

ABSTRACT

Title of Document: NARRATING TRAGEDY: FROM KENNEDY
TO KATRINA, FROM SPORTS TO
NATIONAL IDENTITIES

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On September 11, 2001, Major League Baseball commissioner Allan ‘Bud’ Selig postponed the baseball season to offer proper respect to that day’s terror victims. On September 16, 2001, when the major league season resumed, sports columnists across the nation-state referred to the New York Yankees as ‘America’s team.’ When the Yankees made their run to the World Series, many columnists argued they ‘healed the wounds of the nation.’ Likewise, as water settled in the French Quarter after Hurricane Katrina, columnists suggested the New Orleans Saints were ‘capable of healing the nation’ and referred to them as ‘America’s team.’ When the Saints returned to the Superdome in 2006, many columnists suggested the region and nation were both healed.

This dissertation uses discourse analysis to reveal the constructions of and contestations for dominant versions of national identity and memory in which sports columnists engaged in the context of tragedies like the John F. Kennedy assassination, 9/11, and Hurricane Katrina.

In examining sports columnists’ work over five decades, I offer a historical

overview of sports columns and their relationship to dominant discourses of race and national identity. In the process, I contend that the voices comprising mainstream sports columnists through the 1960s generally constructed a mythological national identity that privileged whiteness. By the late 1990s, however, the voices comprising mainstream sports columnists included both those who constructed and confronted white hegemony. Interestingly, some of those columnists supporting whiteness were minorities; and some of those confronting whiteness were themselves white. Hence, I argue that whiteness is a standpoint, not a condition of skin color. Likewise, I contend that mainstream sports columnists confronting whiteness work within a system often identified as producing hegemony in order to dismantle it, and potentially exert a great amount of cultural power.

NARRATING TRAGEDY: FROM KENNEDY TO KATRINA, FROM SPORTS
TO NATIONAL IDENTITIES

By

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This is for my daughter. I wrote this as you slept on my shoulder. It is for my wife, without whom I would not have pursued excellence; and love would be a distant stranger. It is for my mother, who showed me the import of stories. It is for my father, whose morality is something to which I aspire. It is for my sister, whose compassion is enviable. It is for Matt, whose friendship extends beyond brotherhood. It is for my E-town boys, who I miss everyday. It is for Kathy Galvin, whose interest and support in my academic career has been a foundation of strength for me. It is for Sellars House and the people who lived in it, who never let me forget that life can be better than good. And it is for a better world.

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Chapter 1: Narrating Tragedy: From Kennedy to Katrina, From Sports to National Identities

Introduction

John F. Kennedy's body lay in Dallas, Texas. National Football League Commissioner Pete Rozelle phoned the White House press secretary Pierre Salinger in Honolulu, Hawaii, to ask whether or not to postpone the games scheduled for play in cities such as Green Bay and New York for that weekend. After receiving "what amounted to the dead president's permission to play," Rozelle announced the games would take place as scheduled, saying "football was Mr. Kennedy's game."¹ Although the NFL continued its planned schedule, images of athletes' bodies playing football did not flicker on the nation's television screens that Sunday. Instead, the President's funeral aired on all three networks. The only people to witness the games, the athletes, and the tributes to Kennedy in the stadiums were those in attendance. Despite that only a fraction of the citizenry saw the games, Red Smith of the *New York Herald Tribune* and Arthur Daley of the *The New York Times* were among many sports columnists from major American cities who vilified Rozelle for shaming "the nation" by "h[anging] up [the NFL's] business as usual sign."²

Today, sports columnists writing of sporting events that follow a national tragedy still refer to Rozelle's decision to continue play in 1963 as they gauge, and theorize, the 'appropriate' response sport should take in service to the nation. For instance, after the

¹ See Charles P. Peirce, "Black Sunday: Forty Years Ago this Weekend, as America Grieved for President John F. Kennedy, Stunned NFL Players Were Told to Take the Field," *Sports Illustrated*, November 24, 2003, 58.

² Red Smith, "De Gustibus," *New York Herald*, November 28, 1963, sec. 4. Also see Arthur Daley, "A Strange Afternoon," *The New York Times*, November 25 1963, sec. L; Jack Mann, "Reaction at Aqueduct—Tears, Shock, Disbelief," *New York Herald*, November 24, 1963, sec. 4. All quoted below.

World Trade Center fell on September 11, 2001, and as concrete and metal smoldered in the New York air, citizens consumed stories of terror, loss, and confusion. Major League Baseball Commissioner Allan Huber ‘Bud’ Selig postponed the games scheduled for play in full knowledge that Rozelle’s greatest regret as Commissioner was allowing the NFL season in 1963 to continue as scheduled. Columnists lauded Selig’s handling of the major league’s schedule by contrasting it with Rozelle’s decision to continue the 1963 NFL season after Kennedy’s assassination. Collectively, these columns were underpinned by an assumption that sport pays a service to national identity in the context of tragedy.³

Moreover, five days after the World Trade Center fell, the major league season resumed, and columnists elevated the New York Yankees (as well as other teams in the New York area) to national significance, calling them “team America” or “America’s team.”⁴ Later in the season, when the Yankees made their run to the World Series, many columnists suggested they ‘allowed the nation to come together’ or provided a catharsis for the nation’s citizens.⁵

Similarly, as water was still settling in the French Quarter after Hurricane Katrina, many Americans watched their fellow citizens in New Orleans raging at the late response of the George W. Bush administration. Images of black citizens on rooftops and in the Superdome endure. Although the NFL season was not postponed, some columnists, such as Jon Saraceno of *USA Today*, suggested that it should have been, and again referred to

³ See Mike Dodd, “The World of Sports is on Hold,” *USA Today*, September 12 2001, sec. C.

⁴ See Hal Bodley, “Selig Facing Difficult Decision on Resuming Games,” *USA Today* September 13, 2001, sec. C.; Edward Wong, “Runs, Hits, and Healing at Stadium,” *The New York Times*, September 26 2001, sec. 1.

⁵ See Steve Wilstein, “Patriotism and Protest at Yankee Stadium,” *The Associated Press*, July 22 2004: <http://www.lexisnexis.com>; Roger Angell, “Can You Believe it?” *The New Yorker*, November 26 2001; William Rhoden, “This Time, A Deeper Appreciation,” *The New York Times*, October 24, 2001, sec. S.

the Rozelle decision after Kennedy's assassination.⁶ In addition, many columnists wrote of the New Orleans Saints in a fashion reminiscent of how their counterparts had written of the New York Yankees in 2001. Weeks after the storm, on September 11th and 17th 2005, respectively, the New Orleans Saints, displaced from the water-and-wind-damaged Superdome, played their first away game in North Carolina, and their first 'home' game against the New York Giants at Giants Stadium.⁷ Many columnists suggested the Saints team was "capable of healing a reeling nation" and many others referred to the Saints as "America's team," again associating sports teams from tragedy-stricken cities with a national identity.⁸ To make sense of the hurricane and the images of black bodies writhing in hunger, columnists drew connections between the coincidental date of 9/11 for the Saint's first game of the 2005 season and their first 'home game' being played in the Meadowlands Stadium, home of the New York Giants; between the terrorists that demolished the World Trade Center and the water that flooded New Orleans streets; and, yes, between the teams representing those two cities. A year later, the Saints returned to the Superdome in New Orleans for the first time since the storm. Many columnists deemed the first game in the Superdome after Katrina as proof of New Orleans' return to "normalcy."⁹ Likewise, as the Saints made their surprising run to the NFC championship game in 2007, columnists suggested the Saints provided New Orleans a sense of

⁶ Jon Saraceno, "NFL Should Have Delayed its Openers," *USA Today*, September 9, 2005, sec. C.

⁷ Although the game took place in New Jersey, columnists, I show in chapter five, emphasized the Giants' association with New York in writing of the Saints' role in their stories of Katrina.

⁸ See Michael Silver, "The Saints Come Through," *Sports Illustrated*, September 19, 2005; Harvey Aaraton, "Just Sports Business as Usual If the Saints Go Marching Out," *The New York Times*, September 20, 2005, sec. D; Michael Wilbon, "It's Not a Rivalry if the Other Team Never Wins," *The Washington Post*, September 19, 2001, sec. D; Dave Anderson, "The Saints Are Now America's Team," *The New York Times*, September 15, 2005, sec. D.

⁹ Nancy Armour, "As New Orleans Rebuilds, Saints' Return Another Step Toward Normalcy," *Associated Press*, August 11, 2006, <http://www.lexisnexus.com>; Israel Gutierrez, "For One Night, New Orleans can be 'Normal,'" *Miami Herald*, September 20, 2006, <http://www.lexisnexus.com>; Judy Battista, "Evening of Good Will Turns Giants' Way," *The New York Times*, September 20, 2005, <http://www.proquest.com>.

normalcy and hope. In making this claim, these columnists referred to the role the Yankees were said to have played in providing New Yorkers and Americans a sense of normalcy after 9/11.¹⁰ Hence, not only did columnists use President Kennedy's assassination as a cultural memory to offer meaning to Katrina, but they used the Yankees' run through the 2001 playoffs to do so as well.

Interestingly, too, the 2001 World Series was, at the time, the most watched World Series in history. Similarly, the Saints first 'home games' of both 2005 and 2006 registered to be among the most watched regular season NFL games of each year.¹¹ These games following tragedy were watched by a bigger portion of the nation-state than those games unassociated with tragedy. In a time of tragedy, and in an era characterized by niche-marketing, these stories that columnists told about sport and nation, then, did have a hold over the imaginations of readers. Still, they often seemed to have served an ironic end: To establish a definition of 'American identity' that would also marginalize many of those consuming the columns.

My own experiences watching the 2001 major league baseball postseason in which the New York Yankees made an emotional run to the World Series are bound up with memory of September 11th and a nostalgia concerning baseball that would be easier to leave uncomplicated. Likewise, the euphoria I felt when the Saints won their first home game of 2006, their first game in the refurbished Superdome, is one that I wish I could couple with an assertion of the refurbished state of New Orleans. Despite such desires, the columns that constructed these sporting events as meaningful to the nation-

¹⁰ Lisa Olson, "A Story of Hope, but There's Much More to Do," *New York Daily News*, January 21, 2007.

¹¹ All statistics gathered from Nielsen ratings, 2001, 2005, 2006.

state and region experiencing tragedy led to a set of research questions that underpin this dissertation:

- What counts as a national tragedy to mainstream sports columnists writing in major cities?
- How have these sports columnists affirmed and/or resisted dominant definitions of national identity in their work immediately following national tragedy?
- What identities and memories are privileged in these sports columnists' constructions of national identity over time? Which are omitted through that privileging?
- What rhetorical conventions are found in sports columnists' work in the wake of national tragedy?
- How do race, gender, class, sexuality, and behavior figure into how sports columnists construct nations?

To answer these questions, I selected columns with two criteria in mind. First, the columnists had to label the moments in question, at one time or another, 'tragic' or some derivation of that word and/or suggest sport paid a service to memory or national identity in the context of tragedy much of dominant culture perceived as a national tragedy.

Second, the columns had to be published in mainstream, major city markets, and/or have been nationally syndicated.¹² In large part, then, the columns cited in this dissertation

¹² From here on in, the word 'columnists' will be used in place of mainstream, major market and/or nationally syndicated columnists. Moreover, as I look at single tragedies over time with the criteria

were selected for me. This method required that I read the canonical writers of sports columns in each era. To write of mainstream sports columnists as a group in 1963 required, for instance, that I examine the nationally-syndicated and Pulitzer Prize winning Red Smith and Arthur Daley, both of whom identified President Kennedy's assassination as a 'tragedy.'¹³

However, the method begs further elaboration. The stories of sports' service to nation after tragedy often played out over time because the teams that columnists constructed as offering meaning to national identity played more than a single game following the tragedy in question. Moreover, because sports columnists used memories of past tragedies to deliver significance to contemporary ones, mainstream sports columnists' stories of national tragedy could take place and be revised over years. Many sports columnists, for instance, are still telling and revising their stories of 9/11 and Katrina while referring to Rozelle's decision not to postpone the 1963 NFL season. Hence, to answer the research questions, I began by reading columns written in the aftermath of what dominant culture and the columnists themselves identified as national tragedies. This work was performed by looking at microfilm and microfiche of publications dated in the immediate aftermath of tragedy. But my reading, I realized, had to continue until columnists ended their stories of tragedy or until I grasped the tenor of each columnist's story of tragedy and its association with sport. Hence, I used database searches for each tragedy about which I write in this dissertation. These searches were

mentioned above, there is not a set number of columns I looked at for each event. Rather, I analyzed columns that fulfilled the criterion for how they constructed national identity in their work.

¹³ Likewise, the columns are mainly from mainstream newspapers because mainstream magazines like *Sports Illustrated* and *The Sporting News*, which are included, had far fewer columnists than newspapers, and were weekly rather than daily. Moreover, most the most regularly published text that resembled a sports column in *Sports Illustrated* through the late 1960s was "Scorecard," an editorial. As such, through the chapters focusing on the 1960s, the focus is on newspaper columns. Afterwards, however, sports columns from *Sports Illustrated* are included.

comprehensive in nature and built off the knowledge I gained in the microfilm and microfiche searches. In databases, I used terms specifically related to the tragedy in question and ‘nation,’ ‘national identity,’ and ‘memory.’ Some of the terms I used, too, were those that columnists themselves had related to the tragedy. For instance, in the search for columns written about President Kennedy’s assassination, I used the terms under ‘Army versus Navy,’ and ‘nation.’ I did this because in days following the assassination, columnists had already constructed that game as meaningful to how Kennedy would be remembered in the nation. Likewise, on occasion I included columns that informed understanding of those written in the context of tragedy, arrived at through these searches. For instance, chapter three begins with a column from *The New York Times* by Robert Lipsyte that chronicles Martin Luther King’s association with sport and his use of it to confront white privilege. Hence, while this column was written prior to his assassination, it is included because it informs one way in which King himself was related to sport prior to his death. Ultimately, this method required sifting through over one thousand sports columns to find the nearly two hundred that met the criteria established above. More specifically, there were many columns written in the aftermath of tragedy that did not speak of the tragedy itself. These were not included in the study. Likewise, there were columns that the search method outlined above returned that would not speak to sports’ service to nation or memory, but they had those words in columns. These were also not included in the study. These methods, I believe, offered a comprehensive view of mainstream sports columns in which sport was said to have paid a service to national identity in the aftermath of tragedy.

By examining these columns and answering the above research questions, I hope to arrive at some conclusions about the identity privileged in dominant narratives of nation sports columnists in major markets engaged in since the 1960s. I also hope to answer:

- What identities do mainstream columnists and their audiences seek to imagine as ‘American’ in moments of tragedy?
- What are the power dynamics involved in such a definition?

Sport, Imagined Nations, Legitimate Memories

In *Tangled Memories*, Marita Sturken defined cultural memory as “a field of contested meanings in which Americans interact with cultural elements to produce concepts of nation, particularly in events of trauma, where both the structures and fractures of a culture are exposed.”¹⁴ Likewise, Marianne Hirsch and Valerie Smith argued that cultural memory is “an act in the present by which individuals and groups constitute their identities by recalling a shared past on the basis of common, and therefore often contested norms, conventions, and practices.”¹⁵ Sturken further argued that cultural memory is experienced through the body. I suggest, though, that particular sporting events are often tangled with tragedies that are labeled nationally significant because these sporting events provide the bodies Sturken claimed are so necessary for cultural memory of tragedy to manifest. Sturken used the example of the John F. Kennedy assassination to illustrate that we remember significant events by locating our own bodies in particular places in time: We remember tragedy by remembering where we were when

¹⁴ Marita Sturken, *Tangled Memories* (LA: University of California Press, 1997), 3.

¹⁵ Marianne Hirsch and Valerie Smith, “Feminism and Cultural Memory: An Introduction,” *Signs*, 28 (2002): 5.

we first heard of it.¹⁶ She continued to argue that popular culture represents tragedy through people's bodies and their stories. I apply my theory of sport to hers of general popular culture to suggest that sport is one of those places where the stories of tragedy proliferate and where the body, which "is essential to the production of cultural memory," is ever-present.¹⁷ In short, columnists who wrote of sporting events in the context of national tragedy were part of a national discussion defining cultural memories for the dominant national identity. This dissertation therefore contends that columnists' writing of sporting events in the context of national tragedy often provided the cultural elements for readers to interact and contest with to establish cultural memories of nation.

More clearly, sport has played no small part in the way significant moments for the nation-state are remembered. Al Michaels' famous call of 'do you believe in miracles?' that coupled the 1980 USA Olympic hockey team's win over the Soviet Union is still highlighted in memory projects associated with sport and nation to discuss the Cold War and the Iranian hostage crisis of 1979-80.¹⁸ Walter Shapiro's column in *USA Today* about the 2001 New York Yankees' run to the World Series, the thesis of which connected the Yankees with national healing from terror: "[N]obody would forget where they were when they heard of Scott Brosius' home run."¹⁹ Sports columnists have often tied moments of national tragedy to the bodies on the field of play and our memory of both the sporting event and the tragedy. Hence, as they wrote of sporting events and

¹⁶ Sturken, *Tangled Memories*, 218.

¹⁷ Marita Sturken, 12.

¹⁸ See *Sports Illustrated 50*, (New York: Sports Illustrated, 2004), 112. This is a memory project that purports to highlight the most significant moments in sport history and shows the 1980 USA hockey team celebrating the win. See also *Do You Believe in Miracles*, HBO films, 2005. In this film, sports columnists, commentators, and participants remember the USA Olympic hockey team win as having 'lifted the nation' in a time of economic instability and the Cold War.

¹⁹ Walter Shapiro, "Baseball Strike Talk Cheapens Post-Sept, 11 Patriotism," *USA Today*, August 28, 2002, sec. A.

tragedy, columnists were in the process of constructing cultural memories of national identity as they wrote of athletes and politicians' bodies at sporting events. In short, sports columnists' stories of sports' service to nation were sites where the elements that lead to cultural memories were available for readers and writers to interact with.

Some of those cultural elements that were available in mainstream sports columns following tragedy were national officials' participation in ceremonies, and obviously, athletes' performances. As columnists represented tragedy through athletes and national officials' bodies to make sense of national tragedy, they produced cultural memories that were bound up with power.

In *Media Culture* Douglas Kellner wrote that the pleasure audiences derive from texts, and so how the texts are produced, are invested with power: "Pleasure itself is neither natural nor innocent. Pleasure is learned and is thus intimately bound up with power and knowledge...A system of power and privilege thus conditions our pleasures so that we seek certain socially sanctioned pleasures and avoid others."²⁰ The history of pleasure associated with news media, including that of sport, informed columnists' constructions of national identity, and is invested with power. Media culture "provide[d] the materials to create identities whereby people insert[ed] themselves into contemporary techno-capitalist societies and which is producing a new form of global culture."²¹ In terms of sporting events in the context of national tragedy, the bodies that columnists represented as telling of the tragedy were some of the materials people used to 'insert themselves' into the national body politic. But these materials were often positioned to serve the pleasures of mainstream audiences.

²⁰ Douglas Kellner, *Media Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 39.

²¹ Ibid., 1.

The pleasure of mainstream sport audiences has historically been associated with white, male, heterosexual, middle-class value systems. And hence the use of sport to construct cultural memory of nationally-significant moments itself privileges specific versions of national identity. In *Making the American Team* Mark Dyreson connected nationalism, power, and hegemony to sport and the pleasures of consuming it. He defined sport as a technology that was created with a specific purpose in mind, to hold up a middle class value system. He theorized that particular Americans' concepts of nation, identity, and power have always been closely related to sport. Beginning in the mid-1800s, elites used sport as a mechanism to discuss and represent the virtues of democracy, even if that democracy was not manifest in reality. According to him, the rituals associated with the nation-state, such as the national anthems, Presidential first pitches, or Navy fly-overs at games, continue to represent and encourage a national identity in which military strength is a central construct.²² But such representations of national identity according to S.W. Pope tout "the ideals of patriotism and democratic participation...despite the pervasive, often discriminatory class, race, ethnic, [sexual], and gender" discriminations existent in sport and the nation-state.²³ Hence, columnists' work that claimed itself to be about *the* nation, even that which represented the military, was often engaged in a discourse that privileged white, masculine, heterosexual interests by implying an achieved democracy despite that oppressions yet existed in the nation-state.

But often rituals associated with national strength or democracy substituted for representation of bodies, ruptures, or structures that would show the failures of

²² Mark Dyreson, *Making the American Team* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1998).

²³ S.W. Pope, *Patriotic Games* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 118.

democracy and subsequently confront the power of those historically privileged in the nation-state. These columns, as they emphasized rituals meant to celebrate the ideals of democracy, often presented the games as meaningful to tragedy, but did not emphasize the oppressions revealed through tragedy. Hence, the identity historically privileged in sport media was re-asserted--and the pleasures derived from consuming sport were served--through many of these stories of tragedy as they emphasized rituals at games and the virtues of democracy while avoiding the realities of oppressions that led to or were exposed through tragedy. Specifically, the identity legitimated as reflective of *the* nation was discursively constructed through such emphasis in an overwhelming majority of sports columns written in the context of the John F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King, and Robert Kennedy assassinations; and Magic Johnson's contraction of HIV. As such, these columnists produced cultural memories for the nation that avoided the existence of oppression the tragedy may otherwise have exposed.

However, in the three tragedies since 1992 that this dissertation examines, the versions of national identity constructed by mainstream sports columnists were not as uniform as those established before that year. While many columnists of and beyond the 1990s continued to privilege white, middle-class, heterosexual identities in constructing their national identities, many also challenged such privileging. Columnists who challenged monolithic constructions of national identity were implicitly if not overtly also constructing nations that were more inclusive of minority identities than their counterparts; and/or critical of the nation-state, despite the tradition of constructing a mythological America through sports writing. Hence, in the tragedies after 1992 that this dissertation examines, mainstream sports columnists did not construct a single national

identity, but many national identities. As such, by the mid-1990s, sports columns written in the context of national tragedy were sites where significant contestations regarding what identities would be considered legitimate in mainstream media's construction of national identity and cultural memory of it took place.

White National Identity and Sports Pages

Benedict Anderson identified the mid-to-late 1800s as the origin of national identities, or what he called imagined communities. He identified this era as significant in national identity creation as a result of the proliferation of news and print culture. He claimed that the increase in intensity of print culture from the mid- to late 1800s, allowed “people to think about themselves, and to relate to others in profoundly new ways” and created ‘national identities.’ He thus defined nations as ‘imagined communities.’²⁴ His notion of imagined communities did not complicate the power dynamics that ensued when identities projected themselves as representative of the nation through media. But Anderson provided helpful terminology with which to dislocate the concept of ‘nation’ from the borders of the nation state.²⁵

Ernest Gellner took a Marxist approach to national identity and argued that media situated specific bodies/identities as indicative of the national identity and in the process marginalized others. Hence, he argued, the nation constructed through mainstream media culture set up borders between identities and established nations not in terms of the nation state itself but the identities imagining themselves as common and representative of the nation-state. Ultimately, Gellner suggested this was the process by which the dominant

²⁴ Benedict Anderson, “Imagined Communities,” *Nationalism*, ed. Hutchinson, John and Anthony D, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 89-96, 91.

²⁵ Benedict Anderson, “Imagined Communities,” *Nationalism*, ed. Hutchinson, John and Anthony D, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 90-91.

national identity established itself through mainstream media. The converse was true too: Those identities not included in the imagined borders of the nation were denied a place in the dominant nation and rarely had a chance to become part of the legitimated memories of the dominant nation because of it.

Gellner also argued that a division of labor allowed print culture and media to be owned by the privileged elite, who then created media in their own image, thereby manifesting the dominant national identity in its own reflection. The division of labor, that is, established a specific people, usually racially homogenous, as the elite representatives of the nation-state. Gellner further explained that elites producing mainstream culture marginalized others: people who were not participating in the same practices as elites could not be considered 'the people' and were denied a place in the national identity being defined by media. Ultimately he argued that nationalism equated to a powerful form of legitimation where people not included in the imagined nation were tautologically denied a place because of their not being included in the media culture that constructed the dominant imagined nation.²⁶

Further, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri asserted that European national identities have been created in opposition to non-white bodies and behaviors and their thesis is applicable to America:

The non-European subject acts, speaks, and thinks in a manner exactly opposite to the European...In other words, the evil, barbarity, and licentiousness of the colonized other are what make possible the goodness,

²⁶ Ernest Gellner, "Nationalism and Modernization," *Nationalism*, ed. John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 55-63.

civility, and propriety of the European self...²⁷

Ultimately, those people who produced media constructed their national identities as representing *the* nation-state but did so by measuring their own identities against an opposed other who lived within that same nation-state. It is in this way that national identity became a racialized construct.

In the mid 1800s, the same time that Anderson and Gellner identified as giving rise to national identity, newspapers separated different types of news from one another. In the 1870s, papers created separate sports sections, whereas previously they scattered sports news throughout the paper. This reorganization of space of the paper led to the colonization of sport from news of the political and mystified the notions of nationalism to which sport contributed.²⁸

As well, at nearly the same time that the sports page secured a special space within newspapers, the baseball fields and the heavyweight boxing title were, either through athletes' imposed regulations or through official league rules, reserved for white males. White bodies and the contests between them thus dominated sports writing, and the imaginations of those reading it. The legitimate identity of the nation defined through sport was white and male. Moreover, according to Paul Gallico "publishers came to see sport news as a source of circulation and by the 1880s, sports news—particularly base ball news—was a daily feature of most major metropolitan newspapers..."²⁹ The popularity of these pages was bound up with consumers' pleasure, itself derived from gazing at white, male, heterosexual bodies as 'normal' and representative of the nation.

²⁷ Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt, *Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 127.

²⁸ See Charles Fountain, *Life and Times of Grantland Rice*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

²⁹ Qtd., *Ibid.*, 59.

In other media during the late 1800s and early 1900s, what Martha Jane Nadell called the graphic revolution took place. In *Enter the New Negroes, Images of Race in American Culture*, Nadell's premise was that this revolution of "visual images, present in advertisements, postcards, magazine and novel illustrations, sheet music, posters, and lithographs, w[as] paramount in codifying ideas of race."³⁰ The baseball field was re-segregated at the same time the graphic revolution took root and at the same time figures like Aunt Jemima were portrayed in advertisements and on grocery shelves throughout the country. Similarly, Jim Jeffries, heavyweight boxing champion from 1899-1905, refused to fight black opponents, so the stories of heavyweight boxing's championship were dominated by white males.³¹ The proliferation of media during this era, coupled with these examples of segregation, indicates that sport media was part of a wider movement in the nation-state in which the white, male, heterosexual body was being legitimated and imagined as 'national' on a larger scale than ever before.

The audiences derived pleasure not just from news of the contest on the field, but the bodies that were present upon it in photos. In *Looking for America* Ardis Cameron claimed that visual culture, since its inception, has been a primary means through which difference and 'Americanism'/whiteness was "produced, resisted, and defamiliarized, and reframed."³² He added to Anderson and Gellner, showing that photographs were part of the print culture through which imagined communities were being constructed. Beginning in the mid-to-late 1800s, photos of non-white, poor bodies and/or women were taken in a social environment where white males were allowed subjectivity and

³⁰ Martha Jane Nadell, *Enter the New Negroes*, (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2004), 17.

³¹ Likewise, from 1882-1908, a black male did not enter the ring to fight for the title as a result of the champions' imposed rules.

³² Ardis Cameron, *Looking for America*, (Boston: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 3.

legitimation, but others were not. The photograph's connection to science and positivism became a manner in which the nation's social and cultural ills could be documented to "buttress middle-class claims and social and moral guardianship" through whiteness.³³ Such claims explain how mainstream media structured the white, middle-class, patriarchal, heterosexual gaze and invested it with power; and how sport, media, national identity, and the body have all been connected in a matrix of power informing national identity and cultural memories of nation.³⁴

Given that sport sections were one of the major means of selling papers and that the body was represented in these sport sections through both words and photographs, it is hardly a far leap to conclude that sports pages, despite being removed from the political sections of newspapers, were playing a political role in organizing a dominant national identity and memory through representations of the body. Sports writers were not just writing of sport, but of athletes' bodies. As such, they organized a hierarchy of identity constituents for their readers.³⁵ Moreover, sports writers constructed the gaze of the sports audience toward the body and played a role in legitimating identities for their imaginations. Ultimately, then, sports writing has a historical link to racializing dominant forms of national identity hegemonically.

³³ Ibid., 6.

³⁴ Similarly, Laura Wexler argued that women's photos were generally absent in newspapers from 1850-1940, thereby denying them a place in the dominant national imagination. See Laura Wexler, "Techniques of the Imaginary Nation: Engendering Family Photography," *Looking for America*, ed. Cameron Ardis (Boston: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 361.

³⁵ Examples of the discourse of identity these writers were engaged in are prevalent throughout the papers. Here I offer as single example. In the May 16 1903, *Los Angeles Times* Jack Jeffries, Johnson's white opponent, was said to have "resembled a Greek God while Johnson was just a good-natured black animal ... a coon." Qtd. Burns, *Jack Johnson*, PBS. That Johnson was described as a coon and an animal while Jeffries the Victorian 'Gentleman' equated to a disciplining of blackness beneath whiteness on the hierarchy of identity constituents.

In “Hegemony, Relations of Force, Historical Bloc,” Antonio Gramsci wrote that “[i]t is undeniable that...the independence and autonomy of the subaltern group which it [the hegemon] claims to represent are in fact sacrificed to the intellectual hegemony of the ruling class.”³⁶ Through the metaphor of hegemony Gramsci suggested that those who are deemed subordinate are not autonomous, but believe they are so. This belief manifests because the subordinate ‘buy’ into the dominant class’s power, for it is presented and accepted as common sense. In this way, hegemony operates under a veil, presented itself as ‘normal’ and the ‘status quo,’ when each of these is invested with power.

In the context of tragedy, columnists often suggested that sporting events returned their nations to ‘normalcy.’ This rhetoric revealed a sort of hegemony associated with memory in which sports columnists have historically been engaged.³⁷ That is, sports columnists often used sport to suggest their nations had returned to normal condition after a tragedy that might have exposed the existence of and problems with oppression. That rhetoric can be seen as an act by which the dominant “nation...is able to assure for itself its past, its archive of official memory by develop[ing] in the present ways of establishing its dominion over the future.”³⁸ Specifically, when columnists represented bodies of officials and athletes rather than bodies of the oppressed, they engaged in acts that reasserted hegemony in the present, and established cultural memories for future generations, both of which would privilege whiteness. Throughout the dissertation, then, I use the terms hegemony or white hegemony to indicate that rhetorical practices by

³⁶ Antonio Gramsci, “Hegemony, Relations of Force, Historical Bloc,” *Prison Writings*, Accessed September 10, 2003, <http://www.marxists.org/archive/gramsci/editions/reader/index.htm>.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Lauren Berlant, *The Queen of America Goes to Washington City* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), 36.

columnists privileged or normalized whiteness. I use these terms interchangeably because of the lens I adopt for this study, which examines how mainstream sport media's practices, which historically normamlized whiteness, continue to do so, or resist this tendency.

Trauma and Memory

Because national identity has been associated with cultural memory of tragic moments, these columnists who wrote of sport in the context of national tragedy collectively constituted an authority establishing cultural memories that form national identity. Building on Freudian theory, Sturken argued that history and cultural memory are not oppositional, but tangled because the borders between cultural memory and history are easily transgressed when popular culture tells the stories of tragedy. Sturken further argued that citizenship can be defined, redefined, or enacted in moments of national tragedy, as people perceive themselves to be participating in moments of national significance while they consume stories of tragedy. The manners in which mainstream media told the stories of these moments and how the moments are subsequently remembered are telling of how citizens or 'the people' were defined.³⁹

Where I distinguish myself from Sturken, though, is in the dissection of how popular culture tells the stories of trauma and tragedy. While Sturken was interested in "how histories are told through popular culture," I am interested in the marginalizations from and contestations with dominant versions of national identity that occurred when these stories entered into mainstream media.⁴⁰ Instead of focusing on the images of tragedy, I examine some of the stories told after it. In the process, I find it necessary to

³⁹ Ibid., 6-9.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 5.

further complicate Sturken's explanation concerning the motives of forgetting, especially in the context of events considered nationally tragic.

Sturken builds off Freud who argued that memory is characterized by forgetting and that, as a result, what is remembered can be studied for what is repressed/forgotten.⁴¹ With this as a foundation for her study, Sturken suggested that cultural memories are "actively blocking out memories that are more difficult to represent."⁴² Although she did argue that the study of cultural memory allows scholars to examine the political intent of the stakeholders in creating those memories, Sturken did not underscore that the repressed memories are a function of hegemonic notions of national identity established through a dialectic interplay between producers and consumers of mainstream media.

When sports columnists told their stories of tragedy by representing athletes' and national officials' at games the result was often a privileging of dominant constructions of national identity. These bodies substituted for the actual citizens that experienced tragedy or that experienced oppression that tragedy would potentially expose.

More specifically, the bodies that testified to tragedy in mainstream sports columns were often those that would not challenge those standpoints historically privileged by mainstream media. The texts associated with national tragedy repressed memories not because they were too difficult to represent as Sturken claimed, but because those identities historically privileged by mainstream media benefitted from the tragedy's story being closed and/or represented through bodies that turn attention away from structural oppression.⁴³ Moreover, when columnists suggested games paid a service to the nation in the context of tragedy, the resumption of a season, or a ceremonial

⁴¹ Ibid., 7-9.

⁴² Ibid., 8.

⁴³ Ibid., 16.

first pitch often ended columnists' stories of tragedy cleanly. This clean ending connected to Sturken's notion of popular culture providing a catharsis for culture.

In the final sentences of her introduction, Sturken argued that cultural healing is possible through popular culture's re-telling of tragedy: "Indeed, memory often takes the form not of recollection but of cultural reenactment that serves important needs for catharsis and healing."⁴⁴ The healing and redemption to which Sturken referred may actually encourage attention to tragedy's story closing and avoidance of the political and social realities potentially exposed through tragedy. That is, columnists often suggested sport 'healed' the wounds of the 'nation;' provided a 'diversion' from tragedy; 'united' the country; or spoke to ideals of American freedom, strength, or diversity. Such rhetoric, though, potentially served an ironic purpose. While the columns using such rhetoric often acknowledged the significance of the tragedy in question, they also avoided substantive discussion of the oppressions that the tragedy may otherwise have exposed. Rhetoric of healing and diversion, unification and freedom, then, privileged those not oppressed by structures that the tragedy in question might have exposed as oppressive. Specifically, then, these stories of tragedy often avoided disrupting white, middle-class, heterosexual pleasure. For this reason, the very notion of 'nation,' 'national memory,' and 'tragedy' were also racialized by sports columns using such rhetoric. Columnists' use of bodies and rhetoric that testified to American ideals rather than oppression, then, was in the process of creating cultural memories of a nation without oppression.

Specifically, one of the ways in which mainstream sports columnists racialized their nations and tragedies was through a peculiar inversion of the way in which sport media often represented the body. For instance, in *Body Language* Gerald Early wrote

⁴⁴ Ibid., 17.

that “[unlike politics sports] do not etherealize the body but make it even more concrete....”⁴⁵ But in the context of national tragedy, columnists often wrote into, not upon, athletes’ bodies, and so they did not capitalize on the political potential of the moment. This occurred through a spatial inversion of bodily descriptions. Specifically, columnists often focused on the internal--the heart, the soul, the character of the athlete, and his/her subsequent ability to reflect the nation’s ability to heal through triumph and will. Columnists’ turn to the internal space of the body or national character in the absence of material descriptions of the body of the oppressed was an example of what Bill Nichols called disembodied knowledge.⁴⁶ He argued that disembodied knowledge speaks of politics without bodies of the other present and allows for rhetoric of democracy and citizenship to manifest despite oppression’s existence in the nation-state. In a similar argument, Lauren Berlant suggested that this rhetoric privileges the white patriarch because the corporeal bodies of the Other are erased, allowing white males’ fantastical versions of national identity to manifest. In short, columnists’ stories of the internal body lent themselves to a focus on the heroics and myths of an innocent nation-state where oppression or the ruptures in culture that tragedy exposed were overwhelmingly absent. Likewise, the absence of bodily descriptions often equated to a privileging of white, middle-class identities by making oppression invisible and by

⁴⁵ Gerald Early, *Body Language*, (Saint Paul: Gray Wolf Press, 1998), vii, xi.

⁴⁶ In “Getting to Know You: Knowledge, Power, and the Body” Bill Nichols suggested that the ephemeral issues of politics, race, gender, and power are not so well discussed as they are represented through the body. Discussion of these issues results in what he called disembodied knowledge. In contrast: “Images are always of concrete, material things recorded at specific moments in time, but these images can be made to point toward more general truths or issues...Representation operates neither univocally nor transparently, but it continues to function as a mediation between one person’s reality and that of another.” Bill Nichols, “Getting to Know You,” *Theorizing Documentary*, ed. Michael Renov (Routledge: New York), 176. Also see Lauren Berlant, *The Queen of America Goes to Washington City* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), 238.

speaking of the nation's character, diversity, resiliency, strength, virtue, and/or democratic ideal.

Hence, these columns assured that white, male, heterosexual versions of contemporary tragedy became the memories of their nations. And closure of the tragedy asserted the white nation's innocence by etherealizing columnists' national identity, rather than using more concrete bodily descriptions of the racism, poverty, and sexism that seemed fundamental to tragedy's story. The effect was a reassertion of the hegemony that existed prior to the tragedy.

The Discourse of Tragedy: Trauma and Sport, Substitution and Place

Columnists employed a number of rhetorical strategies that reasserted and were products of the hegemony of whiteness that characterized the dominant national identity. Collectively, these strategies comprised what will be called the discourse of tragedy.

The conventions of the discourse of tragedy were available in examining columnists' penchant to focus on national officials' and athletes' bodies in a stadium as meaningful to tragedy that occurred outside the stadium. This focus substituted the place and bodies of tragedy with the place of the stadium where a game was played, where columnists ended their stories of tragedy with a game's resumption for the pleasure of mainstream audiences. Such substitution is explained through application of Freudian concepts of language development and their association with trauma and play.

Freud's most salient example of language development concerning trauma was that of the *fort-da* game. In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud theorized language development and its association with identity-development. He used the example of an eighteen-month-old who, upon witnessing his mother's exit from a room, tossed a

wooden toy and uttered the word ‘forte.’ Upon retrieving the toy, the child would exclaim, happily, ‘da’. Through this example Freud theorized that children attempt to master unpleasurable experiences—the mother’s leaving--through creating pleasurable ones—the retrieval of the toy--and through language. Freud wrote of the child “that the unpleasurable nature of an experience does not always unsuit it for play.”⁴⁷

This example transfers nicely to the role of columns about sporting events in moments of cultural and national tragedy. Through the 1960s, columnists generally avoided memory of the unpleasurable in favor of the pleasurable through an act of spatial substitution. Just as the child substituted play for his mother, columnists often substituted the space of tragedy and trauma for the space of play. In locating the story of the tragedy in a game, though, columnists transformed trauma and tragedy into something pleasurable; through an act of substitution the dominant national imagination could be pleased: Columnists often substituted the place in which tragedy occurred, the unpleasurable place, for the field of play, of pleasure. That is, stadia, full of bodies that did not experience the material trauma were often said to be representatives of the tragedy. Hence, the first convention of the discourse of tragedy is the substitution of places to fit the story of national tragedy into a pleasurable one for mainstream audiences.

This pleasure, however, derived from notions of nation’s connection to sport, is the foundation of second, third, fourth, and fifth conventions. In *Patriotic Games*, S.W. Pope wrote that the nostalgia often associated with sport is characterized by a mythology that denies the political histories involved in associating sport with nation. According to him, sport’s mythology has served the purpose of sealing fans’ imaginations from the

⁴⁷ Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (trans, James Strachey, New York: W, W, Norton, 1989), 13.

political realities of the nation despite that sport played a significant role in establishing those realities.⁴⁸ Writing specifically of baseball, he suggested that sports writers were among the many who “shaped the meanings” of sport “to coincide with their own” white middle-class views.⁴⁹ Extrapolating this out, I add to Pope that stories of sporting events that followed moments of national tragedy often ignored the realities of citizens that were oppressed and that tragedy would expose. These stories of play catered to the pleasures already established as normal (hegemonic) and thereby made the displeasurable, pleasurable for mainstream audiences. Understanding of the nation as innocent or democratic, however, was possible only when repressions and marginalizations of bodies and moments that challenged that innocence, democracy, and hegemony were avoided. This is the second convention of the discourse of tragedy—that of presenting the nation as innocent after tragedy to reassert hegemony.

The third was revealed when sports columnists continually proclaimed the dominant national identity to have returned to stability, normalcy, through the games. Common phrases columnists used to describe sporting events’ returning of the nation to stability were that the game allowed ‘a return to normalcy,’ or a ‘healing.’ These phrases, however, indicated a privileging of the same sort of identity that existed prior to the tragedy. Subsequently, columns that utilized this convention were products of and reasserted hegemony. The fourth convention was revealed when columnists privileged athletes’ feats or ceremonies at these games as meaningful to national character. This convention focused on the internal bodies of athletes or politicians’ and/or service peoples’ presence at games to speak to a national character or mythology. Hence, the

⁴⁸ S.W. Pope, 82.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 79.

focus on politicians' or military presence at games was a discursive limitation on the sort of nation that would be constructed through stories of tragedy and sport. All of these occurred as a result of columnists locating their stories of tragedy in the space of the stadium.

The fifth and final convention of the discourse of tragedy was found in the use of past tragedies to make sense of contemporary ones. That is, columnists often referred to the same, previous national tragedies to make sense of those just witnessed. This in itself was a form of setting the stories of tragedy in a conventional mode, which George Lipsitz has argued, re-inscribes old knowledge.⁵⁰ It also established a very few tragedies as legitimate memories for columnists' nations. For instance, when columnists continuously referred to President Kennedy's assassination to make sense of new tragedies, the meaning of that new tragedy was shaded by columnists' memories of the dominant national identity established in 1963.

Still, while many columnists engaged in the discourse of tragedy in writing of the 1996 Olympic bombing, 9/11, or Hurricane Katrina, others resisted that discourse and subsequently confronted the white privilege constructed through it. The confrontation potentially restructured the way many writers and readers perceived citizenship and national identity. Given that Lisus and Berlant see acts in the present as shaping memories for the future, columnists who confronted white privilege and included minority identities, were in the process of establishing a more inclusive and/or socially just national identity through memory creation. Likewise, those that challenged a mythological construction of the nation-state in their writing potentially confronted a

⁵⁰ George Lipsitz, *American Studies in a Moment of Danger* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 191-6.

passive acceptance of social ills that sport often covers up and/or war that sport often supports.

Hence, the last three chapters of the dissertation, then, are organized by what I have defined ‘camps’ of columnists. A ‘camp’ of columnists consists of those who adopt similar standpoints regarding white privilege that are made obvious through their use of or refusal to use one or more of the conventions laid out above. Hence, my use of the word ‘camp’ should be read as a category signifying columnists’ standpoint regarding who is included in the nations constructed in their columns. I in no way mean to imply that those I categorize as in the same camp have any relationship with one another, save that of having similar standpoints.

This confrontation and contestation between columnists privileging whiteness/constructing mythological national identities and those who did not is of primary import to my study and is the reason that I situate this dissertation in the discipline of American Studies.

Relationship to American Studies: Theorizing Whiteness and Sport

Since its formal inception, the field that came to be known as American Studies has characterized itself as pursuing an understanding of the minds of ‘Americans.’ In *Virgin Land*, Henry Nash Smith, the first Ph.D. student in American Civilization, articulated what he conceived to be a method for revealing “the consciousness of Americans” called the myth-symbol method.⁵¹ In chronicling the rise of American Studies through the 1940s and 1950s, Gene Wise wrote that academic institutions along the east coast--Yale, Harvard, and George Washington University--began new programs

⁵¹ Henry Nash Smith, *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1950), 4.

that assumed “a substantive consensus on the nature of American experience, a methodological consensus on ways to study that experience.”⁵²

There were many assumptions underpinning the earliest methods developed in American Studies. One of the most major of those assumptions was that there was an American mind. From this, the scholars developed their second assumption, which was that the American mind could “theoretically be found in any one American. But it comes to its most coherent expression in the country’s leading thinkers...”⁵³ Although the project at hand challenges the notion that there is *a* consciousness of Americans, it is involved in an intellectual endeavor that seeks to understand American culture better by examining some of the work that assumes to know something of the American character—sports columns written in the context of national tragedy. In this way, the project at hand has a home in American Studies.

The study of racial privilege has a direct theoretical connection to the Cultural Turn, which affected the discipline and field of American Studies greatly. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the more than decade-long activism of minority groups influenced the field of American Studies by necessitating and legitimating new and more multicultural kinds of texts for study than those developed by white males; those the myth-symbol school considered America’s intellectuals. The discipline and field embraced some of the tenants of the Birmingham School, summarized well by Stuart Hall in “Cultural Studies and its Theoretical Legacies.”⁵⁴ Hall ultimately claimed that the

⁵² Gene Wise, “Paradigm Dramas in American Studies: A Cultural and Institutional History of the Movement,” *Locating American Studies, The Evolution of a Discipline*, ed. Lucy Maddox (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 179.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 179-80.

⁵⁴ Stuart Hall. “Cultural Studies and its Theoretical Legacies,” *Cultural Studies*, eds. L. Grossberg et al. (London: Routledge, 1992).

feminist and racial movements of the decade “provoke[d] theoretical movements.”⁵⁵ He subsequently argued that scholars have a responsibility to make their own work political by bringing social movements into the discourse of critical studies while focusing on power rather than the Eurocentricity (classed focus, that is) of classical Marxism. Moreover, Hall used the example of feminism to reveal that cultural studies is enhanced by study of social movements because they expand the notion of power. Hence, American Studies, taking its lead from the Birmingham School, embraced these movements as practical means for “developing intellectual and theoretical work as political practice.”⁵⁶

At the root of this dissertation is the question of power that the Birmingham School concerned itself with. But this question of power is coupled with a re-conceptualization of the kind of movements that ought to be studied to make work in American Studies political. This dissertation stems from a sincere concern with a cultural shift in media and academics that potentially leaves the power of whiteness unchallenged.

In *Cultural Moves*, Herman Gray identified this cultural shift. He argued that diverse representation of multiple identities in mainstream media, and I add academia and sports writing, means very little if people, especially whites, refuse to consume and/or create images or stories about people other than themselves.⁵⁷ Gray wrote:

Just as interesting is the discursive frame through which journalists, critics, industry observers, network executives, and studio heads talked about television representations and race. According to conventional wisdom, black, brown, Asian, and white television viewers watch different programs. But since they

⁵⁵ Ibid., 274.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 282.

⁵⁷ Herman Gray, *Cultural Moves*, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005.

remain the idealized subjects of television advertisers, studios, and networks, the culturally pressing question is still whether white viewers will watch shows about the lives of people different from them, and whether networks and studios will take the financial risk of programming these shows.⁵⁸

Gray suggested that the proliferation of niche markets potentially leads to a further isolation of identities from one another, and a perpetuation of white patriarchal, heteronormative privilege. Niche marketing potentially leaves normative, dominant discourses about race and national identity unchallenged. I would suggest that the segmentation of LGBT, Queer, Women's, Asian-American, African-American, and other fields that connect with the intellectual interests of American Studies also potentially leaves whiteness unchallenged. Although these disciplines examine power, they are often physically and logistically separated from one another on college campuses. Likewise, they often are treated as add-on requirements to a course of study and do not affect individual syllabi campus-wide. Hence, my concern is that much of the scholarship that seeks activism preaches to the choir—to those who are already interested in the questions of identity and power.

Moreover, this scholarship does not really require coalitions to be built with people of different political standpoints which is what Barbara Smith called radical: “What I really feel is radical is trying to make coalitions with people who are different from you.”⁵⁹ In an American Studies field in which many scholars embrace the theoretical legacies of which Hall above wrote and are interested in power, we write and

⁵⁸ Ibid., 78-9.

⁵⁹ Barbara Smith, “Across the Kitchen Dialogue,” *This Bridge Called My Back*, ed Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldua (New York: Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press, 1983), 126.

preach to ourselves or to political standpoints that already identify with us. But to change power, we may need to consider the benefits of reaching out to those privileged by race, gender, class, and/or sexuality with the hopes of changing their perspectives concerning power.

I would suggest that in this era of niche marketing, scholarship on sport media culture may have the capacity to perform the sort of work that Hall desires, for it reaches audiences that may otherwise be isolated from one another. I am not necessarily writing of numbers here, but standpoints reached. As I write this dissertation, two events have brought the intersection of gender and race to mainstream media—the Duke Lacrosse team’s exoneration of raping a black woman, and Don Imus’ labeling of the Rutgers women’s basketball team ‘nappy-headed hoes.’ These two incidents sparked national debate about the significance of gender and race in the dominant national identity, partially because the controversies were related to sport, where different standpoints regarding nation and identity meet; partially because there were material bodies to examine while making claims within the racial discourse. The debate may also have occurred because of sport media’s consisting of a diversity of voices and consumers. In sport media more voices critical of national mythologies are present now than were in the 1960s. This shift to a sport media with more voices critical of national mythologies may result of more minority voices being given space in the sports pages; a marketing strategy of sports publications and sections to reach a range of political tastes despite the niche-marketed news sphere; a change in perceptions of national identity among some people in mainstream sport media culture since the 1960s.⁶⁰ There also is an argument to be made

⁶⁰ Nielsen gathered data on contemporary television, newspaper, and internet use 2003-2004. That data illustrated that sport media captures a more diverse audience in terms of race, class, and gender than the

that a younger generation of sports columnists has an increased awareness of the intersectional nature of identity and the necessity of constructing the nation in terms that widen rather than manage the borders of the dominant nation. To be sure, the further away we move from the 1960s, the more inclusive many of the voices comprising mainstream sports columnists are. However, there are yet many voices included in mainstream sports columnists that adopt similar if not the same version of national identity that their counterparts in the 1960s did. Clearly, then, many columnists today, having lived the early part of their lives during or after the Civil Rights Movement, have confronted white privilege. But the benefit of being born during or after the 1960s does not equate to adoption of an inclusive point of view with regard to national identity and/or race. For instance, the majority of columnists writing about the New Orleans Saint's ability to 'heal the nation' after Hurricane Katrina were products of the baby-boomer generation. In contrast, Robert Lipsyte of *The New York Times* has been writing columns that confront whiteness since the mid-1960s. While a new generation of sports columnists introduced a sports page consisting of voices more inclusive than those in the 1960s, it did not rid the sports pages of mythologies privileging whiteness. More clearly, with a new generation of editors, publishers, and news organizations' executives came a

most popular 'mainstream' news organizations and may, as a result, be a site where the potential to change dominant or white conceptions of national identity could manifest. *Sports Illustrated* had a readership of more than twenty million and its audience is two-thirds white. While this was an overly-white readership, consider that the viewership of news stations like CNN, FOX, and MSNBC all have at least a 90% white viewership. And 16.9% of ESPN's Sportscenter's audience, as opposed to 8.2% of the audience of CNN, was black. ESPN's garnering of women watchers (20%) was increasing at rates more significant than other programs. Moreover, 40% more viewers interested in stories concerning national issues went to cable, not network, news television, according to a *Washington Post* Market segmentation study carried out 2004-5. But cable news stations, according to Bill Alpert, were ideologically divided by political standpoint (FOX is for conservatives Alpert wrote, and CNN for liberals). All of this data suggests that, beyond the fact that cable news channels were gathering ideologically homogeneous audiences, they were also not reaching audiences that were representative of the nation-state. Likewise, these news outlets were constructing knowledge of the nation more now than ever; this knowledge is dialectically produced with consumer taste. Thus, unchallenged, hegemonic notions of national identities are provided through cable news.

renewed possibility for columnists who confronted whiteness to secure jobs in mainstream newspapers and magazines. But to claim that such columnists did not exist prior to this generation or that minorities always confront whiteness would be an oversimplification. It is more precise to say that by 2001, space was given to a variety of standpoints in mainstream sport media, while throughout the 1960s, that same space was given almost exclusively to those privileging whiteness.

Still, the variety of voices comprising mainstream sports columnists provides a site that scholars can exploit to show that in mainstream media, there are sites where dominant constructions of national identity are resisted. That is, the study of sport and whiteness is a tactical strategy of reaching out to people and audiences that would not otherwise read work by an academic, much less one as far left as I am.⁶¹ Moreover, as scholars embrace topics that interest a cross-section of political standpoints for study, their work and the classes they teach may have a political impact of the sort desired. That is, they may engage those holding on to oppressive standpoints to educate them regarding privilege, and build coalitions with them, rather than simply leaving their standpoints unchallenged.⁶² A course that teaches the historic privileging of whiteness in sport and other areas may change students' perceptions that 'the normal condition' of media, sport, academia as socially just. Such courses and projects work to change perception by illustrating the tendency of dominant culture to avoid the oppressions of people not privileged by race, class, gender, and/or sexuality. It may even convince those with

⁶¹ Although the dissertation is on columnists' writing, what columnists say on television regarding their writing can be assumed to be similar to, if not more outrageous than, what they write about.

⁶² Hence, this dissertation focuses mainstream sports columnists, not just to allow a methodologically consistent primary resource from 1963-2007. It also focuses on these columnists because they opined about national identity and race in their respective papers, and as talking heads on mediated outlets from *SportsCenter* to CNN. These columnists, as they opined about race and nation, reached an audience consisting of disparate standpoints; the politically diverse make-up of which does not exist in many other spaces of mainstream news media or in academia

privilege to renounce it simply through education of the power of hegemony that leads to privilege. Hence, scholarship on sporting events has a potential audience that may not otherwise read work on race, class, gender, and sexuality. My focus on mainstream sport media and not, for instance, the black press, this is a strategy to challenge the normal condition of dominant social structures by reaching out to those privileged by whiteness in order to educate them about how privilege works, as well as to advocate, at least implicitly, for adoption of attitudes that are actively anti-racist, which I explain below. This focus on sport also is an attempt to address the urgency of the moment not only in media and identity studies, but in a way that has been called for by American Studies scholars.

In *American Studies in a Moment of Danger* George Lipsitz argued that new spaces and ways of seeing need to be developed by American Studies scholars to resist the increasingly-privatized public sphere. Lipsitz argued that we need to strike a balance between being politically active and translating our work beyond the walls of academia if we are going to challenge normative approaches to race and national identity.⁶³ Ultimately, I see the moment's urgency, catalyzed by niche-marketing, as full of potential for activists and providing sports scholars the capacity to reach beyond the academy's walls with their work.

This dissertation is hence an attempt to justify study of whiteness, which has been called into question by many scholars in sociology, race, sexed, gender, and American Studies. In 2005, *Sociology of Sport Journal* dedicated an entire issue to whiteness in sports studies. The articles comprising the issue addressed whiteness and sport from diverse theoretical frames. Of particular importance for this dissertation were the two

⁶³ George Lipsitz, *American Studies in a Moment of Danger*, 1-23.

articles that bookended the issue, “Mapping Whiteness” and “Cautionary Notes on Whiteness in Sports Studies” by Mary G. McDonald and C. Richard King, respectively.⁶⁴ Both authors wrote of the potential dangers of whiteness studies. King wrote that “there is a grave danger that whiteness studies will be whitewashed.”⁶⁵ There is no doubt that to reify arcane and monolithic academic canons would be an unfortunate and counterintuitive use of whiteness studies. But for whiteness studies to perform the work it sets out to do, which is to advocate for anti-racist attitudes, it must also address those who James Baldwin, Richard Wright, Bessie Head, Toni Morrison, and others have argued have the race problem: those holding onto white hegemony.⁶⁶ Addressing whiteness, both as a problem, and as an audience, must be a significant part of any project in whiteness studies. While we must be careful not to whitewash whiteness, we must also find topics for study that those embracing the ideological standpoint of whiteness may be interested in and read, so that we may dismantle their rigid approaches to identity.

In the conclusion of his article, King outlined four strategies for “tempering the trouble with whiteness studies.”⁶⁷ Among these strategies were those to assure that scholars worked beyond the “Black/White binaries” characteristic of the mainstream contemporary sports world.⁶⁸ Certainly, I agree with this notion. However, I also

⁶⁴ Mary G. McDonald, “Mapping Whiteness,” *Sociology of Sport Journal* 22.3 (2005): 397-408, 245-255; C.R. King, “Cautionary Notes on Whiteness and Sport Studies,” *Sociology of Sport Journal* 22.3 (2005): 397-408.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 403.

⁶⁶ See James Baldwin, “White Man’s Guilt,” *Black on White*, David Roediger, ed., New York: Schocken, 1998, 320-325; Richard Wright, “Big Black Good Man,” *Portable Literature*, Kirsznner, Mandell, eds., Fort Worth: Harcourt, 2000, 179-189; Bessie Head, *A Question of Power*, (1987), Toni Morrison, “Home,” *The House that Race Built*, (Wahneema Lubiano, ed. New York: Random House, 1997), 3-10.

⁶⁷ C.R. King, “Cautionary Notes on Whiteness and Sport Studies,” 405.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

suggest that scholars who are interested in the intersection of race, sport, and media have a unique opportunity to, at this moment, play the role of activist by seeking out spaces where political discussions of identity ensue; where those embracing white hegemony and those who do not meet, if only in media consumption. One of those spaces is sport media.

Given the condition of the niche-marketed mediated sphere, I suggest that the answer to King's question "why talk about whiteness now?" is that whiteness is gaining power as a result of niche marketing.⁶⁹ Sport media and scholarship, though, because it potentially reaches politically diverse audiences, and comprises of substantive discussion of political ideas, even in this era characterized by niche-marketing, is one site that offers the potential to stem that power and act politically. While I value King's strategy of looking beyond the black/white binary of mainstream sporting media, then, the current moment offers scholars of whiteness and sports studies the potential to reach audiences they may not otherwise reach. Hence, this dissertation focuses on mainstream sports columns, many of which rest upon the black/white binary King identifies as problematic. It does so, however, for a strategic reason, and one that I hope to be a model for scholars in American Studies in the future: It does so because these are sites where a politically diverse audiences may contest for concepts of nation and identity; and scholarship on those columns may also interest a politically diverse group and serve an activist end.

Moreover, my frame for examining the ideological power of whiteness does not rest on the black/white binary. I draw attention to that construct's elasticity and its normativity with regard sexuality, gender, class, and behavior. Even though much of the dissertation does examine the black/white binary mainstream sports columnists often use

⁶⁹Ibid., 400.

in constructing their national identities, it embraces what Patricia Hill Collins called intersectional analysis, where race is viewed as a construct that intersects with other constituents of identity.⁷⁰ Hence, the study of race does not preclude other constituents of identity, rather it necessitates such study. In embracing intersectional analysis, that is, I examine how race intersects with gender, sexuality, class, and behavior. Hence, gender, sexuality, class, and behavior are not omitted from this study of sport, media, nation, and race, but are studied through the frame of race and its intersections. Finally, the theorists with whom the columnists are juxtaposed, I believe, are diverse in nature.

Methods and Sources

In *Reading Sport: Critical Essays on Power and Representation*, Susan Birrell and Mary G. McDonald organized their anthology by adopting a Geertzian approach to culture. They argued sport controversies reveal the psychic structures of a culture. They also asserted that controversies allow a focused form of study. They wrote that “particular controversial incidents are good points of entry for analysis because they appear to be contained within particular time frames, thus making the initial collection of accounts a more focused task.”⁷¹ Using their framework, I suggest that examining columns that respond to tragedies sports columnists label ‘national’ allows a focused study which reveals the raced, gendered, sexed, and classed make up of the nations they construct. Moreover, the dissertation does not attempt to define ‘national tragedy.’ Instead, it examines tragedies that dominant culture and/or mainstream sports columnists themselves labeled as nationally significant, and then analyzes the identities privileged in

⁷⁰ Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*, New York: Routledge, 2000.

⁷¹ Susan Birrell and Mary G. McDonald, *Reading Sport: Critical Essays on Power and Representation*, (Northeastern University Press: Boston, 2000), 12.

the nations they constructed. Ultimately, this strategy allows an analysis of under what circumstances columnists were able to construct tragedies as nationally significant. But I do not claim to examine all national tragedies since President Kennedy's assassination. Nor do I debate whether or not a particular event was a national tragedy. Rather, I use dominant culture and sports columnists' categorization of tragedies as nationally significant as a means to focus study and to identify the national identities they constructed.

It is important to emphasize that the columnists whose work I selected as primary resources for this study was a result of their being popular columnists who wrote of sports' service to nation in the wake of tragedy. The columnists were all working in major city newspapers and/or nationally-syndicated, and thereby offered a view of what the dominant and/or mainstream culture thought about its own national identity in the context of and resulting from tragedy:

In *Sensational Designs* Jane Tompkins established that literary reputation is an outcome of a writer's opinions, aesthetics, and attitudes aligning with those with the power to offer the author a job.⁷² She continued to write that "stories should...be studied...because they offer powerful examples of what a culture thinks about itself, articulating and proposing solutions for the problems that shape a particular historical moment...[they] have designs upon their audiences, in the sense of wanting to make people think in a particular way."⁷³ Tompkins' theory of stories' canonization was that they reveal what a culture thinks about itself. Hence, I study mainstream sports columns

⁷² Jane Tompkins, *Sensational Designs*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 4.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, xii.

written in the context of what is labeled national tragedy to find what columnists and their readers seemed to think about their nations.

Tompkins' notion of literary reputation, however, was quite similar to Mary Stuckey's theory of Presidential rhetoric. In *Defining Americans*, Mary Stuckey argued that the presidency is the single site in which articulations of national identity are constructed. She argued, too, that presidents historically have shaped their visions of nation so that people will see themselves as part of that nation: "Presidents...articulate national identity and, to be successful, must do so in ways that will be accepted as obvious, even inevitable...so that enough of us will continue to see ourselves...reflected in the national mirror of public discourse."⁷⁴ While many scholars of American Studies would take issue with her blanket statement and lens, in moments after tragedies considered nationally significant, I do believe there is validity to her argument. Clearly, after moments of national tragedy citizens look to the presidency for direction on how to react and often sports columnists emphasized the fact that a national official did or is anticipated to attend games. Hence, each chapter includes the contemporary president's rhetoric that is thematically related to the identity being discussed in the columns about tragedy. Such contextualization allows a further insight into what the dominant culture conceived to be 'American' in the context of tragedy.

Moreover, in *Racial Formations in the United States*, Michael Omi and Howard Winant argued that racial constructs are forged through a "sociohistorical process" and that one of those processes is through presidential rhetoric.⁷⁵ Hence, the presidential rhetoric allows a contextualization of the racial and national discourses in which the

⁷⁴ Mary Stuckey, *Defining Americans*, (Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2004), 2.

⁷⁵ Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States*, (New York: Routledge, 2002), 54.

sports columnists were engaged. It also allows insight into the dominant culture's view of its own make-up. Using this context allows me to also examine the columns through discourse analysis. Embracing Michel Foucault's notion that repression is a characteristic of power, the dissertation works to reveal what identities were discursively marginalized from columnists' nations as they wrote about national tragedy.⁷⁶

The presidential rhetoric, coupled with the columns about tragedy, also allows my analysis to link the micro-level--individual columnists' writing/imaginings--to macro-level concerns--like myth, dominant national identity/imagined communities. Specifically, the dissertation uses the terms myth, construct, and imagination in ways that are often implicitly intertwined. Columnists constructed their own versions of national identity and were in the process of doing so for readers. The theoretical terminology that connects media culture, in this case sports columns, to national identity, summarized above, is 'imagined communities.' However, the imagined communities of which columnists were a part when they wrote, and that they subsequently supported and/or resisted in writing of tragedy, were partially constructed by the dominant imagined community/national identity of the period. Likewise, as columnists wrote that sport served a nation in the context of tragedy, they implicitly if not overtly were informed by the historic, mythic sort of national identity S.W. Pope writes of above.⁷⁷ In this way, columnists' imaginings were dialectically intertwined with the imagined community/dominant nation, itself having a historic attachment to a mythology sport served. Hence, these terms, while not interchangeable, were part of a matrix by which, I argue, sports columns revealed and constructed versions of national identity in the

⁷⁶ Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, (Penguin, 1996), 8.

⁷⁷ S.W. Pope, *Patriotic Games*.

context of tragedy. Moreover, the individual columnists' imaginations were part of a media constructing and constructed by imagined communities mainstream media itself constructed prior to their writing.

Finally, although the columnists selected were and are from major American cities--New York, Washington D.C., Los Angeles, St. Louis, Chicago, and San Francisco--their work was often syndicated throughout the country and read by audiences in different locales and of different identities. While the appendix identifies which publications some of the columnists in the dissertation primarily worked for, to situate these columnists in terms of place and/or audience would not only be difficult, but most likely faulty. Their syndication allowed them to be read in many locales and by many different kinds of people, which is the very reason that I have selected them: these columnists offer a view of the dominant culture's view of itself and the mainstream contestations for national identity that surfaced in a particular time. Moreover, many of the mainstream columnists selected for the 1980s-present did and/or do appear as talking heads on ESPN shows, have blogs, and/or host their own radio shows where they repeat the same ideas they write in their columns. Therefore, these are and/or were powerful writers in terms of standpoints and audiences reached, are difficult to situate in a place other than the nation-state, and transcend traditional boundaries of genre.

Limitations of the Study

There are limitations to this study. I set out to examine sports columnists' stories about service to nation in the context of tragedy. There is, as a result, no audience analysis provided, nor is any agency theorized for the consumers of these stories. Nor is there adequate contextualization by way of situating the columnists' writings within a

social history of the years under study or even within their lives or in the news rooms. Moreover, I did not intend to analyze any cause/effect relationship between what columnists wrote and why they wrote it. Although I began my study of sport media with the general observation that many sports columnists in the new century were engaging in substantive discussion of structural oppression where mainstream cable news networks were not, I did not perform a comparative analysis of sport and hard news in this dissertation. Further, a full explanation of journalism history, along with a complex analysis of the history of sports columns is not offered here. Finally, although I have argued in elsewhere that sports themselves are raced, gendered, and sexed formations, I do not offer a full analysis of the manner(s) in which sport was and is raced, gendered, and/or sexed by columnists or by other sectors of the dominant culture.

Some of the limitations of this study are intertwined with structural oppression in news media. There are nearly one hundred different columnists cited in the dissertation, but only nineteen minorities. There are five African American, two Asian American, one Hispanic, and eleven women columnists. In the tragedies examined through 1968, moreover, nearly all of the columnists are white males. It is no coincidence that the columns written after the tragedies through the 1960s privileged whiteness. The uneven ratio of white males to minority columnists, however, extends to today. Clearly, newspapers and magazines are increasing their representation of minority identities in their pages. However, as I noted above, this did not necessarily lead to a more inclusive version of America constructed in individual sports columns.

Finally, there are those who would argue that sports columnists, under a deadline and with limited space, should not be scrutinized to the degree they are in this study.

However, many columnists, this dissertation shows, constructed inclusive nations in the context of tragedy. Hence, I do not see the validity in such an argument. Moreover, I would argue that the limitations in space and time are more reason to examine these columns as cultural products revealing the dominant culture's version of itself in the aftermath of tragedy.

Outline of Dissertation

The second chapter of the dissertation examines Red Smith, Arthur Daley, Jack Mann, Jesse Abramson, Allison Danzig, and AP columnists' writing of the 1963 Army and Navy game as significant to establishing memory of John F. Kennedy's assassination. The chapter argues that, in the context of the Cold War, these columnists imagined the nation as white, masculine, strong, and innocent, and generally matched their rhetoric with that of Kennedy's regarding the Cold War. It also sets the foundation for my argument that referring to previous tragedies is one of the ways in which sports columnists maintain whiteness as the dominant construction of their national identity.

The following chapter examines how sports columnists have historically used sport to serve a national identity by writing about black athletes. It examines how sports columnists wrote about the assassinations of Martin Luther King and Robert F. Kennedy; Tommie Smith and John Carlos' protest at the 1968 Olympics; Muhammad Ali's refusal to fight in Vietnam; and Magic Johnson's contraction of HIV. Specifically, the chapter analyzes Shirley Povich, Daley, Bob Addie, Robert Lipsyte, Steve Cady, Dave Bradley, Michael Wilbon, Tony Kornheiser, among others' writing. The chapter suggests that sports columnists generally focused on single acts of violence as tragic rather than the ongoing systemic violence of racial and classed oppression that the men who were the

focus of their columns worked to dismantle. Ultimately, this chapter theorizes ‘national tragedy’ is a racial construct revealing of identities privileged in sports columnists’ nations.

The 1996 Olympic bombing that took place during President William Clinton’s administration is the focus of the next chapter. In this chapter I examine Kornheiser, Ira Berkow, Rick Reilly, Thomas Boswell, Mike Downey, Dave Kindred, and among others’ stories about the bombing of the Atlanta Olympics in 1996. In the process, I reveal that there were two major camps of sports columnists writing about the bombing. Almost immediately after the bombing, mainstream media was notified that it was most likely carried out by a white supremacist. One group of columnists suggested that the bombing was a sign that the nation was, in 1996, experiencing terror for the first time. The other camp, however, demonstrated the historic threat that white supremacy had presented the nation-state’s citizens for over two centuries. Hence, these two camps engaged in a contestation for how white supremacy would be remembered as a terror network with a past in the nation-state.

The final two chapters examine the most recent tragedies defined as national, 9/11 and Hurricane Katrina. These two chapters reveal the diverging and powerful voices of mainstream sports columnists in the 21st century. For instance, in chapter five I reveal there to be three camps of columnists. The first camp used sport to establish a virile nation-state ready for war, and was not critical of the nation-state’s forthcoming War on Terror. The second camp did not support the War on Terror, but suggested that sport allowed the nation to heal from its wounds by providing a diversion. The third camp, however, used sport, specifically the death of Pat Tillman, Arizona Cardinals safety who

left a \$ 3.6 million contract to join the Marines after 9/11, to overtly criticize President George W. Bush's policies and running of the War on Terror. Collectively, then, these columnists used sport as a means to write about the War on Terror, 9/11, and to contest for how each would be situated and remembered in the dominant national identity. In making these claims, I look at Bill Plaschke, William Rhoden, Diane Pucin, Roger Angell, Rick Morrissey, Christine Brennan, Jason Whitlock, Mitch Albom, Rick Reilly, and many others' work.

The final chapter suggests that many sports columnists solidified a conservative standpoint in writing of Hurricane Katrina through the New Orleans Saints. In this chapter, I argue that columnists' writing of the Saints as representative of New Orleans and the nation played a significant role in avoiding the reality that white privilege yet oppresses the nation-state. However, a very few columnists resisted this conservative turn and insisted that the black impoverished be remembered as a significant part of Katrina's story and the nation-state's failure. Like the previous chapter, then, I argue that columnists used sport as a means to contest for how a tragedy would be situated and remembered in the dominant national identity. However, I suggest that black poverty, not war, was what was being discussed by Wilbon, Rhoden, Nancy Armour, Tim Dahlberg, Ohm Youngmisuk, Paul Attner, and Whitlock among others.

In the end, I hope this interdisciplinary project sheds light on a space in mainstream media that is rife with power relations and capable of supporting or deconstructing the whiteness and the discourses that privilege it.

Chapter 2: War Games

On January 20, 1961, President John Fitzgerald Kennedy stood in the frigid Washington, D.C., air and delivered an inaugural address, the content of which revealed the national identity he would seek to establish through his administration. Wearing no hat or coat, he worked to construct his nation as vigorous, virile, and willing to exercise military force against the spread of Communism.¹ He said “Let every nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe to assure the survival and the success of liberty....”²

Kennedy’s assertions of national strength in the name of liberty, David Farber and Trevor and Shawn Parry-Giles argued, came in the context of the Cold War, where the notion of American stability and strength was constantly challenged by the Soviet Union and its advancements in weaponry and space. These scholars also argued that Kennedy crafted an image and message of national and military strength in response to Gallup polls that suggested American voters would welcome both in the context of the Cold War.³

In a commonly-used stump speech during his Presidential campaign, Kennedy revealed that his construction of military strength was in response to the Soviet Union’s

¹ Using Freudian substitution theory, which this chapter builds on in terms of sports columns, Trevor and Shawn Parry-Giles argued that Presidential candidates must carefully construct private and public selves to gaze voters who are aware of cultural myths of the Presidency and political discourses of the contemporary era. Clearly, in his image and the mythological construction of national identity that he constructed, Kennedy was aware of this dynamic. Parry-Giles, Shawn and Trevor, “Political Scopophilia, Presidential Campaigning, and The Intimacy Of American Politics,” *Communication Studies*, 47(3): 191-205.

² Qtd, David Farber, *The Age of Great Dreams*, (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1994), 26.

³ Parry-Giles, “Political Scopophilia, Presidential Campaigning, and The Intimacy Of American Politics;” David Farber, *The Age of Great Dreams*.

threat to American stability. He promised to “mold our strength and become first again...[He] want[ed] the people of the world to wonder not what Mr. Khrushchev [wa]s doing [but] what the United States [wa]s doing.”⁴ Likewise, in *High Noon in the Cold War*, Max Frankel illustrated that Kennedy’s rhetoric and image of strength were both crafted with the intention of ceasing the Soviet Union’s spread to Cuba and Berlin.⁵ Finally, Shawn Parry-Giles argued that national politicians and mainstream American media had, throughout the 1950s and early 1960s, normalized Cold War rhetoric, which asserted American might and implied military strength.⁶

Often during his Presidential campaign, Kennedy extended this normalized Cold War rhetoric by connecting military might with moral superiority. Kennedy argued that the belief in and exertion of American strength was moral because of a single American trait that separated his country from Communist countries: its democracy. So moral was Kennedy’s constructed America and its democracy, in fact, that he claimed “God’s work” was America’s.⁷ Hence, Kennedy’s construction of a strong, virile, and moral American identity was implicitly an argument about America’s place in the global community and how America stacked up against Communism.

However, two years after his inauguration, on August 28, 1963, Kennedy’s construction of national morality was overtly challenged when 250,000 people from all over the nation-state traveled to Washington, D.C., to participate in the March on Washington, which was to protest the unfair and unequal treatment of racial minorities and women. In newspapers across the country, reporters quoted President John F.

⁴ Qtd, David Farber, *The Age of Great Dreams*, 26.

⁵ Max Frankel, *High Noon in the Cold War*, New York: Random House, 2004.

⁶ Shawn Parry-Giles, *The Rhetorical Presidency, Propaganda, and the Cold War, 1945-1955*, Westport: Greenwood, 2001.

⁷ Qtd, David Farber, *The Age of Great Dreams*, 26.

Kennedy's words that the March "advanced the cause of 20 million Negroes' and all mankind."⁸ Edward T. Folliard from *The Washington Post*, Robert C. Albright from the *Los Angeles Times*, and Laurence Burd from the *Chicago Tribune* wrote of Kennedy's support of the March and the Civil Rights Movement.⁹ Burd wrote that A. Philip Randolph and nine other leaders of the March "met in the White House cabinet room with the President." There Kennedy noted that the March signified a growth in public awareness about civil rights, but that despite progress, "we have a very long way to travel."¹⁰ Along with Burd's article, a photograph of Kennedy and Vice President Lyndon Johnson with the ten African American leaders ran on the top of the page.

Three months after the March, Kennedy's body lay dead in the same building in which he shook hands with the race leaders. *The New York Times* sports columnist Arthur Daley, whose work was nationally-syndicated, called the assassination "a national nightmare."¹¹ Red Smith, who wrote for the *New York Herald Tribune*, but was syndicated nationally, argued that the assassination required "a day of mourning" for the "nation."¹² Sid Ziff of the *Los Angeles Times* suggested the cancelation of regularly scheduled programming by radio and television was executed "to impress upon the people, over and over again, the sense of tragedy."¹³ These writers collectively appeared in more than 200 papers throughout the country. And as was customary of the discourse of tragedy, they pondered what the appropriate action for sport would be in order to give the proper respect to Kennedy. However, none of these columnists--and few if any of

⁸ Qtd., Laurence Burd, "March to Aid Negro Cause, Kennedy Said," *Chicago Tribune*, August 29, 1963.

⁹ Edward T. Folliard, "Kennedy Says March Advanced Negro Cause," *The Washington Post*, August 29 1963, sec. A; Robert C. Albright, "March Leaders Press Civil Rights Case," *Los Angeles Times*, August 29, 1963.

¹⁰ Laurence Burd, "March to Aid Negro Cause, Kennedy Said."

¹¹ Arthur Daley, "A Strange Afternoon," *The New York Times*, November 25, 1963, sec. L.

¹² Red Smith, "De Gustibus," *New York Herald*, November 28, 1963, sec. 4.

¹³ Sid Ziff, "And They Came Out," *Los Angeles Times*, November 24, 1963, sec. D.

their counterparts--mentioned the March or the Civil Rights Movement that Kennedy supported. Columnists' silence regarding civil rights in the wake of Kennedy's assassination was telling of the identities privileged in the nation they suggested sport served, given that sport at that time was full of black men, many of whom supported civil rights.¹⁴

(White) National Bodies

Two days after the assassination, an Associated Press column referring to Kennedy's advocacy of physical fitness underscored that the fallen president "emphasized the importance of building the body as well as the mind."¹⁵ Columnists' writing of Kennedy's policies and interest in physical fitness and athletics, then, should be framed as engaged in a discourse that signaled citizenship status of identities in sports columnists' nations.

For instance, Daley wrote that Kennedy "was vitally interested in every phase of athletics."¹⁶ As evidence to support this claim he cited Kennedy's attendance at boxing matches, Hall of Fame dinners, and his wealth of sporting knowledge. Omitted from the elements comprising Daley's version of sport, then, was its racial make-up despite that Kennedy worked to de-segregate professional and collegiate sport.¹⁷ Hence, Daley also avoided racial policy in constructing his memory of Kennedy. Another AP column implicitly engaged in a discourse of citizenship by representing only white males in referring to athletes' association with national identity and the military:

¹⁴ Among the superstars who supported the Civil Rights Movement were Bill Russell of the Boston Celtics, David Meggysey of the Saint Louis Cardinals, Jim Brown of the Cleveland Browns, Curt Flood of the St. Louis Cardinals, and many more.

¹⁵ Associated Press, "A Friend and Champion is Missing From Sports," *New York Herald*, November 24, 1963, sec. 4.

¹⁶ Arthur Daley, "A Strange Afternoon."

¹⁷ Ibid.

President Kennedy did not merely stress the importance of physical well-being...He also created a Youth Council on Fitness under the supervision of Oklahoma's football coach Bud Wilkinson. The program was encouraged throughout all primary public schools throughout the country...He appointed Gen. Douglas MacArthur the final-say in the dispute [between the Amateur Athletic Union and the U.S. Olympic Program.] He had surrounded himself with football men, feeling they were rounded citizens best trained to meet today's problems.¹⁸

Although African Americans were participating in sport throughout the country, white males were constructed as the 'most able citizens capable of addressing this nation's problems.' Hence, the face of sport and the nation served through it was white and male. Sport paid a service to a national identity of military strength as General MacArthur was aligned with Kennedy's association with athletics. They thereby situated Kennedy in their imagined nations by emphasizing the militaristic component of his administration while repressing the racial. And this nation's problems were related to physical fitness and training youth for the Olympics, not the social and racial oppressions that Kennedy's policies within and beyond sport addressed. Moreover, the emphasis of physical fitness was engaged in a discourse legitimating white male identities as those representative of the nation and sport, while marginalizing black bodies and racial policy from sports columnists' memory of Kennedy.

The discourse of national identity carried over to columnists' use of fans' attendance at the 1963 Army-Navy game to establish the make-up of their imagined

¹⁸ Associated Press, "A Friend and Champion is Missing From Sports."

nations. Smith led his column: “Silent in the sunshine, 100,000 citizens stood...”¹⁹ Jesse Abramson of *The New York Times* wrote that a “cross section of the public” attended the Army-Navy game, but he identified only white national officials by name.²⁰ Leonard Koppett of the *The New York Times*, but syndicated throughout the country, reduced Kennedy’s position from national official to ‘fan’ and thereby made Kennedy’s actions of ‘the people.’ He wrote that “at the many events [Kennedy] had attended, he seemed to respond as a fan, rather than as a public figure making ceremonial appearances.”²¹ These columns all constructed ‘the public,’ or the nation’s ‘citizens,’ as represented at the game, but only mentioned white males as present in the stands. Moreover, when we consider that Navy’s varsity team consisted of only white males until 1964, and Army’s consisted of only white males until 1966, the act of gazing at white bodies became one of citizenship.²² Likewise, these columnists established fans of the military’s sporting teams as citizens. (To be clear: while it is certain that women and minorities attended the game, these columnists did not mention them in constructing the public that was reflecting their nations.) The nations that Smith, Abramson, and Koppett constructed were full of white bodies, pleasures, gazes, and politicians, despite that Kennedy’s administration played a significant role in integrating the NFL, even threatening the Washington Redskins with court action if the organization refused to sign black players; despite that sport was full of black males interested in civil rights.

¹⁹ Red Smith, “Five for Navy,” *New York Herald Tribune*, December 8, 1963, sec. 4.

²⁰ Jesse Abramson, “Army, Navy Squads Drill; For Nothing,” *New York Herald Tribune*, November 24, 1963, sec. 4.

²¹ Leonard Koppett, “Pro Football Attendance Unaffected,” *The New York Times*, November 25, 1963, sec. 4.

²² In 1964, Flankerback Calvin Huey was the first African American to play on the varsity squad for Navy and in 1966 split end Calvin Steele was the first to play for Army. See Lincoln A. Werden, “Cahill’s Plans for Army Eleven Include its First Negro Regular,” *The New York Times*, June 4, 1966.

When the columnists focused on the all-white Army-Navy games to construct cultural memory of Kennedy and his relationship to sport, they were not only avoiding topics that would confront the hegemony of whiteness, such as the segregation in sport that Kennedy worked to dismantle, but they were also asserting it. Kennedy's work to integrate sport was avoided in these columnists' memory of him. Black citizens were altogether marginalized from the field of play columnists used to construct their nations, despite that Kennedy worked to allow some of them on the field of play. Hence, columnists' discourse of national identity emphasizing physical fitness and Army-Navy games privileged whiteness and what Berlant called the national fantasy of whiteness simply by marginalizing race from their nations. Moreover, columnists' rhetoric suggested sport paid a service to the nation and memory of Kennedy, but constructed both in terms that sealed the reality of racial strife beyond the stadium walls.

Kennedy's advocacy of physical fitness had a history in the presidency and in espousing military might. W.W. Abbott introduced President Washington's personal papers by noting the president's athleticism and referencing his prowess in war.²³ Similarly, throughout his presidency, Theodore Roosevelt put emphasis on sport's ability to ready the nation-state's young men for war. In *Manliness and Civilization* Gail Bedermen chronicled Teddy Roosevelt's rhetoric and noted that the emphasis of physical prowess and sport during his administration was part of a greater project to conflate race, masculinity, and sexuality. She further wrote that the rhetoric was not the most powerful means through which this conflation occurred. Rather, "middle-class constructions of male power would become firmly based on the violence and sexuality of this journalistic

²³ W.W. Abbott, "The Papers of George Washington, Preface," 11 February 1999, <http://gwpapers.virginia.edu/articles/abbot_3.html> 21 June 2007.

version of primitive masculinity.”²⁴ This masculinity was emphasized in the rhetoric of the news pages that touted nationalism and eventually led the nation to the Spanish American War. Finally, S.W. Pope wrote that “the American sporting tradition was profoundly transformed by the military’s widespread incorporation of sports into the war effort.”²⁵ He continued to suggest that “riding patriotic fervor, many physical educators linked mass athletic activity with the democratic ideal” and citizenship.²⁶ Likewise, as sports columnists located Kennedy’s body in sport stadiums and focused on his advocacy of physical fitness they were, in effect, writing upon the dominant national identity and subsequently involved in a discourse of national identity that would support and be informed by the military complex.²⁷

Specifically, columnists associated Kennedy with two of the three collegiate teams with direct connection to the nation-state and war, Army and Navy. For instance, Smith wrote of the Pentagon’s decision to allow the 1963 Army-Navy game to be played in the wake of tragedy and suggested the game was of primary import in establishing how Kennedy would be remembered for his nation.

No doubt there are less important questions, though none come to mind at the moment. Decent sport which the President admired and encouraged, does not dishonor his memory now. Indeed, the game with all its pageantry could create an opportunity for the young men of West Point and Annapolis to

²⁴ Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 215.

²⁵ S.W. Pope, *Patriotic Games*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997) 154.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 154.

²⁷ In “Pro Football Attendance Unaffected,” Koppett wrote that those in sport felt an acute sense of loss, not because Kennedy worked to desegregate sport, but because he attended games and “emphasi[zed]...physical fitness.” The AP column cited above claimed that Kennedy “was one of the best friends American sports ever had” and used his attendance at Army-Navy games as proof of its claim. In “One Drunk, Unarmed,” Red Smith remembered that “John Kennedy enjoyed [football] games as a participant and spectator, and sports had his hearty official support as President.”

pay public tribute to the Commander in Chief.²⁸

Though Smith suggested the game was important for the members of the Armed Forces, the bodies he imbued with meaning for memory of Kennedy were male, white, and in the Armed Forces. In imbuing these bodies with meaning, Smith implicitly constructed his nation in a similar way that Roosevelt and later Kennedy had--white masculinity, characterized by physical prowess, was privileged. In fact, white males were the only sort of bodies represented in Smith's nation; the only sort establishing cultural memories of the President for his nation.

The privileging of white masculinity did not stop with representation of the Army-Navy players, though. Specifically, Smith reinforced the myth of national strength and might by remembering the Army-Navy game that occurred a full year previous, in 1962. Smith wrote that Kennedy was "hatless and without an overcoat in the November cold."²⁹ Painting Kennedy in the same cold-weather gear, Abramson wrote that "President Kennedy attended the last three Army-Navy games...Two years ago the man of vigor shed his coat and sat in his shirt sleeves."³⁰ Likewise, Daley wrote that "recollection comes, too, of the President at the Army-Navy game, shunning an overcoat while everyone around him was well-bundled."³¹ Hence, columnists implied Kennedy's toughness and vigor by describing his clothing. These descriptions constructed Kennedy in terms reminiscent of his inaugural address, where he cast his national identity as strong, virile, and moral. In this era of instability and in the context of a president's assassination that threatened to expose that instability even further, Kennedy became a

²⁸ Red Smith, "De Gustibus."

²⁹ Red Smith, "One Drunk, Unarmed," *New York Herald Tribune*, November 23, 1963, sec. 4.

³⁰ Jesse Abramson, "Sports Silent Tribute to President Kennedy—Most College Football Games Are Called Off," *New York Herald Tribune*, November 23, 1963, sec. 4.

³¹ Arthur Daley, "A Day of Mourning," *The New York Times*, November 26, 1963, sec. L.

symbol of columnists' national toughness and vigor, a symbol of mythological nationhood.

Columnists further connected Kennedy to the military complex and national might by writing of their memories of his participation in the rituals associated with sport years earlier. Smith wrote of Kennedy's walking through a double-row of Navy and Army students during halftime of the 1962 Army-Navy game.³² The Associated Press and Red Smith remembered Kennedy's flipping the coin at the beginning of the 1962 game while standing next to soldiers. Despite that Kennedy associated himself with many facets and levels of sport during his tenure as president, his memory was being constructed in terms of his attendance at the 1961 and 1962 Army-Navy game and his proximity to white male soldiers. Ultimately, these columnists emphasized moments in Kennedy's life in which his clothing indicated something of vigor and masculinity, or moments in which he surrounded himself with white male bodies associated with the military complex. In this way, national identity and cultural memory of it found their intersection soldiers' bodies and their proximity to Kennedy in these columns. But this discourse of nation concerning Kennedy was characterized, ironically, by its disembodied-ness. That is, these columnists situated Kennedy in their nations through memory in his absence; and their nations were thus fantasies of whiteness constructed in the absence of black and female bodies.³³

In *The Queen of America Goes to Washington City* Lauren Berlant argued that disembodied definitions of democracy and citizenship privilege white patriarchy because the corporeal bodies of blacks, women, and non-heterosexuals are either erased or

³² Red Smith, "One Drunk, Unarmed."

³³ Associated Press, "A Friend and Champion is Missing From Sports;" Red Smith, "One Drunk, Unarmed."

become the fantasy of white males. In short, they are denied a place in the national imagination. Such is the case in the columns referenced above. These columns in which writers remembered Kennedy in a stadium consisting of white males associated with the nation-state, in effect established their nations as white, virile, masculine, and associated with the Armed Forces. At the same time, these columnists set discursive frames around what identities would be represented in their nations. Hence, these columnists were also engaged in a discourse of national identity that would repress and marginalize the black and female body—and any political concerns therein—from the national identity they established.³⁴

The Elegy

In the immediate aftermath of the Kennedy assassination, college and pro football leagues and conferences were uncertain if they should play their scheduled games. The NFL played all of its scheduled games on time, and most other major sporting leagues or conferences postponed them. Columnists who wrote of the NFL games being played vilified Pete Rozelle's decision to continue the season. Ultimately, we shall see, columns about the NFL generally contrasted with those written about the Army-Navy game of 1963.

It is helpful to conceive of these columns establishing cultural memory of the deceased President through sport as elegies. Peter M. Sacks defined the elegy to be a work of mourning in which the writer substitutes the deceased body with another object that survivors can use to move on from loss. Sacks' analysis of the genre extended from

³⁴ Lauren Berlant, *The Queen of America Goes to Washington City* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), 238.

his reading of Freudian theory of trauma, substitution, and their relationship to language development. Although Sacks did not write specifically about media's role in constructing the works of mourning that allow for a 'healthy' recovery from cultural trauma or loss, he did suggest that there are moments in which death becomes:

obscene, meaningless, or impersonal—an event either stupefyingly colossal in cases of large-scale war, or clinically concealed somewhere behind the technology of the hospital and the techniques of the funeral home.³⁵

Kennedy's assassination fell into the colossal sort of which Sacks writes: The stadium(s) sports columnists wrote of can be theorized to be one of those technologies that clinically concealed death. In this case, columnists producing successful elegies reproduced what happened at games using bodies associated with the mythic, masculine, white national identity to catalyze a healing. In order for columnists' elegies to enact a healing for their nations, bodies connected to the nation-state had to be present so that columnists could substitute those for Kennedy.

That is, to create an elegy that reasserted national identity as strong, virile, and moral, required a technology that sealed the reality of tragedy, potential national threats, and internal social problems from readers' imaginations. Columnists used cultural memories of Kennedy and his association with members of the nation, Presidents, and/or war heroes who had been constructed as strong and virile to write their columns. In doing so, they could return their nations to normalcy: The tragedy of Kennedy's death and the racism he worked to fix would altogether be avoided and white, male, virile bodies associated with the nation-state who would also imply military strength would

³⁵ Peter M. Sacks, *The English Elegy: Studies in the Genre from Spenser to Yeats* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press 1996), 299.

again secure columnists' national identity. And national concerns would be limited to the Cold War, the military complex, and national stability.

For instance, in "D-Day Plus 11" Jack Mann of *The New York Herald Tribune* linked Kennedy with another President associated with athletics, white masculinity, and military might: He wrote of Roosevelt and his work during World War II.³⁶ He wrote that hearing of Kennedy's assassination catalyzed the same feeling among spectators of Aqueduct (a race track in New York city) as when they first heard of President Roosevelt's death. He suggested that there was that feeling of "poured concrete in the lower intestine" which was "not exactly duplicated again...until news of Kennedy's death was learned of."³⁷

The rest of his column underscored President Johnson's masculinity by comparing it to Kennedy and Franklin Roosevelt's, both of whom, Gary Gerstel showed in *American Crucible*, were raised to the level of mythic status in cultural memory through reference to war and toughness.³⁸ Mann likened the Roosevelt and Kennedy administrations through similar, significant events associated with nation that are characteristic of masculinity and strength: War and sport. Mann wrote:

This change of command [from Kennedy to Johnson] was not as frightening because the [soldiers] knew Lyndon Johnson, and he is not the longshot the new President Truman seemed to their political minds on D-plus-11, from 10,000 miles way, in a hot war.³⁹

³⁶ Jack Mann, "Reaction at Aqueduct—Tears, Shock, Disbelief," *New York Herald Tribune*, November 24, 1963, sec. 4.

³⁷ Jack Mann, "D-Day Plus 11," *New York Herald Tribune*, November 25, 1963, sec. 4.

³⁸ Gary Gerstle, *American Crucible*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

³⁹ Jack Mann, "D-Day Plus 11."

Mann then theorized that the change in command from Kennedy to Johnson would not be disrupting for his nation because Johnson had exhibited similar masculinity as the other two presidents. Although Johnson “never captained a PT boat, ordered an invasion of a continent or fisted a five-star general...he looked death in the eye and laughed at it. Stricken in 1955 by a heart attack,” he was capable of toughness and humor. “That is all the Lyndon Johnson I know...it’s encouraging.”⁴⁰ Mann argued that Johnson was a known fighter. He delivered to Johnson the qualities of masculinity and strength, and implied a seamless transfer of command in the leadership of the nation-state as a result. In comparing Johnson and Kennedy’s heroics, Mann created a story capable of supporting the national mythology of Presidential toughness that would sustain his nation’s strength in a period in which its strength was questioned and deemed necessary.⁴¹

Daley, too, engaged in the discourse of tragedy by writing of Kennedy’s heroism in World War II. He wrote “the President’s prowess as a swimmer made him a war hero after his torpedo boat was cut in two by a Japanese craft in the Pacific. He was for miles towing a wounded member of his crew, and later swam many miles in seeking the assistance he eventually obtained.”⁴² In the process he constructed an America in which citizens and heroes were masculine figures who fought for in war and had athletic prowess.

Framed in terms of the elegy and its conventions, other columnists’ assertions that the NFL’s decision to play games was distasteful to the nation can be seen as resulting from the fact that the that bodies present at the NFL games upon which columnists

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Jack Mann, “D-Day Plus 11.”

⁴² Arthur Daley, “A Day of Mourning.”

focused were not associated with military strength or the nation-state. Hence, these games did not allow columnists to successfully reassert American strength and virility through substitution of bodies.

For example, many columnists constructed the nation as shamed when the NFL took the field. Irving T. Marsh of *The New York Herald Tribune* first acknowledged much of sport for carrying out actions he deemed appropriate: “[T]he sound of sports revelry was stilled yesterday as a nation mourned its martyred President.”⁴³ He criticized the NFL for being the “only group which will carry out its schedule in full.”⁴⁴ Smith wrote that the NFL lacked civility because it played games the weekend of Kennedy’s assassination. The lead was:

In the civilized world it was a day of mourning. In the National Football League, it was the 11th Sunday of the business year, a quarter-million dollar day in Yankee Stadium, a day for selling to television a show which that medium not always celebrated for sensitive taste—couldn’t stomach.⁴⁵

Smith later wrote of the NFL that “it is not encouraging to realize that a league with the foresight to make provisions for playing off ties cannot avoid shaming the nation.”⁴⁶ However, Smith himself noted that the games were not televised. Hence, many people in the nation-state had no capacity to be offended by the games being played. The reaction columnists had toward the non-televised NFL games can be better framed in terms of what the games did not provide for writers, rather than for what they actually did to

⁴³ Irving T. Marsh “Weekend of Mourning—Most Sports Blacked Out,” *New York Herald Tribune*, November 23, 1963, sec. 4.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Red Smith, “Carnival,” *New York Herald Tribune*, November 25, 1963, sec. 4.

⁴⁶ Red Smith, “De Gustibus.”

offend. This especially rings true when the offense columnists underscored was not the actual assassination, but the games being played.

For instance, Smith ended a column implying that the games being played was tragic for his imagined nation in this way: there was a "...bad taste left when Pete Rozelle...hung up the business as usual sign...For that exercise in tasteless stupidity there is neither excuse or defense."⁴⁷ Ziff regretted "that the whole NFL football season had not been set back one week," underscoring that "it was commissioner Pete Rozelle's decision."⁴⁸ The nation offended was one of Smith and Ziff's imagination, where a sporting event seen by only a fraction of the citizenry could in fact shame the entire nation. Daley wrote of the NFL games similarly and suggested that NFL players seemed out of place that day. He wrote the games were being played in the context of "a national nightmare."⁴⁹ He ended his column: the "feeling of disquietude never left completely...That was why it was so difficult to concentrate on the game yesterday. Big men were playing a boy's sport at the wrong time."⁵⁰ Hence, both writers were incapable of spinning myths that would substitute Kennedy's deceased body with others. Without bodies directly associated with nation-state and military might, columnists were incapable of producing works that would return their imagined nations to strength and virility after having lost its President in the context of the Cold War. Ultimately, because the bodies that would allow such elegies to be produced were absent from NFL stadiums

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Sid Ziff, "And They Came Out."

⁴⁹ Daley, "A Strange Afternoon."

⁵⁰ Ibid.

many viewed that first Sunday's games like Daley: "[I]t was not a satisfactory afternoon...Under the circumstances, how could it be?"⁵¹

In contrast to the NFL games, however, the Army-Navy game did eventually provide the bodies and fodder for columnists to complete the elegiac convention of substitution that would allow the nation to be constructed in masculine and virile terms. Even before the game was played, many writers and columnists speculated as to whether the Army-Navy game should or would be cancelled or postponed. Jesse Abramson wrote that two teams being "subject to orders from the secretaries of the Army and Navy and the Defense Department" were yet waiting for word on whether the perennial game between the forces would take place. He continued, implying that if the game was played, the nation could heal, but because it had not, "the numbness of the nation continued."⁵² Underpinning Abramson's column was the implication that the Army-Navy game would offer the material for columnists to create the elegiac myth that would return their imagined, white, masculine nations to stability, normalcy, and hegemony.

Ultimately, the Pentagon postponed the game, and set a date for December 7, 1963, for it to be played. In many of the columns regarding the game, the 'coincidental date' that the Armed Forces resumed their season on, the anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor, was not overlooked.⁵³ In a sports section that ran a header 'Dedicated to the Memory of President Kennedy,' Abramson wrote that the game would be played on a "day which will live in infamy—the 22nd anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor which

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Jesse Abramson, "Army, Navy Squads Drill; For Nothing."

⁵³ It may not have been a coincidence. The postponement of the Army-Navy game to this date may have been intentional and a product of Robert McNamara's desire to present the Kennedy administration, at the beginning of the Vietnam conflict, as fighting a war with the clean, moral decisions that presented themselves in the World War before it. Abramson, for instance, noted that the decision to play the game on that date "may have" been influenced by the White House and Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara.

plunged the U.S. into World War II.”⁵⁴ Abramson later wrote that the decision to postpone the Army-Navy game “was one that [was made so that] history would note that [it] was not played on the scheduled date after the assassination of the President.”⁵⁵ He thereby anticipated that the game would be linked to cultural memory of Kennedy. Further on, Abramson connected the history of the game to World War II and to leaders of the nation-state. He mentioned that Philadelphia had been the site for the game “since the years of World War II, its attendants to include leaders from the armed forces.” He continued that “many leaders in the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government, governors, and a cross-section of the public” were at the game.⁵⁶ The officials of nation-state present, the substitution of Kennedy was in the process of being completed through sport. That is, through the game and the officials present at it, Abramson substituted Kennedy with bodies that would assure his nation’s stability.

Emphasizing the bodies present, sports columnists wrote of the rituals at the Army-Navy game in terms of funeral ceremonies, which Sacks suggested, can replace the body of the deceased to allow for a healthy mourning, closure, and stability. In his chronicle of the forthcoming game, Koppett wrote that the “usual festive displays will be dispensed with...Instead, a minute of silence will be observed...and other ceremonies will be of an appropriate nature.”⁵⁷ Daley categorized the stadium as an “outdoor cathedral.”⁵⁸ Ziff wrote that Los Angeles Rams owner Dan Reeves “quoted parts of

⁵⁴ Abramson, “Army, Navy Squads Drill; For Nothing.” Later, Abramson would write that the Kennedy family requested the Army-Navy game take place, offering yet another connection of Kennedy, nation, and sport. Finally, it was the Secretary of the Army, Abramson recorded, who asserted that the game would be dedicated to the President’s memory.

⁵⁵ Jesse Abramson, “Army, Navy Squads Drill; For Nothing.”

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Leonard Koppett, “Decision is Made by the Pentagon,” *The New York Times*, November 27, 1963, sec. L.

⁵⁸ Arthur Daley, “Philadelphia Thriller,” *The New York Times*, December 8, 1963, sec. L.

[Kennedy's] eulogy that was uttered in his mass earlier that day [November 24th].”⁵⁹

These rituals led to the closure of sports columnists' stories of tragedy and a return to normalcy: Daley suggested that the nation would soon “return to normalcy;” Smith argued that “quiet resumption of normal activity” would occur through continuation of sport; Mann's “Big D” illustrated that Dallas had returned to normalcy in anticipation of the Cotton Bowl in which Navy would participate; and Smith implied normalcy returned when the opening ceremonies of the Army-Navy game were complete; for after them, “nothing was more important than football.”⁶⁰

In these columns, the conventions of the elegy were fulfilled and columnists used the stadium's technology to seal the reality of instability and tragedy beyond its walls. That is, columnists stressed the ceremonies of the game as meaningful, substituted Kennedy's deceased body with those of the nation-state's officials and soldiers. Ultimately, they suggested the presence of these bodies allowed a return to ‘normalcy.’ But these columnists' elegies offered closure by asserting a hegemonic notion of citizenship, where white masculine bodies of the nation-state were the only types legitimated. They also implied that the problems of the nation-state were solved because the nation's military was secure. This construction of national stability and morality was an easy rhetorical maneuver when the racial realities of the nation-state were avoided in their columns and the stadium.

There is further evidence that columnists closed their stories of Kennedy's assassination after they asserted their nations' strength and virility by writing of the Army-Navy game. Navy's win assured them a spot in what many columnists labeled the

⁵⁹ Sid Ziff, “And They Came Out.”

⁶⁰ Arthur Daley, “A Strange Afternoon;” Red Smith, “De Gustibus;” Jack Mann, “Big D,” *New York Herald Tribune*, December 2, 1963, sec. 4; Red Smith “Five for Navy.”

national championship game to be held in, of all places, Dallas, where Kennedy was shot.⁶¹ Daley, Danzig, and Jim Murray of the *Los Angeles Times* all wrote of the Cotton Bowl, but none referred to the death of Kennedy, despite that it was there that his body fell. Hence a game held in the same site as the assassination, and played by the same team associated with the President, was not said to have significance for the nation or tragedy. But whiteness, masculinity, and nation were all further secured, at least by Daley: After Navy lost to Texas in the national championship, Daley wrote that “at least one televiewer swelled with pride at that exhibition and thought how comforting it was to know that a nation’s destinies would someday be in the hands of indomitable Navy officers like these.”⁶² The future of Daley’s nation was safe in the hands of white males associated with the nation-state and a strong military complex—a message desired and offered over and again in the context of the Cold War. It was a message, too, that blindly and implicitly accepted Kennedy’s approach to the Cold War, and his escalation of troop levels for the Vietnam War, about which I write in the next chapter.

A Loss of Innocence

The white and male hegemony columnists engaged in can be further revealed by examining the irony inherent in their use of memories of WWII to establish national identity as heroic, virile, and moral. Columns that linked the Army-Navy game to citizenship were rife with contradiction as they completely marginalized black citizens and concerns from their columns. Similarly, as cultural memories of World War II often emphasize American strength and virtue, this game was being established as significant

⁶¹ See Ibid., Allison Danzig, “Service Game Fitting Climax to Surprising Year,” *The New York Times*, December 9, 1963, 50; Arthur Daley, “The Cotton Pickers,” *The New York Times*, January 1, 1964; Jim Murray, “To Rule or Serve,” *Los Angeles Times*, January 3, 1964, sec. B.

⁶² Arthur Daley, “Sunk Without a Trace.”

to columnists' construction of Kennedy and nation as strong and virtuous. But during World War II black soldiers were asked to fight against an oppressive regime in the Nazis, and they were not offered equal treatment within the forces. A similar marginalization of black identities occurred not only at the Army- Navy game. This marginalization occurred both in sports columns that suggested the teams and games represented the nation, and in mainstream media's Cold War rhetoric that implied the nation-state was moral and superior despite the existence of racial oppression within its borders. This marginalization of black interests from sports columnists' memory of Kennedy occurred despite that "not since the reconstruction had a President of the United States so strongly linked to his political fortunes to the fate of African-Americans."⁶³

This marginalization of the civil rights movement from columns said to be written in memory of Kennedy, too, can be framed in the way in which the Kennedy assassination commonly serves as a cultural memory that signaled a loss of national innocence. Farber wrote that the assassination made people realize that not "all of America's possibilities were good" and that even today the baby-boomer generation remembers the Kennedy assassination as signaling the loss of innocence for their nations.⁶⁴ But the perception that the nation was innocent prior to the assassination is indicative of a standpoint privileged by race, gender, class, and sexuality. To assume innocence existed prior to the Kennedy assassination requires not only the de-legitimization and marginalization of black bodies and concerns from the imagined borders of the dominant nation, but also a simultaneous dislocation of Kennedy's work toward racial politics from his story. If his assassination signaled a loss of national

⁶³ David Farber, *The Age of Great Dreams*, 89.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 48.

innocence, Kennedy's administration must be viewed in absence of its approach to racism.

The memory of Kennedy's assassination as an 'end to innocence,' as a result, is paradoxical in the way George Lipsitz highlighted the romanticization of the 1960s as a time of social and political activism is. Lipsitz argued that even though the dominant nation considered the Kennedy assassination as part of a matrix of events in which progress in the sphere of civil rights was evident, "a majority of Americans opposed almost all of the specific objectives of the civil rights movement."⁶⁵ Lipsitz remembered the activism of the 1960s to have occurred from "the self-worth and raised expectations resulting from participation in social movements by workers, women, military personnel, and members of aggrieved social groups," not participation of those already privileged by the power structures in America.⁶⁶

The absence of an overt, racial discourse in sports columnists' writing of Kennedy spoke loudly of the identities privileged in their imagined nations, not necessarily Kennedy's nation-state. In this way, the nations that sports columnists wrote of were, in a very real sense, of their own imaginations. Given that the columnists writing for mainstream publications in 1963 were overwhelmingly white and male, the memories of Kennedy and nation they constructed can partially be attributed to their life experiences in an era where the normalized discourse privileged their identity and military strength. Their memories of Kennedy that celebrated the nation and the deceased president as virile and masculine disregarded race as an important part of either's story. That so many of these mainstream columnists omitted race from their stories was also revealing of the

⁶⁵ George Lipsitz, *American Studies in a Moment of Danger* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 61.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 64.

lack of urgency and sincerity with which the producers and consumers of their work approached race relations in the early 1960s, no matter how that time period is remembered now. In short, as columnists did not engage in an overt racial discourse, they continued to normalize white masculinity, their own identity, as the dominant national identity.

The way we remember is partially how we currently perceive ourselves and our own identities in relation to power and privilege. Avoiding the reality that racial oppression was ignored by many whites even in the immediate aftermath of Kennedy's assassination allows them not to confront their own role in supporting white hegemony. It is a memory strategy that perpetuates the national mythology of democracy and equality and that, this chapter shows, sports columnist most definitely engaged in. Hence, one of the goals of this chapter is to underscore how memory and forgetting work to privilege whiteness. Highlighting how memories and omissions support privilege is part of the project of educating with the goal of challenging hegemony: If readers of this dissertation see that cultural memory has normalized whiteness and constructed the 1960s as an end of innocence by marginalizing blackness, they may take a more critical view toward the standpoints by which they view significant moments in history, and construct less rigid national identities for themselves.

In the next chapter, I suggest that sports columnists used black athletes to represent a national identity of equality and diversity while also marginalizing any athletes or voices that challenged that representation of nation. I examine sports columnists covering the assassinations of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Robert F. Kennedy as well as John Carlos and Tommie Smith's protest at the 1968 Olympics, Muhammad

Ali's protest of the Vietnam War, and Magic Johnson's contraction of HIV. Ultimately, the chapter asserts that the way columnists wrote of these tragedies was revealing of the make-up of their imagined nations, and that, as a result, 'tragedy' in the late 1960s, was a racialized construct.

Chapter 3: White National Tragedies

On December 16, 1967, *The New York Times* published a column by Robert Lipsyte in which he wrote of a press conference attended by Professor Harry Edwards and Dr. Martin Luther King. During that conference Edwards and King linked sports to their civil rights agenda. Edwards said that one of the means “to affect” white Americans was to use sports as a vehicle to reach them. He continued to argue that:

We must re-assert the basic masculinity of the black people and force the white man to stop taking their services for granted in a country where we can’t take simple things, like personal safety, for granted, where we can’t drive across our country and expect to be served with humanity...the Negro loves his country, fights for it in [the Vietnam] war. The tragedy here is that the country the Negro loves doesn’t love him back.¹

Herein, Edwards and King defined the systemic racial and classed oppression of African Americans as a tragedy of national proportions. In the process, they established sport as a vehicle through which to assert black masculinity in the context of both the Civil Rights Movement and the protests against the Vietnam War in which “22 percent of the battlefield deaths were Negro, while only 10 percent of the population [wa]s Negro.”²

Through 1967 and up until his assassination in 1968, King was overtly critical of President Lyndon Johnson’s approach to the Vietnam War, arguing that it was an obstacle to racial equality. Four months after his press conference with Edwards, King pointed out that the war effort was “taking the young black men who have been crippled

¹ Robert Lipsyte, “Striking Nerves,” *The New York Times*, December 16, 1967.

² *The New York Times*, “The Draft: Cassius Versus the Army,” April 30, 1967.

by our society and sending them 8,000 miles away to guarantee liberties in Southeast Asia which they had not found in southwest Georgia and East Harlem.”³ Exactly one year later, James Earl Ray gunned Martin Luther King down.

Colorblind Nation

A confluence of events, all associated with King’s assassination, necessitated that Major League Baseball postpone its opening day scheduled for April 8, 1968. First, upon hearing of Martin Luther King’s assassination, President Johnson called for a national day of mourning to be observed on Sunday, April 7, 1968, arguing that the major obstacles facing the nation were those of “inaction, of indifference, of injustice.”⁴ Second, Dr. King’s funeral services took place on Tuesday, April 9, 1968. Hence, many baseball players and officials wanted to wait to begin the season until after the funeral services. Third, in many cities such as Baltimore, Washington D.C., Chicago, and New York, race riots broke out and necessitated that the games be postponed.

Especially in the cities in which riots erupted, columnists constructed the postponement and resumption of the season as meaningful to their nations’ recovery from tragedy. For instance, Shirley Povich, who wrote for *The Washington Post* and whose work was also syndicated throughout the nation-state, originally proclaimed: “[T]he postponement of Washington’s opening game in deference to the late Martin Luther King...rates...[as] one of baseball’s biggest upsets as it took 108 years to discover

³ Martin Luther King, “Black Soldiers in Vietnam,” April 4, 1967, <http://www.socialistworker.org/2003-2/464/464_08_BlackAthletes.shtml>

⁴ Lyndon Johnson, “Address to the Nation Upon Proclaiming a Day of Mourning,” April 5, 1968, *American Experience*, 20 April, 2007. <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/presidents/36_1_johnson/psources/ps_mourning.html>

Negroes had a place in organized baseball.”⁵ But when the Washington Senators resumed play, Povich asserted that opening day united the divided country: “This is it. The opening day of another baseball season, and for the next six months the Nation will have a decent common interest.”⁶ Similarly, Bob Addie, who wrote for *The Washington Post* and *The Sporting News*, fulfilled the convention in the discourse of tragedy that argues the nation is healed through sport. He wrote that baseball provided a chance to “get back to the ordinary things of life...a touch of normalcy...we all need so desperately.”⁷ These two columnists suggested baseball had the capability to unite the country that was obviously fractured racially and whose fracturing underpinned the very premises of their columns. These columnists used baseball to construct their nations as healed, and implicitly denied the existence of ongoing, systemic oppression that Edwards, King, and Johnson underscored as racist. In this way, sport served what David Voigt called the mythological function of presenting the nation as colorblind when in fact baseball and the nation-state have been plagued by racism.⁸

Moreover, prior to opening day, President Johnson made it clear that his attendance at opening day in Washington, D.C., was in question. In a column pondering who would toss out the ceremonial first pitch in Johnson’s absence, Povich suggested that whoever did would offer a delivery:

...from the din of new words like reassess and divisiveness that have come into the language...[T]he charm of baseball is that everybody knows what it is all about. Every boy or girl who has ever caught a ball or bounced one has almost

⁵ Shirley Povich, “This Morning” *The Washington Post*, April 7, 1968, sec. C.

⁶ Shirley Povich, “This Morning,” April 10, 1968.

⁷ Bob Addie, “Golden Arms Abound,” *The Washington Post*, April 7, 1968 sec. E; Bob Addie, “Muted Ceremonies Likely on Tuesday,” *The Washington Post*, April 6, 1968 sec. E.

⁸ David Voigt, *America Through Baseball* (Burnham Publishing, 1976).

complete understanding of the American game...The ceremonial openers in baseball are a reminder that baseball is the national pastime...It isn't certain if President Johnson or even Vice President Humphrey will throw out the first pitch because of other affairs. But that won't make much of a difference.⁹

Here Povich established baseball and the ceremonial pitch as uniquely American pastimes capable of uniting everyone despite national, racial divisiveness. However, Povich's nation healed as a result of racial differences being cast beyond the walls of the stadium. More specifically, such constructions of nation through sport served those privileged by race and solved the nation-state's racial problems by simply ignoring them. Despite King's association of sport to his civil rights agenda, these columnists used his assassination and the resumption of sport after it to construct their nations as democratic.

In a later column, Povich sought to praise American patriotism while denying its structural racism that led to the civil rights movement, King's assassination, and the riots that followed: He wrote that "in Washington, particularly, the opening game is an emotional affair, not merely because of the flourishing and ruffles that greet the Chief Executive and the bunting that may evoke a new flush of patriotism."¹⁰ In 'new flush of patriotism' Povich implied a desire to turn what little focus there was on the assassination and riots to baseball and its connection with the nation-state's officials. The patriotism was for a nation privileged by race. Povich even ended his column by writing that "a terrible thing happened in the eighth inning, the Twins got another run...This was the Senators losing their sixth straight opening game, and it cannot be reasonably described

⁹ Shirley Povich, "This Morning," *The Washington Post*, April 10, 1968, sec D.

¹⁰ Ibid.

as an unique human experience.”¹¹ With the resumption of sport, the problems sports columnists wrote of were limited to the games. And the problems of racism and poverty that King identified as nationally tragic were altogether ignored in columns that were at the very least tangentially related to King’s assassination. Hence, King’s assassination was considered nationally significant to these columnists, but only on the condition that sport could heal the wounds of the nation through a simple turn away from them.

Moreover, a year prior to his death, King openly criticized President Johnson’s allocation of funds and administrative attention to the Vietnam War as a major obstacle to the Civil Rights Movement. King said the war was “playing such havoc with our domestic programs that I am forced into opposing it.”¹² He continued to suggest that the war’s funding was detracting from solving the fundamental “economic problems” and promised to demonstrate to “expose the problems of the ghettos” as he openly opposed the War.¹³ When riots tore through some of the very cities that King hoped to expose the poverty of through his demonstrations--namely Baltimore, Washington D.C., and Chicago—games were postponed. Few columnists explained the reasoning behind these riots or the poverty that King worked to expose during his life.

But they implicitly if not overtly endorsed Johnson’s approach to the war in the context of King’s assassination. For instance, Povich wrote that “President Johnson did not report to D.C. Stadium or the opening game, apparently giving priority to Ho Chi Minh, one of his newer and more pressing interests...”¹⁴ Despite that Povich suggested that the nation was healing from the assassination of King, he avoided discussion of civil

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Qtd. Associated Press, “Dr. King to Press Anti-War Stand,” *The New York Times*, March 24, 1967, sec.

A

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Shirley Povich, “This Morning,” *The Washington Post*, April 11, 1968, sec. C.

rights and their connection to the Vietnam War. He did so while underscoring the attention Johnson paid to that same war. He thus implicitly endorsed Johnson's approach to Vietnam War. Povich continued and characterized the season opener as an end to violence: "the only violence is involved with the bat, against the cured and whitened hides of long-dead horses..."¹⁵ Hence, sport served Povich's nation by presenting it and its war as void of violence—racial or that in Vietnam. Similarly, Addie wrote that there was "considerable doubt that in view of the nationwide mourning for Dr. King [and the ensuing riots] that President Johnson or Vice President Humphrey w[ould] throw out the ceremonial first ball on Thursday."¹⁶ And later, after the game, Addie led his column by writing "Vice President Humphrey came out of the Presidential box at D.C. Stadium yesterday..."¹⁷ He finally expressed regret not at the assassination or riots or the reasons behind them, but that the President did not attend the game. In this way, sport served to remember King as an icon, but avoided his politics. Columnists also implicitly supported the war in Vietnam, to which King was overtly opposed by avoiding discussion of the ongoing violence in the nation-state associated with racial oppression, riots, and war.

Columnists also wrote of the presence of National Guardsmen at the stadium in a way that altogether avoided the reasons for their initially coming to D.C.: to quell the riots. In a reference to the National Guard, Povich wrote: "In baseball, when the troops are called on it means that managers are emptying the bench of pinch hitters."¹⁸ George E. Minot of *The New York Times* wrote that "there was apprehension around the well-guarded D.C. Stadium that the opener with the Minnesota Twins might be set back a third

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Bob Addie, "Muted Ceremonies Likely on Tuesday."

¹⁷ Bob Addie, "HHH Ignores Protest," *The Washington Post*, April 11, 1968, sec. E.

¹⁸ Ibid.

day in the wake of Civil Disorders.”¹⁹ He later chronicled that the opener was “put off out of respect for Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.”²⁰ He then wrote that the riots “rocked the capital” and that “President Johnson is not expected to attend today’s ceremonies,” because Vice President Humphrey would throw the first pitch at D.C. Stadium, “an armed camp.”²¹ Addie wrote that “it wasn’t quite like opening day at D.C. stadium yesterday,” but there was no mention of King or the riots in his column. However, he did write that “National Guard troops sprawled throughout the stands.”²² In a later column Addie wrote that “there were troops scattered throughout the stands.”²³ While these columns underscored the presence of the National Guard, none explained the reasons behind the riots that brought the Guard to the stadium. Hence, these columnists engaged in the process of silencing any debate about black masculinity or poverty while emphasizing patriotic national identity through bodies associated with the military complex. As such, through sport, they promoted a national identity associated with the military while ignoring the fact of racial imbalance in the War.

Columnists also used their own memories of past opening days to construct a national identity that was implicitly mythological, white, and strong in war. In a column that appeared the day of the opener, Addie used memories of Presidents Kennedy, Eisenhower, and Johnson to discuss the service sport would pay to a nation experiencing tragedy. Addie recollected the strength of each man’s throwing arm:

Mr. Kennedy had a good arm. He threw with grace and form...President

¹⁹ George E. Minot, “Nats Plant Drives on Gridiron,” *The New York Times*, April 9, 1968, sec. B.

²⁰ George E. Minot, “Senators Open Baseball Season Today,” *The New York Times*, April 10, 1968, sec. D.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Bob Addie, “Killebrew Reflections,” *The Washington Post*, April 12, 1968, sec. D.

²³ Bob Addie, “HHH Ignores Protest,” *The Washington Post*, April 11, 1968, sec. E.

Johnson has a good arm....Last year he threw four balls, which seems like a bit much even for the Great Society...Ike, of course, was no green pea with a baseball...General Eisenhower prided himself on baseball knowledge.²⁴

Here Addie created a mythological nation using baseball and its connection to Presidential ceremonies and the military as a means to do so. Similarly, Povich wrote “nice things could happen to a lesser light in government, like who gets to throw out the first ball. Back in 1917 an assistant secretary of the Navy did the honors. F.D. Roosevelt later was elected President of the United States four times.”²⁵ In the same way that Jack Mann of *The New York Herald Tribune* created an elegiac myth of national strength and virility in 1963, by substituting the deceased Kennedy with the new President Johnson, Addie and Povich used the memory of white, male war heroes and Presidents with which to substitute the deceased King. In a discourse of citizenship established through memory, politicians were athletes, and the nation constructed through them was strong and white. Moreover, prowess in war was championed over national policy regarding the civil rights movement. These columnists writing of presidential ceremonies and the military complex in columns proclaiming to be about King were engaged in the disembodied form of nation that Lauren Berlant identified in *The Queen of America Goes to Washington City*. Such representations of nation constructed national identity in the absence of minority bodies while also proclaiming the nation to have untied after racial riots. Hence, these columns presenting the nation as racially united were ones of and privileging whiteness.

²⁴ Bob Addie, “Opening-Day Memories,” *The Washington Post*, April 10, 1968, sec. D.

²⁵ Shirley Povich, “This Morning,” *The Washington Post*, April 10, 1968, sec. D.

Some columnists, however, did write about the Civil Rights Movement while using their memories of black males to do so. For example, Arthur Daley of *The New York Times* and syndicated throughout the nation-state, suggested King's assassination measured on the same scale as President Kennedy's assassination, which he labeled a tragedy and "national nightmare" in 1963.²⁶ He then remembered and hailed Branch Rickey's selection of Jackie Robinson, a former World War II soldier, as the first black player in modern era Major League Baseball. He suggested that in times like racial assassinations and riots "a bow should be made to [Rickey,] the man who gave baseball the push supplying one irrevocable impetus."²⁷ Daley's focus on Rickey rather than Robinson or King, though, solidified a white point of view toward the black masculinity's place in his nation. Specifically, black males were allowed entrance into the dominant nation, but only on the condition that they could be written of in a way that presented the nation as democratic and colorblind; in ways that legitimated white superiority.

Further, Daley overtly constructed sport as serving an example of how the nation could achieve equality. He wrote that "in sports the Negro gained the integration denied him elsewhere...The world of sports has not completed the job of integration, but it has made further advances than most segments of American life in approaching the still unrealized dream of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr."²⁸ He further wrote that there was a general "reluctance of the Negroes to believe everything they read in the white man's

²⁶ Arthur Daley, "The Long Season Begins," *The New York Times*, April 6, 1968, sec. 5. See Arthur Daley, "Strange Feeling."

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Arthur Daley, "The Trail Blazer," *The New York Times*, April 9, 1968, sec. 5.

newspaper” except in the sports pages.²⁹ Although Daley argued that integration was not complete, he also established sport as having achieved equality where it was elsewhere denied. The implication was that black masculinity was offered agency in the sports and its media. However, in emphasizing Rickey’s role in civil rights, rather than King or Robinson’s, Daley set limits on the sort of black male who would be allowed in his nation. It was a black male who served as evidence of the sport’s democratic character. Such constructions of national identity through sport and black masculinity, however, originated from a position of power and white patronage.³⁰

Daley was not alone in using Robinson and sport to construct a colorblind nation through sport, however. Four months after King was assassinated, Robert Fitzgerald Kennedy was gunned down in California by Sirhan Sirhan. By then, Kennedy had already established his support for the Civil Rights Movement. Like King, Edwards, and President Johnson, Robert Kennedy argued that “there is another kind of violence, slower, but just as deadly. This is the violence of institutional indifference and inattention and slow decay.”³¹ Again, however, columnists wrote of sport’s service to nation in the wake of this assassination, but avoided discussion of the structural racism that Robert Kennedy himself labeled as violent.

Specifically, Addie called Robert Kennedy’s assassination a “tragedy” and wrote that “the late Sen. Kennedy belonged as much to the sports scene as he did to the political

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ As Daley wrote of Robinson in the context of King’s assassination, sport was paying a service to his white nation. In “Whose Broad Stripes and Bright Stars,” Amy Bass argued that mainstream sports writers of the 1960s used many black athletes to “validate...democratic ideals” without drawing attention to the nation’s racism that King and Edwards cited at the beginning of this chapter worked to dismantle. Amy Bass, “Whose Broad Stripe and Bright Stars,” *Sports Matters*, John Bloom and Michael Willard (New York: New York University Press, 2002) 184-204; 187.

³¹ Robert Kennedy, “On the Mindless Menace of Violence,” *Robert F. Kennedy Memorial*, April 4, 1968, <<http://www.rfkmemorial.org/lifevision/onthemindlessmenaceofviolence/>>

scene.”³² He then suggested that Jackie Robinson could be a seamless substitute for Robert Kennedy in the Senate. “Jackie Robinson, former Brooklyn Dodger...is among those being considered by New York Gov., Nelson Rockefeller, to fill the U.S. Senate vacancy caused by the death of Sen. Robert F. Kennedy.”³³ Dave Brady of *The Washington Post* chronicled the role Rosey Grier, a Los Angeles Rams defensive tackle, played in wresting a gun from Robert Kennedy’s assassin. He then wrote that “even before Kennedy had entered the race for the Democratic presidential nomination, Grier served at functions with which the Senator was associated.”³⁴ These sports columnists remembered Robert Kennedy as a friend to sport and also suggested that sports figures themselves were friends of and capable of entering the political sphere. In mentioning Grier and Robinson, too, these columnists presented the nation as democratic in similar ways Daley had. They implicitly represented their nations as democratic and colorblind through introducing black athletes into the political sphere. However, they presented that political sphere and the dominant national identity to be quite like the sporting arena: black masculinity was represented, but only in one dimension, one that paid a service to a colorblind nation, and where racial discord was not a reality.

Likewise, columnists throughout the nation used their memories of sport to construct athletes and political figures as part of ‘the American family;’ a construct that itself was racialized and masculine. Ross Newhan of the *Los Angeles Times* remembered Robert Kennedy through the tragedy of his brother’s assassination.³⁵ He remembered Robert Kennedy as a “man, like his brother, for all seasons,” and then chronicled all of

³² Bob Addie, “Senatorial Possibility,” *The Washington Post*, June 9, 1968, sec. C.

³³ Addie, “Senatorial.”

³⁴ Dave Brady, “Sport Figures Surrounded RFK,” *The Washington Post*, June 6, 1968, sec. C.

³⁵ Ross Newhan, “Kennedy Recalled as a Man for All Seasons,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 7, 1968, sec. F.

the sports he played.³⁶ Dave Brady of *The Washington Post* underscored Robert Kennedy's association with Don Drysdale and George Plimpton, sports figures themselves. Steve Cady of the *The New York Times* wrote that Robert Kennedy's assassination was the second time in two months that "large segments of the sports world w[ould] call time out...for a slain national leader."³⁷ He led his column by writing of how John Glenn played touch football with Robert Kennedy's son David the day after his death.³⁸ He then chronicled the many pro football players, national politicians, and Army officials that played touch football on the White House lawn with Robert Kennedy. The column culminated when he quoted Sam Huff of the Washington Redskins as saying "this is a terrible thing, like the death of a member of the family."³⁹ Daley wrote of Rusty Staub and Bob Aspromonte's refusal to play the day of Robert Kennedy's services and argued that "less than two months earlier they went through similar shock, the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr."⁴⁰ He continued to write:

insubordination on the part of a player is a violation of his contract and lays him open to penalty. But these were unusual circumstances. They almost would seem to call for the same understanding that would normally be forthcoming if it had been the death of a close relation. Millions regarded Bobby Kennedy in that light.⁴¹

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Steve Cady, "Many Sports Events This Weekend Put Off in Respect to Senator Kennedy," *The New York Times*, June 7, 1968, sec. L.

³⁸ Dave Brady, "A Kennedy Friend Keeps Boys Busy," *The Washington Post*, June 7, 1968, sec. D. Brady also wrote that Robert Kennedy was responsible for popularizing touch football as a game throughout the nation.

³⁹ Dave Brady, "A Kennedy Friend Keeps Boys Busy."

⁴⁰ Arthur Daley, "Compounding A Felony."

⁴¹ Ibid.

These columnists constructed Kennedy as sports-loving and part of the ‘American’ family. More specifically, they constructed their nations as families full of sports loving males who loved their countries. Hence, when a young, virile, white, athletic politician died, it was, to these columnists, a national tragedy.⁴²

In keeping with the convention of the discourse of tragedy, Daley and Povich found fault in L.A. Dodgers’ owner Walter O’Malley’s initial refusal to postpone the Dodgers and Phillies’ game on the day of King’s services. Daley used the John Kennedy assassination to situate the tragedy in his imagined nation’s history. He wrote that President Kennedy’s assassination “was far too fresh in memory” and because of this, “every sport [should have] acted swiftly in canceling events during his other period of national mourning.”⁴³ However, this sentence framed O’Malley’s initial refusal as distasteful because it reminded Daley of the NFL’s actions after Kennedy’s assassination, not of King’s work to dismantle oppression. Similarly, after referring to the NFL’s actions following Kennedy’s assassination, Povich wrote that O’Malley’s “stubborn refusal to postpone the opening game...in deference to Martin Luther King’s funeral...offended Bob Carpenter, owner of the Phillies” and the general fan base.⁴⁴ Although O’Malley finally agreed to postpone the game, both Daley and Povich condemned him for offending whites, partially by raising memories of how the NFL dealt with the assassination of a white president. The violence to which they referred existed in memory of sporting events being played in 1963, not the systemic racial violence that King and Robert Kennedy, the leaders about whom their columns were written, worked

⁴² Lauren Berlant, *The Queen of America Goes to Washington City*, 136. I elaborated upon this extensively in chapters 1 and 2.

⁴³ Arthur Daley, “The Long Season Begins.”

⁴⁴ Shirley Povich, “This Morning...” *The Washington Post*, April 14, 1968, sec. C.

to dismantle. Hence, these columnists' memories avoided others of structural injustice, and were products and supportive of what Edwards called the American tragedy concerning the neglect of black masculinity.

All of the columnists cited thus far in this chapter used sport to construct mythological nations in the context of tragedy. These nations were white and/or predicated on entrance of a particular form of black masculinity into their nations. They also used the construct of the family to establish white males as central to their national identity. All of these columnists, moreover, privileged white masculinity and were white males. It is important to underscore that mainstream publications hired these columnists and that mainstream audiences consumed their work. Hence, these columns were part of a circuit of production and consumption that privileged white masculinity and were underpinned by a structural racism that held up white males as speaking for *the* nation, even in moments when structural racism that privileged whiteness was being exposed as a fundamental problem.

That is, these columnists labeled violent acts tragedies only if they were constructed as single events, like an assassination or riots, or if they potentially reminded their audiences of displeasurable moments in history that would not challenge white privilege, like the NFL's decision to play its games on time after President Kennedy's assassination. The term tragedy, however, was not reserved for ongoing cyclical problems in the nation-state that Edwards labeled tragic and President Johnson and Robert Kennedy labeled as violent. These same problems were to blame for keeping raced, gendered, and sexed identities from getting jobs working for mainstream sports pages. Those benefitting from structural racism were also those defining tragedy and

subsequently constructing national identity. In this way, tragedies could only happen to the white nation, a nation that included black masculinity, so long as that black masculinity did not challenge white hegemony. The nation constructed in these columns was one that tautologically constructed national identity as white because, in part, those constructing it were white.

American Religions

Fully aware of the mythological nation mainstream media constructed through sport and its representation of black masculinity, Harry Edwards, in organizing a protest at the 1968 Olympics, said that “if there is a religion in this country, it is athletics.”⁴⁵ In an attempt to shatter the mainstream media’s mythological construction of national identity, Edwards organized many black athletes who were competing in the 1968 Olympics in a protest, with the hope of ““affect[ing]...a substantial portion of the country in the stadium or in front of the television. We want to get to those people, to affect them, to wake them up to what’s happening in this country, because otherwise they won’t care.””⁴⁶ His goal was, in short, to resist the way in which black masculinity had been monolithically structured through sport; and to subsequently change the construction of a colorblind nation that let white Americans remain passive and/or avoid the significance of civil rights as they watched black males perform in front of them.

The most significant event that columnists wrote of regarding Edward’s activist intentions occurred when, in Mexico City, two black Olympians, Tommie Smith and John Carlos, thrust their fists high in the air against the backdrop of the American flag and the national anthem. What was unique about Smith and Carlos’ protest was that it

⁴⁵ Qtd, Robert Lipsyte, “Strinking Nerves.”

⁴⁶ Ibid.

was made by athletes on the field of play, not political leaders associated with sport. Hence, columnists had no choice but to write about the protest in terms of black masculinity and its relationship to the mythological construction of national identity that sport historically served and that privileged whiteness.

However, the protest was not just about American race relations. It was also about America's role in the global community. For instance, the men's protest was a climactic moment in African-American athletes' year-long threat to boycott the Olympic Games if South Africa, with its state-legislated policy of apartheid, was allowed to participate. And by the time the protest took place, Smith and Carlos extended their political motives to include global racism. Many columnists, however, forced their stories of Carlos and Smith into the frame of national colorblindness that their counterparts had used in the wake of King and Robert Kennedy's assassination.⁴⁷

For instance, Red Smith of *The New York Times*, but syndicated throughout the nation-state, conflated Smith and Carlos' protest with the Civil Rights Movement, thereby limiting its motives to American race relations. He wrote that the raised fists were a gesture meaning "we shall overcome" and then condemned the act for taking place at an inappropriate time.⁴⁸ Likewise, Povich's first column about the protest

⁴⁷ In a press conference immediately following their race, Smith and Carlos asserted that their protest was to represent "black unity" across national and class lines. Carlos said the protest was to confront whites who perceived black people "as animals" if they did something "bad." But if "we do something good...they'll throw us some peanuts or pat us on the back and say 'Good Boy.'" Here Smith and Carlos suggested the protest was to assert black masculinity and draw attention to the rigid roles that were expected of black men in America. See "2 Accept Medals Wearing Black Gloves," *The New York Times*, October 17, 1968, sec. S. Moreover, these two athletes were known to be members of Prof. Harry Edwards' social movement articulated through sport prior to the Olympics. That movement was not just one in the "nation's racial struggle, [but was one]...by colored people all over the world against a white man's lingering colonialism," and the war effort. Edwards said "I refuse to be drafted so George Wallace can be safe." See Arnold Hano, "The Black Rebel who Whitelists the Olympics; The Black Rebel," *The New York Times*, May 12, 1968 sec. SM.

⁴⁸ Red Smith, "Olympic Emotions Reach All Levels," *The Washington Post*, October 18, 1968, sec. D.

connected it to the Civil Rights Movement in America, despite that the athletes' project was global in nature. He wrote that Smith and Carlos:

did not disrupt any Olympic event by their actions on the ceremonial stand. Their sin was a technical one...If it was unpatriotic in the view of most observers, the courage and dignity of their revolt gesture was inescapable...Even those who would deplore the time and place of their demonstration will concede that a right of protest was theirs. Passage of the Civil Rights Acts by Congress affirmed the Negroes' complaint of 300 years.⁴⁹

Although Smith and Povich defended these athletes' rights to protest, they also limited their explanations of the protest to be about its appropriateness and to American race relations. In this way, they wrote of the single event—the athletes raising their fists--as if it, not the structural oppression that sparked the protest, was the controversy. Even as they championed these men's courage, they condemned the protest as unpatriotic, for it did not conform to the role reserved for black males by mainstream media.

In a later column, Povich adopted a standpoint that characterized many of his counterparts' approach to the protest. Povich juxtaposed Carlos and Smith with black males who adopted stances toward America that resembled Jessie Owens'--stances Povich had established as patriotic. He wrote that "America's boxing-basketball Negroes appear a different breed than the raging militants on the track team..."⁵⁰ Povich categorized African American males of the 'boxing and basketball' and the 'track and field' teams by behavior. Other columnists extended on the categories of which Povich wrote. Cady marginalized Smith and Carlos by juxtaposing them with Owens. He wrote

⁴⁹ Shirley Povich, "This Morning..." *The Washington Post*, October 19, 1968, sec. C.

⁵⁰ Shirley Povich. "This Morning..." *The Washington Post*, October 24, 1968, sec K.

that Owens, “working for the Mutual Broadcasting System said that he had been disturbed by the boycotts...”⁵¹ Similarly, Neil Amdur of *The New York Times* wrote of Bobby Douglass, a black wrestler, by implying that black masculinity was to be a quiet and passive sort. Amdur quoted Douglass as saying ““I want to prove that Prof. Harry Edwards is wrong. I want to prove that I can do more by competing than by sitting on the sidelines yelling black power.””⁵² Amdur constructed the appropriate sort of black masculinity as the sort that accepted the ‘normal’ construction of the nation and sport to be colorblind. He established that nation through black athletes who were represented, but not heard, on the field. Similarly, Daley championed George Foreman for his patriotism and by implication condemned Carlos and Smith for their protest.⁵³ These columnists, then, engaged in a form of border management where black identities who did not confront the notion of national colorblindness were ‘American,’ and the act in which Smith and Carlos engaged was inappropriate and unworthy of further examination. In this way, racial representation on the field of play served columnists’ construction of a democratic nation, so long as the black bodies being written of did not challenge white hegemony historically supported through sport. Herein, columnists’ representation of black bodies did not necessarily equate to a democratic ideal; how raced bodies were represented mattered as much as that they were.

Columnists even labeled Carlos and Smith un-patriotic and/or raised the protest to the level of national tragedy. For example, Povich criticized the shock the protest catalyzed, but did not examine the reasons for the protest. “The shock at the actions of Smith and Carlos was great, but the surprise needn’t have been...[They] gave advanced

⁵¹ Steve Cady, “Owens Recalls 1936 Sprinter’s Ordeal,” *The New York Times*, October 17, 1968, sec. C.

⁵² Neil Amdur, “Negro Hopes to Pin Down Medal,” *The New York Times*, October 12, 1968, sec. L.

⁵³ Arthur Daley, “The Incident,” *The New York Times*, October 10, 1968, sec. S.

warning that they were unreliable...[because] they fail[ed]...to respect the American flag and the National Anthem....”⁵⁴ Povich continued that the athletes were “unpatriotic” but also “courag[eous].”⁵⁵ Daley wrote that “...a majority condemned [the protest] as disgraceful, insulting, and embarrassing” for the nation.⁵⁶ William Carsley of the *Chicago Tribune* wrote that the event was tragic because “Smith and Carlos, who obviously achieved no satisfaction from competing for their country, occupied places on the United States team that could have gone to athletes who care;” meaning athletes who would not speak out against the nation.⁵⁷ He wrote that the two “perform[ed] like a pair of boorish refugees from a motorcycle gang” and further vilified both for their seeming lack of patriotism.⁵⁸ Daley further criticized the protest because it occurred “where it did not belong and created a shattering situation that shook this international sports carnival to its very core. It was also divisive.”⁵⁹ Of course, the act itself was not divisive; it only drew attention to the actual conditions of the nation-state that was divided. Similarly, Addie condoned the comparison in mainstream media at the time between the protest and Nazis. He wrote that:

There has been a parallel suggested between the snub of Owens by Adolph Hitler...and the two current athletes...The shock came not that the two angry young men had a right to protest, but at the stage they used for their theatrical performance, which was embarrassing to the United States. Some of us are getting too old to think of somebody tearing up the Constitution or spitting on the

⁵⁴ Shirley Povich, “This Morning...” *The Washington Post*, October 24, 1968, sec. K, p 1.

⁵⁵ Shirley Povich, “This Morning...” *The Washington Post*, October 19, 1968, sec. C.

⁵⁶ Arthur Daley, “The Incident.”

⁵⁷ William Carsley, “Athletes Who Care and Those Who Don’t,” *Chicago Tribune*, October 25, 1968.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Arthur Daley, “The Incident.”

flag—else what would happen to such stirring moments in our history as the flag raised at Iwo Jima?⁶⁰

Here, Addie used the memory of Owens competing at the Olympics for America and another memory of World War II to prove Smith and Carlos' lack of patriotism. Whereas Owens was a black American who proved American superiority over an enemy in terms of athletic prowess and in the context of war, Smith and Carlos drew attention to the white nation's lack of morality in terms of its approach to race, also in the context of war. Smith and Carlos, not racial oppression, were constructed as national embarrassments.

Hence, these columnists suggested that Smith and Carlos were un-American or that the protest was tragic in character. The reason for such labeling, however, was that the protest took place in a venue not traditionally reserved for criticism of the nation-state. The tragedy was that the two men drew attention to oppressive structures in the United States and that "a substantial portion of the country" knew of it from mediated coverage.⁶¹ As was the case with the two assassinations, then, mainstream columnists generally constructed this single moment, the protest, a tragedy. In the process, they refused to draw attention to the cyclical, long-standing and structural oppressions within and beyond the nation-state that these athletes were attempting to expose and that Edwards and King labeled tragedies themselves. Especially in the context of war, sport was to serve these columnists' mythological nation worthy of support.

Povich even revealed an ideological connection between disdain for the sprinters and support for the war. He reported that U.S. Olympians on the shooting team hung signs out of a "third story window" in their dorm that supported the International

⁶⁰ Bob Addie, "An Affair of State?" *The Washington Post*, October 19, 1968, sec. C.

⁶¹ Robert Lipsyte, "Striking Nerves."

Olympic Committee's decision to kick "the two sprinters out of Olympic Village and off the American team...[They also hung a sign to] win the war in Vietnam."⁶² Whereas Edwards and King linked assertions of black masculinity to sport and the resistance of the Vietnam War, white privilege altogether avoided serious discussion of the reasons underpinning the protest. Likewise, white privilege did not tolerate any questioning of the nation, either in its approach to race or the Vietnam War.

Columnists situated black masculinity in their imagined nations by opining of athletes' standpoints regarding Vietnam prior to the 1968 Olympics, however. Just a year earlier, for instance, Muhammad Ali refused to enlist in the Army after being drafted. One of the many reasons Ali cited for refusing to enlist was the racial imbalance of power in both the nation-state and the War. Two days prior to his official refusal to enlist, Ali said:

You want me to do what the white man says and go and fight a war against some people I don't know nothing about—get some freedom for some other people when my own people can't get theirs here? You want me to be so scared of the white man that I'll go and get two arms shot off and ten medals so you can give me a small salary and pat me on the head and say 'good boy, he fought for his country?'

⁶³

Hence, Ali established his refusal to join the war as a resistance of what he perceived to be a white power structure. He also suggested that his refusal to enlist was a choice that asserted his humanity and opposed the passive role whites generally required of their black male athletes or 'good boys.'

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Qtd, Robert Lipsyte, "I'm Free to be Who I Want," *The New York Times*, May 29, 1967.

Inevitably, columnists established Ali's stance as un-American as it did not conform to the role of the passive or patriotic black male. Sid Ziff of the *Los Angeles Times* contrasted Ali's approach to Vietnam with Floyd Patterson's, implying that Patterson's desire to enlist in the Army was more admirable.⁶⁴ In a later column, he wrote that "Ali could have avoided all of his draft troubles by enlisting in the reserves...he would be [rich and] carefree as a lark."⁶⁵ Ziff limited the discussion of Ali's objection to Vietnam to financial matters, never broaching the issue of structural injustice or the War itself. He also, by implication, approved of black males supporting the nation-state and its war, while disdaining those drawing attention to its racial problems.

Similarly, on the day of Ali's refusal to join, Daley chastised the boxing champion for implicating that "he d[id]n't think the United States [wa]s worth fighting for."⁶⁶ In the next paragraph, however, Daley made clear the connection he saw between sport, national identity, and memory:

Yet a couple of memories keep intruding on that jarring supposition, flashbacks to the games at Rome in the 1960 Olympics. It's always an emotional moment when an Olympic champion stands on the topmost part of the three-part pedestal and the flag of his country rises on the center staff while the band plays his country's national anthem...None stood at attention with more pride than Cassius Marcellus Clay. Sure he had won for himself, but he had also won for his country. Even when he returned to the States he went wandering around Times Square in his pullover uniform with USA lettered across his chest. He was proud

⁶⁴ Sid Ziff, "Floyd is New Man," *Los Angeles Times*, June 4, 1967, sec. H.

⁶⁵ Sid Ziff, "Big Sports Stories," *Los Angeles Times*, May 29, 1967, sec. C.

⁶⁶ Arthur Daley, "Day of Decision," *The New York Times*, April 24, 1967.

to wear it and to show it off...That's why there's a tragic feeling here...Actually, it's a greater offshoot of the tragedy of Vietnam.⁶⁷

Here Daley implicitly argued that Ali's decision in 1967 to object to the war tarnished his own memory of Ali's 1960 Olympic win. The tragedy was in Ali's not enlisting and Daley's memory and construction of Ali as a patriotic figure being blemished. Daley's construction of national identity through black masculinity was so rigid that he desired Ali to enlist in Vietnam. This was despite that Daley himself labeled the war a tragedy. Daley next accepted Floyd Patterson's marginalization of Ali as un-American as a result of his stance on the war and racism. He quoted Ali saying "Floyd says he's gonna bring the title back to America. If you don't believe the title is already in America, just look at who I pay taxes to."⁶⁸ In short, black males in Daley's nation were the sort that supported war and the colorblind nation; those who did not support both were chastised and un-American, even if that war was problematic.

Similarly, Povich criticized *Ring Magazine* for not choosing Ali as its Fighter of the Year. His reasons, however, implicitly supported a marginalization of black athletes who criticized the nation-state and its war as perpetuating racism: "[Ring] is grading prize fighters, not the Nation's patriots."⁶⁹ Povich did not quarrel with Ali's being deemed unpatriotic, only that the magazine should have limited its conditions for selection to those developed in the ring.

Ultimately, then, when athletes challenged the nation-state, columnists practiced in one of two discourses. One was to avoid discussion of the black males' political

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Shirely Povich, "Clay defended as Boxer, not American Patriot," *Los Angeles Times*, February 4 1967, sec B.

motives and use them to construct a colorblind nation by using their presence as proof of the nation-state's diversity. The other was to label black males' acts of protests tragic, un-American, or some other such derivation. Either way, these white columnists limited the kinds of black masculinity in their nations by defining tragedies as single events that disrupted the ability of sport to project a colorblind nation worthy of patriotism in the context of war. In a tautology characteristic of hegemony, tragedy could never be a result of social structures privileging whiteness, for the ones controlling those structures defined what tragedy was. Hence, white producers could secure the future of a colorblind national identity by limiting how tragedy was defined and who was allowed in their versions of national identity. Likewise, sport was to always blindly support and serve war, even if the war itself was deemed problematic.

Twenty years later, however, a black male who had been accepted as a member of the 'American family' contracted HIV, a disease that had been associated with gay identities who had been pathologized and marginalized from the dominant nation. Mainstream sports columnists, as a result, had to negotiate between the mythological and pathological as they wrote of Ervin "Magic" Johnson.

The All-American Family

In his "Proclamation of AIDS Awareness Month," President Ronald Reagan used AIDS to pathologize homosexuality and juxtaposed both against his construction of family life. He said "both medicine and morality teach the same lesson of AIDS...the best way to prevent AIDS is to abstain from sexual activity until adulthood and restrict

sex to a monogamous, faithful relationship...[and to know] the blessings of stable family life.”⁷⁰

In *The Queen of America Goes to Washington City*, Lauren Berlant identified the Reagan administration and mainstream media as fundamental in reducing political discourses of the 1980s and 1990s to consist of topics associated with private life. According to Berlant, politicians and mainstream media referred to sexual practices, family values, and moral character, rather than civil acts in determining citizenship status of identities.⁷¹ Berlant also suggested that this connection of sexuality with morality defined the dominant national identity normatively:

The sphere of discipline and definition for proper citizenship in the US has become progressively more private, more sexual and familial, and more concerned with personal morality...following the Reaganite tendency to fetishize both the offensive industry whose mission is to micro-manage how any controversial event or person changes the meaning of being ‘American.’⁷²

However, on November 7, 1991, Magic Johnson announced that he had contracted HIV.

When Magic contracted HIV, he was a young, masculine figure associated with sport; much like Robert Kennedy. As a result, he was, as Thomas Boswell of *The Washington Post* put it, “a part of almost every American family. And, now, we can’t get him out of the family. He’s everybody’s brother or son who may get AIDS.”⁷³ In an era

⁷⁰ Ronald Reagan, “Proclamation 5709: AIDS Awareness Month,” September 29, 1987, <<http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/speeches/1987/092987e.htm>> February 4, 2007.

⁷¹ Lauren Berlant, *The Queen of America Goes to Washington City*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), 1.

⁷² Lauren Berlant, *The Queen of America Goes to Washington City*, 177.

⁷³ **Error! Main Document Only.** Thomas Boswell, “Magic Opens the Doors,” *The Washington Post*, November, 15, 1992, sec. C.

characterized by political rhetoric calling forth family values, and in sports pages that had a history of constructing the family as central to their white nations, such a statement held further significance than may first appear on the surface. Citizenship was being redefined, as a member of the sexually moral 'family' contracted HIV. Hence, sports columnists would not redefine black masculinity or the construct of the family through Magic. Rather, sports columnists' nations and their relationship to HIV/AIDS would be redefined as a member of their national family and colorblind nation had contracted HIV/AIDS.

For example, Alison Muscatine of *The Washington Post* placed Magic's infection in the realm of national tragedy and in the process also constructed HIV and AIDS as an issue for her national identity. She wrote that sport was central to the manner in which nation was imagined: "Tragedies that befall athletes seem to penetrate the American consciousness more than any others, unleashing a wave of emotion and shock that crosses class, race, gender and generational lines. Most people, it seems, know and love Magic. Now, it seems, most people are worried about him."⁷⁴ Muscatine was involved in a discourse of citizenship, claiming 'most people' cared about Magic. But Muscatine dislocated HIV/AIDS from homosexuality: There was no mention of homosexuality in the categories of people to whom sport news transcended despite that she was writing of HIV/AIDS in the early 1990s. Hence the people comprising 'most people' in her nation were assumed to be heterosexual; this tragedy was of the heterosexual nation.

Bob Verdi of the *Chicago Tribune* wrote of the virus in similar terms, but also connected it to the nation-state and so his imagined nation:

⁷⁴ Alison Muscatine, "Magic's Revelation Transcends Sports; Athletes' Tragedies Have Greater Impact," *The Washington Post*, November 10, 1991, sec. D.

Magic was special, Magic is special, and that explains why the world grieves at his crisis. That is why President Bush sends prayers from Rome, that is why Dan Rather's news program begins with the press conference at the Great Western Forum, that is why kids whom Magic touched without ever patting their heads or shaking their heads dribble in gymnasiums now with no particular energy or direction.

Verdi associated the virus with national officials and mainstream media figures who shaped and were part of the dominant imagined nation. Hence, HIV/AIDS, through Magic's body, was being written into Verdi's national identity.⁷⁵ Likewise, Mike Conklin of the *Chicago Tribune* established Magic in national mythology through referencing Reagan's role in *Knute Rockne All-American*:

Maybe the earliest, most publicized example of an athlete battling disease was George Gipp, the Notre Dame football player who was injured in his final season with the Fighting Irish, developed pneumonia, and died in 1920 at age 25. Coach Knute Rockne's 'win one for the Gipper' speech would become a legend, enhanced later in the movies.⁷⁶

Conklin placed Magic in the same mythological narrative line as both Reagan, who played Gipp, and the All-American young athlete who tragically dies too early.⁷⁷ Finally, Tony Kornheiser of *The Washington Post* set Magic's contraction in the discourse of

⁷⁵ Bob Verdi, "A Collective Smile Turns to Sorrow," *Chicago Tribune*, November 9, 1992, sec. S.

⁷⁶ Mike Conklin, "Magic Lesson: Disease Doesn't Play Favorites," *Chicago Tribune*, November 8, 1991, sec. S.

⁷⁷ Through the spectacle of Hollywood film, the role of the football player representing 'All American' values set Reagan in the realm of national mythology and served his politics that privileged white heterosexuality well. Reagan even embraced the nickname 'Gipper' throughout his Governorship of California and Presidency, suggesting that mainstream consumers enjoyed the national mythologies of sport and conservatism in which Reagan had engaged.

tragedy and communicated HIV/AIDS by referring to a cultural memory sports columnists had set in their mythological national identity of masculinity and whiteness: “I felt the same stunned reaction that I remembered having 28 years before, when I was in a seventh-period math class, and word of John Kennedy’s assassination spread through the school like a bad dream.”⁷⁸ Magic was already being constructed as a young, virile, male figure hero who would die too early. He was, in short, set in similar narrative lines as both Kennedys were after their assassinations.

That is, the elasticity of whiteness was revealed in columns like Boswell, Verdi, Muscatine, and Conklin’s. HIV/AIDS was allowed in their nations, but only on the condition that the sexual norms of the All-American colorblind family would not be challenged. And again, black males were used to support the myth of colorblindness and assumed to be heterosexual. These columnists limited the tragedy to be about Magic’s contraction, rather than the epidemic of HIV/AIDS or Reagan’s general neglect of it: By 1985, Reagan had yet to mention HIV/AIDS in any speech. By that date, nearly 15,000 Americans had died, most of them were homosexual.⁷⁹ Moreover, these columnists who limited the tragedy included a woman, Muscatine. Throughout her career, Muscatine had a close connection to official discourses of the nation-state and dominant constructions of national identity. In 1993, Muscatine joined President William Jefferson Clinton’s White House, which accepted Congress’ ‘don’t ask, don’t tell’ policy, one that continued the

⁷⁸ Tony Kornheiser, “A Hero’s Message of Hope,” *The Washington Post*, November 8, 1991, sec. C.

⁷⁹ See Daniel Beegan, “Study Says Reagan Has Shown Little Concern over AIDS,” Associated Press, September 19, 1985. While campaigns such as ACT UP were working hard to elicit federal and state funds to care for HIV/AIDS victims, Reagan’s Presidency was marked by a general neglect of the HIV/AIDS epidemic as a political concern, so much so that in February of 1990, he apologized for not making it a priority during his administration. See Bruce Hilton, “AIDS Week: Better Late than Never?” *San Francisco Chronicle*, February 4, 1990, sec. A.

closeting of gay identities.’⁸⁰ Hence, her gender and sex did not equate to a resistance of normative constructions of national identity that historically privileged white masculinity and heterosexuality. The hegemonic mythology of sport and its connection to a similar national identity, in short, affects and is affected by people other than those white males who are often privileged by both.

But Muscatine was not the only columnist who constructed normative versions of black masculinity despite not being privileged by race and/or sex. For instance, Michael Wilbon, a black columnist of *The Washington Post* who generally adopts a liberal standpoint in his work, wrote that “Magic became angered at one newspaper column that cited the incredibly low percentage of men who become infected by women.”⁸¹ Wilbon continued to establish Johnson and NBA athletes as heterosexual and justified in promiscuity. Wilbon wrote on November 10, 1991, that:

If you’ve ever left an NBA arena late, real late, say an hour after the game is over, or followed a team back to the hotel and seen the literally dozens of women waiting outside both locker rooms, you understand that players don’t have to go looking for sex; it’s staring most of them in the face. Not only is it not easy to say no, it’s almost impossible. To abstain, we’re talking about a level of self-control that I, certainly, for one, would not have under similar circumstances.⁸²

Wilbon implied that male athletes were powerless to the wiles of women. Wilbon also wrote that if Magic proclaimed he was heterosexual that that was good enough for to him believe it, implying a pathologization of homosexuality. As a result, Wilbon established

⁸⁰ She currently is Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton’s head speech writer.

⁸¹ Michael Wilbon, “Available at Your Peril,” *The Washington Post*, November 10, 1991, sec. D.

⁸² Ibid.

blackness in narrow, heterosexual terms. The notion that black writers would establish black masculinity in more diverse terms than white ones, then, was not proven through Wilbon's columns on Magic.

In fact, Wilbon's construction of black masculinity resembled many of his counterpart white columnists': Dave Anderson limited his concern about HIV to heterosexuals. He wrote that Magic:

has been labeled by many as a 'hero' when hedonist might be the better word...While insisting that he has 'never had a homosexual relationship...[he also] did 'his best to accommodate as many women as [he] could...' Anybody with a sense of heterosexual responsibility isn't likely to get the HIV virus.

Anderson, that is, argued that Magic's promiscuity was a problem, but also seemed quite protective of heterosexual—not homosexual--health.⁸³ In the process, sport served a heterosexual nation and its health concerns.⁸⁴ Finally, Jim Murray of the *Los Angeles Times* wrote "wait a minute...Magic doesn't deserve this...[Magic is] not going to let HIV get away with it."⁸⁵ Underpinning Murray's assertion was the assumption that Magic's infection was different from that of others, that HIV invaded a place in which it did not belong—Magic's heterosexual body. The tragedy, then, was that HIV invaded a place imagined as national, part of the heterosexual family of the colorblind nation; the

⁸³ Dave Anderson, "Sorry, But Magic Isn't a Hero," *The New York Times*, November 14, 1991, sec B.

⁸⁴ Shari Dwarkin and Faye Linda Wachs ultimately claimed that the discourse surrounding Magic lead to the conclusion that "'bad' (gay, black, or working-class) sexuality is juxtaposed against the unstated norms of...white, middle-class, heterosexual men [who] are left out of the picture and are absolved altogether from any involvement with HIV/AIDS promiscuity." See Shari Dwarkin and Faye Linda Wachs, "Disciplining the Body," edited by Susan Birrell and Mary G. McDonald, 258-269. (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2000), 264.

⁸⁵ Jim Murray, "Warning HIV: No Hiding Now," *Los Angeles Times*, November 10, 1991, sec. C.

tragedy was not that tens-of-thousands of Americans who happened to be homosexual were dying.

A complex narrative of national identity manifested through sports columnists' writing on Magic Johnson, then. They worked to widen the borders of the dominant imagined nation to include HIV/AIDS, indeed, were part of a mainstream media that produced what was later called the 'Magic effect'--where HIV clinics across the nation-state reported a significant increase in testing thousands more heterosexuals within weeks after Magic press conference. However, they also wrote of HIV/AIDS and black masculinity in normative fashion.⁸⁶ The national identities these columnists constructed were not more inclusive than those before. Rather, when Magic, a member of the American and 'sexually moral' family, contracted the virus generally associated with homosexuality, columnists did not redefine their nations to include homosexual bodies. Instead, they redefined their nation to include the imagined possibility of the virus entering heterosexual bodies that were already considered part of the family. And the tragedy was that the virus could now enter heterosexual bodies, not that homosexuals were dying in the thousands. Moreover, the minority columnists cited in this section did not challenge the historic heteronormativity of sports pages as they wrote of Magic, and both are now married to people of the opposite gender. This suggested that non-white males may yet construct national identities that privilege white masculinity, especially if they do not see the intersectional nature of identity: Even though Muscatine is a woman and Wilbon black, they are both heterosexuals, and so in writing of HIV/AIDS, may have

⁸⁶ Chase wrote that "Last evening, AIDS hotlines around the country were flooded with calls. Hotline volunteers said many people who thought they may be at risk of infection were calling for testing information, while others called specifically to voice support for Mr. Johnson and offer donations to AIDS-related organizations." See Marilyn Chase, "Johnson Disclosure Underscores Facts of AIDS in Heterosexual Population," *The Wall Street Journal*, November 11, 1991, sec B.

done so from their own experiences, experiences that melded with mainstream America's heteronormative approach to identity. Likewise, the inclusion of minority identities in sports pages does not necessarily equate to resistance of white, patriarchal, heteronormative privilege. While inclusion of diverse identities in institutions is quite important in resisting whiteness, so is inclusion of those with political standpoints that would resist hegemony, despite their raced, gendered, sexed, or classed make-up.

Finally, the ramifications of columnists' general heteronormativity should not be overlooked: In "Eloquence and Epitaph" Phillip Brian Harper chronicled news media coverage of news reporter Max Robinson's death resulting from AIDS. Harper explained that political leaders and media outlets spoke of Robinson and AIDS with language that avoided the possibility of a black male homosexual and potentially limited education about the virus.⁸⁷ Likewise sports columnists' establishment of Magic's contraction as a national tragedy occurred only as they situated Magic, and so the disease, as heterosexual. Such constructions of Magic, the disease, and the nation marginalized homosexuality and potentially limited education about the virus and its relationship to sexual practices, thereby potentially causing material harm.

Lipsyte's Resistance

In all of these tragedies, Robert Lipsyte, a white, heterosexual male of *The New York Times* resisted the national identities his counterparts constructed through rigid definitions of black masculinity. For instance, writing of black athletes' potential protest of the 1968 Olympics, Lipsyte suggested that the Olympics and mainstream media hid the consequences of racism and poverty by presenting the games as the "moral equivalent

⁸⁷ Philip Brian Harper, "Eloquence and Epitaph: Black Nationalism and the Homophobic Impulse in Responses to the Death of Max Robinson," *Fear of a Queer Planet*, Ed. Michael Warner, (Univ. of Minnesota, 1993), 239-263.

to war.”⁸⁸ In such presentations, he argued, competition, not ‘politics,’ decided the winner and no attention was afforded to oppression.

As a solution to this problematic construction of the Games, and in contrast to his counterparts’ vilification of Smith and Carlos, Lipsyte underscored the motives behind the protest. He mentioned that the Olympics took place in the context of controversy: that of the “murderous snuffing-out of Mexican student rioting...and the admission of South Africa” to compete despite its policies of Apartheid. Both, he argued, were examples of deplorable actions generally ignored by the mainstream sport media.⁸⁹ Whereas his counterparts generally constructed the controversy of the protest to be about its appropriateness, Lipsyte illustrated that the controversial protest occurred because racism and poverty were global and national problems.

Similarly, in the context of King’s assassination and its potential effect on the 1968 Olympics, Lipsyte suggested American policy toward race had an effect globally. The common link between the assassination and the potential boycott of the Olympics, Lipsyte allegorically argued, was that both offered evidence that racism does not know national borders. Lipsyte wrote of Steve Mokone, “the first African to play major league soccer in England.”⁹⁰ In a single sentence, Lipsyte used Mokone’s black, male body to illustrate the matrix of power existent in sport, pleasure, and race. “[Mokone’s] success...was a threat to the concepts of supremacy” in England, where all football (soccer) players were white.⁹¹ Lipsyte’s tale of Mokone implicated America in wielding an oppressive, transnational, stance toward race because of its complacency toward

⁸⁸ Robert Lipsyte, “Here We Go Again,” *The New York Times*, October 17, 1968.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Robert Lipsyte, “One Who Got Away,” *The New York Times*, April 8, 1968.

⁹¹ Ibid.

Apartheid. In not pressuring the South African nation-state to halt its Apartheid policies, the American nation-state tacitly endorsed them, and thereby also supported and was part of a globalized form of racism. Here, Lipsyte illustrated that violence was not a single act, but systemic and ongoing as a result of general complacency in the policies of America. In the process, he illustrated that nations are racial constructs, presented as divorced from one another, despite that they affect one another in terms of racial policy.⁹² This insight underpinned his writing about Ali as well.

Throughout 1966, 1967, and 1968 Lipsyte chronicled Harry Edwards' and Ali's words, which are cited throughout this chapter. Both men overtly criticized the hypocrisy of racial oppression and injustice in a country proclaiming itself to afford freedom and democracy to all. Lipsyte's work through 1968 could be summarized in a quote from Ali that served as the title of his culminating piece on the champ:

On February 26, 1964, Ali first confirmed the rumor of his membership [of the Nation] by repeating that parable to a shocked and angry white press.

Clay turned back their arguments with a soft and deadly 'I don't want to be what you want me to be I'm free to be who I want.'⁹³

The column continued to chronicle Ali's criticism of the racial imbalance in the Vietnam War and at home. Hence, throughout the late 1960s, Lipsyte implicitly criticized the notion that athletes and black males in general were expected to submit to a preconceived stereotype of patriotic athlete.⁹⁴ Lipsyte even implicitly criticized officials in the nation-state who attempted to discipline black athletes for not conforming to that patriotic

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Robert Lipsyte, "I'm Free to be Who I Want," *The New York Times*, May 29, 1967.

⁹⁴ See Robert Lipsyte, "I'm Free to be Who I Want;" "Striking Nerves," "Case Closed," *The New York Times*, July 1, 1978; "Fighter Charges Board with Bias," *The New York Times*, February 18, 1966; "Instant Bile," *The New York Times*.

stereotype. Implying the same hypocrisy in then-Governor Ronald Reagan of California, Lipsyte wrote that “Edwards’ activism...has brought...a demand by Governor Ronald Reagan that Edwards be dismissed from his” professorship at San Jose State College.⁹⁵ This would not be the only time that Lipsyte would challenge the manner in which his counterpart sports columnists and Reagan situated black masculinity in their nations.

In 1991, Lipsyte deconstructed the heterosexual assumptions that underpinned mainstream media’s construction of black masculinity as it wrote of Magic’s contraction of HIV. He wrote that sports columnists were generally in “an obscene rush to declare [Magic] heterosexual.”⁹⁶ He wrote that there was no “Devil’s Advocate” in the “media blitz and disappearance of Magic,” after his press conference.⁹⁷ The whole event, he wrote, seemed like a “Magic Kingdom ride.”⁹⁸ The reference to and implied criticism of the event and its Disney aesthetics was more critical of mainstream media and conservative officials’ normative conceptions of black masculinity and national identity than may appear on the surface. Sharon Zukin and Douglas Kellner wrote that Disney aesthetics privilege white, middle-class identities-- identities that Reagan and George Herbert Walker Bush put at the center of their imagined nations through rhetoric of sexual morality and family values.⁹⁹ Hence, Lipsyte criticized mainstream media’s construction of black masculinity and national identity through Magic as heteronormative.

⁹⁵ Robert Lipsyte, “Striking Nerves.”

⁹⁶ Robert Lipsyte, “Magic as Hero: It’s Not the Most Comfortable Fit,” *The New York Times*, November 15, 1991, sec. D.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ See Sharon Zukin, *Landscapes of Power: From Detroit to Disney World*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991). Douglas Kellner, *Media Culture*, (New York: Routledge, 1995).

Beginning in the 1960s, and through 2007, Lipsyte continuously resisted normative constructions of black masculinity and national identity in which his counterparts engaged. He did this in one of the outlets most responsible for establishing dominant national identities, mainstream sport media. Moreover, he wrote for *The New York Times* sports section, the same outlet for which many of the columnists constructing national identity through normative definitions of black masculinity worked. He thereby adopted the rhetorical strategy of what George Lipsitz identified as the spider that works within the structures of oppression to use them as means for liberation. This move enables a particular group “to focus attention on the actions of those doing the discriminatings rather than solely on the victims of discrimination.”¹⁰⁰ That is, his work potentially reached out to readers who accepted normative constructions of black masculinity as ‘normal.’ In the process, he potentially taught them the problem with ‘normal.’ In the sports pages, then, Lipsyte potentially performed the work of activist who reaches out to people different from him in order to change their minds, in order to educate about hegemonic constructions of nation and identity. Lipsyte’s career thereby allows insight into how power is deployed and that resisting it may require reaching out to those benefiting from it.

Likewise, Lipsyte’s career offers an example regarding the import of studies of sport media: It potentially changes minds that once embraced normative conceptions of race and national identity. Through teaching of his career, too, scholars may be able to exert a great amount of liberative power by revealing the problematic connection between sport and national identity that many columnists, even quite liberal ones like Povich, Muscatine, and Wilbon, often make. Lipsyte, a white, male, heterosexual author took a

¹⁰⁰ George Lipsitz, *American Studies in a Moment of Danger*, 125.

more liberal and critical approach to writing about black masculinity than his counterparts had. His career thus offers proof that whiteness is an ideology not connected to race, class, gender, or sexuality.

It is clear that whiteness has an origin in the historic privileging of white masculinity, and that white males are likely to embrace this standpoint, as their identities reflect that which is legitimated in such hegemony. However, the historic privileging of white masculinity in mainstream media does not equate to a monolithic approach toward national identity adopted by all white males writing in sports pages: White males writing of sport and national identity do not automatically assume standpoints that could be categorized as hegemonically white, and minority writers do not necessarily resist hegemonic whiteness.

Rather, in the tragedies focused on in this chapter, what determined a columnist's relationship to a white point of view was *how* black masculinity was represented; not his/her skin color or *that* blackness was represented. In these columns, that is, was evidence that representation of blackness did not equate to an inclusive point of view of the columnist, nor an inclusive national identity. Moreover, while a major reason that white versions of national identity and blackness were constructed in sports columns through the early 1990s was that the authors of sports columns were overwhelmingly white, this was not the only reason: Because of the intersectional nature of identity, and the heteronormative fashion in which national identity had been constructed through the 1990s, even women and black columnists privileged white versions of black masculinity when writing of HIV/AIDS simply by protecting that heteronormative nation. Likewise, the single columnist who challenged normative versions of blackness mainstream sports

columnists constructed from the 1960s on was a white male. Hence, whiteness is a slippery construct that cannot be explained by simply claiming that white males have historically been the ones in power. Such explanations are too rigid if left uncomplicated. And that rigidity overlooks the fact that minority columnists, most likely unwittingly, engage in hegemonic constructions of national identity that resemble those constructed by whites.

National Memories

Over time, memories of black males' overt criticism of the nation-state have experienced a sort of shading that presents American inclusion and democracy as having progressed, if not achieved. For instance, the columnists writing of King in this chapter were part of a mainstream media that has legitimated him as a national hero who was embraced throughout his life by mis-remembering how he was perceived when he was alive. Not a single column cited above mentioned King's politics and his continuous criticism of white moderates, the Vietnam War, and/or the white press. Moreover, King appeared on CIA watch lists and was vilified by many whites throughout the 1960s. He was, in short, perceived as a threat to the white power structure. However, in these columns he was used to remember the nation as diverse and/or patriotic. Likewise, today he is remembered as having been accepted and embraced by the white public throughout the 1960s.

Similarly, Smith and Carlos' protest has been framed as heroic, brave, and indicative of American civil disobedience. For instance, *Sports Illustrated* and *HBO Films* have recently published or showed memory projects about American sports that tout the protest as a significant moment in national history. Neither project, however,

articulated the motives behind the protest. *Sports Illustrated* merely stated that the men “shocked America.”¹⁰¹ This is the extent of the project’s story on Carlos and Smith, and it thereby equates shock to activism and heroism without explaining the protest or the structural racism that catalyzed it. In this way, Smith and Carlos have been legitimated as national heroes in the same way I suggested King has.

Memories of Ali also serve a colorblind national identity by mis-remembering the way much of mainstream media and citizens of the nation-state originally reacted to the boxer. Take, for instance, George Vecsey’s construction of a diverse America through Ali’s lighting of the ceremonial flame at the 1996 Olympics: “the lighting of the Olympic flame in the heart of Dixie was performed by a man, Muhammad Ali, who had traded his self-styled slave name for a Muslim name, and had somehow emerged from shunned draft dodger to national, as well as global, hero.”¹⁰² While Vecsey correctly noted that Ali was shunned, he did not explain the white privilege involved in that shunning. Moreover, he performed the same trick of memory much of mainstream media has with Ali: Holding him up as a hero, referencing the change in how many perceive him, does not require people to change their stance about black males criticizing the war or race relations. It merely requires people to consume Ali’s now-Parkinson-ridden body as part of their national identity. This use of Ali to construct the nation as colorblind, however, is a nifty trick of memory that presents a physically and orally weakened Ali as representative of the national identity’s inclusive spirit.

¹⁰¹ *Sports Illustrated*, (Time Warner Books, New York, 2001); Frank Deford, *Picture Perfect: The Stories Behind the Greatest Photos in Sports*, 2002.

¹⁰² George Vecsey, “Sydney 2000: A Symbol more than a Gesture,” *The New York Times*, September 16, 2000.

Hence, columnists, mainstream media, and many American citizens represented these black males who challenged the nation-state as part of the dominant national identity, but in the process, repressed from memory their overt criticism of oppression in the nation-state. These columnists, then, worked to construct memories of a colorblind nation through representations of blackness. These memories privilege whiteness. As black males who were once vilified are held up as iconic heroes of the nation, those embracing white ideology do not have to shift their standpoints, although they are assured that their approach to race relations has progressed. Moreover, remembering black males like Smith, Carlos, and Ali as American heroes without placing the way they were initially condemned front and center avoids placing blame on whites for being protective of their privilege in the past. In *Possessive Investment in Whiteness* George Lipsitz wrote that perceiving one's own race as innocent is a power move. Remembering whites' stance toward black males as innocent is a manner in which white privilege maintains its power. For it allows whites to remember their role as patrons of the black race rather than obstacles to it.¹⁰³ Projects that confront those embracing white hegemony with the reality that their own privilege is left unchallenged as a result of repressing memories of white power in the past are engaged in an education project. This project works to de-center the normative standpoint of those embracing white hegemony by illustrating that such a standpoint operates from a position of power, even if that power is not overtly obvious. It is in this way that sports columns writing of race, cultural memory, and sport can educate by reaching out to audiences who benefit from power.

¹⁰³ George Lipsitz, *Possessive Investment in Whiteness*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1999).

In the next chapter, I return to the 1996 Olympics to argue columnists constructed memories for mainstream audiences that worked to establish the nation's historic experiences with white terror.

Chapter 4: Bombs Bursting, but Not Here

Under a sky lit by fireworks, and in front of a full capacity crowd at Turner Field, Muhammad Ali waited to light the 1996 Olympic flame that would blaze during the two-week competition held in Atlanta, Georgia. Mike Downey of the *Los Angeles Times* constructed a vision of global and national diversity based on Atlanta's being the birthplace of Martin Luther King:

They came from everywhere, from Hong Kong to Congo to Tonga, runners and punchers and tumblers, cycle and horse riders, arrow and gun shooters, iron pumpers and canoe paddlers, to a corner of America that had produced a President of the United States and a King who championed civil rights, but never the Olympic Games.¹

Dave Kindred of *The Sporting News* also referred to Martin Luther King's association with Atlanta in his summary of the opening ceremonies. He cited Muhammad Ali as celebrating "mankind coming together [in] Martin Luther King's home."²

In contrast to how columnists wrote of Ali in 1968, however, Kindred and Downey constructed the ex-champ as an American icon, and through him established their nations as colorblind. Kindred wrote that "[s]wimmer Janet Evans carried the flame up a long ramp to the stadium rim, there touching her torch to Ali's, and then the 1960

¹ Mike Downey, "Putting a New Georgia on Their Minds," *Los Angeles Times*, July 28, 1996, special section S.

² Dave Kindred, "Muhammad Ali Will Always be the Greatest," *The Sporting News*, July 28, 1996.

Olympic gold medalist raised high the flame in his right hand.”³ Downey wrote similarly, but drew attention to the weakened condition of Ali’s Parkinson-ridden body: “a strong Janet Evans passed the torch to the once mighty Ali’s trembling hand, this was Atlanta’s night to let civilization know that a city that once burned to the ground was now eager to be illuminated by an eternal flame.”⁴ As Downey highlighted the weakened state of Ali’s body against Evans’ white and strong one, he constructed Ali as the patriotic and non-threatening black male. Hence, these columnists transformed the meaning of Ali to conform to rigid expectations that sport and white mainstream media required of its black males, which I elaborated upon in the last chapter.

Moreover, both of these writers ended their columns by chronicling how President William Jefferson Clinton was “misty-eyed” when he saw Ali light the flame. In representing Clinton, they also associated Ali’s lighting of the flame as connected to the nation-state.⁵ In drawing attention to Atlanta’s being King’s birthplace and using rhetoric to associate Ali with national identity, Clinton, and diversity, these columnists used black masculinity and the Atlanta Olympics to represent a colorblind national identity. They did so through a trick of memory that privileges whiteness and that would be characteristic of the columns constructing a diverse nation through the 1996 Olympics. The memories Kindred and Downey used to establish their nations focused on Ali’s love of country without offering substantive discussion of whites’ racism in the past or in the present. Kindred wrote:

Clay said to the Russian [who, in 1960, asked him about racial intolerance in the United States,] ‘Tell your readers we got qualified people working on that

³ Ibid.

⁴ Mike Downey, “Putting a New Georgia on Their Minds.”

⁵ Ibid.

problem, and I'm not worried about the outcome. To me, the USA is the best country in the world, including yours.' That was then, this is now...Now this man who once refused induction into the U.S. Army—"I ain't got no quarrel with them Viet Cong," he said--has lit the Olympic flame.⁶

Downey wrote:

And who better than their old Kentucky neighbor Muhammad Ali to usher in the new South in this, our republic's bid for a brighter tomorrow? America is a far different place from the one he represented 36 years ago as Cassius Marcellus Clay Jr., still imperfect, still impoverished, yet dedicated to be a better land than the one that once so discouraged a young prizefighter from Louisville that he hurled his gold medal into a nearby river.⁷

Both columnists suggested a progress in race relations had occurred and constructed a subsequent national identity that reinforced colorblindness. But both also established Ali as nationally heroic as a result of his patriotism in 1996. Their construction of Ali as a national hero, as a result, did not require or communicate a shift in whites' rigid attitudes toward race since the 1960s. Moreover, Kindred wrote of Ali's criticism of the Vietnam War, which, by 1996, was generally recognized as a problematic conflict in the nation-state's history. Likewise, Downey wrote of poverty, not race, in establishing Ali as a national hero. Hence, the memories these columnists used to write of Ali were ones that would not necessarily confront or challenge normative standpoints of race as Ali had in the past. In fitting Ali into the normative construction of patriotic black male; remembering the Vietnam War; or discussing class instead of race, these columnists

⁶ Dave Kindred, "Muhammad Ali Will Always be the Greatest."

⁷ Mike Downey, "Putting a New Georgia on Their Minds."

avoided memories of white privilege and racism in the past that, if raised in 1996, may have confronted those embracing white hegemony of their own latent racist attitudes.

These columnists' writing of Clinton and Ali's interaction at the 1996 Olympics was appropriate given their avoidance of explicit discussions of race while representing a colorblind nation through Ali. For instance, in his first inaugural address, Clinton cited "deep divisions among our people" and "power and privilege" that "shut down the voice of the people," but not a single reference to race was made.⁸ Weeks later, Clinton established what was then considered to be the nation's most racially diverse Presidential cabinet, proclaiming that it was the first "that [would] look like America."⁹ However, in the final chapter of *Racial Formation in the United States*, Michael Omi and Howard Winant examined the national identity Clinton and other politicians established through rhetorical practices that avoided overt discussion of race but that also represented a colorblind nation. They argued that as Clinton utilized 'universal' language of poverty, health care, disease, "'personal responsibility,' and 'family values' ...[he] w[o]n back white suburbanites...In [his] use of racially coded language, [Clinton and] the 'new Democrats' chose to remain silent on any explicit discussion of race and its overall meaning for politics."¹⁰ As well, Omi and Winant established that racial euphemisms alluding to class and colorblindness "...perpetuat[ed] the same type of differential, racist treatment" that existed in the past by defining "'American identity' as white."¹¹ Hence, as these columnists used sport, Ali, memory, and Clinton to construct their nations as

⁸ William Jefferson Clinton, "First Inaugural Address," Bartleby Books, February 2, 2006 <<http://www.bartleby.com/124/pres64.html>> January 22, 1996.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formations in the United States*, (New York: Routledge, 1996), 147-50.

¹¹ Ibid., 60, 66.

diverse, their work was produced by and producing white hegemony. And when a white terrorist bombed the 1996 Olympics the connection between and among sport, memory, and white hegemony became all the more clear.¹²

Specifically, by 1996, sports columnists' voices were hardly monolithic. Far more diverse in standpoints, race, and gender, the writers comprising of mainstream sports columnists constructed not a single nation. Rather, their columns can be characterized as engaged in a contest for how white supremacy and terrorism would be remembered in the nation-state, and subsequently representing two kinds of nations. One camp of columnists first privileged whiteness by presenting its nation as 'diverse' in Clintonian fashion while also avoiding the real and significant history of white hegemony in the nation-state. Such constructions of nation avoided any rhetoric that would draw attention to the existence of white terrorism and white racism in the nation-state's history or present. Another camp of columnists confronted white privilege and recognized and warned against the history and future dangers of white terror in the nation-state. The existence of these two camps of columnists in sports pages across the nation-state

¹² Throughout the dissertation, I accept the definition of terror generated by terrorism experts A.P. Schmid and A.J. Longman and generally accepted by social scientists: "Terrorism is an anxiety-inspiring method of repeated violent action, employed by (semi-) clandestine individual, group or state actors, for idiosyncratic, criminal or political reasons, whereby - in contrast to assassination - the direct targets of violence are not the main targets. The immediate human victims of violence are generally chosen randomly (targets of opportunity) or selectively (representative or symbolic targets) from a target population, and serve as message generators. Threat- and violence-based communication processes between terrorist (organization), (imperilled) victims, and main targets are used to manipulate the main target (audience(s)), turning it into a target of terror, a target of demands, or a target of attention, depending on whether intimidation, coercion, or propaganda is primarily sought." See A.P. Schmid and A.J. Longman, *Political Terrorism, A New Guide to Actors, Authors, Concepts, Data bases, Theories, and Literature* (Amsterdam, Transaction Books, 1988), 28. This bombing was not only the first of many by Eric Rudolph, but was immediately suspected to have been carried out by white supremacists, as shown below. As such, the repetitive nature required of an act to fit into this definition of terror was fulfilled; likewise, the act was clearly an act of communication to threaten the nation-state in its approach to race, abortion, and homosexuality.

equated to a contestation for what would be considered legitimate identities and memories for the dominant imagined nation.

White Diversity

A day after the ceremonies, a pipe bomb killed two and injured 111 at Centennial Park, the public space constructed for the 1996 Atlanta Olympics. Immediately, U.S. intelligence officials theorized the bombing to have been carried out by a white supremacist, most likely of the Georgia Militia.¹³

Peter Appelbome of *The New York Times* labeled the bombing a “tragedy.”¹⁴ Thomas Boswell of *The Washington Post* first categorized the terrorist act a “tragedy” and lifted it to national proportions, suggesting that when the Olympics carried on, “the nation turned bad into good.”¹⁵ Ken Rosenthal of *The Baltimore Sun* criticized much of the media for forgetting that the bombing and subsequent deaths were a “tragedy” for the “free nation.”¹⁶ J.A. Adande and Jennifer Frey of *The Washington Post* labeled the games “tragedy-stricken.”¹⁷ Bill Plaschke and Mike Downey of the *Los Angeles Times* and Tony Kornheiser of *The Washington Post* all worked to establish the 1996 Olympics as a cultural memory for the nation by writing of the bombing.¹⁸ Downey even wrote that “Atlanta would be remembered for its violence.”¹⁹ In the context of national and

¹³ See “Who Planted the Bomb?” CNN, July 27, 1996.

¹⁴ Peter Applebome, “Grim Reality Doesn’t Scare Most Fans from Games,” *New York Times*, July 28, 1996.

¹⁵ Thomas Boswell, “Beyond the Quest for Gold, Games have a Silver Lining,” *The Washington Post*, August 5, 1996, sec. D.

¹⁶ Ken Rosenthal, “Glitz, Hype Overshadow Real Tragedy,” *Baltimore Sun*, July 31, 1996, sec. D.

¹⁷ J.A. Adande and Jennifer Frey, “Security Tightens in Village, but Athletes Still Come Out to Play,” *The Washington Post*, July 28, 1996, sec. A.

¹⁸ See Tony Kornheiser, “The End is Such a Deflating Experience,” *The Washington Post*, August 5 1996, sec C; Mike Downey, “The Bittersweet End,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 5, 1996, special section; Bill Plaschke, “Looking for Right Spirit? Begin List with Ghaffari,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 5, 1996, sec. S.

¹⁹ Mike Downey, “The Bittersweet End.”

racial constructions that defined American identity as white, sports columnists who wrote about this terrorist act, carried out by a theoretical white supremacist, revealed the distinction and connections between white hegemony and white supremacy that many scholars today conflate.

For instance, columnists constructed Centennial Park, the site created for the general public to gather during the Olympics, to represent a diverse nation despite that that nation was predicated on the marginalization of black and impoverished bodies from the park. These Olympics were, as Thomas Boswell wrote, to show an “appreciation for diversity.”²⁰ Brian Duffy of *US News & World Report* wrote that Centennial Park was “open to those who could not afford tickets [to the Games].”²¹ Applebome emphasized that Centennial Park was quite “[u]nlike the [other] Olympic venues, the park [wa]s free, open to all, and not subject to security checks.”²² Rosenthal wrote “celebrity worshippers, religious zealots, corporate acolytes—they were all on hand for the re-opening of Centennial Park.” He also cited a school teacher Mary Jenkins: “The park has created a physical and psychological space that Atlanta hasn’t had...This is a very segregated city, a very suburban city. This park is the kind of space that makes cities come alive...The whole notion of shared experience ...People can come here.” Rosenthal continued: “The park belongs to the people.”²³

These columnists all emphasized the park’s being open to ‘the public’ or ‘the people’ and representing ‘our sense of diversity.’ But the people and public to whom the park was open established ‘our diversity’ in very narrow terms--terms that defined

²⁰ Thomas Boswell, “Beyond.”

²¹ Brian Duffy, “Terror at the Olympics,” *US News & World Report*, August 5, 1996, (121):5 121-127; 125.

²² Peter Applebome, “Grim Reality Doesn’t Scare Most Fans from Games.”

²³ “Glitz, Hype Overshadow Real Tragedy.”

diversity in similar ways Clinton's rhetoric and columns about the opening ceremonies did: Few if any columnists mentioned the gentrification, anti-panhandling laws, and sweeps of arrests of black people that occurred in the weeks leading up to the Games, and in conjunction with the International Olympic Committee's visits in choosing Atlanta as a host city.²⁴ Few if any columnists noted the subsequent absence of people experiencing the intersection of poverty and racism at the park, even as they underscored its diversity.²⁵

Even those columnists who mentioned that the Park was built in a place that once was inhabited by black impoverished people used euphemisms that avoided drawing attention to the fact that the place's 'diversity' was underpinned by a displacement of black impoverishment. For instance, Dave Anderson of *The New York Times* wrote "to construct Olympic Park and Coca-Cola Olympic City as an Olympic playground, Atlanta leveled a shabby area of downtown."²⁶ Anderson reduced the significance of the lives of those displaced, and black poverty in general, through the euphemism 'shabby.' This euphemism hid the power of and bought into the white hegemony that considers diversity to be manifest in the absence of black poverty. Hence, Centennial Park and the columns

²⁴ Gerald Weber, Legal Director of the ACLU of Georgia, and Anita Beatty, Co-President of the Atlanta Task Force for the Homeless, argued that there were a number of city policies that coincided with Atlanta's being awarded host-city status that also threatened the civil rights of the city's black impoverished. Among them were "sweeps of homeless camps and gathering areas, particularly before conventions arrived in Atlanta...[And] [t]he demolition of old buildings that might have been used as affordable housing... In addition, the Atlanta city government passed a series of ordinances that, for all intents and purposes, made homelessness illegal. These new laws prohibited aggressive panhandling, lying down on a public park bench, either remaining in or walking across a public parking lot unless one had a car parked in that lot, and occupying vacant buildings." Under these ordinances, African American homeless people were by far the most arrested, according to a study conducted by the agencies of which both leaders were a part. See Karen Denton, "The Olympics, Homelessness, and Civil Rights," *The ACLU Reporter*, Fall 1999.

²⁵ Steve Gietschier noted that "American cities that bid for the Games typically make a guaranteed, lucrative television deal part of their proposal to the IOC...based on the assumption that the events would be telecast live." See Pope, SW et. al., "Virtual Games: The Media Coverage of the 1996 Olympics," *Journal of Sports History*, (27):1 Summer 1997 63-73. See also Seth M. Low, "The Anthropology of Cities," *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 1996 (25) 383-409.

²⁶ Dave Anderson, "Olympics Not Games Anymore," *The New York Times*, July 28, 1996, sec. D.

that emphasized its normatively-defined diversity were both products of and producing white hegemony. Those identities legitimated were those that spoke to white middle-class versions of diversity, manifest through a marginalization of the fact of colored poverty and overt discussions of race.²⁷ The voices of the people displaced to make room for the park and ‘our diversity’ were, to borrow from President Clinton, “shut down” by “power and privilege.”²⁸

In an insightful column, however, Kornheiser underscored the extent to which the Olympics had been commodified to support the selling of products. He noted:

[T]he crush of people in Centennial Park waiting in line in the heat for hours to get into “The Super Store,” a schlockery where you can buy the same official Olympic merchandise you can buy in the Kansas City airport. Speaking of Centennial Park, there is a statue there of Baron de Coubertin. He is facing “Bud World” and “Coca-Cola City,” and the look on his face indicates that if he’d known what the Olympics would turn into, he’d have bought Anheuser-Busch and Coke stock.²⁹

Similarly, Rosenthal wrote of the memorial service following the bombing: “the memorial service gave the same number of mentions to AT&T (one) as it did to the two people who died. The moment of silence lasted all of nine seconds.”³⁰ In short, Kornheiser and Rosenthal played the role of cultural critics, condemning transnational

²⁷ In a roundtable discussion with Mark Dyreson, Steve Gietschier, S.W. Pope, and many others, Dyreson revealed the coverage of the 1996 Olympics projected the nation as a place where “everyone share[d] the same suburban values and spr[u]ng from the same ethnic cultures.” SW Pope et al, “Virtual Games: The Media Coverage of the 1996 Olympics,” *Journal of Sports History*, 63-73.

²⁸ William Jefferson Clinton, “First Inaugural Address.”

²⁹ Tony Kornheiser, “The End is Such a Deflating Experience.”

³⁰ Ken Rosenthal, “Glitz, Hype Overshadow Real Tragedy.”

corporations for participating in what Paul Lauter called the “triumph of commodification.”³¹ The national identity projected through the park was a commodified object normalized through mainstream media and national politicians which, in underscoring diversity without presenting black poverty, catered to the pleasures of white, middle-class tastes. The diverse national identity was a product, like Coke and AT&T, whose consumption was underpinned by and secured white hegemony.

A Trick of Memory

In writing of the terror, columnists’ narratives constructed the 1996 Olympics as a cultural memory proving their nations’ strength, resiliency, and diversity. Kindred demonstrated ‘the people’s’ resiliency in the aftermath of tragedy. He wrote that when the fans returned to Centennial Park, the act of a single foolish terrorist was overcome.³²

Downey wrote that:

In one morbid way, the bomb did Atlanta a great service. There are many—myself very included—who forever would have painted Atlanta as the biggest loser of the Olympics...Instead, I and others will go home telling of an Atlanta that overcame an adversity...Atlanta will be remembered for its violence. Atlanta will also be remembered for its valiance...the Olympics turned out to be about: rising after a fall, envisioning a brighter tomorrow, getting there to give everything you got, and remembering where you are.³³

Don Markus of *The Baltimore Sun* quoted Governor George Zell Miller as saying the bombing would not be remembered as the significant moment of the Olympics. “While

³¹ Paul Lauter, *From Walden Pond to Jurassic Park*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), 109.

³² Dave Kindred, “Georgia Will Always Be on Our Mind?” *The Sporting News*, August 12, 1996.

³³ Mike Downey, “The Bittersweet End.”

we will always remember in our hearts the loss, the reclaiming of our city, the defiance the entire Olympic family showed is a more powerful story that will ultimately be the way these Games will be remembered.”³⁴ Boswell wrote that “when these Games are remembered, it probably will be as a stubborn triumph for the Olympics....”³⁵ These columns were, in the present, establishing the tragedy at the 1996 Olympics as a cultural memory for their nations. However, these columnists established this memory as speaking to national strength and resiliency in the face of adversity, not indication that the nation-state had terrorists inside its borders.

Moreover, utilizing the discourse of tragedy, columnists constructed their nations as strong when sport resumed in the places it had previously existed, all of which represented a national identity characterized by and reinforcing white hegemony. Kindred wrote that “somehow, the Games moved to moments of triumph when athletes went on with the work that brought them to a field of dreams that became a nightmare.”³⁶ Boswell chronicled Donovan Bailey’s record win in the 100-meter dash and American Gail Devers’ win in the same event. He then wrote that “the Olympic flame still burned brightly....”³⁷ Dave Anderson of *The New York Times* engaged in the discourse of tragedy by debating whether the Games should have continued. He quoted Francois Carrad, deputy general of the International Olympic Committee saying, ‘the games will go on.’ Anderson then wrote: “And they should. To cancel these Summer Games would be surrender to the evil cowards who planted the pipe bomb that exploded early yesterday

³⁴ Don Markus, “Spirited Ceremony Brings Games to a Close,” *Baltimore Sun*, August 5, 1996, sec. C.

³⁵ Thomas Boswell, “Beyond the Quest for Gold, Games have a Silver Lining.”

³⁶ Dave Kindred, “What is it with These Fools?” *The Sporting News*, August 5, 1996.

³⁷ Thomas Boswell, “Terror Leaves Games in Somber Mood,” *The Washington Post*, July 28, 1996, sec. D.

morning among revelers in Centennial Park, the Olympic partyland [sic].”³⁸ Anderson presented national strength in the act of athletes’ and civilians’ returning to the Olympics. In short, Boswell, Kindred, and Anderson suggested that the resumption of sport equated to a national overcoming of terrorism. Such rhetoric, however, limited discussion of white terror, and should be viewed as a symptom of the narrowly-defined diversity characteristic of the nation this camp of columnists and federal politicians in general constructed in 1996.

In a further attempt to demonstrate how the nation overcame adversity in the context of terror, Kornheiser, Plaschke, and Boswell used the story of U.S. silver medalist winner in wrestling, Matt Ghaffari. Through him, they constructed the 1996 Olympics as significant cultural memories for their resilient nations. All three asserted that what they would remember most was not the bombing, but moments of compassion Ghaffari showed after winning the medal. Kornheiser wrote:

What do you [think you will] remember most about the Atlanta Olympics? For some it will be the bomb, of course...I'll think of the tender moments, like swimmer Angel Martino giving her bronze medal to a friend who has cancer, and wrestler Kurt Angle weeping through the playing of 'The Star-Spangled Banner' at the medal ceremony, after placing his gold medal around his mom's neck...In my mind the most compassionate act of all was Ghaffari going to the hospital to visit Fallon Stubbs, teenage daughter of Alice Hawthorne, who was killed in the bomb.³⁹

Here, Kornheiser tied Ghaffari's compassion and the patriotic moment of the Star

³⁸ Dave Anderson, "Olympics Not Games Anymore."

³⁹ Tony Kornheiser, "The End is Such a Deflating Experience."

Spangled Banner being sung to how he (and so his readers) would remember the 1996 Olympics. Similarly, Plaschke suggested that Ghaffari's medal had "magic" and that "he ha[d] spread that feeling throughout a city that badly needed to believe these Olympics still had magic left..."⁴⁰ Plaschke suggested that Ghaffari's medal allowed Atlanta and the nation projected through it to recover from the terror. Plaschke then assigned the label of 'American' to Ghaffari by chronicling the athlete's trek from Iran to America and quoting him as saying, "I've worked my butt off to be an American."⁴¹ Boswell explained that Ghaffari was afraid that the American public would chastise him for not winning the gold. He then quoted Ghaffari as saying: "After my match, the people showed me how to turn a negative into a positive...A few days later, we had the bomb...Again, this great nation turned bad into good. Everyone put humanity ahead of sport."⁴² While Kornheiser, Plaschke, and Boswell paid homage to the dead, they also began to set their version of the Olympics in the realm of the mythological through the good acts of Ghaffari. That is, these stories wrote inside of, not upon, Ghaffari's body and then attributed this unique man's internal qualities to their nations' compassionate character, democratic ideal, and its subsequent ability to heal. The compassionate national character these columnists constructed through Ghaffari necessarily avoided the reality that white terror lurked within the nation-state's borders, even when that terror was what their nations were healing from. Finally, the healing would be for those lucky enough to have witnessed the stories of the 1996 Olympics unfold through media, not those in the park, or those who would be or had been threatened by white terror in other places.

⁴⁰ Bill Plaschke, "Looking for Right Spirit? Begin List with Ghaffari."

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Thomas Boswell, "Beyond the Quest for Gold, Games have a Silver Lining."

But the terrorist acts that columnists suggested the nation overcame through sport extended beyond those at the 1996 Olympics. For instance, Elizabeth Levitan Spaid of *The Christian Science Monitor* tangled tragedies and constructed her nation as having a unique character in the process.

The blast, which comes eight days after the downing of TWA Flight 800, continues to keep world's attention riveted on terrorism. Two months ago, 19 US personnel died after a bomb blew up barracks in Saudi Arabia. Fifteen months ago, Oklahoma City was the target, and before that, the World Trade Center in New York... 'We celebrate freedom here,' says Eleanor Pemberton of Conyers, Ga., a spectator at a women's basketball contest Saturday... We need to stand tall. This could have happened anywhere in America,' former Mayor Maynard Jackson said Saturday. 'This is a convenient place for someone to do something as awful and tragic as this... The show must go on.'⁴³

Spaid suggested that through the Olympics, the acts of terror that had been exacted upon American soil and people from 1994-1996 would be overcome. Her reason for this claim was that America was the land of the free and people here could 'stand tall.' Similarly, Boswell referred to the aforementioned tragedies as well as the 1972 Olympics in Munich. He argued that "death and terror did not stop the Olympics today."⁴⁴ He then equated sport and the Olympics with what he labeled American diversity and character:

This was not really the Atlanta Games so much as it was the American Olympics-the first true one, with the whole world aboard, since 1924. As such, it celebrated

⁴³Elizabeth Levitan Spaid, "Blast Quiets but Can't Quiet Olympic Spirit," *The Christian Science Monitor*, July 29, 1996, sec. D.

⁴⁴ Thomas Boswell, "Terror Leaves Games in Somber Mood."

our diversity and hospitality, our gaucherie and our generosity...and our general decency.⁴⁵

Boswell constructed America as strong, resilient, diverse, and unique.

Collectively all of these columnists established their nations in the mythological, arguing terrorism was overcome through athletes' acts on and/or off the field. They also established their nations as diverse, despite that the diversity espoused through the Olympics was one serving and underpinned by white hegemony. That hegemony not only belied Atlanta's and the nation-state's actual conditions by marginalizing black poverty. It also denied substantive discussion of white terror that may have complicated the construction of the nation as democratic and embracing diversity. Adande, a black man, and Spaid, a woman who often wrote of discriminatory practices in the nation-state, touted American ideals as representative of the nation-state, despite their own identities and their historic writings that confronted white hegemony.⁴⁶ The denial of black poverty and white supremacy in even these columns suggested that when national identity is discussed through sport, the mythologies of both are normalized to such an extent that columnists who would seemingly resist both do not. Moreover, the dearth of black female columnists in 1996 illustrated the white masculine privilege in the make-up of the mainstream press. Still, this dearth of such columnists would not necessarily explain the hegemonic fashion in which this camp of columnists constructed the Olympics as memories that proved their nations' strength, resiliency, good character, and diversity. The diversity represented through these columns privileged middle-class identities, and

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ See Elizabeth Levitan Spaid, "Churches Still Struggling to Cross Racial Divide," *The Christian Science Monitor*, April 10, 1993, p. 6; "Atlanta's Freaknik a Symbol of Atlanta's Racial Divide, or Just a Party?" *The Christian Science Monitor*, April 18, 1997, p. 4; "Georgia Contests Test What Pulls Votes: Race or Party?" *The Christian Science Monitor*, October 1, 1996, p. 1.

subsequently white versions of blackness. As a result, this camp of columnists privileged whiteness perhaps as a result of their identifying with the classed make-up of Centennial Park.

However, this camp's general avoidance of discussion of white terror is best explained as buying into hegemonic and mythological national identities supported through sport. Specifically, of memory and nation, Lauren Berlant wrote that the producers of mainstream media assure the future of whiteness by avoiding realities and memories of oppression.⁴⁷ Hence, in establishing cultural memories of the 1996 Olympics to tout national diversity, democracy, strength, and resiliency, while avoiding discussion of white terror, these columnists were assuring a diverse and strong future for their nations; a future that would not require whites to confront their own hegemonic approaches to race in the present or past.

Avoiding Memory of Terror

But the construction of the nation as diverse was established in how columnists remembered their national history through the Games, too. Many columnists used the bombing to remember their nations having been historically free from terror. In "Triumph over Terror," Jerry Adler wrote that "the Atlanta games will be forever remembered for the first fatal terror attack directed at civilians."⁴⁸ William Booth of *The Washington Post* wrote that the blasts at Oklahoma and Atlanta signaled "the end of [national] innocence" from terror.⁴⁹ Boswell wrote of Matthew Britt, a doctor in Oklahoma, who suggested the bombings at Oklahoma City and Atlanta indicated the

⁴⁷ Lauren Berlant, *The Queen of America Goes to Washington City*, 56.

⁴⁸ Jerry Adler, "Terror and Triumph," *Newsweek*, August 5, 1996: 24-33.

⁴⁹ William Booth, "Blast Hit Heart of Party," *The Washington Post*, July 28, 1996, sec. A.

nation's children were losing their innocence.⁵⁰ Michael Grunwald of *The New York Times* suggested the nation was "no longer immune to terror."⁵¹ Lance Morrow of *Time* wrote:

The Atlanta bomb was not Munich 1972, which was Black September's awful masterpiece. By comparison, Atlanta was amateur night. But Atlanta came in the immediate aftermath of TWA Flight 800, and close enough in history to Oklahoma City, to leave in Americans' minds a conviction, developing like a Polaroid picture, that their nation is somehow in the process of losing whatever may be left of its old immunity...Terror was an evil native to other lands.⁵²

Brian Duffy wrote of Oklahoma City, Atlanta, and violence and wondered what "evil had suddenly become us."⁵³ Kindred distinguished between American citizens' reaction to terror and those from Northern Ireland. Whereas in Ireland terrorism had existed for the better part of two centuries, Kindred argued that it was just now visiting America—America was losing its identity as lacking terror.⁵⁴

Collectively, these columnists established their nations as historically lacking terror, which was revealing of the identities privileged in those nations. These columns altogether avoided the historical reality that homegrown white terrorism had long been part of American history. It existed in lynching of black and gay identities for as long as

⁵⁰ Thomas Boswell, "Terror Leaves Games in Somber Mood."

⁵¹ Michael Grunwald, "FBI Charges Fugitive in Atlanta, Olympic Bombings," *The Washington Post*, October 15, 1996, sec. A.

⁵² Lance Morrow, "An Equal and Opposite Darkness," *Time*, August 5, 1996, 148(7): 72.

⁵³ Brian Duffy, "Terror at the Olympics," 121.

⁵⁴ Dave Kindred, "What is it with These Fools?"

the nation was officially an independent state.⁵⁵ Such repressions in memory were similar to those that avoided the historical reality that many whites vilified King and Ali. These repressions were also similar to those that failed to realize that white versions of diversity and privilege were underpinned by the displacement of black impoverished bodies from the site where Centennial Park was built. In short, the construction of a diverse nation had been predicated on columnists' avoiding memories of moments when white racism was overt in the nation-state's history and the social realities that underpinned the material construction of Centennial Park. Even if the whites reading or writing these columns did not participate in such racism, it was part of the nation-state's history that was being omitted in these stories of nation and terror. By avoiding these memories, columnists could hold up the nation as democratic and experiencing a momentary lapse in terror.

Moreover, as the columnists represented diversity through Centennial Park, they tacitly constructed whites and whiteness as always progressing toward establishing democracy for all identities, rather than being obstacles to it. Hence, they supported and were affected by white hegemony.

Along these lines, columnists constructed their nations as currently void of a network of white terror through the games. They suggested that a single individual carried out the terror at Centennial Park, glossing over the fact that a network of white supremacist/terror organizations existed in the nation-state. Boswell wrote that the terror was carried out by an "isolated lunatic;" Kindred wrote that it was the act of a single

⁵⁵ *Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*, *Cane*, and many other texts by African American authors demonstrate that public lynchings were forms of social control that were geared towards intimidating entire groups of people, not towards exacting violence against specific people. They hence fit into the definition of terror cited at the beginning of this chapter. See James Weldon Johnson, *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*, (New York, Penguin Books, 1990); Jean Toomer, *Cane*, (Penguin Books, New York, 1993).

foolish terrorist.⁵⁶ These pieces suggesting that the bombing was carried out by a single individual presented terror as an anomaly to the nation-state, rather than a result of its terrorist networks, themselves with a robust history. The repression of white terrorism's history and present status was what Cynthia-Levine Rasky called the "denial and legitimization of white hegemony."⁵⁷ For if the nation-state was constructed as lacking terror and racial oppression, then white versions of diversity and history were justified.

Finally, Downey and Boswell continued their stories of the bombing and chronicled mainstream media's accusation of Richard Jewell as the terrorist. (Jewell was the security guard first hailed as a hero for evacuating Centennial Park in the moments before the bomb detonated. His profile of a police officer wanna-be, according to numerous reports, would explain his desire to set off a bomb in public while also being the one to 'save' many civilians. Many media outlets immediately used Jewell's profile to convict him in the court of public opinion. Ultimately, however, Jewell was never arrested and the media's focus on Jewell made him a straw victim). Downey referred to Jewell's being accused as a lynching. "This was the year I saw a man lynched and not with a rope [but by the media]...I don't know if...Timothy McVeigh blew up that Oklahoma City office building...but one thing I do know: [He] was charged with a crime: Richard Jewell was not."⁵⁸ Downey's use of lynching to describe Jewell's experience was the only reference to terrorism specifically linked to white supremacy in his work. This was despite that the Atlanta bombing and lynching were and had been, in no uncertain terms, connected to white supremacy. Boswell was much tamer with his

⁵⁶ Thomas Boswell, "Beyond the Quest for Gold, Games have Silver Lining."

⁵⁷ Qtd, Mary G. McDonald, "Mapping Whiteness," *Sociology of Sport Journal* 22.3 (2005): 397-408, 245-255; 249.

⁵⁸ Mike Downey, "It Was Clear Case of Rush to Judgment," *Los Angeles Times*, October 28 1996, sec. C.

language, but still focused on media rather than white terrorism as the culprit in the tragedy: “An innocent man was made infamous around the world, his life put under a cruel microscope for months. How will that damage ever be undone?”⁵⁹ The damage was to a single white male, not the many at Centennial Park.⁶⁰ Moreover, the permanent damage was exacted by the amorphously-defined media, not the ongoing white terror groups in the nation-state; not the white hegemony displacing black poverty from spaces in the nation-state and from the columns constructing national identity.

Hence, one camps of columns about the 1996 Olympics generally constructed their nations as representing diversity, as resilient and strong, as compassionate or historically lacking terror and in the process were produced by and producing white hegemony.

Remembering White Terror

Some writers, however, did use their position in mainstream media to remember the history of white terror in the nation-state. They thus potentially resisted the hegemonic construction of national identity in which many of their counterparts engaged. For example, Coleman McCarthy’s work appeared in *The Washington Post*, and although it was not a sports column, it was a text about the Olympics that was overtly critical of the sort of rhetoric cited in the first camp’s columns. He challenged the notion that terror was a foreign entity:

⁵⁹Thomas Boswell, “Reassuring Our Convictions,” *The Washington Post*, January 28, 1998, sec. D.

⁶⁰ Moreover, the perpetrators of violence were the unidentified and amorphous ‘media.’ According to Joel Black, the practice of condemning media for its leading to moral decline is a means of escaping real, harmful issues such as gun violence, and, I would suggest, white terrorism. (See Joel Black, *Reality Effect*, New York: Routledge, 2002). This is not an argument about who should have been blamed for terror, but an observation that white hegemony garners power by repressing historic and current manifestations of white terrorism.

That was much the reaction to the Oklahoma City bombing: Germs of terrorism, once an infectious poison quarantined among car-bombers in Belfast or suicide-bombers in Israel, are now invading the serenity of America. Why us... This expression of shock that suddenly it is happening here ignores a few facts, starting with those supplied by the FBI's Bomb Data Center. In 1984, 803 bombings or attempted bombings occurred, a number that soared to 3,163 in 1994. From 1990 to 1994, California was the nation's bomb capital, with 2,424 attempted or actual explosions.⁶¹

Here McCarthy argued that white terror had been part of the nation-state for a long time prior to the 1996 Olympics. His feature worked to establish the history of white terrorism in the nation-state, which many of his counterparts repressed from their memories of national history. He even underscored the irony of a National Anthem at the Atlanta Olympics and its lyrics of exploding bombs. He wrote "a bomb-loving government can expect to have a bomb-loving citizenry. It does."⁶² Hence, McCarthy resisted sports columnists' tendency to construct their national identities as innocent from violence and so diverse. He even suggested that violence was part of his national identity.

S.L. Price of *Sports Illustrated* underscored the national network of white terrorist groups and their capability and threats to exact violence on the Games:

Court records reveal that the last time a Summer Games was held in the U.S., in L.A. in 1984, a right-wing 'Aryan' paramilitary group called the Order made elaborate plans to bomb several Olympic sites. When members of the

⁶¹ Coleman McCarthy, "Residue From Rockets' Red Glare," *The Washington Post*, August 20, 1996, sec. D.

⁶² Ibid.

group were arrested that year, several like-minded militias vowed to continue what they saw as the Order's 'unfinished business,' though no incidents related to that threat were reported. Last April federal agents near Macon, Ga., arrested two members of the Georgia Republic Militia with bombmaking materials in their possession. It was widely reported at the time that the group was planning a 'war' on the '96 Olympics, though authorities denied it.⁶³

Both writers deconstructed the dominant national identity's compassionate spirit by remembering some of the acts of white terror that existed prior to 1996, acts that their counterparts altogether avoided. Each thereby challenged the construction of a national history characterized by white benevolence and that catered to white, middle-class sense of racial progress.

Similarly, Boswell's most insightful column rejected the notion that America was exceptional and innocent of terror and racial oppression. He argued that terror existed in many nation-states, and is not a racial construct, but an ideology related to extremists of all races and nations, including America:

Our whole range of Parliamentary militarists make the shortlist of [potential guilty parties]...Skinheads and Klansmen make the shortlist too...Next time we hear about a bomb in Belfast or a famine in Africa, perhaps the suffering will seem less remote and harder to ignore.⁶⁴

This column, quite a contrast to the other two he wrote on the 1996 Olympics, implicitly illustrated that terror is not naturally connected to race, but is an ideology. He similarly demonstrated that nations are constructions with direct connections to how cultures

⁶³ S.L. Price, "Stained Games," *Sports Illustrated*, August 5, 1996 (85):6, 22-28.

⁶⁴ Thomas Boswell, "A Bond Linking Us All." *The Washington Post*, July 28, 1996, sec. C.

perceive terror and each other. He wrote that “all those who...c[ould] deny that [terrorists] exist among us” are part of the problem.⁶⁵ Hence, Boswell confronted white hegemony by suggesting that passively ignoring the reality of white terrorism in the nation-state is a symptom of hegemony.⁶⁶ In Boswell, then, is evidence that whiteness is an ideology. Further, in some columns, Boswell embraced a standpoint that constructed his nation in ways that privileged whiteness; while in others he confronted whiteness. Like the rest of culture, his identity is complex, and as he wrote of athletes’ feats in sport, he constructed a mythological nation. When he wrote specifically of terrorism and diversity, he underscored race problems in the nation-state. Boswell’s straddling of the two camps of columnists writing of the terror at the Olympics indicates that individual columnists’ work is not monolithic in nature, and cannot be categorized without analysis of the context, event, and themes in and about which the column was written.

Ultimately, columnists who acknowledged the existence of white terrorist groups in the nation-state confronted the hegemonic, colorblind nations their counterparts constructed. They began the process of deconstructing hegemonic nationhoods by challenging the notion of national diversity that mainstream media, through politics and sport, was in the practice of celebrating. They also resisted the tendency of mainstream media to hide the reality of white terrorism from memories of the nation. These columns resisted the presentations of nation and tricks of memory that were prevalent in mainstream media at the time. Finally, these columnists demonstrated that white hegemony can be resisted by drawing attention to the existence, dangers, and history of white terror and racism in the nation-state.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Likewise, Rosenthal argued that terror was an ideology without a nation. Ken Rosenthal, “Glitz, Hype Overshadow Real Tragedy.”

Given that columns from both camps this chapter identifies appeared in the same publications--indeed, in Boswell's case, were written by the same author--it is hardly a far leap to argue that readers of different standpoints read work from both. In this way, these columns were collectively contesting for how diversity, black poverty, and the history of terror in the nation-state would be remembered and established in their nations. Likewise, these sports columns had the capacity to shift cultural conceptions of national identity to include knowledge of how white hegemony works for those who embraced white hegemonic stances toward race, terror, and national identity. It works, at times, by emphasizing a narrow form of diversity and/or denying the existence and history of white terror. Knowledge of the mechanisms of white hegemony, finally, potentially educates readers by requiring them to examine their rigid definitions of diversity, nation, and terror. Acknowledging the existence of racism and white terrorism potentially confronts those embracing white hegemony with the reality that racism, even in its passive form, is a violent and continuous problem in the nation-state. Moreover, by confronting those who embrace white hegemonic approaches to nation or diversity, the columnists in the second camp worked within the mainstream media, an outlet often blamed for producing hegemony, in order to deconstruct it.

Finally, all of the columnists in the second camp were white. As a result, skin color does not preclude whites from confronting white hegemony. In contrast, the construction of national colorblindness and a nation lacking terror has a historic connection to white privilege and power that yet exists in mainstream media and sports pages. The power of this history is great, and even minority writers like Adande, Spaid,

and Washington buy into and produce it. Hence, whiteness is a powerful ideology that affects and is embraced by many, despite the skin color and/or gender.

In the next chapter, I examine how sports columnists wrote of another terrorist attack, 9/11, in conjunction with sport. In the process, I argue that sports columnists engaged in a national debate about the justification for and ongoing consequences of the war on terror.

Chapter 5: Counter Wars: Cracking the Mythology

Against the backdrop of a clear blue sky, United Airlines flight 175 and American Airlines flight 11 plunged into the World Trade Center. In Washington D.C., United Airlines flight 77 dove into the Pentagon wall. And en route to the White House, United Airlines flight 93 was downed in Shanksville, Pennsylvania. Across the nation-state, anxious citizens, themselves targets and victims of the terror, read and watched news stories about the acts of violence.

Later that afternoon, President George W. Bush addressed the country and established his nation as full of citizens resolved to exact revenge against the terrorists. He said “this is a day when all Americans from every walk of life unite in our resolve for justice and peace. America has stood down enemies before, and we will do so this time.”¹ Three days later, with the Towers still smoldering and bodies being unearthed from the rubble, President Bush wrapped his arm around a rescue fireman and sounded off through a bull horn: “I can hear you. The rest of the world can hear you. And the people who knocked these buildings down will hear all of us soon.”² On September 20, 2001, Bush delivered the “Address to a Joint Session of Congress and American People,” in which he established his national identity in anticipation of war:

On September 11th, the enemies of freedom committed an act of war against our country. Americans have known wars—but for the past 136 years, they have

¹ George W. Bush, “President Bush’s Address to the Nation on September 11, 2001,” September 11, 2001, <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010911-16.html>>

² George Bush, CNN News, September 14, 2001.

been wars on foreign soil, except for one Sunday in 1941. As long as the United States of America is determined and strong, this will not be an age of terror; this will be an age of liberty, here and across the world. We will rally the world to this cause by our efforts, by our courage. We will not tire, we will not falter, and we will not fail. It is my hope that in the months and years ahead, life will return almost too normal.³

In the ten days following the attacks, Bush constructed his national identity as one that had historically been attacked by ‘enemies of freedom.’ He also explained that the nation would return to normalcy when revenge was exacted for the attacks, and through a courageous and strong commitment to freedom.

Three hours after the attacks, Major League Baseball Commissioner Allan Huber ‘Bud’ Selig postponed the baseball season. In writing of sport’s service to national identity in the context of terror and the subsequent War on Terror, columnists adopted three kinds of standpoints, which I define as camps. The first asserted that sport had historically served the nation in the context of war, and would do so in the aftermath of the terrorism. They also used sport to construct their nations as strong, virile, and ready to avenge the terror. The second camp resisted the traditional use of sport to construct a mythological national identity. This camp dislocated sport from national identity, claiming that sport ought not be a diversion from attending to everyday citizens’ problems. It also offered a new way in which sport paid a positive service to nation. The final camp was critical of and confronted the nation-state’s and the first camp’s construction of a mythological national identity and War on Terror. This camp

³ George W. Bush, “President Bush’s Address to the Nation on September 11, 2001.”

represented a counter-narrative to the national mythology traditional in sports columns written in the context of tragedy.

The very manifestation of three divergent political standpoints regarding national identity in the context of war, moreover, illustrates a significant shift in the voices comprising mainstream sports columnists in 2001. Whereas columnists from earlier eras generally marginalized voices critical of the nation-state, especially in the context of war, now sports columnists themselves were among those most critical of it. In writing of 9/11 and the subsequent War on Terror, then, the collective voices of sports columnists were much more representative of the many political views of citizens in the nation-state than before. Moreover, these voices represented a contestation for how 9/11 and the War on Terror would be constructed in the dominant national identity and its memory.

Sport's Myths and its Nation

After Selig postponed the season, many sports columnists engaged in the discourse of tragedy by theorizing the service to national identity resumption of sport could pay. For instance, columnists established 9/11 in a grand narrative about sport's historic role in delivering stability to a patriotic form of national identity in the context of being attacked. Steve Buckley of *The Boston Herald* wrote, "all you need to know about the study of sport in America is that, during World War II, President Roosevelt insisted that Major League Baseball continue to operate. Roosevelt believed the games would buoy the spirits of Americans, and he was right."⁴ Walter Shapiro of *USA Today* wrote of Major League Baseball Commissioner Kennesaw Mountain Landis' worry that baseball, in the wake of the attacks on Pearl Harbor, would be acting in an unpatriotic

⁴ Steve Buckley, "Thankfully, Games go On," *The Boston Herald*, November 22, 2001, p 92.

fashion by beginning its season on time months after the attacks. He summarized a letter Landis wrote to President Roosevelt:

Landis and the 16 team owners were prepared to halt the sport for the duration of the war if that was what the president deemed proper. But thanks to Roosevelt's sagacious letter of approval, the 1942 season was played in its 154-game entirety, climaxing with a World Series in which the upstart St. Louis Cardinals upended the New York Yankees, four games to one.⁵

George Vecsey of *The New York Times*, citing baseball's continuing its albeit truncated schedule during both World Wars, argued that sport was a social institution offering stability to the nation in times of crisis.⁶

One year after the attacks Bill Plaschke and David Wharton of the *Los Angeles Times* placed a single athlete, Pat Tillman, Arizona Cardinals safety who left a \$3.6 million contract to join the Armed Forces, in the same grand narrative of sport's service to nation. They wrote of Tillman and referred to the many "heroic" athletes who served in World War II.⁷ Both columnists ultimately suggested that Tillman was proof the nation was still full of "men of honor."⁸ Plaschke noted that Tillman exemplified "what was best about America."⁹ All of these columnists used cultural memories of World War II to suggest that in times of national crisis and war, the correct form of patriotism was consistently asserted through sport.

⁵ Walter Shapiro, "Baseball Strike Talk Cheapens Post-Sept, 11 Patriotism," *USA TODAY*, August 28, 2002, sec. A.

⁶ George Vecsey, "Can American Sports Ever Get Back to Normal?" *The New York Times*, September 16, 2001, sec. 1.

⁷ David Wharton, "War Isn't Their Kind of Game," *Los Angeles Times*, April 24, 2004, sec. A.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Bill Plaschke, "The True Meaning of Sacrifice," *Los Angeles Times*, April 24, 2004, sec. D.

With the connection of nation to sport solidified, columnists argued that the resumption of sporting events after 9/11 would lead to the nation's return to normalcy and lift its national spirit. Vecsey wrote a column entitled "Can American Sports Ever Get Back to Normal?" in which he labeled 9/11 a "tragedy." He continued to write that "we will get back to some semblance of normalcy. We need our games...."¹⁰ Hal Bodley of *USA Today* used cultural memories of the Bay Area earthquake in 1989 to suggest that "the closest [tragedy] to [9/11] baseball has endured was the devastating earthquake in San Francisco."¹¹ He then argued that Bud Selig should not "push" a resumption of the season and that the postponement of games was a "moral" decision. He finally chronicled that Selig "talked to the White House," thereby associating the decision with Bush's nation.¹² Mike Tierney of *The Atlanta Journal Constitution* wrote:

America's pro athletes vacated playing fields once more Wednesday as sports joined hands with a nation healing from a terrorist assault on two cities...Measuring a line between respect and resilience, Selig is considering resumption on Friday, when the Braves are supposed to welcome the Marlins.¹³

These columnists linked sport to a national recovery from the terror of 9/11. The places and bodies they used to construct their nations as recovered or in the process of being so, however, revealed the identities privileged in their nations.

¹⁰ George Vecsey, "Can American Sports Ever Get Back to Normal?"

¹¹ Hal Bodley, "Selig Facing Difficult Decision On Resuming Games," *USA TODAY*, September 13, 2001, sec. 4.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Mike Tierney, "Another Day off as Nation Mourns," *The Atlanta Journal Constitution*, September 13, 2001, sec. F.

For example, Scott Ostler's column in *The San Francisco Chronicle* engaged in the same convention in the discourse of tragedy as those columns cited above. But he also associated the tragedy with New York:

Commissioner Bud Selig shut down the game for three days so far, and even though the Sportswriter Code demands criticism of Selig for every decision, that seems about right. Who really knows?..If nothing else, the Yankees deserve a chance to provide New York with a diversion and a spiritual boost.¹⁴

Ostler was only one of many columnists who secured the tragedy as specific to New York while also constructing a nation ready for war through it. Ostler also suggested that sport could provide a seemingly contradictory purpose: It could offer New Yorkers a diversion from the reality of terror while also elevating the spirits of fans--spirits that were lowered as a result of terror. Ostler's notion that the Yankees could provide a spiritual boost for New Yorkers was engaged in mythological construction of sport and nation that would implicitly inform the mythological national identity that would advocate war.

For instance, Steve Wilstein of the Associated Press linked New York, national identity, the Yankees, and citizenship:

Sports is the most parochial and national of our institutions, touching our identities as citizens deeper than other entertainments. We come together for our cities and our regions and we root for the home team. For a while, after 9-11, New York became America's home team.¹⁵

¹⁴ Scott Ostler, "The Question is How, Not When to Play," *San Francisco Chronicle*, September 13, 2001, sec. E.

¹⁵ Steve Wilstein, "Patriotism and Protest at Yankee Stadium," The Associated Press, July 22, 2004, <http://www.lexisnexis.com>.

Here New York was a trope for Wiltstein's nation and how it would recover from 9/11.¹⁶ Likewise, Dan Barry of *The New York Times* quoted Steven Cohen, Vice Dean of Public Affairs at Columbia University, as having said that New York was then seen by the rest of the country "as the most American of cities...We're tough, we're resilient, we fight back, and we're undaunted."¹⁷ Joe Lapointe of *The New York Times* conflated New York with his national identity suggesting that the T-shirts "God Bless America" and "Don't Mess with New York" signaled the same sort of strength in national identity.¹⁸ These columnists constructed New York as a place reflective of their resilient and courageous national identities. They also constructed New York as a place willing to retaliate against an enemy, thereby conflating resiliency and war with sport and New York.

Like Ostler above, many columnists suggested that baseball players and Yankees specifically reflected the values and character of their nations. Roger Angell of *The New Yorker* wrote:

The Yankee players had been on the scene, so to speak, on the morning of September 11th, when the bad news for the country arrived, and how they felt and how they would fare now mattered. And millions here in the city felt the connection: the Yanks were us.¹⁹

Bodley wrote: "Despite a lifetime of ingrained Yankee-hating, I'm going to root for them... Let's think about us. Go team America."²⁰ Diane Pucin of the *Los Angeles Times*

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Dan Barry, "New York Carries On, but Test of Its Grit Has Just Begun," *The New York Times*, October 11, 2001, sec.B.

¹⁸ Joe Lapointe, "Baseball: Fans Wear their Emotions," *The New York Times*, September 12, 2002, sec. D.

¹⁹ Roger Angell, "Can You Believe it?" *The New Yorker*, November 26, 2001.

quoted Harrison Mitchell, who once worked in one of the Twin Towers: “Baseball is our national pastime, right? Baseball is part of America and we need to be Americans right now.” Diane Pucin, a woman columnist, ended her piece stating that “we will” watch baseball again. “It’s who we are. We’re Americans.”²¹ A year after the attacks, Wilstein remembered the nation’s recovery through sport’s resumption:

Fans came back quickly when the baseball and football games resumed after Sept.

11. They chose to stand together, defy the terrorists and show they were not afraid. In coming to the games, the fans declared that their lives will go on and they would not hide in their homes as the terrorists hid in caves.²²

These columnists thus constructed their nations through a conflation of New York and baseball while implying that patriotism equated to a support of retaliation against the state of Afghanistan, a state constructed as consisting of only terrorists.

Columnists’ construction of New York, though, was part of a discourse of national identity in which male sports figures, firemen, and policemen came to represent national response to terror. That is, columnists located a patriotic national identity in a matrix of New York servicemen and ballplayers, both of whom were present at Yankee games. Josh Dubow of the Associated Press established all the citizens in his nation as supportive of New York baseball and New York servicemen as a result of the terror. “Everybody seemed to be cheering for New York’s baseball teams after Sept. 11. The interlocking ‘NY’ on the teams’ caps symbolized the perseverance of the city and the

²⁰ Hal Bodley, “Selig Facing Difficult Decision On Resuming Games.”

²¹ Diane Pucin, “Terrorism Can’t Defeat Heroism,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 16, 2001, sec. D.

²² Steve Wilstein, “Patriotism and Protest at Yankee Stadium.”

country in the wake of the worst terrorist attacks in the nation's history."²³ Angell likewise associated the Yankees with firemen and policemen and constructed his national identity in very narrow terms. He wrote:

Ceremonials and long minutes of silence, players in Fire and Police Department caps (and the 'PAPD' version, for the Port Authority's cops), plus attending groups of policemen and firemen, vociferously cheered, greeted the resumption of play after a week's suspension....²⁴

Writing of the Yankees, Tyler Kepner of *The New York Times* chronicled of New York fans: "unscripted and uninhibited, they filled the silence with a chant. 'U-S-A! U-S-A!' they cheered, and a few minutes later they applauded and waved flags..."²⁵ These columnists lifted the Yankees, policemen, and firemen to the status of American heroes while using sport to assert an overly patriotic national identity.

However, the athletes columnists associated with a masculine and patriotic national identity in the context of terror and war were not limited to baseball. Tillman, the ex-football player and American soldier, also served a patriotic national identity. Gary Smith of *Sports Illustrated* and Plaschke told the same stories of Tillman, stories whose content were reminiscent of other symbols of American mythology. His hard work ethic in college, evidenced in his refusal to red-shirt his freshman year, was reminiscent of John Crevecoeur and Ben Franklin. His fortitude even in the face of legal punishment during a high school trip to Mexico was reminiscent of President George Washington's cherry tree and President Abraham Lincoln's honesty. And his penchant to

²³ Josh Dubow, "Booing New York Means Baseball's Back to Normal," March 15, 2002, <http://www.lexisnexis.com>

²⁴ Roger Angell, "Can You Believe it?"

²⁵ Tyler Kepner, "At Yankee Stadium, Tributes and a Monument to Heroism," *The New York Times*, September 12, 2002, sec. D.

camp alone was reminiscent of Walden.²⁶ Similarly, Jason Cowley linked Tillman's story to President Kennedy's life and suggested constancy to American identity:

It was as if the words of John F Kennedy, resounding across the decades, had spoken directly to [Tillman]. He knew that, following the events of 11 September 2001, his mission no longer lay on the football fields of America, where he played for the Arizona Cardinals.²⁷

These columnists used the athlete-turned-soldier Tillman to situate 9/11 and the war in a grand narrative of American history, or at least the values that are characteristic of that grand narrative. They suggested that the nation's identity was, throughout time, found in exceptional men like Kennedy and now Tillman. Hence, Tillman served these columnists' construction of a mythic national identity that was represented in stories with moral endings familiar to American mythology, itself full of white male patriots.²⁸ This construction of national identity and acceptance of war was reflective of the tradition in mainstream sports columns, as shown in chapters two and three.

But the establishment of a masculine and patriotic national identity through sport and male bodies had implications for how columnists and their readers situated their national identity in the global community. For instance, many columnists' descriptions of President Bush's ceremonial first pitch at the third game of the Yankee-Diamondback World Series implicitly supported war. Angell wrote "President Bush threw the ceremonial first pitch of game three for a strike, from the full distance, and the Yankees

²⁶ See Gary Smith, "Remember his Name," *Sports Illustrated*, September 5, 2006, 88-101; Bill Plaschke, "The True Meaning of Sacrifice."

²⁷ Jason Cowley, "Sport," *New Statesman*, May 24, 2004 <http://www.proquest.com>.

²⁸ See Bill Plaschke, "The True Meaning of Sacrifice;" Jason Cowley, "Sport."

and the weather seemed to take it from there.”²⁹ Wilstein used Bush’s pitch as a way to juxtapose his national identity with terror:

That was the same message President Bush delivered when he threw out the first pitch of Game 3 at the World Series. It was a perfect strike, literally and symbolically. Seeing that, how many Americans hoped Osama bin Laden was watching on a satellite TV in his cave, wondering what it takes to defeat the spirit of this country?³⁰

Dana Milbank of *The Washington Post* set Bush’s pitch in the grand narrative of sport’s service of national identity by suggesting that it was reminiscent of Franklin Roosevelt’s insistence that baseball continue during World War II. Describing Bush’s bullet-proof gear, Milbank associated Bush with a soldier and found a matrix of national identity, war, masculinity, sport, and unthinking patriotism by which to define his nation’s response to terror. His column ended by stating that Bush “tossed a strike and he...left the field to chants of ‘U-S-A,’ it appeared his message got through. ‘USA Fears Nobody,’ proclaimed a banner hanging from an upper deck.”³¹ All of these columnists represented national response to terror through Bush’s body and used rhetoric that established their national identities as masculine, patriotic, and implicitly supportive of war. They did so, partially, by playing on the word ‘strike’ to associate the strength of the President’s throw with the anticipated bombings of Afghanistan.³²

²⁹ Roger Angell, “Can You Believe it?”

³⁰ Steve Wilstein, “Patriotism and Protest at Yankee Stadium.”

³¹ Dana Milbank, “At Yankee Stadium, President Makes a Pitch for Normalcy; Bush Calls for Americans to Find ‘Balance’ of Caution and Defiance,” *The Washington Post*, October 31, 2001 sec. A.

³² Greg Stoda wrote of another political figure at Yankee games; a figure that, because of his association with New York, was quickly vaulted to national significance in a similar way that Regan was through his association with California and film. Stoda wrote that “[Rudolph Giuliani] was one of baseball’s most prominent faces last autumn...So, too, were the dynastic Yankees from The Bronx in World Series defeat.”

Similarly, as columnists wrote of the soldier Tillman, they linked sport and support of war to national courage and strength. Mortimer Zuckerman of *US News & World Report* wrote of Tillman: “But, every now and then, there’s a moment that gives a face and a name to those who are fighting and puts the patina of courage...” on it.³³ Tillman “put his ideals into action and, in so doing, reminded all of us what those overused terms in sports—‘guts,’ ‘courage,’ and ‘tough’--really mean.”³⁴ Plaschke wrote “the real tackles weren’t the ones made to inspire your team, but to save our neighborhoods.”³⁵ Tillman, who was in Afghanistan, but whose actual present-day experiences were not known, became a construct of sports columnists’ imaginations where the enemy was altogether absent and participation in war equated to courage, honor, and patriotism.

Ultimately, the strength implied in the descriptions of Bush’s throw and columnists’ construction of Tillman, tied sport and tragedy together in memory of 9/11. This memory of the terror and the nation’s reaction to it, however, cleansed both of their violence. The cleansing, moreover, was predicated on a substitution of places and bodies that experienced violence with places and bodies that would allow columnists to use rhetoric of national masculinity, courage, and retaliation.

The substitution, that is, was characteristic of the elegy about which I wrote in chapter two. Briefly, Peter Sacks theorized the elegy to perform a successful work of

See Greg Stoda, “Symbolic Home Run Helped A City's Healing Piazza Embodied September 11 Recovery.” A few writers were invested in using Rudy Giuliani’s rhetoric as a mechanism by which to heal their nations. In “A Nation Challenged: The Mayor” Jennifer Steinhauer wrote of a press conference in which Giuliani argued for a return to normalcy and invoked the Yankees as integral to the return. “At news conferences filled with questions about fear, he still talks about the Yankees, encourages people to go to restaurants and peppers the conversation with joking asides.” Jennifer Steinhauer, “In Uncharted Territory, Giuliani Campaigns Against Fear,” *The New York Times*, October 18, 2001, sec. B.

³³ Mortimer Zuckerman, “A Hero’s Parting Message,” *U.S. News & World Report*, May 10, 2004: 72.

³⁴ Mortimer Zuckerman, “A Hero’s Parting Message,” 72.

³⁵ Bill Plaschke, “The True Meaning of Sacrifice.”

mourning when the bodies of the deceased are substituted with another object, body, or place.³⁶ He argued that funeral ceremonies associated with death perform such work. Hence, Edward Wong of *The New York Times*, writing of the resumption of the baseball season, suggested that “the mourning was far from over, but the healing took a different form last night.”³⁷ William Rhoden of *The New York Times* argued that Yankee Stadium served as “an open-air cathedral,” for those who died on 9/11.³⁸ These columnists substituted the sites of terror, Afghanistan, and the bodies in each for Yankees stadium and the people in it. Similarly, columnists writing of Tillman’s joining the Marines engaged in a discourse of nation characterized by its disembodied-ness and that subverted elegiac conventions. Tillman’s body was absent from columnists’ view when they wrote of him and his experiences in war. Hence, columnists establishing their national identity through Tillman manipulated the convention in the elegy that substitutes the deceased’s body with another object to allow healthy mourning and to celebrate national ideals. Obviously, Tillman was not dead, but his movement from the football field to Afghanistan allowed columnists to substitute his absence with rhetoric of mythological national identity.

All of these columnists who suggested athletes and politicians and the places they were in served the nation revealed the conditions under which masculine, courageous, and revengeful national identities could be established in the context of terror and war. In short, columnists substituted bodies and places that would require reflection on the implications of globalized war with bodies and places that allowed a reassertion of

³⁶ Peter M. Sacks, *The English Elegy: Studies in the Genre from Spenser to Yeats*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996, 299.

³⁷ Edward Wong, “Runs, Hits, and Healing at Stadium,” *The New York Times*, September 26, 2001.

³⁸ William C. Rhoden, “This Time, A Deeper Appreciation,” *The New York Times*, October 24, 2001, sec. S.

patriotism: Ground Zero was where the war was promised, and Yankee Stadium and Tillman was where sports columnists cleansed that promise of its violence. Moreover, sports columnists' practices of bodily and spatial substitutions can be explained through trauma theory. The DSM-IV, the psychiatric handbook used to diagnose mental disorders, defined "efforts to avoid activities, places or people that arouse recollections of the trauma" as a major symptom of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.³⁹

Ultimately, then, there were three ways in which these columns about the Yankees and Tillman engaged in constructing a mythological national identity. First, American heroes were males. Second, these columnists wrote of war without writing of bodies in the actual war. Rather, they wrote of the sports figures in New York or of Tillman, all of whom became vessels through which columnists constructed their imagined nations as male, brave, strong, and just. Third, and as a result, patriotic responses to these males equated to support of a hegemonic nationalism that made the consequences of patriotic fervor and war invisible. Hence, the unthinking patriotism these columnists advocated was also a precursor to public support of a war in which brown bodies and American soldiers—most of whom were poor--would be killed.⁴⁰ The potential consequences and reach of the War on Terror were invisible in all of the above columns. These columnists, like the Bush administration that prohibited soldiers' coffins from being on shown on television, then, constructed what Patricia Zimmerman called the war in the air: where bodies of the injured and dead are avoided by mainstream media and the consequences of war are dislocated from the stories about it.⁴¹

³⁹ American Psychiatric Association, *DSM-IV*, (Washington, fourth edition, DC: 2000), 468.

⁴⁰ See Gavin Smith, "The Ending is Up to You," *Film Comment*, July-August 2004, 22.

⁴¹ Patricia Zimmerman, *States of Emergency: Documentaries, Wars, Democracies*, (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 57.

Interestingly, the columnists in this camp consisted of mainly white males, but also included Diane Pucin, a woman; William Rhoden, a black male; and Edward Wong, an Asian American. While white males were overwhelmingly the ones constructing mythological and masculine national identities in the context of 9/11, they were not the only ones. The construction of a masculine national identity that implicitly supported a war in which mainly colored and classed bodies would die occurred in columns written by a variety of races and both genders. Hence, the inclusion of minority voices in sports pages did not automatically equate to differing points of view regarding national identity. Rather, differing concepts regarding sport's relationship to national identity—despite the raced or gendered identity of the columnist--did.

My assertion about the inclusion of minority identities in major publications, however, should not be read to mean that institutions should not attempt to achieve diversity in race, class, gender, sexuality, or able-bodiedness. It is rather a statement that whiteness is a powerful ideology that many kinds of people buy into and assert.

A Diversion, but not a Mythology

Jason Whitlock of the *Kansas City Star* exposed some of the racism that manifested itself within the nation-state after 9/11. Whitlock summarized his experiences on a plane ride after the Broncos-Chiefs game he attended on September 23, 2001:

I sat next to a man who appeared to be of Arab descent. All sorts of silly, stupid thoughts danced through my pea-sized brain. I actually considered getting off the plane. And then I remembered I would be letting the terrorists win. They want us to change our routines. They want to ruin the pleasures, such as easy travel and sporting events that we take for granted. They want us to bow to our racist

tendencies.⁴²

Whitlock, a black columnist and former collegiate athlete who often takes a well-reasoned, racial lens to his writing, warned against the racial stereotypes that were being constructed and accepted after 9/11. This was the closest columnists came to revealing the structural racism underpinning support of the war. But to attribute his insights regarding race to his skin color only, rather than how it intersects with his experiences in high-level sport and mainstream media, would be an assumption resembling the sort against which he is warning through his story of problematic stereotypes. Still, however, his identity, which includes his blackness, I would imagine, contributed to his consciousness of racism.

To elaborate, Whitlock and Mitch Albom, a white columnist of the *Detroit Free Press*, both argued that the connection between sport and national identity in the context of war was tenuous. Whitlock wrote:

While our government began its retaliatory campaign against terrorism, I sat inside Denver's Invesco Field at Mile High and watched the Broncos slap our Chiefs. I made a point not to look at the press-box televisions showing details of our bombing of Afghanistan. I didn't want to be updated. I wanted to escape for a few hours. Sports played its role beautifully Sunday...The marching orders we've been given since Sept. 11 have been rather simple. President Bush and his staff told us that we were going to conduct a long, bloody war against terrorism and that we must have the courage to go on with our lives...We can't be controlled by fear. Osama bin Laden and his terror network want to control America with fear.

⁴² Jason Whitlock. "We Can't be Afraid to Watch and Enjoy Sports," *Kansas City Star*, October 8, 2001.

Fear is their only real weapon.⁴³

Unlike his counterparts, Whitlock did not use sport as a means to tout war or unthinking support of it. Rather, he suggested sport had a place in everyday citizens' routines, but that place was quite separate from the War on Terror. Similarly, Albom summarized a van trip he took from Detroit to Cleveland to attend the Lions-Browns game on September 23, 2001. He wrote:

Normally, I fly to games. But 'normal' disappeared 13 days ago when terrorists captured the skies for one awful morning and threw America over a cliff... The terror mongers had nudged most of us off our paths. This was how they nudged me. I was in a van for a four-hour commute.⁴⁴

Here, the concept of normalcy was destabilized by terror, and, he argued, sport did not re-establish that normalcy. He continued to write that "on the all-news radio stations they spoke of America's coming military action and Afghanistan's refusal to turn over Osama bin Laden. For the first time in a long time, however, we did not immediately turn on the news."⁴⁵ Like Whitlock, then, Albom subverted the conventions of the discourse of tragedy and distinguished between sport, national identity, patriotism, and support of the war. The remainder of his column deconstructed the rituals at the game meant to represent patriotism while arguing that national stability and strength was not associated with them:

[O]ur stability comes from our Monday-through-Sunday schedules. Later on Sunday, the NFL would turn up the volume. It would have special pre-game ceremonies and a united country singing 'America the Beautiful.' There would

⁴³ Jason Whitlock. "We Can't be Afraid to Watch and Enjoy Sports."

⁴⁴ Mitch Albom, "Road to Recovery Takes Unlikely Turn," *Detroit Free Press*, September 23, 2001.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

be footage from the World Trade Center rubble, heroes, victims, smoke, fire, tears. Moving, yes. But I will remember a different moment, a moment, during our impromptu Sunday trip, where the conversation took a rest and Kenny Burrell was softly playing his guitar over the speakers. Justin was leafing through the *New York Times* magazine. Gene had one finger curled on the bottom of the steering wheel, his jaw chomping with gum. A ladybug had found its way into the car and landed on Bob's arm. Bob gently rolled down the window and let the ladybug out to freedom.⁴⁶

To Whitlock and Albom, everyday people's return to their routines was a sign of recovery from the terror. In making these claims while referencing the War on Terror in their work, both columnists implied that sport was a diversion from the realities of war, not a proper means to support it; that a return to normalcy was not predicated on sport or rhetoric of strength, retaliation, or virility. Specifically, both columnists argued that sport had nothing to do with national identity. These columnists, in short, not only resisted using sport to construct a mythological, masculine national identity. They also deconstructed the narratives that did so, and in the process, potentially served as knowledge producers for their readers, teaching them that the connection between sport and nation was tenuous at best.

A year after the terror, similarly, Christine Brennan of *USA Today* challenged the way baseball was linked to cultural memories of patriotism in the context of 9/11. She wrote:

If you listen to the sports talk shows, you know that baseball and Sept. 11 have somehow become linked... Even though last year's World Series gave

⁴⁶ Ibid.

the nation's sports fans something to enjoy in the days and weeks after the terrorist attacks, I see absolutely no relationship between baseball and Sept. 11, 2002...What facet of baseball is so redeeming and worthwhile to deserve this kind of patriotic kinship with Sept. 11?⁴⁷

That Whitlock is black, Albom white, and Brennan a white woman, is of utmost importance to underscore in arguing that resisting national mythology and whiteness is a matter of standpoint, not skin color or gender. Just as male columnists of color and women columnists in the first camp supported national mythologies through sport, white, black, and women columnists resisted that mythology here. Hence, while it is clear and obvious that including all minorities in social, cultural, and political institutions is necessary in achieving social justice, so too is including different points of view regarding race, nation, gender, and sexuality. More specifically, the inclusion of racial, gendered, sexed, and/or classed diversity in institutions does not equate to diversity in standpoints regarding identity, nation, and/or social justice. Both kinds of diversity are necessary to manifest true diversity, however.

There was, too, a sub-group of columnists in this camp that focused on how athletes served other citizens in a time of need. In so doing, this sub-group dislocated sport from the national identity and resisted the mythology of the first camp. For instance, referring to Peal Harbor and Pete Rozelle's decision to allow the games to continue just days after President Kennedy's assassination, Paul Attner of *The Sporting News* quoted Jets head coach as saying "If (people) want a diversion, [sports isn't it,] go to church, pray."⁴⁸ He then listed the many relatives of athletes in the NFL who were

⁴⁷ Christine Brennan, "Thoughts of 9/11 Override Baseball," *USA Today*, September 11, 2002, sec. 3.

⁴⁸ Paul Attner, "The League Will go on, but so Will its Grief," *The Sporting News*, September 24, 2001.

harmed or nearly killed during the terrorist attacks. Attner continued, specifying that many NFL teams including but not limited to the Redskins, Giants, Eagles, 49ers, Titans, and Steelers donated blood, attended services, and/or visited victims and servicemen in the days following the attacks. Similarly, Kepner wrote a column about the first game the Mets played after the attacks, resisted the construction of athletes as national heroes, and also illustrated the potential activism inherent in sports columns. Rather than focusing on hits or runs, he wrote that Mets Manager Bobby Valentine “had not slept much before arriving in Pittsburgh today. For the second day in a row, he had stayed at Shea [Stadium in New York] until 3 a.m., directing volunteers who were loading relief supplies for victims of the World Trade Center attacks. ‘It was my diversion,’ Valentine said.”⁴⁹ Throughout the column, Kepner illustrated the general malaise among players and thereby showed that athletics did not serve a nation of strength and virility. In later columns about the Mets, Kepner resisted the tendency to link sport to a healing process and even suggested that the city and nation may not heal from the terror. He also highlighted that the Mets donated pay and time to victims of the attack.⁵⁰

These two columnists, then, showed that sport was of little value to the nation in the context of 9/11. But they also emphasized the humanity of the people in professional sport and showed that sport could serve nation if the athletes volunteered for the Red Cross, visited the injured, donated money, and/or time. The potential power in such columns should not be overlooked. Just as those columns that constructed a virile and revenge-seeking nation through sport wielded substantial power, those columns that

⁴⁹ Tyler Kepner, “Patriotism Does not Erase the Trepidation,” *The New York Times*, September 18, 2001, sec. C.

⁵⁰ See Tyler Kepner, “Emotional Return Home for the Mets,” *The New York Times*, September 21, 2001, sec. C.

emphasized service and donation as exemplary responses to terror potentially moved citizens to help others when in need.

Collectively, this camp of columnists argued that sport could not return the nation to normalcy. This camp also played an activist role by resisting mythological narratives about nation, sport, and war. In the resistance, too, was the potential to reach readers who would otherwise buy into the hegemonic and mythological national identities the first camp of columnists constructed.

While the 2001 season ended, the War on Terror has not. Eventually, columnists began to dislocate sport and Tillman from their national identity and in the process question the effectiveness of the Bush administration's approach to the War on Terror.

Counter Narrative: Making the War Visible

Rick Reilly of *Sports Illustrated* confronted the mythological national identity and clean War on Terror his counterparts in the first camp and federal officials constructed. He did this in writing about soldiers playing sport in Afghanistan and acknowledging that people were dying in the War on Terror.

Reilly represented American soldiers in Afghanistan playing baseball. Chronicling how the Delta Company Desperados built a baseball field for entertainment during down-time, Reilly contrasted Yankees games with the games the soldiers played in Afghanistan. He wrote that "instead of New York cops providing security, they have infantry posted on all sides, which is what you need in a war with no front against an enemy who doesn't care about saving his own flesh, only splattering yours."⁵¹ These baseball players/soldiers were in a war-zone, experiencing the violence of war, not in

⁵¹ Rick Reilly, "War Games," *Hate Mail from Cheerleaders*, New York: *Sports Illustrated* Book, 2007, 314.

New York playing games nine miles away from the terror and across the ocean from the war. Reilly then brought to mainstream media knowledge of the war's violence through the same kind of people that were repressing it in other his counterparts' columns: men on a baseball field:

Since the war began in March, 10 soldiers have committed suicide and another 15 deaths are being investigated as possible suicides. Hopelessness comes with this kind of conflict: You can't quite figure out how it can end, but guys are getting sent home in body bags in between. More American soldiers have been killed since President Bush declared an end to major combat operations on May 1 than died in the war itself.⁵²

Here Reilly showed that deaths were occurring in the war, thereby challenging his counterparts' construction of it and the hegemonic nationalism that underpinned it. Reilly also illustrated that more deaths had occurred since President Bush, dressed in Air Force gear, descended on the USS Abraham Lincoln to offer a speech with a banner 'Mission Accomplished' as the backdrop than prior to this moment. Rather overtly, too, Reilly criticized of the war's goals, suggesting that there was no end-point, but young men were dying anyway. Hence, Reilly resisted the discourse of national identity characterizing his counterparts' columns that cleansed the war of its violence. Unlike his counterparts--and his predecessors, as we saw in chapter three, when I wrote of columns about Ali and his refusal to enlist for Vietnam--Reilly used sport to criticize the President and the War.

⁵² Ibid., 315.

One year after Reilly wrote his column, he would find allies among other sports columnists. On April 22, 2004, Pat Tillman's unit was ordered, against their wishes, to tow a broken Humvee along the southeastern border of Afghanistan. (The orders came from a commander at a base far from where the platoon was). When the platoon came through a rocky ravine, fire came down upon them from the two canyon walls above. Confusion ensued. At the end of fight Pat Tillman, American hero through whom the war without casualty was partially constructed, lay dead, a victim of friendly fire.

Immediately after news of Tillman's death was relayed to the Pentagon, however, officials manufactured a press release that said:

The former Arizona Cardinals safety Pat Tillman was posthumously awarded the Silver Star for gallantry on the battlefield for leading his Army Rangers unit to the rescue of comrades caught in an ambush. Tillman was shot and killed in Afghanistan on April 22 while fighting 'without regard for his personal safety.'⁵³

The report implied that Tillman's death resulted from enemy fire and his courage. As with the first pitch of Game three and the 'Mission Accomplished' banner, national officials worked to control the narrative of the War on Terror by manipulating Tillman's story to fit the themes they had already scripted for it. Their manipulation of Tillman's story extended beyond the press release, though. Tillman's fellow platoon mates, including Russell Baer, a friend to Pat and his brother Kevin, were told to keep

⁵³ Steve Coll, "Barrage of Bullets Drowned Our Cries of Comrades," *The Washington Post*, May 1, 2005, sec A.; Frank Rich, "It's All Newsweek's Fault," *The New York Times*, May 22, 2005: 4,13, Dave Zirin, "Pat Tillman, Our Hero," *U.S. News & World Report*, May 10, 2004. <http://www.proquest.com>.

knowledge of the fratricide repressed.⁵⁴ Marines in Tillman's unit were ordered to burn his uniform and body armor. And ultimately, an "initial investigator's report" was "buried and redone after he recommended that 'certain leaders be investigated' for 'gross negligence.'"⁵⁵

Frank Rich of *The New York Times* argued that the Pentagon and Bush administration did not just attempt a cover-up through Tillman. (Although Rich's column was not a sports column, it was a column written about this event. Hence, I include it here). The Pentagon also attempted to recreate a version of the national identity established in sports stadiums after 9/11. According to him the Bush administration went out of its way "script a narrative" of Tillman and the war that would support the "myths" of national identity.⁵⁶ Rich wrote that "...Mary Tillman [Pat's mother], was offended to discover that even President Bush wanted a cameo role in this screenplay: she told *The Post* that he had offered to tape a memorial to her son for a Cardinals game that would be televised shortly before Election Day. (She said no)."⁵⁷ Despite her refusal, however, Bush taped the memorial and it was aired during the game. Given the precedent set by his appearance at game three of the Yankees Series in 2001, Bush's video that played in Cardinal Stadium worked to fit the story of Iraq and Afghanistan back into the realm of national strength and resiliency.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ See Steve Coll, "Barrage of Bullets Drowned Our Cries of Comrades," (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2005) 181-199; 182; Dave Zirin, "Pat Tillman, Our Hero," *U.S. News & World Report*, May 10, 2004, p 72; Frank Rich, "It's All Newsweek's Fault," *New York Times*, May 22, 2005, sec 4, p 13; Gary Smith, "Remember his Name," *Sports Illustrated*, September 5, 2006, 88-101; Terry McDonnell, "Brothers," *Sports Illustrated*, September 5, 2006.

⁵⁵ Gary Smith, "Remember his Name."

⁵⁶ Frank Rich, "It's All Newsweek's Fault."

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Gary Smith, 100.

However, columnists chronicled Tillman's experiences in Afghanistan and Iraq as a means to resist the mythological national identity Bush worked to create. In writing of Tillman's death, Steve Coll of *The Washington Post* maintained the soldier's status as a hero, but deconstructed the national mythology established through him. Coll wrote:

Myths shaped Pat Tillman's reputation, and mystery shrouded his death...Many Americans mourned his death last April 22 [2004] and embraced his sacrifice as a rare example of courage and national service...The records show that Tillman fought bravely...They also show that his supervisors exaggerated his actions and burnished his legend in public.⁵⁹

Coll chronicled how the Pentagon's press release concerning Tillman's death knowingly misled the public because he was "the Army's most famous volunteer on terrorism...[who], for many Americans [captured] the best aspects of the country's post-September 11 character."⁶⁰

Rick Morrissey of *The Chicago Tribune* characterized the cover-up, not the death, a tragedy of national proportions. According to him, Tillman, like many soldiers, was a hero and the true "dark side of the Tillman tragedy [wa]s the danger of his sacrifice being shaped and twisted for other purposes."⁶¹ He then criticized the unthinking patriotism that sports columnists supported in the aftermath of 9/11 and in the process re-framed Tillman's story as one about the current War on Terror. He wrote, "nobody wants [Tillman's death] to become a tribute to the NFL's sense of patriotism, the way many of

⁵⁹ Steve Coll, "Barrage of Bullets Drowned Our Cries of Comrades," 181-2. Although his work initially appeared in the News section of *The Washington Post*, Mike Lupica selected Steve Coll's "Barrage of Bullets Drowned Out Cries of Comrades" for inclusion in the annual version of *Best American Sports Writing*.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 191.

⁶¹ Rick Morrissey, "Well-known Soldier a Hero, Plain and Simple," *Chicago Tribune*, May 31, 2004, sec. S.

the post-9/11 ballpark ceremonies by Major League Baseball became” ones.⁶² Similarly, Terry McDonnell, editor of *Sports Illustrated*, introduced a commemorative issue on Tillman and 9/11 by underscoring the problematic mythology that sports columnists constructed in the aftermath of 9/11.⁶³ He wrote that after 9/11, “[t]he games resumed, and the nation came together around sports. Stadiums became places to find strength; what had been diversion now felt like ritual. It was tribal. We were going to war.” But McDonnell did not stop there. He also worked to deconstruct the Bush administration’s narratives of the war in the air. He wrote that “[a]s of September 11, [2005] at least 272 members of the U.S. military have died in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Uzbekistan...In Iraq at least 2,643 members of the U.S. military have died since the beginning of March 2003.”⁶⁴ Both of these writers told the story of Tillman’s death and his actual experiences in war to reframe the way 9/11 and the nation-state’s response to it was remembered. That is, through Tillman, they were working to un-link memory of 9/11 from sport and tie it to the death that occurred when a mismanaged war was supported through an unthinking patriotism. Hence, these writers overtly criticized the Bush administration, the War on Terror, and sports columns from the first camp as they wrote of Tillman’s death. They ultimately created a counter-narrative to the national mythology traditional of sports pages in the context of any war, and that was prevalent in many columns just one year earlier.

Similarly, Gary Smith wrote a feature article that recorded Tillman’s thoughts concerning the distinction between Afghanistan and Iraq: “‘This war is so f----- illegal’

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Hence, the commemorative issue of *Sports Illustrated* clearly was geared at reframing the way sports and 9/11 had been tied in cultural memory. Like Morrissey’s column, though, this reframing occurred through memory of Tillman. On the cover was Tillman in fatigues, and the issue’s title was “Remember his Name.”

⁶⁴ Terry McDonnell, 1.

Pat said of the Iraq War.”⁶⁵ Smith wrote that Tillman sat upon a bunker, “11 days into the invasion of a country that had hatched none of the 9/11 terrorists” and realized that he was in a war that he did not sign up for.⁶⁶ Smith dislocated the current war in Iraq from the myths associated with Tillman and in the process suggested that the War on Terror was two wars, the one in Iraq being illegal.⁶⁷ Hence, Smith remembered Tillman’s actual experiences in Afghanistan and Iraq, and the nation-state’s attempt to cover them up, rather than substituting his body with rhetoric of national mythology. Smith also worked to reframe how Tillman and 9/11 would be remembered. He suggested that 9/11 should be remembered through the terror of 9/11 and the actual wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, not New York, the Yankees, or mythologies of Tillman.

Collectively, this last camp of columnists situated soldiers’ bodies in war. In the process, they worked to reframe the way their counterparts remembered 9/11 and Tillman. This re-framing also permitted a criticism of the current War on Terror. In chronicling Tillman’s experience in a foreign war, they illustrated that the patriotic and vengeful national identity constructed in sports stadiums and columns after 9/11 had global implications, and dire consequences for even the most ‘American’ of heroes. And in writing of men who died, these columnists resisted the construction of the war without casualty. They did not suggest bodies on an American field of competition or in their imaginations represented the nation or its reaction to terror; they also refused to fulfill the conventions in the discourse of tragedy that cleansed the war of its violence.

The final two camps of columnists, too, represented a major shift in the role sports columnists would play in writing of national identity through sport. Rather than

⁶⁵ Qtd. Smith 91.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

emphasizing national officials' appearances at sporting events as meaningful to their nations, the columnists of the last two camps suggested such pageantry worked to construct problematic notions of national identity. The final camp, moreover, challenged not only the mythological construction of nation that was traditional of sports columns written in the context of tragedy, but also the nation-state's officials. As such, some sports columnists were now involved in contesting with official discourses of national identity, and in the process, engaged in an overtly political discussion.

In chapter one, I argued that in the context of the niche-marketed public sphere, news of the nation is more often garnered from news outlets directed at specific political standpoints, such as Fox News, rather than network stations, mainly because it is available at all times of the day.⁶⁸ Consider too, that a market segmentation study performed by *The Washington Post* found that readers of mainstream, national news who were interested in all kinds of news had a strong preference for reading stories about sports when they went to the newspaper. This was partially because sports coverage seemed more balanced than national news coverage in the paper.⁶⁹ Also consider that the same study found that thirty percent of its own readership identified itself as Republican: the party that supported President Bush's re-election in 2004, which ran on a platform of supporting the War on Terror.⁷⁰ In short, sports columnists who were nationally-syndicated but who had a home at papers like *The Washington Post*, *The Kansas City Star*, *The New York Times*, or the *Los Angeles Times*, and/or who appeared in nationally-distributed outlets like *Sports Illustrated*, *The Sporting News*, or ESPN, reached a wide

⁶⁸ See Ralph Reed, "Divided America? Don't Mind the Gap," *The American Enterprise*, October-November, 2004.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ See Washington Post segmentation study.

variety of political standpoints, where cable news stations did not. Likewise, columnists from the two extreme camps this chapter identifies appeared in *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *USA Today*, and *Sports Illustrated* at different times. All of the above suggests that mainstream sports columns, in the era of niche marketed cable news, collectively garner a more politically diverse audience than those organizations much of culture goes to for what is called hard news on the nation.⁷¹ Hence, these stories regarding 9/11, Tillman, and the War on Terror, as they gathered sports audiences, were also potentially reaching people of disparate political views. They were clearly involved in a contestation for cultural memory of 9/11 and its relationship to the current War on Terror. The existence of the diverging standpoints, too, potentially changed some readers' standpoint from supporting the nation-state's approach to war. In such cases, the last two camps of columnists potentially played the role of knowledge-producers as they illustrated how power and whiteness were both supported through mythological uses of sport. This knowledge-producing role is the very reason academics should study sport: Some of dominant culture's notions of identity, nation, and power, may be shaped, contested for, and/or reified there.

In this chapter, too, we saw women columnists and male columnists of color supporting the mythological, masculine national identity that would justify a war in which mainly colored bodies would be killed. While those privileging whiteness were more likely to be white and male, it was not uncommon for white males to criticize the nation-state, and subsequently confront whiteness. Whiteness was therefore supported

⁷¹ Clearly, these columnists benefitted from a marketing strategy among these outlets and their sports sections catering to the wide variety of political standpoints. This marketing strategy does not negate the potential activist role these columnists may play. They also worked in a cultural arena viewed as balanced and subsequently consumed by both liberal and conservative standpoints.

and resisted by people of diverse backgrounds based on standpoint, not just raced, classed, gendered, or sexed identity.

Finally, all of the columnists in this chapter revealed that representations of the body and place together shape cultural perceptions of national identity when made in the context of tragedy. As columnists wrote of the War on Terror without situating soldiers' bodies in Afghanistan or Iraq, they supported a national mythology. In contrast, as they situated soldiers' bodies in those same places, they illustrated the consequences of going to and engaging in war. Continuing on this theme of situating bodies in place in the next chapter, I examine how sports columnists used cultural memories of 9/11 and New York to situate Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans, and the black body in their national identities and memories.

Chapter 6: Patrons of the Saints

On August 27, 2005, Hurricane Katrina, then a category one storm, rumbled across the Gulf of Mexico. Twenty-four hours later, it reached category five status and neared the Mississippi delta region. Not a single federal official warned of its potential danger.

When the storm hit land on August 30th, many New Orleans citizens--a majority of them black and impoverished--sought shelter in the Superdome, home of the New Orleans Saints. As late as September 4th, the George W. Bush administration had yet to send federal assistance to evacuate the dome despite that the survivors, by then, were hungry, scared, and surrounded by human waste. The slow response of the Bush administration, however, was indicative of federal politicians' historic neglect of that region's black and poor: In *Development Arrested* Clyde Woods illustrated that beginning with the slave trade and continuing to the current era, white plantation and farm owners, coupled with federal policies that funded for research of machinery that reduced the necessity for manual labor, exploited and also made the black laborer obsolete. The region, as a result, has remained impoverished.¹ Similarly, in "The Broken Contract" Michael Ignatieff wrote that politicians of the nation-state have historically denied primary citizenship status to the black and impoverished citizens of New Orleans. "Public officials simply didn't bother to cross the social distances that divided them from the true poverty of the New Orleans population."²

¹ Clyde Woods, *Development Arrested*, (Haymarket Books, 2000).

² Michael Ignatieff, "The Broken Contract," *The New York Times Magazine*, September 25, 2005, p 6.

In writing of Hurricane Katrina, sports columnists initially revealed the nation-state's neglect of the black and impoverished in New Orleans. However, when the NFL season began, only two weeks after the storm, a significant portion of columnists suggested the New Orleans Saints paid a service to New Orleans and the nation. Using rhetoric of national unification, these columnists suggested the nation and/or region was represented through sport and in the process avoided discussion of race and class oppression exposed through the tragedy. Interestingly, some of the columnists using such rhetoric were female and/or of color, again reinforcing my argument that whiteness is a standpoint, not a condition of race, gender, sexuality, or class. There was one other camp of columnists, though. This camp demanded that the black impoverished be remembered as part of Katrina's story and the nation-state's responsibility. This camp not only refused to embrace its counterparts' mythological construction of national identity, but also confronted white privilege in the sports pages that traditionally privileged that identity. These columnists engaged in a contest for how the black impoverished would be remembered not only as part of Katrina's story, but the dominant national identity as well. The contest, again, marked a robust debate about race and class in mainstream sports media.

The Tragedy in the Dome and the Myths Afterward

In writing of Katrina, many columnists constructed the Superdome as a metonym for the suffering of New Orleans citizens whom the Bush administration, like other administrations before it, neglected. Stephan Fatsis of *The Wall Street Journal* wrote that in the Superdome structural poverty and racism were clearly visible, and that "Katrina

ha[d] turned the Saints' stadium, the Superdome, into a national symbol of squalor."³

David Weiss of *The New York Daily News* wrote that "the Superdome was turned into a relief center and virtually left condemned."⁴ Michael Silver, a feature writer for *Sports Illustrated*, wrote that "[a]ll the stadiums and arenas, the houses of glory, had been turned inside out into houses of suffering."⁵ The Superdome was, according to Gary Smith of *Sports Illustrated* "now the site of riots, murders and rapes, even an apparent suicide by a man who couldn't bare another moment of the stench."⁶ Clifton Brown of *The New York Times* quoted Bill Curl, director of public relations for the Superdome as saying "[b]ecause of Katrina, everybody in the world saw the evacuees in this building, and there was a lot of tragedy inside this building."⁷

Collectively, these columnists constructed the Superdome as the site of national tragedy. However, they did not label the storm the tragedy. Rather, the tragedy was the suffering that occurred within the dome and the consequences of racial and economic oppression that mainstream audiences witnessed. In short, these columnists redefined the Superdome's cultural meaning from the festive location of Super Bowls to a visible trope for failed American ideals. Sport columnists, then, served to deconstruct the national mythology of achieved democracy that it often supported.

By the NFL's opening day, however, a majority of the citizens who had been left to toil in the Superdome were transferred to two other sports stadiums—the Astrodome in Houston, Texas and the Alamodome in San Antonio, Texas. Still, with the season

³ Stephan Fatsis, "Football's Saints Ponder Whether to Relocate," *The Wall Street Journal*, September 8, 2005.

⁴ David Weiss, "After the Storm," *New York Daily News*, August 13, 2006.

⁵ Michael Silver, "The Saints Come Through," *Sports Illustrated*: September 19, 2005: 94.

⁶ Gary Smith, "Dark Days," *Sports Illustrated*, September 9, 2006.

⁷ Qtd, Clifton Brown, "With Bush Available, Saints Options Abound," *The New York Times*, April 29, 2006, sec. D.

underway, columnists used sport, and specifically the New Orleans Saints, to pay a service to national identity. Michael Wilbon of *The Washington Post* wrote “‘America’s Team’ is playing tonight, you know. No, I’m not talking about the Cowboys. The Saints are the team so many of us root for now.”⁸ Dave Anderson of *The New York Times* wrote that “[w]hether the Dallas Cowboys like it or not, the Saints are now America’s Team, at least until they can go home again.”⁹ An editorial in *The New York Times* argued that the Saints were now “everybody’s favorite team.”¹⁰ Anderson wrote of Jim Haslett, Saints’ coach, who said: “The best thing we can do as a football team to keep New Orleans alive is win games...The best thing to keep the city and the Gulf Coast region out there is win games.”¹¹ Silver wrote that the Saints were “were the torchbearers for a city and a region.”¹² He later suggested of the Saints’ first game that they had the ability to “heal a reeling nation.”¹³

As columnists suggested the Saints were America’s team and ascribed healing qualities to its players, they imbued athletes’ bodies, not those of New Orleans citizens in sports stadiums across the nation-state, with meaning for how Katrina would be situated in their nations and national memories. Only when the bodies associated with New Orleans entered places that would *not* draw attention to the nation-state’s failures did they become representative of these sports columnists’ construction of national identity, Hurricane Katrina, and/or New Orleans. In contrast, people still in the Alamodome and

⁸ Michael Wilbon, “It’s Not a Rivalry if the Other Team Never Wins,” *The Washington Post*, September 19, 2005, sec. E.

⁹ Dave Anderson, “The Saints Are Now America’s Team,” *The New York Times*, September 15, 2005, sec. D.

¹⁰ *The New York Times*, “Up From the Country, Patron Saints of the Road,” September 18, 2005.

¹¹ Dave Anderson, “The Saints Are Now America’s Team.”

¹² Michael Silver, “The Saints Come Through.”

¹³ *Ibid.*

Astrodome, people in places that would represent the nation-state's failures, were substituted with NFL players playing games in Carolina and later, New York.

In telling the story of Katrina, then, columnists used Saints players to re-construct a mythological nation. They thus fulfilled the convention in the discourse of tragedy that substitutes the places and people that experienced tragedy with those of sport. One of the ways columnists established their mythological nation was to represent the nation through athletes and servicemen who had, since 9/11, been established as serving a patriotic national identity. The first game the Saints played in 2005 was against the Carolina Panthers on September 11th. Their second game, a 'home game,' was played against the New York Giants at Meadowlands Stadium in New Jersey. Columnists used these temporal and spatial connections to 9/11 in writing of the Saints' service to their nations in the context of Hurricane. Silver wrote that "by kickoff Sunday-after a standing ovation for the New Orleans players from the crowd of nearly 73,000, a prayer in remembrance of Sept. 11 and an F-16 flyover-the Saints were determined to make an immediate statement."¹⁴ Lisa Olson of *The New York Daily News*, in an otherwise astute and complex column, associated 9/11 with this tragedy while highlighting the heroics of "firemen and policemen" in both.¹⁵ Anderson evoked memories of 9/11. He quoted New Orleans wide receiver Joe Horn, and raised him to the same realm of mythic American hero that the Yankees, firemen, and policemen were lifted to in the wake of 9/11. Of the New York fans Horn said:

They feel our heart, they feel our pain. We're supposed to be the new America's Team. That's fine because that's what America is all about, bonding

¹⁴ Ibid, 95.

¹⁵ Lisa Olson, "A Story of Hope, But There's Much More to Do," *The New York Daily News*, January 21 2007.

together...When Sept. 11th happened, my heart went out to everyone in New York.' He continued, remembering that the Saints were the first visiting team at Meadowlands Stadium when the 2001 N.F.L. schedule resumed after 9/11. "I wanted to do everything I could to help them: the firemen, the policemen, the people who lost their families...."¹⁶

In these columns, the Saints, like the Yankees after 9/11, were aligned with military might, servicemen, and national unity. Moreover, the service-people lifted to heroic status by these columnists had been saturated with cultural meaning since 9/11 to refer to national strength and virility. In touting these identities as representative of the region and nation's patriotism, strength, and unity, however, these columnists avoided discussion of racial and class oppression.

This patriotic national identity was further reasserted as Silver used the coincidental date of 9/11 for the Saints' first game to suggest sport paid a service to the same sort of nation it did after 9/11. He recorded the Saints victory over the Carolina Panthers first by emphasizing that the game took place on "the fourth anniversary of the Sept. 11 attacks...the underdog Saints stunned Carolina."¹⁷ He then quoted Horn: "Horn said... 'Football ain't nothin' compared to somebody who lost a loved one or who doesn't have a house to go back to, but...we're representing a region that's resilient as hell."¹⁸ Silver continued to write that "many of the men [responsible for the Saints' win felt] that they had in some small way helped the healing process back home."¹⁹ The Saints' return to and win on the football field thus served Silver's version of a New Orleans region that

¹⁶ Dave Anderson, "The Saints Are Now America's Team."

¹⁷ Michael Silver, "The Saints Come Through."

¹⁸ Ibid., 98.

¹⁹ Ibid., 94.

was resilient and in the process of healing. Such rhetoric resembled that of columnists' after 9/11, and the place of New Orleans was constructed as returning to normalcy or resiliency in the absence of the people that initially met under the Superdome roof after the storm.

The rhetoric reminiscent of columnists' reaction to 9/11 did not stop there. In the end-of-the-year *Sports Illustrated* issue, Silver again wrote of Horn. The final paragraph of his column consisted of an interior monologue reminiscent of the nationalistic phrase 'Let's roll.' Silver wrote that Horn must be thinking to himself: "Y'all take care of each other. We gonna roll through this, no doubt."²⁰ In the aftermath of 9/11 the Bush administration adopted phrase 'let's roll,' which was to celebrate the heroes of 9/11. It was a phrase originally used by Todd Beamer, a passenger on Flight 93 who helped to down the plane in Shanksville, Pennsylvania. Horn and sport in general served Silver's construction of a masculine and resilient New Orleans and nation. Overwhelmingly absent from this construction of New Orleans and nation, however, was race and class. Hence, Silver constructed Katrina's tragedy to exist in damage to the region only, and closed that story through a Saints' victory.

Columnists further connected 9/11 to Katrina through sport and suggested football games served to lift the region's spirits. Silver wrote that "four years ago it was the NFL players who had seemed most in touch with the mood of the nation rejecting...the naive idea that an instant return to football fields would hasten the healing process."²¹ He then argued that the Saints engaged in "a triumph" and subsequently allowed a healing.²² Similarly, Skip Wood, a columnist for *USA Today*, wrote that the Panther fans on 9/11

²⁰ Michael Silver, "Athletes and Katrina," *Sports Illustrated*, December 12, 2005, p 108.

²¹ Ibid., 108.

²² Ibid., 108.

cheered the Saints while also remembering “the terrorist attacks of exactly four years ago.”²³ Bill Reiter of *The Kansas City Star* argued that “a storm can nearly rip the soul of a city...and a sports team can help repair that.”²⁴ Marc Narducci of *The Philadelphia Enquirer* wrote of the game in New York: “The spirit, camaraderie and patriotism were seen everywhere--from the Giants Stadium parking lot to the field in a football game disguised as a fund-raiser. After Hurricane Katrina’s destruction, the games still go on, but this one had a special spirit.”²⁵ The resiliency and patriotism these columnists suggested sport permitted was yet another example of what Bill Nichols called disembodied knowledge, where rhetoric of the national ideal takes place in the absence of minority bodies.²⁶ Such columns made Katrina a story for “Sunday—a feel-good story to warm the hearts and wrap the flag around.”²⁷ Moreover, a Saints game could not serve a region nearly void of citizens, a significant portion of which was without means to watch televisions because they were in other domed structures in Texas. Those unable to watch the games were not included in the nations to which the Saints served a patriotic identity.²⁸ In a very real sense, then, these columnists were organizing their nation’s memory of the storm to privilege those reading and watching its stories unfold; those people who were not the black and impoverished that met in the Superdome only weeks earlier. They also reasserted the hegemony of whiteness, which was partially to blame

²³ Skip Wood, “Saints Win for Empty New Orleans,” *USA Today*, September 12, 2005.

²⁴ Bill Reiter, “Marching Home,” *Kansas City Star*, August, 2006.

²⁵ Marc Narducci, “For Saints ‘Home’ Opener, a Special Spirit Prevails,” *The Philadelphia Enquirer*, September 20, 2005, sec. sports.

²⁶ See Lauren Berlant, *The Queen of America Goes to Washington City*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997); Bill Nichols, “Getting to Know You,” *Theorizing Documentary*, ed Michael Renov, (Routledge: New York), 176.

²⁷ Tim Dahlberg, “Saints a Feel-Good Story for Now, but Future Not Bright for Their Fans,” *The New York Daily News*, September 21, <http://www.lexisnexis.com>.

²⁸ Sturken wrote that “debates about what counts as cultural memory are also debates about who gets to participate in creating national meaning. When people participate in the production of cultural memory..they do so both in opposition to and in concert with a concept of the nation.” Marita Sturken, *Tangled Memories*, 13.

for the systemic racial and economic neglect of New Orleans' black and poor in the first place. Such constructions of the storm and the nation through it continued in columnists' writing of the Saints' first game in the Superdome, nearly a year later.

When the Saints Came Home: The Normal Economics of it All

When the Saints returned to the Superdome in 2006, columnists wrote of national officials and servicemen to suggest the region was returning to normalcy. Ian O'Connor of *USA Today* wrote of New Orleans Police Chief Eddie Compass standing next to Presidents Bill Clinton and George H.W. Bush at the coin-toss for the opening of the Superdome. Compass said "The Saints are God-sent to our city...We're trying to get back to a normal life, and there's nothing more normal in New Orleans than watching the Saints."²⁹ Israel Gutierrez, a Hispanic columnist for *The Miami Herald*, wrote of Presidents Bush and Clinton's attendance and argued that the return to the Dome said something "inconceivably, can't-get-your-arms-around-it huge. But the fact that an event that significant can be back in New Orleans, that says normal."³⁰ Both of these columnists suggested the event, not the citizens' return, was indication that New Orleans was approaching normalcy. Hence, these columnists' nations were constructed as normal when males associated with the nation-state, none of which were black, Hispanic, or impoverished, appeared on the field of play—or at least, their representations of the field of play. Sport served to return these columnists' nations to a patriotic national identity, what these columnists labeled the 'normal' condition of their nations.

²⁹ Ian O'Connor, "Saints, fans made to feel like Giants in N.Y." *USA Today*, September 20, 2005, www.lexisnexis.com.

³⁰ Israel Gutierrez, "For One Night, New Orleans can be 'Normal,'" *The Miami Herald*, September 20, 2006, <http://lexis.com>.

Moreover, columnists engaged in a contestation for how the storm would be remembered in their nations. For instance, Brown wrote: “Some people said, ‘[the Superdome is] such a terrible memory, how can we rebuild it? I say, How can we not?’”³¹ Nancy Armour, national award winning writer for the Associated Press, suggested that the options for the Superdome were between rebuilding and destroying it. Either option would “help heal the memories of the pain and suffering that occurred there.”³² Mary Foster, also of the Associated Press, wrote that the Saints’ return to the Superdome would “erase some of the bitter memories that the Superdome had come to symbolize—the images of misery and suffering of a city plundered by the storm.”³³ Despite Foster’s work in helping find homes for pets Katrina left abandoned, she was ready for memories of the tragedy to be erased. These columnists advocated for an erasure of the memories of racial and economic inequality that manifested when black and impoverished people were left to toil in the Superdome. As a result, they argued that the Superdome, rife with cultural memory regarding failure of American ideals, had to be refurbished or razed in order to deliver pleasure to sport that had been disrupted with knowledge of social inequity.

The desire to repress memories of past inequities, however, was one that equated to the avoidance of black impoverished citizens, or a return to the same media aesthetics and political strategies that existed prior to the storm.³⁴ For instance, unlike his reaction

³¹ Clifton Brown, “With Bush Available, Saints Options Abound.”

³² Nancy Armour, “As New Orleans Rebuilds, Saints’ Return Another Step Toward Normalcy,” *Associated Press*, August 11, 2006.

³³ Mary Foster, “Fans Celebrate Superdome Reopening,” *The Washington Post*, September 26, 2006, sec. E.

³⁴ Herman Gray wrote that mainstream “representations of blackness operate squarely within the boundaries of middle-class patriarchal discourse about ‘whiteness’” Herman Gray, *Watching Race*, Minneapolis: (University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 9.

to 9/11, President Bush, vilified for his slow and incompetent response to Katrina, dared not visit a sporting arena, even while some of the citizens he was to serve were still in stadiums. His first address to the nation after Katrina took place on the lawn of the St. Louis Cathedral in Jackson Square, at night, with no reporters around him, no victims of the storm around him. In his speech, he argued for a healing and used rhetoric quite similar to that used after 9/11. He said “this great city will rise again.”³⁵ The absence of New Orleans citizens was coupled with a look toward rebuilding and, of course, resiliency. Bush’s rhetoric worked to erase the memory of national failure that occurred during Katrina, and his choice in setting avoided the reality of black poverty.³⁶

Likewise, columnists avoided representation of black poverty as they suggested that with the return of the Saints and the Superdome, the city returned. For instance, Armour, writing of the Saints first home game of 2006 and the subsequent celebration on Bourbon Street, proclaimed that:

for anyone who questioned why the Saints would go back to a flood-ravaged city, or wondered if a football game could really make a difference in the lives of people mired in misery, you have your answer. New Orleans was a rollicking, raucous sight to behold Monday night [sic].³⁷

Les Carpenter of *The Washington Post* wrote that the return of the Saints was “the night New Orleans was reborn.”³⁸ He cited NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell as saying that the game “means more to this community and this nation and gives them an opportunity

³⁵ George W. Bush, “Address to the Nation,” 20 September 2005
<<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2005/09/20050915-8.html>>

³⁶ It should also be noted that in his State of the Union Address of 2006, not a single mention of Katrina or the nation-state’s responsibility to the region was made.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Les Carpenter, “A Roaring Return,” *The Washington Post*, September 26, 2006, sec. E.

to show them the spirit that is here.”³⁹ These columnists suggested that New Orleans was on its way to recovery as a result of the spirit that coupled the game. Armour even suggested that the rebuilding of the Superdome was part of the project of making the city “better than its pre-Katrina state,” not once challenging who would be included in that city.⁴⁰ Likewise, in an argument that suggested “New Orleans’ greatest asset is its people,” Michael Wilbon of *The Washington Post* argued the city was on its way back.⁴¹ This he argued despite that only 46% of the city’s population had returned and 190 murders had occurred there in 2007 as of July 20th.⁴² Current estimates are that as many as 100,000 black and poor people have yet to return.⁴³ Hence, the New Orleans that was in the process of healing was one of the columnists’ imaginations; one that privileged white and middle-to-upper class identities as citizens of New Orleans while delegitimizing the black and impoverished; one that neglected the reality that New Orleans was one of the most unsafe cities in the nation.

A few columnists paradoxically emphasized the region and nation’s structural oppression as problematic, but used the return of the Saints to pay service to a white national identity. For instance, Paul Newberry of the Associated Press wrote:

Even before Katrina, this city was deeply divided by racial and social problems:

Rampant crime. Mediocre schools. A lack of good jobs for the underclass. But the

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Nancy Armour, “As New Orleans Rebuilds, Saints’ Return Another Step Toward Normalcy.”

⁴¹ Michael Wilbon, “Hope Wears as Saint’s Uniform,” *The Washington Post*, September 26, 2006, sec. E.

⁴² 360 with Anderson Cooper, July 27th, 2007. In 2004, the year prior to Katrina, the U.S. Department of Justice estimated that there were 56 murders per 100,000 people in New Orleans. *Time* magazine estimated New Orleans to be populated by 155,000 people as of March 2006. If there has not been an astronomical increase, the murder rate, in 2007, then, has increased greatly. See Charley Varley, “Crime Returns to the Big Easy,” *Time*, March 21, 2007.

⁴³ Steve Springer was careful to cite that the entire of New Orleans citizens would not be present in the city for the game: “New Orleans is a city in need of cohesion, Hurricane Katrina left 1,293 people dead and today about 309,000 adults remain displaced. There were about 455,000 people living in New Orleans before Katrina. That number is now estimated at 190,000 to 220,000, according to the *Times-Picayune*.” See Steve Springer, “The Parade Goes By,” *Los Angeles Times*, January 22, 2007, www.lexisnexis.com.

Saints helped to break down some of those black-and-white issues, a rallying point for an eclectic community even when they struggled on the field.⁴⁴

Here Newberry identified that racial oppression existed prior to the storm. But he also suggested the Saints could heal that oppression.

Similarly, Wilbon suggested that sport paid a service to healing the region from Katrina. He argued:

You can be cynical if you want from 1,500 miles away and dismiss the notion that a...football team could somehow lift people in the worst times of their lives, ungodly times they never could have imagined. But the Saints are pretty much all they've got that is familiar.⁴⁵

In the same column Wilbon argued that the Saints functioned to keep mainstream audiences aware of the damage in New Orleans. Wilbon underscored that the area “looked like a bomb had hit it. All the gas stations are closed.”⁴⁶ He continued to write of other problems with the region’s infrastructure, thereby avoiding the use of the Superdome as a trope for regional recovery. Wilbon, however, argued that the game provided a catharsis for the citizens. Yet, the people he used as proof of this claim were those financially privileged enough to *choose* to rebuild there or those who proved his thesis. He cited, for instance, Tulane basketball coach Perry Clark, ESPN analyst Michael Smith, policemen and students at schools to give voice to the citizens who whole-heartedly believed the return provided the region a service.

⁴⁴ Paul Newberry, “Amid the Rubble, a City Rallies Behind its Football Team,” *Associated Press*, September 24, 2006, <http://www.lexisnexis.com>.

⁴⁵ Michael Wilbon, “Hope Wears as Saint’s Uniform.”

⁴⁶ Ibid.

Hence, unlike many of his counterparts, Wilbon refused to close the story of the tragedy with the Saints' return to the Superdome. But he limited the tragedy to physical damage of the region, rather than the racial and class oppression exposed there. As a result, Wilbon's column was also underpinned by a racial discourse similar in character to his counterparts' columns, one that represented the region's normal state as lacking the black impoverished.

Collectively, sports columnists who characterized New Orleans as recovering through the Saints' return to the Superdome privileged a particular sort of wound. The wounds being healed were not the physical sort experienced by New Orleans or its citizens. Rather, the wounds were those experienced by an audience that had not been accustomed to having its class and race privilege challenged by stories of structural racism, classism, and political neglect by the nation-state. Hence, sports columnists' rhetoric of healing can be viewed as a return to a socially constructed normalcy of mainstream media aesthetics that privileges the hegemony of whiteness. That return, moreover, was predicated on substituting the black impoverished with athletes or national politicians and servicemen to tell the story of Katrina.

The columnists' class status as nationally-syndicated and/or major-market writers may have shaded their own stories. The fact that Armour and Foster, both women writers for the AP whose work was published throughout the nation; Wilbon, a black writer with national syndication and who appears nightly on ESPN's *Pardon the Interruption*; and Gutierrez a Hispanic writer; were all ready to write the black impoverished out of the memory of Katrina, says as much about those consuming the stories as the columnists themselves: Cultural memories of the storm were being produced to privilege whiteness,

even though the producers of those memories included authors of color and women. However, in closing the stories of Hurricane Katrina, these columnists also returned sports to hegemonic, white, middle-class aesthetics, aesthetics that were privileged prior to the storm. Hence, the normalcy called for was one in which the reality of black poverty, like before, was altogether hidden from mainstream media and its audiences.

With the substitution of places and people complete, sports columnists could construct nations as places where structural racism and poverty simply did not exist, and their nations, through the Superdome, as having returned to normal. Or they could construct their nations as places where racism and poverty did once exist, but were healed or healing through Saints games. This camp of columnists, consisting of men and women, whites, blacks, and Hispanics, illustrated that white privilege is not constructed by whites only. It is instead, a condition of, produced, and offered to people not experiencing the consequences of structural racism and poverty—those privileged by the status quo.

Re-Membering New Orleans: A Counter-Narrative

Not all columnists privileged whiteness as they wrote of the Saints' service to national identity in the context of Katrina, though. Jon Saraceno of *USA Today* engaged in the discourse of tragedy as he argued that the NFL season should have postponed its season opener. He wrote that the games ought to have been postponed “out of respect” for those who died in Katrina.⁴⁷ He theorized that:

If New York City--where the NFL has its offices on Park Avenue--had faced a disaster where an estimated 10,000 people perished, would it be business as usual

⁴⁷ Jon Saraceno, “NFL Should Have Delayed its Openers, *USA Today*, September 6, 2005, sec. C.

this weekend?...What [would] the esteemed Mr. [Pete Rozelle] would think--and do--if he were alive?⁴⁸

Saraceno contrasted the landscapes of New York and New Orleans, suggesting that the former represented a more nationally significant identity than the latter because of its capital, wealth, and power. The implication was that New Orleans deaths did not register as significantly on the NFL's construction of national identity as deaths in New York.

Stefan Fatsis of *The Wall Street Journal* contrasted New Orleans with New York as well. He wrote that the Saints could not heal the region because many of its fans did not have the ability to watch them play. Interestingly, he simultaneously resisted and relied on sport's service to a mythological national identity:

But unlike the aftermath of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, when New York's baseball teams helped rally the city's spirits, the Saints--and the city's National Basketball Association franchise, the Hornets—don't have a city to rally.⁴⁹

Here Fatsis took issue with his counterparts' use of 9/11 to write of Katrina and their suggestion that football could heal New Orleans. But he also accepted the notion that baseball served the nation after 9/11. Tim Dahlberg of *The New York Daily News* maintained the focus on New Orleans. He underscored that Saints fans watched the game in shelters and so could not have actually been served by football.⁵⁰

Jason Whitlock of *The Kansas City Star* deconstructed the discourse of tragedy in which many of counterparts engaged. He wrote that delaying the games would serve no

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Stefan Fatsis, "Football's Saints Ponder Whether to Relocate."

⁵⁰ Tim Dahlberg, "Saints a Feel-Good Story for Now, but Future Not Bright for Their Fans."

purpose while also illustrating that rhetoric of football's healing qualities privileged wealthy identities:

If I thought it would make a difference, I'd call for a stoppage of play, a respectful, patriotic, mournful pause of the games that entertain us. We did it after 9-11. But that was different. We paused in fear. We feared a World War, we feared a shadowy enemy, we feared another attack. Stopping was the absolute right thing to do. It served a purpose. This time, in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, the irrelevancy of sports has never been made more clear. It doesn't matter where or whether the New Orleans Saints play their games...You can't ease the pain of the men, women and children suffering, starving and, in some cases, dying in the streets of New Orleans. A strong performance by the Saints won't offer any relief to those who lost their material possessions to Katrina or to those who lost their faith in America's compassion to the nonstop neglect being broadcast on CNN, MSNBC and Fox News. You can argue that the people of the Gulf need the escape that sports, particularly football, provide. Do they really?...No. Katrina's victims are thirsting for a real escape. Those of us lucky enough and/or wealthy enough to be away from the front lines of the flooding, the disease, the anarchy and the hopelessness desire the entertaining escape.⁵¹

Rather than delivering significance to the Saints in the aftermath of Katrina, Whitlock exposed the consequences of doing so: It actually made the victims of the storm invisible and provided those 'wealthy' enough to watch football without worry of poverty with an

⁵¹ Jason Whitlock, "The Games Just Wash Over the Hopelessness of Katrina's Victims," *Kansas City Star*, September 3, 2005.

escape from the reality of Katrina's story and the economic oppression it exposed.

Paul Attner of *The Sporting News* deconstructed the matrix of sport, nation, memory, and race privilege that underpinned columns suggesting the Saints healed the region or nation. He used the Superdome's 'skin' as a metaphor for how the storm unveiled the historic race and class oppressions of New Orleans and the nation:

And to have the Superdome fixed? The last we saw of the place, it was a symbol of so much that was wrong with the government's response to Katrina and about the desperation of humans in trouble. Winds tore apart its white roof, exposing a black skin.⁵²

Attner's metaphor illustrated that the city's historic racial and classed oppression operated under a veil. He was careful to avoid such a veiling when writing of the Saints' return by citing that "the city has lost more than half of its pre-Katrina population of 450,000, and its economy remains hobbled."⁵³ In a sarcastic end to that paragraph, Attner wrote: "Now [the dome is] a symbol of a new beginning for the city, its roof shiny white again."⁵⁴ He continued by citing Horn who said that the opening game of the 2006 season would, "for a lot of people who will be there...exorcise the demons of what they endured inside the dome during Katrina."⁵⁵ He finally wrote, however, that "for New Orleanians and the Gulf Coast, the joy of the Saints is tempered by the reality of the enormous task ahead."⁵⁶ Hence, Attner argued that sport could not close the story of

⁵² Paul Attner, "They're Home, There's Hope," *The Sporting News*, September 29, 2006, <http://www.nexis.com>.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

Katrina. He also illustrated that the dome's refurbished state threatened to re-veil the raced and classed oppression of the area and memory of its existence in the nation-state.

Similarly, in writing of the dome's re-opening, Ohm Youngmisuk of *The New York Daily News* chronicled the crime that occurred in the Superdome in fall 2005 as part of its history. He juxtaposed descriptions of the new dome with those of the lower Ninth Ward, which he characterized as a "ghost town littered by rubble and hundreds of abandoned and destroyed homes."⁵⁷ He wrote that "thousands of New Orleansians who were displaced by Katrina and are now scattered across the country," thereby illustrating that New Orleans had not returned.⁵⁸ In that same column, he wrote of Dee Jabar, a black resident of the Ninth Ward in debt because of his decision to return. Jabar said "while I'm struggling, they (the city) should be busy worrying about how to survive and rebuild rather than about a team that earns millions of dollars."⁵⁹ Giving voice to a black and financially worried citizen, Youngmisuk contested with his counterparts like Wilbon who argued that New Orleans was full of people who placed value the Saints' healing power. Ultimately, then, Youngmisuk chronicled a point of view that resisted the mythological construction of nation and New Orleans his counterparts adopted, a point of view that was completely overlooked in many of his counterparts' stories of Katrina—a black, poor New Orleans citizen who did not see the value in the Saints return.

Finally, Whitlock and William Rhoden of *The New York Times* centered the story of Katrina to be about the black impoverished. Rhoden wrote that "what Katrina illustrated, quite graphically, [wa]s that the economic problems confronting communities

⁵⁷ Ohm Youngmisuk, "Rising After the Storm," *The New York Daily News*, September 24, 2006.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

from which many professional athletes come are too large for one foundation to solve.”⁶⁰ Here, Rhoden argued that sport alone could not solve the inequities exposed through the storm.

Whitlock ended his column by arguing that a sport serves a nation of the wealthy by hiding the impoverished behind white and wealthy faces. He wrote:

Please let the games begin, bring on Herbstreit and Corso and Madden and Michaels and Brady and Manning...We don't want to look at our poor and uneducated. We don't want to contemplate what their squalid suffering says about us. We build housing projects to isolate them, keep them out of view and away from anything we value--the Superdome, the French Quarter, the Convention Center... Sports play virtually no role in bringing us together when it's time for us to muster the resolve and the compassion necessary to appropriately assist our underclass. For that, we still need lots of prayer and a collective integrity we've yet to acquire.⁶¹

Whitlock suggested that sport could not heal the economic inequities of New Orleans, or the nation, and that it even reinforced those inequities by hiding their reality.

In “Feminism and Cultural Memory,” Marianne Hirsch and Valerie Smith asserted that cultural memory is “an act in the present by which individuals and groups constitute their identities by recalling a shared past on the basis of common and therefore often contested norms, conventions, and practices.”⁶² Likewise in *Tangled Memories*,

⁶⁰ William Rhoden, “Amid Ruins of Home, Sorrow and Solidarity,” *The New York Times*, September 18, 2005. See also Tim Layden, “Marching In,” *Sports Illustrated*, January 22, 2007; Rick Reilly, “Sports to the Rescue,” *Sports Illustrated*, September 6, 2005.

⁶¹ Jason Whitlock, “The Games Just Wash Over the Hopelessness of Katrina’s Victims.”

⁶² Marianne Hirsch and Valerie Smith, “Feminism and Cultural Memory: An Introduction,” *Signs*, 28 (2002): 5.

Marita Sturken wrote that representation is how cultural memory is produced, and that these representations are continuously blocking others from memory.⁶³ Collectively, then, the columnists in this camp--some white, some black, and one Asian-American--overtly inserted race into the cultural memories of the Superdome and/or Katrina they were in the process of constructing. They all refused to close the story of Katrina in their columns and resisted the tendency to construct New Orleans as healed simply because the Saints returned. In the process, they insisted that the black and impoverished who were forgotten about in the decades leading up to Katrina, and in many of the columns in the year following it, be remembered. By insisting that the black and impoverished be remembered as part of Katrina, New Orleans, and the nation, they worked within the mainstream media to confront white hegemony. Moreover, they represented a counter-narrative to the mythological nation characteristic of historic and many contemporary columns regarding sport and nation.

Ultimately, then, as the first camp of columnists used the Superdome's refurbished condition to suggest New Orleans had healed, they encouraged their mainstream audiences to consider the problems of economic and racial oppressions fixed; to embrace cultural memories of the storm that matched the shared conventions of a white nation. Such representations of the dome not only repressed memory of the horrors inside of it, then, but also reinforced whiteness by hiding the structural oppressions and neglect that the tragedy initially exposed. In contrast, the second camp of columnists insisted on remembering oppression as a central element of Katrina's story, and the nation's problems. Representation of the Superdome and subsequent memory of the

⁶³ Sturken, Marita, *Tangled Memories*, LA: University of California Press, 1997.

black impoverished as part of Katrina's story, as a result, was directly related to how columnists perceived race and poverty as part of their nations.

Again, the diverging standpoints regarding the Saints and the Superdome after Katrina equated to a contest for how race and poverty would be situated in sports columnists' national identities and cultural memories of it. Interestingly, for instance, *Kansas City Star*, *The New York Times*, *Sports Illustrated*, and *The New York Daily News* included columnists from camps that privileged and resisted whiteness as they wrote of Katrina. Hence, within these publications a healthy debate occurred regarding the place of black poverty in sports columnists' national identity. The latter camp of columnists who confronted white privilege potentially reached audiences embracing white hegemony. As such, this camp potentially played a significant role in resituating the way many conservative people thought of the Bush administration and the way those embracing white hegemony thought of black poverty. This camp's resistance of the traditional mythology of sport within the sports pages that have a readership consisting of those embracing white hegemony is the very reason to study whiteness and sport media and teach it to students: To illustrate that racial privilege exists, that its consequences are dire, and that there are sites of resistance in mainstream media that, if capitalized upon, could change the way people think of race in the nation.

Moreover, this chapter, consisting of columnists from a variety of races and both genders, complicates the notion that whiteness is a condition of white skin. Prize-winning, nationally distributed women, black, and Hispanic columnists like Armour, Foster, Gutierrez, and Wilbon privileged whiteness in their constructions of the Superdome and/or New Orleans. In contrast, white, black, and Asian-American

columnists, from Attner to Rhoden to Youngmisuk resisted whiteness. This chapter subsequently illustrates that whiteness is exerted and produced through marginalization of specific identities from stories of nation, and not necessarily alleviated or reinforced because a specific identity is producing the story.

Moreover, this chapter complicates any tendency among critics to label individual writers as adopting monolithic standpoints regarding identity and nation. For instance, Rhoden, who was one of the columnists constructing a mythological national identity through the Yankees after 9/11, refused to do so through the Saints in the context of Katrina. Rhoden is a black writer who often exposes racism toward blacks in sport and the nation. Hence, one reason for his taking a role in producing white hegemony after 9/11, but resisting it after Katrina, may be that Katrina exposed racism toward people with whom he, as a black man, has historically identified. That is, the intersectional nature of identity leads liberal columnists to support whiteness in some contexts, and to resist it in others. To understand the extent of whiteness' power and the strategies of resisting it requires an examination of its elasticity and acknowledgement that we all may support it in different contexts without knowing it. Such examination allows people to understand white hegemony and learn how to resist it in different contexts.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

After both tragedies, columnists justifiably advocated giving money to the Red Cross as a means to assist people and places devastated by tragedy.¹ While columnists' advocacy of donating money is part of the activist role they play, and donating money is, in no uncertain terms, admirable, it can also be a means through which hegemony reasserts itself after tragedy. Specifically, donation cannot close the story of tragedy. It cannot substitute for memory of the nation-state's failures, or for attempts to correct those long-standing structural problems. It cannot pay for a national healing; a healing underpinned by a making invisible of the places and citizens that confront white hegemony. Nor can the swipe of a credit card substitute for activism. For in that that swipe, one potentially consumes catharsis, closure, and healing. And America is not only constructed but also reified as an imaginary space where middle-to-upper-class identities hold power. Herein is the import of columnists who challenge white hegemony in mainstream media: They potentially reach out to audiences with the means to help, and who may have otherwise adopted hegemonic stances toward race and nation. But as columnists write about race, nation, and proper responses to tragedy, they potentially teach members of their audience about privilege, with the result being their renouncement of it. Although renouncing privilege does not equate to social justice, understanding and learning of privilege is the first step to enacting it.

¹ See Ohm Youngmisuk, "Rising After the Storm;" Michael Wilbon, "Hope Wears as Saint's Uniform;" Dave Anderson, "The Saints Are Now America's Team."

As I wrote in chapters five and six, sports columnists, especially in the wake of tragedy, potentially played an activist role. For instance, after 9/11, many columnists used sport to emphasize the necessity and import of service to people. Likewise, in his final column of 2006, William Rhoden of *The New York Times* wrote about the Saints' upcoming playoff games as significant to the New Orleans region, but refused to do so in mythological terms. "There's an inherent danger in placing the hopes of a decimated city on the shoulder pads of a pro sports team. It's a nice story, as long as the team wins. What happens when the bubble bursts and team loses?"² In the remainder of his column, Rhoden answered his own question, underscoring that the Saints players were bound to New Orleans, ingrained in the community, and committed to rebuilding the city. Because of their involvement with New Orleans, a loss, according to Rhoden, would not devastate the city. Likewise, a win would provide "faith" though not a solution to the economic, racial, and structural problems Katrina exposed and created.³ Rhoden was not alone in his careful distinction between hope and resolution for the Mississippi delta region. What was unique about his column, however, was a careful delineation between the celebratory, cathartic, and even restorative feeling one may have while watching, even remembering a game; the reality that such feelings, if permitted to reveal the meaning of a tragedy's story, potentially cause real harm; and the importance of actively working to relieve racial and class oppression.

Rhoden's focus on athletes' work to help a region devastated by natural disaster, however, also revealed and was telling of why sport media have such potential to move readers. The stories in sport media are about other people. In contrast to news of politics

² William Rhoden, "A Saints' Superdome Title isn't a Giant Leap of Faith," *The New York Times*, December 25, 2006.

³ Ibid.

in which ideas are debated from disparate standpoints, sport media uses the stories of actual people to arrive at ideas that are themselves political. This dissertation has used diction (like ‘discourse’), central to Cultural Studies. It has presented arguments about memory that are technical. At the most basic and important of levels, however, the argument made throughout is that what story-tellers represent and remember is bound up with power and reflective of values of identity and nation. Hence, as columnists write stories about tragedy and sport, they hold up certain kinds of people and not others as representative of America and its history. Of course, columnists are not the only figures in mainstream media engaged in producing such stories. But often their stories provide the elements that make up cultural memory regarding nation. And as of the late 1990s, many sports columnists were more inclusive in the vision of America they constructed than those who are paid to represent it.

Rhoden, in remembering Katrina and the devastation it exposed and created, was implicitly engaged in a memory project working to include the black, impoverished, and tragedy-stricken in a nation-state that was threatening to neglect their conditions again. For instance, only two months after Rhoden’s column about the Saints, President Bush delivered a State of the Union Address in which not a single reference was made to Katrina, despite his promise seventeen months earlier to be “fully involved with the” recovery of the region.⁴ The extent to which Bush and Rhoden focused on Katrina as a significant memory in their texts also equated to a (de-) legitimization of people associated with the storm as part of the nation’s story for 2006. While Rhoden emphasized that

⁴ See George W. Bush “State of the Union Address,” January 31, 2007, <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/stateoftheunion/2007/>> George W, Bush, “President Discusses Hurricane Relief to the Region,” September 9 2005 <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2005/09/20050915-8.html>>.

athletes were helping the tragedy-stricken to recover, he implicitly argued about the import of remembering those wounded by tragedy and ongoing systemic oppression. Similarly, in neglecting to mention Katrina, Bush erased the memory of the black impoverished, the displaced, and his own ineptitude from his story of national identity.

Still, scholarship on cultural memory in the recent past has suggested mainstream media constructs a monolithic, white, and conservative national identity while bemoaning the fact that independent artists' work does not reach a wide enough audience to change power relations in the nation-state significantly.⁵ Sport media, though, often vilified as overly masculine and white, consists of more diverse standpoints than its critics often allow, especially since the late 1990s.⁶ In the contrast between Rhoden and Bush's remembering of Katrina, we see a contestation for the narrative not only of the storm, but national identity as well. This contestation complicates—if not rejects--the notion that “contests of meaning take place within the power relations of official institutions and the mass media in relationship to alternative areas of public culture.”⁷ That is, especially as of the mid-1990s, mainstream sport columnists represent a cross-section of standpoints regarding identity, sometimes within the same publication's sports pages. These sports pages thus provide the contests of meaning many scholars of nation see taking place only in ‘alternative’ areas of public culture.

Hence, this project worked to show that mainstream columns about identity, nation, and memory were sites where knowledge was being contested, re-shaped, and

⁵ See Patricia Zimmerman, *States of Emergency: Documentaries, Wars, Democracies*, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2004.

⁶ For scholarship constructing sport media as white and conservative, see Caroline Fusco, “Lesbians and Locker Rooms,” in *Sport and Postmodern Times*, ed. Genevieve Rail, (State University of New York Press, 1998), 87–116; Shari Dwarkin Shari Lee and Faye Linda Wachs, “Disciplining the Body” in Susan Birrell and Mary G. McDonald, *Reading Sport: Critical Essays on Power and Representation*, (Northeastern University Press: Boston), 2000, 258-270.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 258.

reproduced. Moreover, the dissertation challenged the notion that racial representation was necessarily indicative of racial equality in the nation. After examining sports columnists' representation and critiques of race over five decades, I hope to have shown the national identities constructed in sports columns have often been exclusionary of particular racial identities; inclusive of them based on conditions; or unconditionally inclusive of them. This dissertation, moreover, was a study of how power was maintained, exerted, renounced, and challenged through exclusions, conditions, and inclusions. In concluding this dissertation's discussion of race, I hope to offer a simple answer to Herman Gray's question in *Cultural Moves* regarding the future of media studies concerned with race: He asked are "identity and representation...productive sites of struggle, sources of critique, and affirmation."⁸ The simple answer to Gray's question: Representation is important. Likewise, who is doing the representing is important. But just as important is *how* people are represented and in what context they are. For example, although it is clear that the increase in minority sports columnists in sports pages is a positive change in news media, to ascribe a cause and effect relationship to the diversity in standpoints since the 1980s would be faulty. The same is true of ascribing a cause-effect relationship to a younger generation of columnists populating sports pages. Robert Lipsyte, a consistent voice of racial and social justice is a white man writing in the 1960s; likewise, many of the columnists constructing mythological nations that excluded black poverty from them in the aftermath of Katrina were women and/or black born of the baby-boomer generation. Finally, it has to be acknowledged that there is a general dearth of women minority sports columnists in mainstream media, an indication that the structure of mainstream media and voices of which it consists are not yet fully diverse.

⁸ Herman Gray, *Cultural Moves*, (University of California Press, 2005), 189.

In short, whiteness is a standpoint adopted by people, despite race, gender, class, and/or sexuality. However, that standpoint can be changed and renounced through education of what privilege looks like, and sport media is a site in which that privilege is easy to witness through simple analysis of the mythological rhetoric often present in it. The potential for educating people about how white privilege operates hegemonically through establishing memories and myths is one reason to study and criticize sport media and its intersection with identity, nation, and memory. Moreover, sport media is one site in which much of the reading public, despite political viewpoints, meets. It is subsequently important to study for its potential to serve as a sort of public sphere where knowledge is created and reshaped; especially if projects regarding white privilege, like Rhoden's columns about Katrina, reach mainstream audiences.

I want to end this dissertation with an anecdote and call for tempered use of language in whiteness studies. I began thinking seriously about this project in 2004, a few weeks after the nation-state had concluded a bitter presidential election. In December of that year, I had dinner with some old college friends, friends with whom I shared opposing political views, but with whom I was able to begin discussing the Iraq War by first bringing up President Bush's opening pitch of game three of the 2001 World Series. Their memories of that event provided us with a safe space to engage in political debate when such debate was difficult to hold as a result of the venom injected into the election that year. It was then that I solidified my own belief that narratives about sport and national identity not only become bridges between and among people with different political viewpoints. They also are partially responsible for how we remember tragedy, how we perceive ourselves, and our places in the nation. In this era of talk radio, ESPN,

blogs, and the internet, separating sports writing from other genres becomes complicated, and these cultural producers are reaching even more audience members. Their power to (re)shape how we think about identity, nation, and memory is only growing. For this reason, scholarship on sport media, nation, race, and memory is of utmost importance. As we research sport media, though, we have to take care to make our work accessible and palatable to audiences unfamiliar with Cultural and Racial Studies and those, like my friends, with whom we disagree.

In the first chapter of this dissertation, I cited a special edition of *Sociology of Sport Journal* in which scholars from many methodological frames argued about the import (or lack thereof) of whiteness studies in sport. In that chapter, I suggested that the condition of the niche-marketed media sphere permits a study of mainstream sport media despite its tendency to represent race through a black/white binary. My emphasis of the observation regarding the niche-marketed sphere and my subsequent argument that sport studies may allow media activists to reach out to those adopting white standpoints is the fundamental difference between me and many other scholars in Whiteness Studies. Whereas C.R. King argued about the import of studying multiple identities for inclusion, I argue of the import of confronting whiteness now so that those embracing such an ideology will see the necessity of adopting standpoints and research agendas King's in the future. Mine is an argument about tactics and strategies. It extends, though, to use of the language scholars of whiteness adopt. For instance, in his article, King cited Mary Karenga, who defined national identities that privilege whiteness as 'white supremacist.' Both argued that white supremacy "[i]s a social problem, a problem of thought and

practice,” not necessarily an ideology found in Ku Klux Klanners or the like.⁹ However, I am concerned that Karenga’s use of ‘white supremacy’ potentially blurs the distinct kinds of violence in which ‘white supremacy’ and ‘white hegemony’ engage. Those who benefit from white privilege and buy into mythological versions of national identity are often good people without understanding of the hegemony they buy into and the privilege from which they benefit. This is how hegemony works. To make that clear to audiences outside of academic halls, I suggest that scholars in Whiteness Studies and disciplines to which it is related adopt terminology that can clearly and quickly delineate between (white) hegemony and white supremacy, as the latter is often associated with terror.¹⁰ Ultimately, the distinction between white hegemony and white supremacy, which King and Karenga conflate, is imperative to maintain for two reasons. First, it allows a clear identification of audiences to and for whom scholarship is written. One of the many audiences for Whiteness Studies, I argue, is that which produces and/or consumes stories of the sort cited as hegemonically white in this dissertation. This is one of our audiences because one of the goals of Whiteness Studies is to reach out to those embracing white hegemony. We reach out to these people in order to educate and encourage their renouncement of rigid and oppressive standpoints. In contrast, white supremacists and terrorists do not comprise one of our audiences. The distinction in terms ‘white hegemony’ and ‘white supremacy,’ as a result, allows the clear distinction in scholars’ audiences and goals while acknowledging that different viewpoints exist in whites—among them are those who work against white hegemony, those who embrace white

⁹ C.R. King, “Cautionary Notes on Whiteness and Sport Studies,” *Sociology of Sport Journal* 22.3 (2005): 397-408; 401.

¹⁰ Hegemony is the normalization of a particular identity and/or power. Many groups can engage in such practices: some Black Nationalists in the 1970s, for instance, it can be argued, engaged in black hegemony. White hegemony is the normalization of whiteness, as defined in chapter 1.

hegemony, and white supremacists. Second, and related, to reach any audience requires that one not turn its members off immediately. Hence, I have avoided use of ‘white supremacy’ throughout this dissertation, except when referring to organized groups related to white terror. This is merely one strategy in reaching out to audiences beyond academic halls in order to confront white hegemony.

Another strategy to make our work accessible beyond the walls of academia is to seek out coalitions with those in sport media. I see coalitions being built between and among both sport media producers and sports scholars as potentially leading to projects that reach beyond our classrooms, and educating audiences consisting of those embracing white hegemony. Although advocating for coalitions between scholars and producers of sport media seems a utopian end to this project, I was struck by Rhoden’s comment on *Outside the Lines* as he pondered whether or not the allergic reaction to Barry Bonds’ home run chase was racist. He proclaimed “we need a sociologist here.”¹¹ In that same vein, in writing this dissertation, I have been lucky enough to have the guidance of wonderful scholars at University of Maryland as well as the expertise of Steve Gietschier, Senior Managing Editor of Research at *The Sporting News*. His expertise as a historian and in sport media has helped me immensely. Beyond his attention to historical detail, his questions regarding my reading of columnists’ work have helped me to articulate arguments about race and identity in ways I hope are clearer to audiences outside of academia. Such coalitions between experts in fields seem only to help projects, and, more importantly, knowledge and communication. I would hope that sport media practitioners and sociologists of identity, nation, and media could find each other in

¹¹ Outside the Lines, ESPN, 23 February 2005.

future projects as well. For it is through talking to each other that we learn, progress, and include.

Appendix

The following is a brief biography of the columnists who are cited often in the dissertation. It is not an exhaustive list of columnists read in forming ideas for the dissertation.

Bob Addie, a columnist for *The Washington Post*, *The Washington Times Herald* and *The Sporting News*, he covered the Senators for over twenty years. In 1981, he was given the J.G. Tyler Spink Award for his contributions to baseball writing, an award voted upon by his peers.

J.A. Adande wrote a column for the *Los Angeles Times* from 1997-May 2007. Prior to his, Adande was a writer for *The Washington Post* and *The Chicago Sun Times*. Since 2005, he has been a regular on the ESPN show *Around the Horn*. His work has appeared in *The Best American Sports Writing*.

Mitch Albom is a columnist for *The Detroit Free Press*, hosts a nationally-syndicated radio show, and frequently appears on ESPN's *Sports Reporters*. He also is the author of seven books including *Tuesdays with Morrie*, which was on top of the New York Times best seller list for four straight years.

Dave Anderson, since 1971, has been a columnist for *The New York Times*. He won the 1981 Pulitzer Prize and the 1994 Associated Red Smith Award for his column. In 1990, he was inducted to the National Sportswriters Hall of Fame. His columns appear nationwide in syndicated format.

Paul Attner, has been a writer for *The Sporting News* since 1984. His work received awards from the Professional Basketball Writers of America, Professional College Basketball Writers of America, and Professional Football Writers of America.

Thomas Boswell, a nationally-syndicated *The Washington Post* columnist since 1984, has written many best-selling books about baseball, not the least of which is his collection of columns. A mentee of Shirley Povich, Boswell is a student of baseball and has appeared in many films about baseball, including "Baseball" by Ken Burns and memory projects for ESPN.

Christine Brennan has been a columnist for *USA Today* since 1997. She has covered the Olympics since 1984

Arthur Daley was a nationally-syndicated columnist for *The New York Times* from 1942-1973. In 1956, he became the second sports columnist ever to win the Pulitzer Prize for excellence in sports writing.

Tony Kornheiser, *The Washington Post* columnist since 1984, is now an analyst for Monday Night Football and host of ESPN's Pardon the Interruption. In 1997, Kornheiser was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in commentary. He also hosted a nationally-syndicated radio show.

Robert Lipsyte, an internationally syndicated columnist for *The New York Times* since 1965, is considered by many an authority on Muhammed Ali. In 1992, Lipsyte was runner-up for the Pulitzer Prize in commentary. In 1996 he won the Meyer Berger Award for distinguished reporting from Columbia University. He is a prolific and award-winning young adult author. Finally, he works for ESPN as an authority on boxing, baseball.

Mike Lupica is a nationally syndicated columnist with *The New York Daily News*. He currently hosts ESPN's The Sports Reporters. He served as editor of the 2004 edition of *The Best American Sports Writing*.

Jack Mann, a writer of horse racing and baseball, was a columnist for *The New York Times*. He twice won the Walter Haight Award for excellence in turf writing. He also wrote a biography on Ty Cobb.

Jim Murray, columnist with *The Los Angeles Times* from 1972-1998, won a Pulitzer Prize for his commentary. He was selected National Sports Writer of the Year fourteen times.

Bill Plaschke, a columnist for *The Los Angeles Times* since 1996, won the Associated Press' award for National Sports Columnists of the Year in 2005. He is a regular on ESPN's Around the Horn and is consistently featured in *The Best American Sports Writing*.

Shirley Povich, a nationally syndicated columnist of *The Washington Post* from 1926-1974, was one of the nation's most-read columnists during this time.

Rick Reilly, *Sports Illustrated* columnist since 1985, has been voted Sportswriter of the Year eight times. His latest book, *Hate Mail from Cheerleaders*, is a compilation of his columns and has been at the top of *The New York Times* best-seller list for the first three months it has been on the market.

William Rhoden, a columnist for *The New York Times* since 1981, appears regularly on ESPN's The Sports Reporters. His latest book, *Forty Million Dollar Slaves*, examines the black athlete in sport and challenges the notion of equality resulting from integration.

Red Smith, *New York Herald Tribune* and later *The New York Times* columnist won a Pulitzer Prize in 1976 for sports writing. From 1947-1982, Red Smith was considered the nation's most widely read sports columnist, as his work was syndicated in over 200 papers.

George Vecsey, has been a columnist for *The New York Times* since 1982. He has authored multiple books on baseball.

Jason Whitlock, a columnist for the *Kansas City Star*, has written for ESPN 2 and AOL sports. He has appeared on ESPN's *Sports Reporters* and *Pardon the Interruption*.

Michael Wilbon, columnist for since 1987 *The Washington Post*, is co-host of ESPN Pardon the Interruption.

Dave Zirin, a columnist for *The Los Angeles Times* and *Nation Magazine*, was Press Actions' 2005-6 Sports Writer of the Year. Besides authoring many books about sports, race, and nation, Zirin appears on ESPN's *Outside the Lines* frequently.

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