foreign universities." It goes without saying that any potential baseball talent languishing in Chinese labor camps need not apply. After all, someone's got to sew the uniforms and manufacture those cleats, right?

Calling Foul: The NBA's Double Dribble

Well before Major League Baseball was striking out in Atlanta, the National Basketball Association was busy inflicting flagrant fouls on logic and intellectual consistency with its double-standard approach to social justice. The 2019-2020 NBA season was consumed with political controversy in the wake of international Black Lives Matter protests. Even before the season began, players were protesting what they called targeted police brutality against blacks, highlighted by the death of George Floyd. Players



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wore shirts, bandanas, and masks promoting BLM; they knelt for the National Anthem or opted to remain in the locker room until it was over. The NBA even painted “Black Lives Matter” on and around the courts for all to see.

The league also allowed players to wear social-justice messages on their jerseys for the entirety of the season. The messages included such slogans as “Say Their Names,” “I Can’t Breathe,” “Power to the People,” “Justice Now,” “Sí Se Puede” (Yes We Can), “Liberation,” “Listen to Us,” “Stand Up,” “Ally,” “Anti-Racist,” and “I Am a Man.” Three hundred (out of 350) players wore jerseys carrying those messages, including high-profile white players and international stars. All season, NBA players and coaches foregrounded victims of police “racism” while speaking during media sessions. Last August, the Milwaukee Bucks opted not to play a playoff game in protest of the shooting of Jacob Blake in Wisconsin (no charges would eventually be filed against the officer who shot Blake). Other playoff teams joined the protest, and no NBA games were played for three days. After meetings involving players and coaches, the majority voted to resume play. Calls for the league to focus on the game of basketball were decried far and wide as racist and anti-American. Silence was violence and complicity, we were told by players, coaches, and league talking heads.

By the time October rolled around and the NBA finals were under way, a cacophony of voices on the Right and Left were calling out the league’s double standard regarding China. The triggering event was an October 4 tweet from Daryl Morey, the general manager of the Houston Rockets. The tweet shared the popular slogan “Fight for Freedom, Stand with Hong Kong.” Rockets owner Tilman Fertitta immediately distanced the team from the statement and even suggested that the Rockets were not a “political” team, despite their full participation in Black Lives Matter protest symbology.

Under duress, Morey eventually apologized and removed the tweet, but not before a tidal wave of threats, demands, and ultimatums were lodged by the Chinese Communists, who were already dealing with international outrage after Hong Kong protesters staged large-scale demonstrations over China’s move to allow extradition from Hong Kong to the mainland. The Chinese Basketball Association ended all cooperation with the Rockets, and Chinese-run state television suspended all broadcasts of games. New Jersey Nets owner Joseph Tsai posted on Facebook that “1.4 billion Chinese citizens stand united when it comes to the territorial integrity of China and the country’s sovereignty over her homeland.”

Despite the full-frontal social-justice blitz already taking place around Black Lives Matter issues, the league’s formal statement about the China controversy was woefully inadequate and triggered considerable backlash in the United States:

We recognize that the views expressed by Houston Rockets general manager Daryl Morey have deeply offended many of our friends and fans in China, which is regrettable. While Daryl has made it clear that his tweet does not represent the Rockets or the NBA, the values of the league support individuals educating themselves and sharing their views on matters important to them. We have great respect for the history and culture of China and hope that sports and the NBA can be used as a unifying force to bridge cultural divides and bring people together.

All during this trying time, there was never a single posting from anyone in the NBA that dared to remember “our many friends and fans” among the local police.



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China has been a major and very lucrative NBA market since the Rockets selected Chinese center Yao Ming with the first pick in the 2002 draft. The impact of Ming's very successful career accelerated the globalization of the NBA. So, when the NBA's official statement failed to quell the backlash, Nate Silver, the league's commissioner, sat down for an interview with *GQ* magazine. He responded to the double standard by saying, "But I guess that people could say, 'Well, it's inconsistent with our values.' And I'd say, 'Do you make decisions based on one issue?'"

If Silver had the historical knowledge and intellectual integrity to have suggested that this "one issue" was actually communism itself — across its long, murderous history, and through its dark trajectory of totalitarianism, and below to the depths of its endless repression — then perhaps he might be forgiven for the seeming reductionism. But instead, Silver meant China's strong-arming of Hong Kong. That one issue. Not the Falun Gong, or the bullying of Taiwan and Tibet, or the million-plus Uyghurs in concentration camps, or the coverup surrounding the COVID-19 virus, or the persecution of Christians, or the harvesting of organs, etc.

To be clear, the one real issue concerning Silver was money — lots of it. It is the same one issue that prompted Warriors' coach Steve Kerr to deflect away from Chinese atrocities and pivot back to the comfortable and profitable criticism of America. When questioned if he's ever been asked about human rights during his trips to China, Kerr replied: "No. Nor has [America's] record of human rights abuses come up either.... People in China didn't ask me about ... people owning AR-15s and mowing each other down in a mall." Even the so-called king, LeBron James, begged off by throwing the first amendment under the bus:

We all do have freedom of speech, but at times, there are ramifications for the negative that can happen when you're not thinking about others and you're only thinking about yourself.... So, many people could have been harmed, not only financially but physically, emotionally, spiritually. So just be careful what we tweet and we say and what we do even though, yes, we do have freedom of speech. But there can be a lot of negative that comes with that, too.

No word from his royal highness about the negatives that might accrue from enforced child labor. Those sneakers aren't just going to stitch themselves!

In 2016, North Carolina passed H.B. 2, also known as the "transgender bathroom law," which prohibited local governments from compelling private businesses to allow trans persons into the bathrooms of their preference. The law was a response to a trans-friendly bathroom ordinance passed by the Charlotte City Council earlier in that year. Immediately after H.B. 2 was passed, corporations across the nation banded together and sent a letter of protest to North Carolina Governor Pat McCrory. Not only was the NBA part of the protest, but Commissioner Silver announced that Charlotte would no longer host the 2016 NBA All-Star Game, which was transferred to New Orleans.

In an interesting and ironic twist, a Chinese court ruled in February of this year that homosexuality can be characterized as a psychological disorder. Given the NBA's unwavering commitment to LGBTQ issues, one might expect a response to China at least as definitive as the actions taken against North Carolina. But as of the time of the writing of this article, there is no indication that the NBA will challenge China in any way. As usual, the NBA's players and leadership put profit above principles



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when it comes to the Chinese Communists. But as the experts at Human Rights Watch have documented, this is not a zero-sum game, as China's human-rights abuses have accelerated since American corporations such as the NBA began accessing Chinese markets. Once again, woke sports not only fail those they pretend to support, but very often make the plight of persecuted minorities even worse, from Atlanta to Beijing.

With every new shameless act of sports-league virtue signaling, athletes and sports writers begin to push back. Former star players such as Herschel Walker and Burgess Owens spoke out boldly against NFL double standards, Owens parlaying his activism into a seat in Congress. Former superstar quarterback Bret Favre blasted the woke NFL: "I know when I turn on a game, [I want to watch a game](#). I want to watch all the important parts of the game, not what's going on outside of the game, and I think the general fan feels the same way.... I can't tell you how many people have said to me, 'I don't watch anymore; it's not about the game anymore.'" And talented African-American sportswriter Jason Whitlock was banned from Twitter for daring to criticize self-described, Marxist-trained, BLM founder Patrisse Cullors for buying four houses and moving into an upscale white neighborhood, all while demonizing white people and the wealthy.

Game Over: Global Profit Over Global Social Justice

A key idea driving the woke sports we described in this article is the push toward globalism. Global markets, of course, mean increased access to new customer bases and rapidly expanding profits. As we have seen, the same global corporate entities that condemn — and in some instances foment — inequalities in the United States are nevertheless complicit and downright adamant about the limits of their self-serving wokeness. They will condemn the United States, but calling out the palpable evil of regimes such as Communist China is a bridge too far.

Woke sports is only truly woke inside the snug and altogether safe borders of Western culture. Outside those borders, "wokeness" means little more than sleepwalking through emerging markets in places where slavery, sex trafficking, political assassination, censorship, repression, and terrorism are good for business. So it goes, and leagues and superstar players add to their personal billions while children slave away making basketball shoes in "the people's republic." So-called Black Lives Matter leaders — self-identified Marxists — busily buy up expensive houses and property, having gotten rich condemning the very free markets that now shower them with wealth so lavishly. But people of color dying in China is acceptable collateral damage, as long as the endorsements and shoe deals keep coming. Some role-models these.

Even as world leaders and corporations line up to support the World Economic Forum's push for the "Great Reset," it should come as no surprise that athletics play an integral part in the marketing and fundraising plans of our new global overlords. The corporatization of sports, the drive to politicize sports in the service of globalist ideology and the erasure of national borders, is indeed what is called for in a new UN advocacy brief entitled "[Recovering Better: Sport for Development and Peace — Reopening, Recovery and Resilience Post COVID-19](#)." The document details how sports can help usher in a brave new world that prominent globalists are hoping to foist upon us, whether we like it or not. First and foremost, sports can assist in the UN's efforts to implement Agenda 2030: "The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recognizes sport as an important enabler of sustainable development. It highlights the growing contribution of sport to the realization of development and peace in its



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promotion of tolerance and respect.” Of course, to the UN, sustainability means restrictions on liberty, mobility, private property, and self-determination. The UN recognizes the power of athletes to manipulate their fans and seeks to enlist sports in the global centralization of power.

According to the plan, sports are to be coopted so that they become “vehicles to develop and bolster the social and emotional skills in children and young people.” In addition, sports can be used for “promoting positive behavioral changes, public health practices and social safety measures, and for de-stigmatization of mental health issues.” In addition, according to the UN, sports can be a way to promote “gender equality,” “reduce inequality,” promote “sustainable cities and communities,” and be a “strong voice” for “climate action.” But all such utopian idylls — a fancy way of saying elaborate and unrealistically dangerous cons — come at a very large cost to freedom, liberty, and national sovereignty. In more ominous ways than ever before, American sports are indeed more than just a game. They are a way of life. And death.



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