

February 19, 2014

Dear Olympic medalists:

On behalf of public health organizations including Corporate Accountability International, Yale Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity, Campaign for a Commercial Free Childhood, Small Planet Institute and their supporters, we'd like to wish you a heartfelt congratulations. Your achievement has made you an inspirational role model for people all over the world. Today, we ask you to continue your leadership by pledging not to accept sponsorships from McDonald's, a corporation that drives the worldwide epidemic of diet-related disease.

For more than four decades, McDonald's has sponsored the Olympics in order to forge an undeserved association between health and its unhealthy brand. By aligning itself with athletes who represent the epitome of health, the fast food corporation deflects public health criticism. Sponsoring the Olympics and high-profile athletes enables McDonald's to mislead people worldwide into thinking that its brand is healthy.

Many prominent Olympic champions such as LeBron James, Gabby Douglas, and Dara Torres have enlisted with McDonald's in recent years. While on the surface, these relationships might seem innocuous, they are powerful marketing tactics designed to associate the fast food corporation with symbols of health and build brand affinity and trust among children.

But you can stand up to this misleading marketing. You can be a voice for children's health like Olympic medalist boxer Amir Khan, who said in 2012 that McDonald's sponsorships are "clearly sending the wrong signal to kids and young people. If we want them to be healthy and educate them to eat healthily, we need to think about approaching them in a different way, especially around sport."

We hope you will join past and current Olympians in publicly renouncing any current or future endorsement, sponsorship and marketing deals from McDonald's. Children around the world, today and in generations to come, will thank you.

To the happy, healthy future of sport,

Sara Deon
Value [the] Meal Campaign Director
Corporate Accountability International

