



Episode 381 – Not In My Sport Initiative | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

A graphic for Episode 381. At the top left is the Whistlekick Martial Arts Radio logo. In the center, 'EPISODE 381' is written in large, bold, yellow-outlined letters. To the right, 'Not In My Sport Initiative' is written in white. Below this, the hashtag '#NOTINMYSPORT™' is displayed in a large, white, distressed font. Underneath the hashtag, a paragraph of text explains the initiative's goal to revolutionize athlete safety. At the bottom of the graphic is a black and white photograph of a diverse group of children and adults, some holding sports equipment like a basketball and a football helmet.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Hey everybody, thanks for coming by this is whistlekick martial arts radio episode 381 and today we're going to discuss not in my sport. An initiative launched help address the problem of abuse in martial arts. My name Jeremy Lesniak I'm your host for the show and the founder whistlekick. I love martial arts and that's why we do what we do here at whistlekick. When we do, we do a lot and you can find everything that we do at whistlekick.com if you want to check out some the products we make over there, you can get 15% off just by using the code `podcast15`, also supports the show, let us know that some of you buying the stuff are folks listening to the show, just ties altogether makes it really nice for us on the back end. Reminds us that there's a reason we're doing this because let's be honest, a lot of time and money going into this show and after all we are business. Of course everything podcast related is at whistlekickmartialartsradio.com, we do the show twice a week for you all for free and that's where we keep all the back episodes, we don't put any of them behind the pay wall nothing like that, so if you're new to the show, check it out, go back, we've been doing this since April 2015, it's been a while. Speaking of a while, today's episode features a conversation with a past guest someone that I've now known for a while because of the show. Master Tanya Panizzo came on with episode 38 we become best friends and we've talked about a number of things. Now today's conversation around on my sport came out of a personal conversation. She was telling me something she was working on, something that's been very exciting and well, I'm not gonna spoil it, I will just let you hear what she has to say this is some pretty great powerful stuff and it affects all of us. Everyone needs to hear this so please listen.



Episode 381 – Not In My Sport Initiative | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

Master Panizzo, welcome back to whistlekick martial arts radio.

Tanya Panizzo:

Thank you for having me.

Jeremy Lesniak:

You might be tied now with Sensei Scott Bolon for being on the most, I'm not sure. It's a small group of people who have been on more than once. You were, if I remember, you came on the first on episode 38, so we going back a ways.

Tanya Panizzo:

Yes we are. Couple of years.

Jeremy Lesniak:

So audience just to kind of catch you up, you know I met Master Panizzo through the show and we've gotten to know each other and we've talked and we've become friends and you're back today to talk about something that kinda dovetails in with a subject that's come up a couple times and and I'll let you talk about what that is, but what is not in my sport?

Tanya Panizzo:

Not in my sport is an initiative. It's a campaign to use another word where we are really trying to be aggressive with the education educational pieces, where athletes coaches, parents and any athletic personnel in any sport even though it really was rooted in tae kwon do which is my sport, but it's a movement to help bring effective education to all of these different athletic department and physical sexual and emotional abuse in martial arts and then subsequently through all sports as well.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Okay. And of course you know, unfortunately there have been a number of news articles that have popped up over the last two years and the one that we brought forward I think the most episode 295 we discussed the USA taekwondo lawsuit involving the Lopez family and a number things and you and I have spoken off-line, of course about that, and because of your involvement with not in my sport, you know some stuff about what's going on there. So, I think now correct me if I'm wrong but this subject really got big because of what happened with USA gymnastics is that fair to say?



Episode 381 – Not In My Sport Initiative | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

It's fair that it brought it to the limelight

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah I'm not saying it was the first time it happened.

Tanya Panizzo:

No no now it certainly isn't and other NGB Olympic level sports have been engaged in this challenge for a long time that challenges trying here have the victims voices heard, administrators to follow through, education should be effective gymnastics and in light of everything like Larry Nasser, it really did become more recognizable to the public and that's how we are where we are now.

Jeremy Lesniak:

What makes this so challenging? I'm sure there are people listening saying well just, when this happens, just fire people, throw them in jail it seems so simple to solve the problem. But clearly it's not if it's happening so pervasively, so what makes it so challenging.

Tanya Panizzo:

Well, the challenge is that there are many moving parts. So there are the athletes that are working towards their goal, there are coaches that are looking to not only build but sustain their reputation as well as you know organizations and then administrators, and then the US Olympic Committee which really want to bring home medals for the United States. So there are a lot of moving parts and they all have to be working together to create a culture where victims/survivors are treated with respect and dignity. And when one of those pieces are not in place, then we open up the door for me the abuse to not only continue but then eventually perpetuate and propagate in these types of environments and a lot of people don't really understand, how does this happen. I think a lot of adults in particular, nod their head and say no understand how abuse happens and I understand how coaches could be that. It's a small percentage, I do wanna be clear about that that majority of coaches that go into athletics really didn't care about the character development as well as the skills development of their athletes but it's a small number that is doing a large amount of the abusing and that's really what we are focusing on. So, I don't make it sound like athletics is a ground for that, like a breeding ground for that. We see it also in villages organizations, school systems so it's out there related to that authority figure but the majority of coaches are good. But at the end of the day what we're really trying to do is make it so that all of those parts are working together in tandem so that when the bad behavior is happening and people are being abused, that they are heard and then the due process happens and they are effectively dealt with the persons who are perpetrating that and right now we have a lot of missing pieces. And that's what



Episode 381 – Not In My Sport Initiative | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

not in my sport is about, it's about filling in those pieces so that everybody is on the same page and not to go on too much but part of the issue is systemic in the organization and what they're trying to achieve. So for example whether it [00:07:29.21] women committee whether it's the NGB, USA taekwondo association and USA gymnastics or whether it's even like a religious is organizations say the Catholic Church, or a Baptist Church, oftentimes the systemic issue is that there is more concern for what the organization looks like to the public than there is to the participants in that organization so there's more concern about making the NGB look good and it is caring for its athletes. So, that's really the biggest cultural shift we're gonna have to change.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Now you've brought up religious organizations a couple times and I think there's an interesting corollary there, I was listening to a report just a couple weeks ago and they were contending that it's roughly a 4% of the people participating that have opportunity, I'm stumbling over my words, 4% of the people are the problem there we go, that's the best way to put it, within pretty much any organization that we tend see it as being more prominent in certain groups because of the way it's presented such as the Catholic Church but that there numbers and maybe these it's because they're internal numbers, I don't know, I didn't dig that deep it's roughly 4% within the Catholic Church and its roughly 4% within the general public here in the US. Are there numbers we have for Olympic sports? Does does it fit that [00:09:14.13].

Tanya Panizzo:

Well 1 in 4 children will be abused in some manner physically, emotionally, sexually. And the data, there hasn't been tons and tons of research to say is happening in exporting environments but one in four children will be abused in their lifetime and so the research is now especially in light of what's been going on is really trying to narrow in on where are these types of things happening? Is it happening in the recreational athletics, is it happening at a higher level. Is it happening at a church youth group, is it happening in the home? I mean a lot of it is trying to figure out where a lot of that is happening. There have been some really good research papers out there that have estimated that around one and eight athletes will experience some form of abuse under the umbrella or within the context of sport, so let's remove the sexual assault and just go with the Coach that is throwing a ball in an athlete's face because they're angry and those types of things all constitutes abuse as well. [00:10:30.13] and the one thing that we really tried to educate people on in the not in my support initiative is because sports in America is part of our culture and so what that really know that it shifts the social norm, so I want you to imagine an instance where you saw a coach upset at the performance of the player whether a martial arts or basketball or whatever, throwing chairs and throwing balls, I mean I've seen kids gets smacked in the face at Chicago tournament or shaken by their by their uniform and called name and all along, the rail our parents and their spectators participating in the same behavior. But we would not tolerate that in a high school if a child did bad on a math test then a teacher threw a chair, we [00:11:26.01] violin



Episode 381 – Not In My Sport Initiative | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

concert. So what we've done is we've created this shift and altered what is considered a norm in the athletic environment and that's also part of the issue. So that's also something that not in my sport initiative that's trying to address, so that everybody is educated on how we view sports in America and how it's affecting our behavior as adults.

Jeremy Lesniak:

How do we start to separate that? You know we holdup sports as being so important, for so many of us you know something night football is an almost a tribalistic ritual and we tend to look at sports in and our even secondary or tertiary participation is being such an important part of our lives. And how many people watch the Olympics because there the Olympics not paying attention to any of those individual sports the other four years. How do we start to separate that social element because it sounds like what you're talking about, we've gotta do something about that so we can get the people that are observing to be more willing to step up and say this isn't okay because it's different it's just not okay and we need to stand up against it.

Tanya Panizzo:

Right well I think a lot of that comes with the educational pieces, so what we tried to do with not in my sport is to bring this education to parents. It's exciting to go to an event, it's exciting to see a great match at a taekwondo tournament or a karate tournament, it's great to see the Olympics and watch these amazing feats of gymnastics and figure skating and it's exciting because you feel part of that process, you feel part of their dream because they have been working toward this goal, to be able to be on this stage, we also learned a lot about the struggle that it takes to get there and the sacrifice that it takes to get there. So, that's what's really great about sports and they're really is a great deal of character development and life skill that comes along with sports so I don't wanna say that sports are bad because they're not there so much good with them. But I think what happened is that over time we have lost sight of what it truly takes to get there and how we can it not only care for our athletes holistically with their mental well-being and physical well-being and not accusing the to exploit different agenda and putting that athletes I think a lot of that had been lost. So the educational modules bring that to light and parent by parent, coach by coach, athlete by athlete, it starts with just giving them the knowledge to know that oh my gosh that isn't right. You now, I'm not supposed to be doing even though I feel like I want to do that and how do I manage that giving them some strategies for coaches or for players to be able to ultimately modify that behavior or for parents to recognize harmful situations not only for their own kid but perhaps for other athletes and other environment. For example like for the instance where there was an athlete sitting in a chair during a break for a taekwondo tournament, who was losing and the coach smacked him in the face in between rounds, what's really great is how with the not in my sport initiative as we educate referees and we educate parents, for those two people the coach and player sitting in a chair, there are 50 people standing around that ring it will now have the



Episode 381 – Not In My Sport Initiative | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

knowledge to know that is not okay now I know what to do. I think before, there are a lot of them saying that's not okay but they really didn't know what recourse to take after that and so giving them the education is really gonna empower them to start making changes in real time

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah and we may have supposed listening who will say well, I'm not in a school or I am not participating in a group that goes to high-level competition. You know were not tae kwon do, we're not judo were not destined for the Olympics

Tanya Panizzo:

Go to a Sunday soccer field in your area, it's there. You're gonna see that parent who's you know, angry and throwing stuff. You're gonna see the coach who's doing the exact same thing calling the kids a bunch of babies or whatever you're gonna see it it's everywhere.

Jeremy Lesniak:

But do these people who aren't at that level, do they have access to the educational materials of not in my sport?

Tanya Panizzo:

Yes. So not in my sport isn't just for the high level. While were running it, through the NGB, USA taekwondo at the Chinese center there at Colorado I mean, I'm running it any community that wants to have educational module. I ran for my own community just for parents that wanted to participate, we did it for athletes of all sports. We have lacrosse players, hockey players, volleyball players it was just the mix of athletes that had all come together. And I think the other really interesting component which I think has also made it very effective, which is a little bit different than some of the other training coaches and parents that's related to the abuse in sports is we actually also teach the athlete. So in order to coach you have to take certain training modules related to this particular topic in order to get your credentialing. Parents if they want access to certain areas has to do the same and have their background check and all that but there's nothing really for the athlete. So I feel and I have felt for a long time that that has been part of the missing piece. They we're talking about kids that you know are 12 and up for the most part that particular module that are well aware of other things that impact her life socially related to dating, peer to peer abuse, why are we not educating them on some of the other pieces that make them vulnerable like the power differential between coach and player, what is physical abuse by my coach, and why is it called abuse when you know, a peer on my team does it but it's not when my coach does it. And so, what's great about not in my sport is even the athletes have access to



Episode 381 – Not In My Sport Initiative | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

the modules and we're all multi-sensory so they're up moving around learning the concepts as they are using competition which is at the root of them as a competitor to be able to grasp the concept. So that part of the difference of not in my sport versus some of the other training opportunities.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Good stuff. And before we start to give people links on where they can learn more and everything, one of the things that has always complicated questions like this for me is that we have a bit of this dichotomy in traditional martial arts. We have what is socially acceptable, socially normative and then we tend to recognize that sometimes martial arts we do things a little bit differently. You know we have these strongly entrenched hierarchies and rank and things like that. How does someone especially if there's someone who's kind of on the outskirts, navigate those two pressures that can be conflicting?

Tanya Panizzo:

How do they navigate, like following what would in essence be like a chain of command, is that what you're asking or?

Jeremy Lesniak:

It's a broad question but I'll give you a specific. So let's say someone is observing a martial arts class and they see the instructor writing a line that they're not quite sure which side you're coming down on is it discipline or is it abuse? Are they abusing their authority as a martial arts instructor or are they really dialed in to the kid and they know that pushing them just a little bit in this way might seem harsh in the moment but is ultimately for the benefit of the child.

Tanya Panizzo:

Right. I own a martial arts school and over the course of I don't know, 15-20 years of running a school as we encounter parents in the public and parents of athletes, there are some parents who believe that like even calling someone master is not right. I mean they feel that it is and puts them in a subservient position they don't agree with that and there are others that understand that it's similar to professor or something else. So a lot of it comes from that particular individual and their perspective and what they are also bringing to the table, as to what perhaps, they would on the surface constitute this is right or not right. But I think that fundamentally what we should all know is that when we are emotionally abusing by calling an athlete whether the child or adult derogatory names you know, demeaning in public or private, if we are touching them in an inappropriate way privately or in public that those are all wrong behaviors and other things that were teaching not only adults but also kids. But on the surface, there are always going to be people who think, I mean I know a number of people who feel that you



Episode 381 – Not In My Sport Initiative | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

know, we should like saying sir and ma'am is okay but calling them master is not. A lot of it again is coming from where are they coming in their walk of life but part of that also comes with some common sense. If you are seeing an athlete that is under performing, and the consequence perhaps is you know they have to do so many you know right hand free throws to be able to improve that, along with laps, that's one thing versus picking up a ball and throwing it in their face and and calling them out of their name.

Jeremy Lesniak:

And if people want to find information about not in my sport, I assume there's some stuff on the web?

Tanya Panizzo:

Yes. So not in my sport is in its infancy right now. Although, we're doing a lot of programming, I have to say we have built a great deal of momentum right now but although were doing a lot of programming I have to say where we have built up a great deal of momentum. So notinmysport.org is the landing page right now for the campaign. Now I also run a company it's called fighting spirit safety and that's what not in my sport is running under. So that is how you would best be able to reach me, that's how you would be able to book a program, that's how you would be able to get module to your parent, your coaches, to your athletes. So you can check out both of those, fightingforyoursafety.com And then also, There's Notinmysport.org and that website, the not in my sport website, will be getting built out over the coming month as we start to build up more Programming and Acquire More Funding to do so.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Awesome, yeah absolutely important. Stuff it's critical that we start to address this not just as just as martial artist but as human beings I mean the stuff needs to stop. So of course we will link those websites from the episode whistlekickmartialartsradio.com for anybody that might be new.

Tanya Panizzo:

I appreciate that

Jeremy Lesniak:

I think the piece that I'm coming away with from this conversation and you didn't put it this way, but I'm guessing you'll agree, this is everyone's problem, this is everyone's responsibility.

Tanya Panizzo:



Episode 381 – Not In My Sport Initiative | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

Yes it is. If I could say here I've had a number of coaches say to me after they've taken the modules for various reasons [00:23:53.10] or whatever. And I'll say you know if you're interested to either have it out to your parents or for your school, and a lot of them say, you know what, there's not a problem in my school and vet my teachers very well and I've known my teacher for a long time and I feel really comfortable that there's nothing like that going on in my school. And what I really tried to emphasize with them is the situation that happened within my own school. I had a taekwondo athlete who all of a sudden started drastically underperforming, was doing very poorly in school and was having other kind of emotional issues and acting out in a certain way that was very harmful and the parents came to us as owners of the taekwondo school saying that he has got all these problems and we asked what is different in his life, what is new and this particular athlete had started a travel baseball league and he valid part of the new club, had been going on the road as well and through the course of a lot of due diligence and over time, we found out that he had been sexually abused by that particular baseball coach. So at the end of the day, it wasn't happening in my gym, it was happening to somebody that we knew and whose parents came to us because they did trust as another coach is his life so yes it is a community issue, you know yes you may have created a very safe in your school or in your environment but it affects everybody there isn't somebody out there that we don't know that in some way hasn't been affected by this. So why wouldn't you provide as many educational opportunities for your community, kids and adults, if you had the means to do so. So that's how [00:25:50.21] it's wonderful that you feel that way now what if they came to you because it happened at school. Do you know how to respond to that and so that's my answer to that.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Great and I fully agree. Thanks for coming on thanks for being willing to share this and I'm sure we'll have you back at some point as things get built out to talk more about what not in my sport is doing.

Tanya Panizzo:

Great, thank you so much.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I think is easy for us as martial artist to hone in on the good, to forget that there are those of us in the martial arts community who just aren't good people and unfortunately some of those not good people, some of those bad people, well they get elevated to positions of power whether that be through rank or professional standing or in some of the cases were talking about today Olympic coaching. Some pretty high-level stuff. Now we all bear responsibility, if you love martial arts, you are part of the solution or at least you should be. And that's why I want to have Master Panizzo on to talk about this today. This is something that affects the martial arts and thus it affects all of us and as far as I'm concerned, the only



Episode 381 – Not In My Sport Initiative | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

way we stamp this out is by standing up collectively individually in stopping this crap from happening. You better believe I wish I swore on the show cause right now I'd be throwing a bunch of around cause I'm tired of the stuff happening. It's hurting people and it's damaging our reputation. So check out notinmysport.org and fightingspiritsafety.com for resources and more information on what we can do and how we can do it so we can finally stamp this crud out. We got those websites linked as well as the other episodes that we talked about today whistlekickmartialartsradio.com don't forget the code `podcast15` gets you 15% off anything at whistlekick.com. This would be a great episode share not because it promotes us, in fact I rarely say this but if you want to strip out the intro and the outro, take all the commercial stuff out of it, we'll permit that for this episode only so there's no question what our motivation is here. But if you want check out the other things we got going on like social media that's [@whistlekick](https://www.facebook.com/whistlekick) on Facebook twitter YouTube and Instagram and of course you can email me directly at jeremy@whistlekick.com. I thank you for your time, thank you for your consideration of this really important issue. Until next time. Train hard, smile, and have a great day.