SPORT AT THE SERVICE OF HUMANITY: BREAKING THE BARRIERS OF INTOLERANCE THROUGH SPORT

The intercultural cooperation between a sports powerhouse like China and a universal rights organization like Special Olympics is a potential game-changer. Yao Ming, the Chinese basketball superstar, and Danny Jordaan, the CEO of Special Olympics, are working together to build schools for children with intellectual disabilities in China, demonstrating the remarkable power of sport to challenge barriers of intolerance.

Yao Ming’s journey from a global basketball star to a champion for social justice began when he joined Special Olympics as the first Global Messenger in 2011. His transformation is not unique; many athletes have used their platform to advocate for social change. Shadi, for example, overcame years of bullying and discrimination to find his voice through Special Olympics.

The transformation of Shadi highlights the power of sport to break down barriers of intolerance. In addition to the many other inspirational stories shared by the athletes, Danny Jordaan’s reflection on the principles that inspired him – respect, joy, balance, inclusion, and enlightenment – is a powerful testament to the transformative impact of the Special Olympics movement.

Inclusion, one woman’s vision: She was born with a disability, bullied, and told to give up her dreams. Through Special Olympics, she found a community and discovered her strengths.

Involvement – from zero to hero: Speaking out against intolerance is not just for the elite or the rich. It is for all of us. Danny Jordaan is an example of someone who used his platform to make the world a better place.

Inspiration – legend to legacy: There are many inspirational figures, but Danny Jordaan believes unequivocally that prejudice, intolerance or bigotry of any form has no place in sport. This is highlighted by the SSH Declaration of Principles, which then leads us to experience the movement.

If you have a story to tell of how you or a relative have overcome adversity, please share it with us at info@sportforhumanity.com.

Dr. Richard Lapchick

THIS IS US

The transformation of Shadi, along with the many other inspirational stories shared by the athletes, is a testament to the transformative impact of the Special Olympics movement. The movement, which began as a way to provide opportunities for athletes with intellectual disabilities, has expanded to include athletes with all forms of disabilities.

The Special Olympics is an example of an organization that recognizes a group of people who were being marginalized because of an attribute possessed either by them or their ancestors or by society.