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Chicago and Participation in the 1936 Olympics

At least nine researched studies have dealt with the 1935-36 Olympic participation-boycott controversy, largely from official, German and New York perspectives. This paper addresses the role of five groups in the Chicago area. Avery Brundage and Clarence Bush directed a national "participation headquarters" campaign which was very active in the Chicago area. Contributions to the Olympic Fund included \$14,000 from the Chicago Tribune final boxing tryouts, \$10,400 from track and field meets and tryouts and the NCAA district, and \$9,100 from 332 contributors to the Chicago Olympic Fund. Newspaper coverage of the controversy by editorial writers, sports columnists and cartoonists provided publicity for both sides. African-American involvement by athletes and the *Chicago Defender* was influenced by reports of Nazi racism. Both sides sought the support of the sizeable German and Jewish communities. The evidence is drawn from the Avery Brundage Collection, Chicago newspapers, Olympic

Committee publications and other archival and manuscript sources. I argue that the involvement of Chicagoans in the controversy reflected the diversity of American opinions on the propriety and efficacy of sports boycotts to achieve political and social objectives. Writers, officials, participants, and contributors, and ethnic, racial and institutional loyalties played a major role.