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From NASCAR Nation to Pat Tillman

Notes on Sport and the Politics of White Cultural Nationalism in Post-9/11 America

Kyle W. Kusz
University of Rhode Island

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The author offers some developing thoughts on a domestic White cultural nationalism that emerged from the ashes of the attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon on September 11, 2001. More specifically, the author reads the November 10, 2003, *National Review* cover story and the media spectacle made of Pat Tillman's death in 2004 while serving in President Bush's war on terror in the Afghanistan theater as expressions, and producers, of a reactionary White cultural nationalism that emerged in post-9/11 America. In articulating this *National Review* cover story about NASCAR with the media spectacle made of Pat Tillman's death and life, one will be able to see how sport—particularly media discourses about sport figures and formations—is being mobilized in post-9/11 America to express, naturalize, and garner public consent for this reactionary form of White cultural nationalism.

Keywords: *Whiteness; White supremacy; masculinity; sport; nationalism; post-9/11 America*

In critical times, the thrust for freedom and democracy is thwarted by the reinvention of the white race.

—Allen (1994, p. 1)

Without space to make this argument more fully, I implicitly draw on the insights of Ehrenreich's (2002), Mailer's (2003), and Ducat's (2004) readings of White masculinity in post-9/11 American culture to assert that cultural conservatives and neoliberals have seized on the unfortunate events of 9/11 as rationale and justification for forwarding a domestic White cultural nationalism whose implicit intent is, at least partially, to resecure a centered and normative position for White masculinity in American culture within this "post-white" (Hill, 2004, p. 11) moment when a constellation of forces and conditions (viz., the aftereffects of the social movements of the 1960s, identity politics, and globalization) destabilized the taken for granted position of Whiteness (or, more specifically, White masculinity) as the American normative. This reactionary White racial project is being advanced at a time when most of the public's attention is anxiously focused abroad on the status of the "war on terror" in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The horrific events of 9/11 provided the conditions where a highly mediated White cultural nationalism featuring White everyman figures as the most heroic and patriotic embodiments of the nation (think of the media's lionization of the mainly White and male Fire Department New York and New York Police Department personnel in the immediate coverage of 9/11) could unapologetically be constructed in the American mainstream with little fear of public criticism from those who, prior to 9/11 in the relative domestic tranquility of post-cold war America, surely would have objected to the problematic racial or gender representational politics of such imagery (viz., namely how it implicitly conveys the idea that "true cultural franchise and full citizenship requires a white identity"; Lipsitz, 1998, p. 71). Looking back now 5 years after 9/11, it seems difficult to imagine another event that could have provided a better opportunity for cultural conservatives and neoliberals to advance such a cultural project of "taking back their country" from liberal-minded folks whose political correctness, cultural relativism, anti-Americanism, diversity initiatives, and affirmative action programs they had been railing against for years (although conservatives have surely tried their best to use gay marriage and illegal immigration as cultural issues to promote such aims more recently).

The shock of 9/11 provided an excellent opportunity for conservatives to claim that these liberal domestic forces played a constitutive role in 9/11, for it produced a national softness, weakness, and lack of conviction that made us susceptible to the terrorist attacks in the first place. Even further, the almost unfathomable act of hijacking planes and crashing them into prominent symbols of American big capital and the military-industrial complex injuring thousands of innocent common people, coupled with President Bush and his administration's tough-talking, "good versus evil," "civilization versus barbarianism," and "you're either with us or on the side of the terrorists" binaristic mode of constructing the war on terror response to 9/11 created a domestic cultural and political context (up to at least the middle of 2005) where dissent and criticism of any aspect of this response to the attack—drenched as it is in conventional ideas of patriotism, Whiteness, and masculinity—was nearly impossible to make. Even the slightest questioning of his "eye for an eye" military response meant being regarded as unpatriotic, soft, politically correct, defeatist (code for un-America"), or, even most ridiculously, siding with the terrorists.

According to the rhetoric of George W. Bush and his administration, this sort of White cultural nationalism (especially as it is produced and popularized through the media spectacle made of Pat Tillman's death and life) is operating in the name of protecting our besieged nation from "uncivilized" and "barbaric" terrorists set on destroying our freedom and disrupting our way of life. Bush's hyper-masculinist rhetoric and imagery (drawing from the conventional masculinist codes and imagery of the old west and *Top Gun*), which tapped into, as it cultivated, American (White) men's conjuncturally specific desire to "man up" and once again feel like "real men," was not only used as the cultural conduit to drum up popular support for his war on terror, but it simultaneously played a key role in setting the stage to initiate this racial project to

resecure a central and normative position for White masculinity in American culture and society in the name of patriotism and love of country. In the name of doing things for “the American people,” this White nationalist racial project promotes a revival of “traditional American values” and the return of an unapologetic pride in America that conservatives claim has been eroding since the social protests and upheavals of the 60s. Of course, this apparent nostalgia for America is really just code for creating and maintaining the optimal conditions for White patriarchal global capitalism and the undermining of the minimal gains made by historically marginalized groups since the 1960s. Of course, these rallying cries and usual suspects are not new; you can hear within them the echoes of the culture wars of the 1980s and 1990s and the voices of their forefathers—the David Dukes, Ronald Reagans, Rush Limbaughs, Pat Buchanans, and Trent Lotts of post-cold war and pre-9/11 America. But following the morning of September 11, 2001, this White cultural nationalism now appears to have been reenergized and reformulated. Its motivation no longer seems to originate from the psyches of “angry White men” indignant about having their privileged socioeconomic position exposed and challenged but from a grave national wound that evokes such deep affective reactions in the public that it is, and will be, difficult for progressive-minded people to steer the public to the higher road, giving them the tools needed to see and discern for themselves the surplus racial meanings opportunistically being attached to attack on our country to resecure White male normativity.

Post-9/11 White Cultural Nationalism

Post-9/11 White cultural nationalism is a discourse expressed through nationalist narratives, symbols, and imagery drenched in a patriotism that simultaneously revives and recirculates culturally familiar images of White men who are at once common, yet a little different, and exceptionally heroic in leading the fight to protect the nation.¹ The political brilliance of this discourse of White cultural nationalism is that it appears to be racially color-blind and neutral even as it resecures Whiteness and conventional forms of masculinity as the normative center of American culture and society in the American imaginary. Indeed, as the discourse is crafted as supposedly nothing more than an effect of a groundswell of public desire for inspiring stories of patriotism in this time of crisis, these narratives hardly seem concerned about advancing a reactionary racial and gender politics at all. If the racial or gender aims or effects of such national narratives are critically questioned at all, such racial and/or gender intentions can be easily denied by the producers of these representations. Although, ironically, those who would dare pose such a pessimistic or defeatist question in this age of terror are often quickly condemned as anti-Americans whose failure of faith is aiding the terrorists.

The main feature of this post-9/11 White cultural nationalism is the forwarding of a White male, who is said to have an “average,” everyman quality, as the quintessential embodiment of America. He usually claims to, or is made to, represent all

those Americans invested in the “traditional” values and fundamental ideologies for which America has always stood (individualism, freedom, and meritocracy are mentioned most often). Another key aspect of this discourse is that it reasserts and celebrates the return of a conventional (White) masculinity on the American cultural landscape that very often unapologetically decries political correctness and special interests while speaking for those nameless, anonymous White folk “wondering what happened to the free America that my forefathers fought for,” as Larry the Cable Guy, the immensely popular, self-proclaimed apple pie eatin’, Confederate-flag wearin’, proud to be a redneck comedian, puts it (Curtis, 2005).

In a variety of clever ways, this White male American populist figure is also often coded as different or seemingly disaffiliated from dominant Whiteness or lacking economic privileges of any sort. Although the average, everyman White guy cast in this White cultural nationalism is often depicted as representative of any and all Americans and nondiscriminatory because of his mass appeal, the pleasures this everyman figure offers are actually quite exclusive and exclusionary as they originate from, as they celebrate, a conventional White masculine worldview. In addition, this White cultural nationalism either explicitly or implicitly produces a national social hierarchy with working, average White men always on top. Through this discourse of White cultural nationalism, this everyman White masculinity is cast as the normative center and the embodiment of the ideal American citizen for post-9/11 America. The process of installing him as the normative center of American culture and society also requires the subordination of women and people of color (their voices, experiences, and social interests) relative to those of our newest cast of White male national heroes.

To more fully understand how this White cultural nationalism functions as a contemporary mode of cultural racism, one needs to contemplate the racial meanings expressed through these stories about NASCAR and Pat Tillman within the same context as the everyday discursive assaults on Black masculinity regularly get expressed in American sports media culture—whether through criticisms of the celebratory antics of Black athletes such as Randy Moss, the selfishness, lack of discipline, and greed of Terrell Owens, or the alarmingly harsh criticism and lack of public support for the 2004 Olympic basketball team that “only” earned a Bronze Medal in the FIBA World Championships. If it is necessary to examine the sociocultural processes involved in the production and reproduction of White privilege to fully understand the social production of racism and systemic racial inequalities, then it is equally necessary to understand how the construction of America as the “NASCAR nation” or Pat Tillman as an extraordinary contemporary professional athlete and American citizen is connected to, and depends on, portrayals of Black professional athletes not only as threats to “traditional” American values but as some of the most ungrateful, over-privileged, and unpatriotic Americans in post-9/11 America.

It also bears repeating that this White cultural nationalism is not at all something new or unique to the post-9/11 American context. Its roots extend at least as far back as the early 1990s through the rhetoric espoused by those on the far Right, such as

Pat Buchanan and David Duke, or the patriot movement of the early 1990s (Giroux, 1997; Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1998; Lipsitz, 1998; Maharidge, 1996; Pfeil, 1995). But one notable difference between the post-9/11 incarnation of White cultural nationalism and its dubious forbearers is that the post-9/11 version rests squarely and comfortably in the center of the American mainstream and does not seem to be regarded as an extreme ideological expression at all. And as the work of Berlet and Lyons (2000), Ferber (1998), Ross (1995), and Ansell (1997) has shown, the rhetoric used by cultural conservatives and new Right figures has grown increasingly similar during the past 15 years to that used by White supremacists and White nationalists on the far Right. Both groups promote and seek to naturalize White cultural nationalism through using notions of White victimization, reverse racism, and alleged White systematic disadvantage. Indeed, the work of these scholars and activists has importantly revealed how White supremacists have consciously made “efforts to give it [White supremacy] a more moderate and telegenic image” (Berlet & Lyons, 2000, p. 265). What I find particularly astonishing is the way in which these mainstream stories of NASCAR nation and the media spectacle of Pat Tillman’s death, which seem to be ideal examples of “moderate and telegenic” images of White supremacy, have avoided having their racial politics questioned or called out. Surely, the line between extreme White supremacist imagery and rhetoric and these mainstream discourses of sporting White cultural nationalism is blurry at best.

White Cultural Nationalism and NASCAR Nation

With “NASCAR Nation” sprawled across its cover in bold letters, the November 10, 2003, issue of the *National Review* constructs NASCAR as a newly nationalized sport

in which physical courage is admired, family bonds are treasured, the nation’s flag honored, and the proper balance between courteous restraint and necessary aggression is constantly debated. . . . I’m glad to have made the acquaintance of a thrilling, noisy, colorful, commercial and very American sport. (Derbyshire, 2003, p. 33)

The *National Review*’s articulation of post-9/11 United States as NASCAR nation represents cultural conservatives’ clearest intentional attempt to politicize sport and mobilize it as an affective means of generating support for this kind of White cultural nationalism.

As an example of a post-9/11 discourse of White cultural nationalism, this *National Review* cover story is remarkable for the way in which it creates, projects, and celebrates a racially exclusive image of America while simultaneously trying to disavow any White supremacist or White normative intention or racial politics. The *National Review*’s narrative of NASCAR nation constitutes another example of the Republicans’ historically effective “Southern strategy” of using particular cultural

phenomena as wedge issues that allow “corporate fat cats” to create and maintain alliances with “key lower-strata socially conservative constituencies” such as working-class Whites who changed their political allegiance when the Democratic party became known as the party of “special interests” (Winant, 2004, p. 123). As the culture and people of NASCAR are touted for their patriotism, dedication to family (which interestingly includes women willing to go topless at times in the infield), unquestioned tough and unapologetic masculinity, and, let us not forget, “purely coincidental” racial exclusivity, we see how the sport is mobilized to foster White racial bonds and conventional masculine pleasures in the hopes they will trump the divergent economic interests of these disparate groups of Whites. The endgame, of course, is conservatives’ interest in protecting White male privilege and cultural normativity.

But the article also provides an excellent example of how discourses of White cultural nationalism attempt to bury and obscure their internal racial contradictions, such as the notion that the sport’s history of racial exclusivity and its present-day overwhelming Whiteness have nothing to do with conservatives’ desire to feature it as an American national sport worthy of public support and admiration. Thus, the narrative is instructive of the nuances and complexities of the contemporary strategies of racialization used to deny racism and White privilege. These discursive maneuvers ironically involve making certain facts of the Whiteness of the sport visible as a means of denying that the discourse has any racial or racist implications. For example, the article readily acknowledges the sport’s history of virtual racial exclusivity and unapologetically reports that all of NASCAR’s 43 drivers in 2003 are White. Yet it follows these “honorable” confessions up with a story of how Jesse Jackson’s RAINBOW/PUSH Coalition is supposedly involved in a “self-enriching shakedown scheme” against NASCAR. As the story goes, a board member of RAINBOW/PUSH made a public declaration that NASCAR represents “the last bastion of white supremacy” (Derbyshire, 2003, p. 32) to blackmail them into subsidizing the work of Jackson’s organization for a year. Here, the story invokes the logic of the “reverse racism” stories and anti-affirmative action arguments made in the 1990s. It does so to effectively invert the American racial order so that Jackson and RAINBOW/PUSH are transformed into unscrupulous “thugs” unfairly blackmailing NASCAR, whereas the all-American sport of NASCAR (and let us not forget its close ties with corporate America) is cleverly positioned as an innocent victim of an expansive “racial guilt industry” (p. 32). Suddenly, it appears that the era of identity politics is far from over. Inversions of the American racial order and White claims of victimization frequently made during the 1990s era of identity politics are still being made in post-9/11 America through this White cultural nationalism whose aim is “the recovery of white supremacy” (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 2000, p. 191).

Any potential racism within NASCAR is also denied by highlighting NASCAR’s progressive move of including two African Americans—the then current Miss America and the late football player, Reggie White—in their prerace festivities. In addition, NASCAR’s diversity initiative—an effort to find and train Black drivers so

they will be good enough to race in the top circuit—is highlighted as a noble administrative move proactively made by NASCAR’s leadership once they realized that White drivers with dark suntans could not be counted as people of color (as opposed to a move NASCAR officials made after Jackson’s public rebuke of NASCAR’s racial exclusivity). Here, the article seeks to construct a nonracist position for NASCAR by relying on a logic of color blindness and inclusivity on the level of racial representation. That is, if people of color are present in an organization or feature in their public relations materials, then the organization can rest easy at night believing that racism surely does not exist there. Superficial racial representation is strategically displayed to avoid a deeper, more substantive, and important understanding of racism as institutionalized.

Furthermore, in an additional attempt to disavow and stave off readers’ claims that NASCAR is a racist organization, the article offers a simple explanation for the sport’s seemingly undeniable (and virtually complete) White-only participation pattern in the sport (even if White-only rules were never officially codified in the sport’s history)—nepotism. The article contends that White exclusivity in NASCAR is not a sinister effect of racist intent or White supremacy but simply a product of nepotism and the high cost to create a racing team to participate (an explanation which still relies on, and reproduces, reductive and monolithic notions of Whites as wealthy and African Americans as poor). Clearly, the intergenerational displays of fathers, sons, and families involved in the sport—which NASCAR loves to use to sell its product—implicitly celebrate the continuity of White patriarchy. It also bears mentioning that White women usually only appear in NASCAR stories and imagery in supportive roles as wives, girlfriends, and mothers relative to their “boys”—if, of course, they look good enough for the camera. The narrow and particular racial and gendered pleasures of these displays are often overlooked as these stories are framed as celebrations of traditional American family values. And surely we would all agree that enormous economic wealth, nepotism, and intergenerational privilege (especially, but not only, in the South) have little to do with the history of White supremacy and continued divergent patterns of wealth, power, and opportunity that exist between Whites and African Americans in the United States today!

As every effort is made to contain NASCAR’s troubling relation to White supremacy, even as the author admits to the great number of Confederate flags that fly free in the raucous infield at the races, an equal amount of exertion is expended attempting to establish NASCAR’s credentials as a national sport. We are told that only half of the season’s races take place in the South (defined as “the Old Confederacy plus Kentucky”; Derbyshire, 2003, p. 32). Only half the drivers come from the South. And the attendance numbers and national television contract of the “new” NASCAR rival those of the other “big three” sports (baseball, football, and basketball). The “old boys” NASCAR, the article informs us, is a thing of the past. Today’s NASCAR is inclusive, culturally diverse (I guess they mean “geographically diverse”), and family oriented.

Yet in the article's next utterance, this inclusive and family-oriented depiction of NASCAR then blatantly contradicts Derbyshire's (2003) observations and experiences in the infamous infields of NASCAR, where he finds himself surrounded by a crowd that is "noisy and beery. They wear denim shorts and t-shirts, baseball caps or bandannas. I see a lot of tattoos and a lot of Confederate flags" (p. 30). He goes on to explain that the infield has seen its share of shootings in the past and includes a "small jail" too (p. 30). Another tradition of the infield, he explains, is to induce women to show their "chest" (interestingly, he does not use the term *breasts*, as perhaps it would make the family-oriented contradiction in his argument too blatant!) in exchange for beads. So even as Derbyshire attempts a number of rhetorical contortions to contain the racist excesses of this apparently laudable "American sport," he does not seem too ashamed of its blatant sexism, patriarchal relations, or unapologetic displays of male dominance and hyper-masculinity that border on being out of control. Indeed, these seem to be the goals of White cultural nationalism—to rearticulate Whiteness as the legitimate racial identity of America, to proudly reassert conventional forms of masculinity, and to make it seem as if these desired racial and gender outcomes are merely arbitrary and hardly the product of anyone's intentions.

White Cultural Nationalism and Pat Tillman's Death and Life

Following his death on April 22, 2004, Pat Tillman, the former undersized and unlikely NFL All-Pro with "bottomless desire" (Smith, 2004, p. 44) who gave up his lucrative career as a professional athlete to serve his country, was instantly turned into America's most prominent hero of the war on terror. Interestingly, despite the Bush administration's ban on media images of dead American soldiers returning in coffins, Tillman's funeral was broadcast live on the ESPN networks and hosted by the testosterone-infused sports talk personality Jim Rome. In spectacular fashion, Tillman was eulogized and valorized across American media culture during the next few weeks. Senator John McCain, himself an infamous prisoner of war, eulogized Tillman by saying,

There is in Pat Tillman's example, in his unexpected choice of duty to his country over the riches and other comforts of celebrity, and in his humility, such an inspiration to all of us [Americans] to reclaim the essential public-spiritedness of Americans that many of us, in low moments, had worried was no longer our common distinguishing trait. (quoted in Smith, 2004, p. 46)

In a *USA Today* report, Tillman is described as a symbol of "the best of our nation" and as the "ultimate American" (Boeck, 2004). Not to be outdone, NFL fans who attended the 2004 NFL Draft, put aside their team loyalties for a moment to loudly

chant "U.S.A . . . U.S.A . . . U.S.A" when Tillman was remembered by the league at the event (Saraceno, 2004).

The postmortem descriptions and male referents used to inform the public about the identity of this fallen American hero are also telling about the racial and gender politics organizing Tillman's media spectacle in the post-9/11 America. The photo on the cover of *Sports Illustrated* issue that marks his passing showcases Tillman in his Arizona Cardinals uniform as an intense "wild man" with helmet off, long hair flowing uncontrollably behind him as he undoubtedly celebrates some sort of team success that just took place on the field. The inset is a head shot of him in his Army Ranger uniform, sitting proudly in front of the American flag. In press stories, Tillman is "Forrest Gump with smarts" (Smith, 2004, p. 42).² Readers are told that his boyhood hero was Arnold Schwarzenegger. We learn that his nickname at Arizona State was "Brave Heart" (Smith, 2004). And he is described as a "quiet, intense boy governed by a personal code of honor, a machismo that he defined and no one else, a Hemingway character out of the 1920s in Spain" (Smith, 2004, p. 43).

Through these depictions and others, Tillman is conspicuously cast as a nonconformist who was "his own man" and who lived by a higher set of principles. We are told he loved to debate, was ambitiously restless, and focused on constantly evolving and improving as a person. He is depicted as the embodiment of the ethos of *carpe diem*. This signification of Tillman's White masculinity as a nonconformist is a key discursive move for his purported differentness that enables this rather conventional inspiring national narrative featuring the heroism of a White male at the center of the story to appear, at first glance, to be a different and new version of this story. Tillman's emphasized difference expressed through these stories of his nonconformity also work to make him appear distanced and disassociated from White patriarchy. This White differentness and nonconformity was even reinforced at his nationally televised funeral. In tribute to Tillman, his male buddies and one of his brothers, in hyper-masculine fashion, drank beers while giving speeches that celebrated his life. At the same time, they spoke intensely about his extraordinariness and the countless ways in which he taught them how to "take life by the balls" and live it to the fullest. Interestingly absent from the podium that day were Tillman's mother and wife.

In the media spectacle that followed his death, Tillman's contradictorily coded different-conventional White masculinity is portrayed as deserving of mass American admiration because it is cast as the inverse of the much-maligned greedy, overprivileged, selfish pro athlete of the contemporary American sporting world. One article put it this way,

The playing fields abound with prima donnas who hire themselves out to the highest bidder, with no mind to the fans who put them there on the pedestal. . . . The fans are tired of these prima donnas. Tillman was the exact opposite, a man of honor and dignity and morals. (Roberts, 2004)

Media reports lauded Tillman for his loyalty after he turned down a multimillion dollar contract with the much more successful St. Louis Rams to stay with Arizona for much less money because Pat felt he should remain loyal to the Cardinals because they gave him a shot to make it as a pro when he came out of college. He is reported as the team-first guy who shunned the spotlight and never bragged on himself and was never really too interested in the socially and economically privileged lifestyle that being a professional athlete afforded him. Although his teammates are said to have rode to work in high-priced sports cars and sport-utility vehicles, Tillman is said to have arrived to the Cardinals training camp riding his bicycle in flip-flops with his cleats dangling by their shoelaces over his handlebars. Through these narratives, White desires for economic privilege do not appear to exist, whereas Black desires are portrayed as all consuming. Complexly, these stories work to mask White privilege. They do so by projecting socioeconomic privilege onto Black male athlete-celebrities while forwarding White athletes as disinterested in wealth. As a consequence, professional sport subtly appears as a space where the reversal of the racial order has taken place, where Whites appear less privileged and Blacks seem to possess all the power and “bling.”

These representations that constitute the media spectacle made of Pat Tillman's sacrifice for his country also operate as a site of the White cultural nationalism because Tillman's admirable yet heartbreaking story allows him to stand in as a symbol of wounded America itself. He is both American underdog and White, masculine American ideal; he is everyman and a slightly different, nonconformist whose nonconformity makes him appear as a nonestablishment figure but whose memory is invoked to celebrate America's dominant mythologies and the cultural revival of a conventional masculinity with a wild man at its core. He is invested in a definition of family defined in particular by strong patriarchal male figures and women who can be seen on the margins but not heard. Finally, the spectacle made of Tillman's heroic sacrifice produces (and is produced out of) a subtle and strategically coded racial hierarchy where his patriotism, heroism, and articulation as “the ultimate American” are predicated on the defining of African American male athletes as selfish, greedy symbols of American excess. This twin celebration of virtuous White male athletes such as Tillman (or Agassi or Lance Armstrong) and demonization of self-centered Black male athletes such as Terrell Owens (or Tyson or Kobe Bryant) is a discourse of White anxiety and resentment, where White fans' anger and discontent over a loss of White dominance on America's national sport stages silently echoes through a seemingly nonracial discussion of the deficient values, honor, and morality of contemporary ballplayers compared to players from “the good ole days.”

Conclusion

The post-9/11 White cultural nationalism constitutive of, and constituted by, the media spectacle of Pat Tillman's patriotic sacrifice and NASCAR nation can also be

seen in other popular sites of American media culture today: in the comedy of Larry the Cable Guy and the increasingly popular Opie and Anthony radio show. Back to the world of sport, one can also notice some of the representational politics I have highlighted in the documentary about the U.S. quad rugby team titled *Murderball*. Along the same lines of *Murderball*—which mobilized disability as a way of constructing a distinctly American White masculinity as different and unprivileged—is the amazing story of Jason McElwain, the high school basketball team manager with autism, who, when given a chance to play, knocked down 21 points in little more than a minute of play in his final game as a senior. Virtually overnight, his story was made into a media spectacle that even included President Bush making time to arrange a photo op with McElwain while Hollywood rushed to be the first to translate his story to the big screen. Perhaps these stories gained national prominence because of their ability to lend a veneer of realism to this discourse of White cultural nationalism.

Because narratives and ideologies of White cultural nationalism have become an influential force in post-9/11 American mainstream culture, it is imperative not only that we, as critics of sport, diagnose these discourses but also that we expose the reactionary racial politics they subtly seek to promote. Even furthermore, especially in 2006 when the culturally conservative-neoliberal hegemony is showing some cracks (if Bush's high disapproval rating can be read as such an indication), we must develop counternarratives of American patriotism and nationalism that not only disrupt the positioning of White masculinity as the ideal embodied symbol of America but also bring such things as class politics, globalization, postcolonialism, and the expansion of American neoliberal class wealth into discussions of the war on terror. In pursuing such a project, we will simultaneously answer the call made in this special issue—not only to expose how White power operates in and through sport and how sport is used to reproduce White power in American society but also to constantly create modes of opposition and resistance to White power to transform sport and society so America can live up to its promises.

Notes

1. I developed the term *White cultural nationalism* from Swain and Neili's (2003) work on White nationalism.
2. See David Savran's (1998) astute analysis of the retrogressive racial (and sexual) politics constituted in and through the film *Forrest Gump*.

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Kyle W. Kusz, PhD, is an assistant professor in the Department of Kinesiology at the University of Rhode Island. His research focuses on the racial, gender, and generational dimensions of the cultural politics of sport formations, athlete-celebrities, and sport-related films. His book, *Revolt of the White Athlete: Race, Media and the Emergence of Extreme Athletes in America*, is due out in January 2007.