



In communities where basketball is not just a game but a lifeline, the sport’s imagery is used to articulate a vision of resistance, resilience, and hope. In numerous urban centers, artists have turned to basketball-related art as a means of engaging with complex social issues. Murals painted on courts, for example, may depict scenes of protest or honor local activists, using the court as both a literal and metaphorical battleground for social change. These murals often include powerful symbols—fists raised in defiance, portraits of community leaders, or slogans calling for justice—that transform a space of play into one of activism and awareness.

Basketball jerseys and equipment have also been repurposed to carry activist messages. Designers and street artists often integrate political messages into sportswear, making a statement with bold graphics and evocative slogans. These items are worn during protests and rallies, turning them into mobile canvases that broadcast calls for change. The transformation of everyday athletic gear into political symbols underscores the intimate connection between the sport and the broader sociopolitical landscape. At one end of the spectrum, you can revisit the powerful image of NBA players wearing T-shirts adorned with the words “I Can’t

Breathe” in the wake of the police killing of unarmed New Yorker Eric Garner and subsequent acquittal of the offending officer, or the way Black Lives Matter messaging was prominent throughout the NBA’s stint in “the bubble” during the Covid-forced move to Florida that the league enacted in 2020. A smaller, but equally powerful, example of this is found in independent art project *Unarmed*, created by Raafi Rivero, which is centered around basketball jerseys Rivero creates “in memoriam of Black victims of police violence,” as it says on unarmed.co. “Our mission is to honor the fallen, work to change a system that should protect us, and hold those that harm us accountable. Founder Raafi Rivero created the first Unarmed jersey in 2013, not long after the acquittal of Trayvon Martin’s murderer. Each jersey is designed in the colors of a victim’s local sports team. The jersey number is the person’s age. Stars, if present, represent how many times the person was shot.”

This book shows the full scope of basketball art, much of it entirely upbeat, which is great. Basketball is fun, and the art that it inspires can be as well. But basketball is also played in a world filled with issues and inequality, and it is more than OK that the sport is sometimes used to convey messages about issues much bigger than the game.

**STREET PHOTOGRAPHY  
OFTEN TELLS  
STORIES OF RESILIENCE,  
COMMUNITY, AND  
THE TRANSFORMATIVE  
POWER OF SPORT.**



Few places capture the fusion of a city’s cultural vibrancy and its love for basketball like Buenos Aires, Argentina—especially in the colorful streets of La Boca, where the game unfolds against a backdrop of striking urban art (opposite).

One of the coolest courts in the world, *Balance* by Studio Akacorleone transforms a Lisbon playing surface into a vibrant mural that symbolizes duality, connection, and the search for harmony in sport and life (above).