



To:
USA Gymnastics
Karen Golz, Board Chairman
David C. Rudd, Vice Chairman & Secretary
Leslie King, VP of Communications

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From:
The United States Parkour Association
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OPEN LETTER
30 NOVEMBER 2018

Dear Chairman and Members of the Board

It has been brought to our attention that at the Congress to be held on December 2nd and 3rd in Baku there will be a vote to change the statutes of the Fédération Internationale de Gymnastique (FIG) to ratify the inclusion of parkour as the 8th discipline of gymnastics.

Earlier this year, representatives of the largest parkour and freerunning communities in the United States established the United States Parkour Association as the national governing body for Parkour, Freerunning, and Art du Deplacement. We serve as custodians of the philosophy, practice, and integrity of our sport, for and on behalf of the national community, and are the sole governing and administering body for our sport.

Our founding and supporting organisations represent tens of thousands of practitioners across 33 states and the bulk of the parkour economy in the United States, and should serve as to demonstrate that Parkour is autonomously organized.

While we recognize that there are some overlapping physical skills, and benefit to practitioners in mutual practice of both parkour and gymnastics, Parkour is a robust independent discipline that is historically and culturally different from gymnastics, including modes of practice, apparatus, coaching methodology, and competition.

While we are open to collaboration, mentorship, and support in the growth of our discipline and organization, we reject unilateral intervention and actions of the FIG or any other institution in this respect. Yet over the last year and a half the FIG has proceeded ultra-vires, creating parkour events and activities not only without the consent or support of the larger international parkour community, but outside the power given by its statutes.



This disregard for the autonomy of our community and the legal bounds of the FIGs operation, not only concerns us deeply as a sign of bad governance, but leads us to fear the legitimate loss of the values, practices, and qualities that have made parkour unique and powerful if it were to be adopted and developed directly by the FIG. They also have misrepresented in their recent communication to their community the nature of the support of our international community. Not only does the international community generally resist the appropriation of our discipline by FIG (see the rising online trend of #wearenotgymnastics across all major social media platforms), but as of this morning, November 30th 2018, several parkour governing bodies worldwide have issued open letters of resistance, including the UK, Spain, Australia, New Zealand, Switzerland, Denmark, and Poland.

We also wish to draw your attention to recent events on October 18, 2018, where the majority of the members of the FIG Parkour Commission issued an open letter of joint resignation, citing little to no transparency, no involvement of the international parkour community, and the precise disregard for our views and values in the implementation of parkour as a member of the FIG family of disciplines mentioned above. This echoed a very similar outcome to the FIG's initial foray into international competition in May of 2017 where the event (APEX INTL 2017) was cancelled by the organizing company representing the parkour community, APEX School of Movement.

Ultimately, if Parkour is to truly find longevity and success alongside its sister discipline of Gymnastics, it will be most likely achieved in partnership with the existing community, not at odds. This assessment is in alignment with the 2016 report '*Youth Perceptions of the Olympic Games*', commissioned by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and written by Dr. B. Wheaton and Dr. H. Thorpe. This report recommends working with sport-specific federations instead of trying to integrate disciplines like parkour in to pre-existing structures (I.E. FIG) "that may not understand and respect the unique cultural value systems and be aware of the important issues within these sports," This report also concludes that the best chance of achieving 'buy-in' from action sport communities, and thus longer-term sustainability of these activities, is in collaboration with the national and international federations emergent in these sports.

We recognize USAGs dedication to govern with a willingness to learn and an openness to new possibilities, as mentioned in your bylaws. We too share these values, and believe there is much we can learn from each other in the working towards increasing inclusion and participation in parkour. Starting today, we can create a precedent of mutual respect and positive working relations that will facilitate this future collaboration and partnership, to the benefit of both parkour and gymnastics.

To summarize, the United States Parkour Association, in representation of our national community, firmly opposes the unilateral appropriation of our discipline by the FIG and any other external organization. **We respectfully request and urge that the United States Gymnastics votes NO on the inclusion of parkour in the FIG charter at this years Congress in Baku. We**

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also hope that you will recognize our autonomy and thereby accept the respect and relationship we are offering.

At the end of the day I believe we are all working towards the same ultimate vision--a culture that empowers people through sport, that provides safe and diverse training spaces, and supports coaches and practitioners alike in their growth as they discover their natural human potential. Let's do this as partners. We hope we can meet in the near future to discuss how we can work together to grow this discipline in a way that respects both our autonomy as a sport and draws upon the potential of that partnership.

Thank you



Caitlin Pontrella
Board Chair, United States Parkour Association



Michael Zernow
Vice Chair



Mark Toorock
Board Treasurer



Blake Evitt
Board Secretary



Amos Rendao
Board Member

Please find the 40+ regional, state, and local organizations and gyms endorsing this letter and organization listed publicly on our website at www.uspk.org.

CC:

International Olympic Council
Fédération Internationale de Gymnastique
The United States Olympic Council
President's Council on Sports Fitness & Nutrition
Parkour Earth