

Berlin, Germany, 1936. The summer Olympics are sweltering with tension and controversy. Though he ultimately allows blacks and Jews in the Olympics, Hitler uses the games to try to promote his Nazi regime, layering the Olympics with undertones of racism.

Sochi, Russia, 2014. Uncertainty and fear flurry around the winter Olympics. Calls for boycotts and protests are rampant due to the relentless, harsh anti-gay laws that Putin has enacted with an iron fist. After the disapproval from other countries regarding Russia's policies, this is a perfect opportunity to promote a more favorable world view of Russia. Putin has welcomed gay athletes and visitors to the games, but the oppression still hangs heavy in the air.

The Olympics, dating back to 776 BC, is a time for the world to come together and celebrate through sport and competition. But when hundreds of countries with varying beliefs and values are brought together, there's bound to be conflict every now and again.

Here in the United States, the marriage equality movement is alive and running full speed ahead. Seventeen states, as well as Washington D.C., have legalized marriage between same sex couples. On the opposite side of the spectrum and the world, Russia is going strong in its fight to suppress the LGBT community. Article 6.21 of the Russian law bans "the propaganda of nontraditional sexual relations" with punishments ranging from fines to jail time to deportation out of the country.

When two polar opposite views are brought into the arena, the heat starts rising. Though Obama is against America boycotting the Olympics as a whole, he has announced that he and his family will be boycotting the games. These games have become an opportunity in many's eyes to advocate for their cause.

"Historically the Olympics have been used to gain political momentum in different issues and Russia does have a pretty backwards legal system so anything that could have an impact on Russia's laws could be a good thing," senior Nels Carlson said.

With an issue as mainstream as the LGBT rights, calls for reform have been increasingly growing louder.

"It's a problem that they do need to fix," freshman Jacob Robertson said. "It's affecting the people of Russia and also people all around the world."

Though the situation for LGBT members in Russia is looking grim, some have hope that the Olympics is a turning point for the marriage equality movement.

"I think this will ultimately help the movement," freshman Olivia Mark said. "If the world keeps showing Russia that what it's doing is wrong, it'll hopefully change soon."

However, this issue isn't limited to just two sides of an opinion. There's another majority that lies in favor of simply keeping politics out of the events all together. They believe that the Olympics are a time to come together to celebrate sports, not argue their issues.

"I'm not against gay people whatsoever, but we shouldn't bring politics into sports," senior Sam Cashion said. "If you have the skill to play, then play. It doesn't matter if you're gay, straight, black, white, or whatever. It's about the games. People can't control what they are, but they can control their performances in the sport that they love."

Concern over these games extends further than just the contradicting political stances. Fears regarding potential terrorist attacks are lurking over the games. Female suicide bombers known as "black widows" have been crawling through the international news, spreading anxiety in their hunt for revenge for their slain terrorist husbands. Russia has mounted an intense security operation in the city and Sochi officials are currently on the search for three of these black widows.

Though the 2014 Winter Olympics are sliding in with controversy and fear, hope remains that once that torch is lit Feb. 7, the problems and differences can be snuffed out, even for only just a bit. The Olympics are a symbol of unity. There will always be differences and issues among the world, but if people can put all of that aside long enough to come together and compete in the sports they love, perhaps there is yet hope for the world.