

**Abstract:**

At the foundation of many iterations of the conversation around trans and intersex athletes in competitive sports, there is a common foundational understanding that there ‘must be a male winner and a female winner,’ thus justifying the exclusion of trans women from competing. In attempting to combat this kind of exclusion, I was struck by the question, ‘Why is that? What is at stake?’ In this project, I work to investigate the gendered, racialized, and geopolitical implications of winning, especially considering competitive sports’ position on an international scale and its connections to what Earl Smith defines as the *Athletic Industrial Complex* (AIC). The AIC is an institution with immense influence to produce/reinforce imperial hegemony due to its location in the global economy and its entanglements with other institutions of power (Smith, 2014, p. 72). I conduct a discourse analysis on the sensationalized stories of elite athlete Caster Semenya and high school student-athletes Terry Miller and Andraya Yearwood. In this process, I engage with Black Feminist, Marxist, Critical Trans and Critical Sports theorists to frame the continuums and congruences connecting capital and imperial interests of transmisogynoir-istic legislation across time and space.

The first chapter historicizes the social construction of biological sex dimorphism to disrupt the notion that dimorphic sex is based in an unbiased, objective truth. Black Feminist and Marxist analyses of sex and gender help frame sex and gender as inextricably racialized and classed with serious material consequences that allows for exploited gendered labor to persist as well as (re)inforces pathologization of Black people’s bodies. The second chapter begins our discussion about Semenya, Miller and Yearwood and point out the ways that their treatment is connected to/occurring in the afterlife of slavery, thus informing the basis for their subjugation. Reading the discourse of these athletes together contours the boundaries between liberal conceptualizations of human and non-human subjectivities and their relation to the state. The third chapter explores the ways in which winning is embroiled in accumulation of capital and alienates the production of labor from athletes – particularly racialized athletes. In this chapter, I also investigate the connections of winning, nationalism, knowledge production, and imperialist hegemony. Finally, in framing the question of what is to be done, I problematize inclusionary-based politics within our current neoliberal capitalist context, particularly as it is positioned as liberatory.

**Geopolitics at Play:  
Trans and Intersex Athletes in Elite Sports**

Amanda Kearney

Advised by Professor Sarah Stefana Smith, Professor Jacquelyne Luce, and Professor Iyko Day

Department of Gender Studies

Mount Holyoke College

South Hadley, Massachusetts

December 2022

## Acknowledgements

This project is a culmination of the past three years, evolving and taking shape as I also continued to evolve and take shape. Amidst a global pandemic and the summer uprisings of 2020, my world has been shifting and changing at an exponential rate. Thus, the list of people to whom I owe my deepest gratitude keeps expanding – and what a pleasure that has been!

Thank you to my advisor, Professor Sarah Stefana Smith. Learning this thesis process together was a grounding and reassuring process. Thank you for providing grace when times got rough, for encouraging me to think in spaces of contradictions, and for the wisdom you've shared with me during the latter half of my college experience. Your guidance and your affirmations allowed me to shoot for the stars with this project.

Thank you to Professor Jacquelyne Luce for being a part of my committee and working with me in the final moments of this project. Thank you for providing the foundations of my project with your class, *Feminist Engagements with Hormones* and for encouraging me to demand more kindness in science.

Thank you to Professor Iyko Day for being the third person of my committee and for inspiring me to be principled and nuanced in my writing, both in this thesis and in class.

Thank you to my readers, Allyson, Avery, Bina, Em D., Emma, Sage, Shyde, Soli, and Sophie for strengthening my work and being prepared to support me at a moment's notice. In these moments of stress, you made me feel loved and cared for.

To my father, who told me with the same manner as calling the grass green that I will get this project done, and who suggested that I get this published before I had even submitted my proposal. Thank you for calling me your hero.

To my mother, for supporting me through the sleepless nights with endless love (and occasional worry).

To Katie, for witnessing my growth through it all.

To Shyde, Allyson, Sage, and Em H., for being patient and providing endless support.

To Bina, for listening to my endless ramblings and engaging with all my unfiltered thoughts.

And to all of the unnamed friends and family, who are the reason that I'm here.

This project is for other trans, nonbinary, and gender queer comrades committed to our liberation in a Communist future. This project is for you.

**Table of Contents**

Abstract	1
Acknowledgements	3
Table of Contents	4
Table of Figures	5
<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	6
Methodology	6
Locating Myself in this Project	7
Terms and Literature at Play	9
Chapter Summary	14
<b>CHAPTER 1: HISTORIES OF SEX, GENDER, AND LABOR</b>	17
The Sex and Gender Binaries: Entanglements of Black Feminism and Marxism	19
Pathology and medicalization: Bodies must be corrected	30
Pathology and medicalization: Bodies must be controlled	35
The “Us”/“Them” of Fairness	38
<b>CHAPTER 2: CONTINUITIES BETWEEN SEMENYA, MILLER, AND YEARWOOD</b>	44
Seeing Semenya in the Afterlife of Slavery	44
“LGBTQ Propaganda,” Medicalized Transness, and Miller and Yearwood	54
Legislative Violence: Transmisogynoir Across Geopolitical Space	59
What is Human? Universalizing the Liberal Body	63
<b>CHAPTER 3: WINNING AND CONTINUUMS OF GENDERED GEOPOLITICS</b>	68
Winning: What is at Stake?	72
Nation, Hegemony, and National Identity at Play	82
Flow of power: from the Imperial Core to the Imperial Periphery	85
<b>CHAPTER 3.5: WHAT IS TO BE DONE</b>	96
Where do we find competitive sports and athletics?	100
<b>Work Cited</b>	102

**Table of Figures**

Figure 1: Sharp, Bishop, and Semenya at Rio Olympics 2016	18
Figure 2: Mission and vision statements of a DIII institution (Mount Holyoke College) and a DI institution (University of Massachusetts Amherst)	76
Table 1: Results of the 2016 Olympics 800m women's finals	50
Table 2: Timeline comparing Semenya v. IAAF (2019) and Soule v. Connecticut Association of Schools (2020)	60-61

## INTRODUCTION

Trans and intersex athletes in competitive sports have been forced into the spotlight for several generations, coming to a head in the past 15 years with an influx of harmful legislation that limits and/or prevents all together these athletes' participation on the basis of sex and gender. At the foundation of medical, judiciary, and socio-cultural arguments either for or against their participation is the logic that there must be a male and female winner. This logic is dependent on a supposedly objective, biologically sound sex dimorphism. As I began thinking about this project three years ago, I kept running into this logic, feeling troubled by what it meant to be calling for inclusion into the sex binary. Isn't this binary the very constriction that continues to produce tension around trans and intersex sports? As competitive sports have a significant international presence, how do the shifts of sex and gender across national borders show up in the politics of competitive sports? If the superficial driving force behind sex dimorphism in sports is this concept of winning, then what are the stakes of winning? And finally, what are the gendered, racialized, and geopolitical implications of winning?

### **Methodology**

Throughout the project, material like sports legislative documents, media coverage, legal documents, and theoretical analyses from Black Feminist, Marxist, Trans of Color Critique, Critical Trans, and Critical Sports studies will be used to frame the problematics of sex dimorphism and perform a discourse analysis of the sensationalized stories of elite athlete Caster Semenya and high school student-athletes Terry Miller and Andraya Yearwood. A discourse analysis allows me to attend to the dialogue surrounding the three athletes as a crucial, dynamic, and linked nexus between our history and our contemporary moment. This form of analysis also

provides the space to engage with the historical contexts that give rise to the socio-political environment of today, and provide us with the necessary information that helps instruct a more critical and principled framing of what is to be done for competitive sports in a liberated future. The aforementioned dialogue, spreading across the Medical Industrial Complex (MIC), the Athletic Industrial Complex (AIC), educational institutions, media sources, and other interlocutors inform the legislative decisions that were put into place in reference to their stories. Throughout this project, I use my discourse analysis to attend to the continuums and congruences that entangle sports legislation on sex and gender through time and space.

### **Locating Myself in this Project**

As alluded to earlier in the chapter, this project is one that has been sitting and festering in my mind for the past five to six years. As a collegiate runner for a Division III institution in the U.S., as a transgender, nonbinary athlete, as an Asian athlete, I find myself reflecting on my tumultuous and fantastic relationship I have with running competitively, for an institution nonetheless. I have long understood my own body in competitive sports as marked in sexed and racialized ways, and thus many of my reflections and surmises of an imagined world are embedded within my experiences. Furthermore, this project is informed by my non-institutional political education and involvement through community organizing. The desire and ability to ground my theory in material conditions and action is thanks to my engagement with a mass organization<sup>1</sup> that follows the leadership of a disciplined political party. This project is meant to

---

<sup>1</sup> Minister of Defense Kevin “Rashid” Johnson of the Revolutionary Intercommunal Black Panther Party defines the mass organization as such: “a voluntary organization that belongs to and its membership composed of the people of the oppressed communities who are largely inexperienced and undeveloped politically. It must reflect and express their interests, and be accountable and open to them to freely join at the levels at which they exist, and respect their right to embrace different views and lifestyles...The mass organization serves to raise and develop resources for and to staff [Serve The People] programs to serve community needs,” (paras. 10-33).

be theoretical groundwork of critically engaging with sex binaries and the hegemonic position of competitive sports.

I am also writing from a place of critique of the very organization that has been, and continues to be, foundational to my political development. The bulk of our conversations address and struggle against race and class contradictions; seldom are there discussions of sex and gender power dynamics. This is not to suggest that individuals themselves are sex-and/or-gender-reductionists. On the contrary, I have spoken to many of my comrades about sex, sexuality, gender, queerness, and transness extensively. That being said, on an organizational level, there is very little reckoning with the socio-economic implications of sex and gender. It is my core understanding that sex and gender are contradictions that should be attended to any time we discuss class struggles, racial struggles, and combating imperialism and neoliberalism. Thus, this project is, in part, developed from my principle of centering sex, gender, race, and class struggles simultaneously in the fight for our collective liberation.

There are many moments of which I find myself unsure about how or where or what to write about in relation to Semenya, Miller, and Yearwood. Mapping out the historical materialism of violence in their lives is a difficult task – one in which I struggle to find means to an end; one that I *should* experience tension with in order to scratch the surface of the weight of discussing their stories. How does one write about these athletes, reopening old wounds and perhaps creating new ones? How does one write without losing sight of the people who have lived through these stories – who keep living through them – informed by the specularization of their lives and bodies? And where does my writing contribute to this specularization? As Keguro Macharia questions in the context of the retelling of Semenya’s ordeal, “What does it mean when predominantly non-Africa based scholars who work on gender and sexuality speak to an African



cause?” (2009, para. 1). In writing about these three athletes, am I rendering them as wells of misfortune, victimizing them, and denying them agency?

Faced with these ethics, I unite with Katrina Karkazis and Rebecca Jordan-Young’s analysis on their writing about Semenya that “[no] mention of her might serve as a cultural lobotomy that was equally distancing” (2018, p. 3). Similarly, not discussing Miller and Yearwood would be a dishonesty to the ways in which young Black girls are harmed by the sex binary, racial capitalism, and the U.S. Empire. Semenya, Miller, and Yearwood have been subjected to violence and scrutiny countless times, having their dignity and bodies ripped open by vicious op-eds and think-pieces from peers, journalists, and scientists alike. How do I, a non-Black scholar located within the Imperial Core, engage with their humanity/stories in this project? As I wrestle with the ethics of – and perhaps the impossibilities of – sharing their stories and experiences, I work to engage with them in a way that rejects violent normative understandings of their bodies and identities. Thus, I tend to these athletes by contextualizing them in the conditions they are living in to reveal the entanglements of their stories. It is to the benefit of U.S. hegemony to treat them as if they are isolated events, disconnected from the people that came before them as well as from each other. Though these connections are painful and horrific, I have decided to unveil these connected atrocities in a way that nurtures space for coalition.

### **Terms and Literature at Play**

My utilization of *MIC* refers to the globalized system of healthcare that centers capital gains and works in tandem with the state to exercise control and power over individuals and communities, as well as increase its parasitic growth at the expense of individual and community health. The *MIC*’s roots are inextricably tied to eugenics, capitalism, colonization, slavery,

migration, war, prisons, and reproductive oppression (Mingus, 2015, para. 3). These roots are important to contend with as Black athletes are made to interact with the MIC in coercive, traumatic, and/or other unpleasant ways. In sports and athletics, the MIC aids the *AIC* in pathologizing Black athletes, particularly Black trans and intersex women and gender queer athletes. The *AIC* is the network of various entities that are related to the buying and selling of sports on domestic and international markets. The *AIC* also often reflects and is implicated in imperial hegemony, due to the various institutions that are involved (Smith, 2014). Competitive sports, and by extension, the concept of winning, are central facets of the *AIC* because they are the basis of economic growth and decision-making. Throughout this project, my usage of sports refers to the events that more-or-less expect a winner that will reap benefits for their victory over their competitors. I differentiate this from athletics and other physical activities that prioritize bodies in motion and camaraderie on the field. This differentiation is needed because of the otherwise vast understanding of physical activity. Additionally, while there are many different types of athletes and competitive sports, for the purpose of this project ‘competitive sports’ and related concepts refers specifically to high school, college, and professional “elite” sports. This does not include local/recreational level leagues for adults or any child under high school age.

As I dive into the regional politics of sex testing, I utilize four distinct terms that are related, but not interchangeable. The most commonly used terms by scholars of various fields to describe regional patterns of power are *Global North/Global South*. This dichotomy is helpful in understanding racial formations occurring across the equator. While useful, this dichotomy is limited because it orients us along colonial cardinal directions and is not always informative of the power dynamics that don’t follow the equatorial divide. I use *Imperial Core/Imperial Periphery* to describe access (or lack thereof) to power through neocolonial, neoliberal projects

and with proximity to the U.S. Empire and its related organizations (e.g. North Atlantic Treaty Organization – NATO). *Imperial Core* also indicates a significant amount of amassed global wealth. In this project, *Imperial Core* refers to specifically the U.S. and Canada, Western Europe, Australia and New Zealand, and occasionally other countries who are a part of/affiliated with NATO (i.e. Poland). A related term to the Imperial Core is *Empire*, which I use specifically in reference to the U.S. *Imperial Periphery* refers to nations that do not have the same access to power or wealth. Some of these nations may have puppet governments from U.S.-backed coup d'etats and other forms of destabilization that granted the U.S. access to land, resources, and its people.

I enter in conversation with Black Feminists Hortense Spillers (1987), Moya Bailey (2018), and Black Marxist Feminist Claudia Jones (1949) to share how essential race, sex, gender, and class are to each other. In Spiller's "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book," she discusses the construction of sex during the transatlantic slave. She highlights the ways in which enslaved Black communities, and therefore its people, cannot own its labor, as captive flesh. She problematizes the application of the family unit to enslaved families and communities, largely due to the ways that emancipated status was inherited from enslaved mothers. The conditions of enslavement threw into question ownership of their reproductive labor, given that their children were considered property of the plantation owners rather than their children. Claudia Jones takes a different approach in her piece *An End to the Neglect of the Problems of the Negro Women!*, understanding Black families – and more specifically, Black women – are emblems of resilience *because* of their survival against the diabolical ways the U.S. attempt to destroy families (1949). While there is tension in the ways that the two authors think about the family, Black women and their relationship to their labor,

reading them together provides two sides of the same coin: Black women's bodies, particularly their sex and sexuality, are made into sites in which capital, defined as a social relation (Marxists Internet Archive Encyclopedia, n.d.), gains meaning at the expense of their lives and livelihoods.

Bailey's work "Misogynoir in Medical Media: On Caster Semenya and R. Kelly" (2016) addresses the ways that the dialectical relationship between medical literature and mainstream media shaped the discourse around Semenya in the 2016 Olympics. She illustrates how medical literature is informed by socio-cultural factors just as much as media is informed by medical literature. Consequently, the misogynoir that is embedded within social norms is reproduced and reinforced by medical literature – which she investigates in Semenya's treatment by sports governing bodies and international news platforms. Karkazis and Jordan-Young's critical piece titled "The Power of Testosterone: Obscuring Race and Regional Bias in the Regulation of Women Athletes" discusses the racial and regional biases that are implicated in the practice of sex testing predominantly in the 21st century (2018). Similar to Bailey, this article contributes to a long tradition of feminist critique of science that challenges paternalistic patterns of medicine and debunk the bioessentialist, racist assumptions about sex. Karkazis and Jordan-Young specifically interrogate testosterone as a universalized male hormone, highlighting the way that "T talk" (in other words, the discourse surrounding testosterone) is mapped onto the Global South and racialized, gendered bodies (2018, p. 7).

The Introduction of C. Riley Snorton's book *Black on Both Sides: A Racial History of Trans Identity* (2017) discusses the history of Anarcha, Betsey, Lucy, and unnamed other enslaved women that were experimented on as fungible flesh and nonconsensually contributed to the birth of gynecology, highlighting their contributions to medical constructions of sex. Likewise, Gill-Peterson's *Histories of the Transgender Child* (2018) dives into the

nonconsensual roles of trans and intersex children of color were made to fulfill in defining medical trans and intersex bodies, again constructing sex and gender in a clinical setting. I work through Snorton and Gill-Peterson's work to investigate the historical contexts that gave rise to the ways that Semenya's body was used to build and reinforce dimorphic sex, as well as how the belligerent questioning of Miller and Yearwood's status/plans for hormone replacement therapy is rooted in the racialized, medicalized definition of transness that expects treatment (or intention of treatment).

In order to discuss sports from a principled Marxist point of view, I put Chris Bamberg's essay *Marxism and Sport* (1996) to explore the alienation of athletes' labor within the AIC. His work also locates the history of the Olympics and organized, competitive sports developing in tandem with the military and state-controlled violence. This historical context is put in conversation with Vijay Prashad's overview of Military Operations Other Than War (M.O.O.T. War) in an online webinar he delivered in collaboration with The People's Forum NYC in 2019. M.O.O.T. War is a term utilized by the U.S. Joint Chief of Staff and refers to the ideological warfare implemented to combat counterinsurgency and justify and embolden U.S. intervention. I use Bamberg and Prashad to depict the mechanisms in which ideological and hegemonic propaganda is enforced in competitive sports. Vanessa Heggie's essay "Testing Sex and Gender in Sports; Reinventing, Reimagining and Reconstructing Histories" serves as an example of how ideological war affected the implementation of sex testing and sensationalization of athletes' bodies in the 20th century, providing useful background in a pattern of imposition of sex dimorphism in favor of imperial hegemony.

Trans legal scholar and lawyer Dean Spade explicates the issues with inclusionary and legibility politics – especially as they are framed as liberatory and revolutionary – in his book

*Normal Life: Administrative Violence, Critical Trans Politics, and the Limits of Law* (2015). In actuality, legibility within our current system is a part of a neoliberal project that ends up further harming our most marginalized community members. He exposes the ways that anti-discriminatory and hate-crime bills often turn the focus to an individualistic model of harm, resulting in the state having the ability to evade responsibility or even recognition that it causes violence (2015). This framing helps deepen the question, *what is to be done?*

## Chapter Summary

In Chapter 1, I work to set the stage in disrupting the notion of an objective sex binary, and revealing the ways that sex is fundamentally racialized and classed. Constructions of sex and gender within the Empire are built out of enslaved Black women's bodies as sites of exploitable reproductive and productive labor. This lays the groundwork for pathologization of Black women and Black communities, particularly within the MIC. Though this pathology is put into practice and develops into numerous material and theoretical outcomes, I focus on two specific tenets that are particularly relevant to elite<sup>2</sup> and/or otherwise competitive sports: aesthetics and medicalization. I also attend to the conceptualization of *fairness* of sport as a colorblind, politico-blind mechanism utilized to subject individuals and communities to *surveillance medicine* for the sake of an idealized 'democratic playing field' where everyone has a 'fair chance' at winning. *Surveillance medicine*, the concept in which bodies and communities are presumed *potentially ill*, thus seemingly 'in need of intervention and healing sanctioned by the state (Clarke and Olesen, 1999), explicitly connects the calls for fairness and humanitarian intervention of athletes' bodies in the AIC with the MIC.

---

<sup>2</sup> Following Knox, et. al, when I use the term *elite athlete(s)* I am referring to "athletes competing on the national, professional, and university (in USA) levels, paid or unpaid" (2019, p. 396).

Chapter 2 explores existing discourse about Semenya, Miller, and Yearwood in mainstream media and legislation. With Snorton and Gill-Peterson as my interlocutors, I read Semenya's story in the afterlife of slavery and Miller and Yearwood's treatment as a consequence of racialized, medicalized transness. I put these athletes' stories in conversation with each other, outlining international legislation and consumption of Semenya as heavily influential to the U.S. backlash towards Miller and Yearwood. I also investigate legal documents from the respective trials as well as legislative documents and press releases from the International Olympics Committee (IOC), World Athletics (IAAF), and the National Collegiate Athletics Association (NCAA) to shed light on the anti-Blackness and sexist assumptions permeating the sports governing bodies. Reading these athletes' stories together allows us to understand connections between how subjects and non-subjects are created and how this affects their relationship to the state.

Chapter 3 problematizes winning by exposing the predatory nature of competitive sports under neoliberal capitalism. First, I provide an overview of how the AIC functions by ensnaring athletes at younger and younger ages into its belly with promises of future capital gain, funneling them through compulsory schools to colleges and universities and, for a select few, into professional athletics. During this process, they become more and more alienated from their labor as they are reduced to performance statistics. This reduction disenfranchises racialized athletes the most due to the ways that pure numbers minimizes the importance of the historical conditions that athletes like Semenya, Miller, Yearwood are running in/with. I then attend to how individual pathologization of Semenya gets expanded and applied to nations of the Global South, justifying imperialism through neoliberal and neocolonial projects. I discuss the role of national identity in sports, recognizing that nationalism is different coming from a colonized nation

compared to an imperial/colonial nation. Finally, I address the flow of power from Imperial Core and the Global North outwards. The production of scientific knowledge coming from Imperial Core has significant repercussions in the creation of the rules of play.

The final half-chapter problematizes inclusionary politics into a neoliberal capitalist system, particularly how they're framed as liberating. While it is true that Semenya, Miller, and Yearwood should participate alongside other women, that solution is short-term and doesn't address questions about nonbinary and other gender-queer athletes in sports who do not intend to or cannot undergo hormone replacement therapy, nor does it address the system that harms and profits off of Semenya, Miller, and Yearwood in the first place. While clear and actionable solutions lie outside the scope of this project, I engage with Spade to interrogate what it means to be seeking legibility with a Critical Trans politic.



## CHAPTER 1: HISTORIES OF SEX, GENDER, AND LABOR

“[T]he histories of science, medicine, and health care are literally built on the bodies of Black women.” (Bailey and Peoples, 2017, p. 12)

In 2016, excitement buzzed in the air as two British women were set to be the first trans athletes to compete in the Olympics. Though there were critics, the general attitude news sources held towards these unnamed athletes were tinged with hope – albeit worrisome about the presumed upward battle in relation to their participation – with headlines reading “Transgender Women Could Make History at Olympics for UK” (teleSUR, 2016) and “Transgender British athletes set to make history at Rio Olympics” (Armstrong, 2016). Whether or not these athletes were selected to compete is not readily available information. This is in part because their gender identity was not publicly disclosed, which is in line with the International Olympic Committee (IOC) protocols of the right to confidentiality of trans athletes' health and personal information (IOC, 2015). This runs in stark contrast to the public humiliation that South African runner Mokgadi Caster Semenya experienced since the beginning of her career, especially in the months leading up to the 2016 Olympics. Though we don't know the race of the two British athletes, it is still relevant to comment on the difference in aggression towards these athletes and Semenya because of the ways that Semenya's identity as a Black intersex queer woman from the Global South is entangled with histories and realities of continued colonial and imperial violence.

In 2016, Semenya ran an incredible season, winning the 400m, 800m, and 1500m races in the South African National Championships in the spring and then winning the 800m at the Olympics in Rio, setting South Africa's national record with 1:55.28 minutes that summer. One particular scene immediately following that race plagued news outlets around the world, capturing a moment of what should've been competitors' camaraderie. Instead, what was

immortalized was a distinguishable image of rejection: Lynsey Sharp of Great Britain and Melissa Bishop of Canada in an embrace, ignoring Semenya's outstretched hand (shown in Figure 1).



Figure 1: Sharp, Bishop, and Semenya at Rio Olympics 2016 (Morin, 2016)

This image fueled the already-ongoing discourse on whether or not Semenya had the 'right' to compete in women's races. However, this isn't the first time that Semenya received international attention. In 2009, her rapid improvement in her 800 meter times called into question her natural abilities (as opposed to abilities modified with drugs), leading to punitive scrutiny of her sex both legislatively and by the general public. Though she was ultimately cleared to compete, questions about her sex festered, coming to head during the 2016 Rio Olympics. Some scholars have pointed out that "the amount of publicity Semenya's story received, and is still generating seven years later at the 2016 Olympic Games, overwhelms any commensurate reporting on other

women athletes' stories in the past" (Hurst, 2009, as cited in Bailey, 2016, p. 4). This begs the question, what makes Semenya's story so marked?

### **The Sex and Gender Binaries: Entanglements of Black Feminism and Marxism**

There are two distinct, but deeply entangled principles that I will be turning to in order to question the soundness of gender and sex binaries: Marxism and Black Feminism. The first is a Marxist analysis of sex and gender. A critical analysis on the racialized, sexualized dynamics of sports is imperative to discussing frameworks of winning. The 'female sex' has been defined through a series of primary and secondary sex characteristics. Many feminist, queer scientists and/or theorists have critiqued this binary understanding of sex, bringing attention to limitations of the "two-sex system" in understanding human sexuality (Fausto-Sterling, 1993) and challenging the very framing of sex differentiation in-utero as creating panic around 'feminization' through passive/active dichotomies of hormones related to sex (Roberts, 2007). Others turn their attention to the production of scientific knowledge, pointing to the ways that "biology textbooks construct mindsets for the next generation of scientists" (Spanier, 1995, as cited in Roberts, 2007, p. 56). Going further, Moya Bailey argues that sociological attitudes are not only dependent on biomedical knowledge, but also inform biomedical theories and therefore affect medical practices inflicted on Black people and communities, particularly Black girls and women. She investigates this dialectical relationship in Semenya's contested participation in competitive women's sports and in the trial of R. Kelly. "The 2009 controversy surrounding world-class runner Caster Semenya," she starts, "illustrates the unique synergy between socially constructed biases and medically derived standards, which collude to pathologize some bodies more than others" (Bailey, 2016, p. 2). Semenya's sex is racialized by both social and biomedical

factors in a globalized capitalist, white supremacist world that ultimately works to justify itself in the contestation of Semenya's participation.

One of the key contradictions of sex and gender binaries is the very dichotomizing of sex and gender. At this current moment, progressive views on gender understand it as being fluid in nature, adapted and shaped through performance (Brown, 2014). Anti-discrimination policies are built on this understanding – including in competitive sports – citing respecting gender identity as a guiding principle (IAAF, 2019; IOC, 2021; NCAA, 2011). However, whereas gender is understood as socially constructed, dimorphic sex is taken as an irrefutable and objective truth.

A Marxist analysis of the construction of sex understands that sex is not a static concept, but one that changes according to social factors just as much as gender does and must be examined in relation to its historical development (Brown, 2014; Ghandy, 2016). Marxists also call attention to the upholding of the sex binary as a key component of the naturalizing of the significance of women's roles in reproductive labor, including (but not limited to) childbearing and rearing, housework, the passing of culture from one generation to the next, and much more (Brown, 2014; Ghandy, 2016; International Communist League, 2009). This labor is simultaneously belittled as being easy, while also expected of women, naturalizing their position in the family unit that takes on all of the caregiving responsibilities – often in addition to full-time jobs. Furthermore, the brunt of this unpaid, disregarded work falls on Black, Indigenous, and other racialized women as they take on jobs like housekeeping and nannying for families in the bourgeoisie and petit bourgeoisie classes. Thus, the sex binary is necessarily justified as a tactic of the patriarchal ruling class to exploit women and reduce the value of their labor (Ghandy, 2016, pp. 92-93).

Simultaneously, the induction of Black women into the market during the transatlantic slavetrade calls for a specific understanding of the production of sex and the relationship between labor and racialized bodies. Hortense Spillers calls our attention to the “atomizing” of captive bodies that obscures any distinction of a body being a part of a person, allowing the extraction of labor from enslaved people as a loss of ethics that would otherwise distinguish the body as a person, rather than a pure source of labor and nothing else (Spillers, 1987, p. 68). In other words, this atomizing is part of the very ground that the transatlantic slavertrade is built upon, because rather than people being shipped, what filled the boats were “cargo” that would be forced to work. Spillers continues:

... [T]he procedures adopted for the captive flesh demarcate a total objectification, as the entire captive community becomes a living laboratory.

The captive body, then, brings into focus a gathering of social realities as well as a metaphor for *value* so thoroughly interwoven in their literal and figurative emphases that distinctions between them are virtually useless. (p. 68)

The repeated process of the objectification of an individual enslaved person in the market economy shifted the relationship between the laborer and the labor produced insofar as their labor, in its extraction through coercion and violence, removes any semblance of ownership of labor for enslaved communities. Going further, Dána-Ain Davis discusses the status of Black enslaved women and their forced ties to the market economy:

... [E]nslaved women’s reproductive capacity into market capital to serve economic interests. In the United States, it was enslaved women who reproduced the workforce... This is a point about race and gender: only black women could give birth to enslaved children, and every black woman who was enslaved and gave birth did so to an enslaved child. In other words, the class that reproduced the workforce was limited to black women. (2019, pp. 21-24)

The insidious exploitation of Black women exposes a specific relationship between their bodies and labor, exemplifying the atomization of captive bodies to the highest degree in the ways that their bodies became symbolic of the continuation of a workforce in servitude. As the status of ‘freed’ and ‘enslaved’ gets passed down through matrilineal ties and their bodies are made into cargo, ownership of labor and of their bodies are obliterated.

Claudia Jones, notably a leading figure of the Communist Party USA (CPUSA) and later the Communist Party Great Britain (CPGB), also wrote about the conditions of Black women in the afterlife of slavery, as well as in revolutionary struggle. Her articulation of Black women’s subjugation within familial structures and labor had a slightly different emphasis than Spillers in that she preserves the family unit and connects enslaved Black women with Black women in her contemporary moment of the mid-20th century through a narrative of perseverance and fortitude against white ruling class forces that sought/seek to destroy this unit (1949). Her writing on the violence Black mothers face while bearing the weight of “rearing children in an atmosphere of lynch terror, segregation, and police brutality, and of fighting for an education of the children” (p. 3) still rings true more than 70 years later, requiring us to contend with her work with proximity to both the Antebellum period as well as today. She frames the matrilineal inheritance of emancipated status as an indication of dominance, pairing this framing with the highly influential position of women in West African families to speak to the tenacity of Black women and their location in the family (p. 7). Spillers argues that the function of “family” within the transatlantic slavetrade must be problematized due to the destabilizing effects of gender from the loss of kinship and domesticity through omnipresent property relations (1987). While Spillers’ analysis seems almost contrarian to Jones, reading them together provides two sides of the same coin: Black women’s bodies, sex, and sexuality, are made into sites in which capital, defined as a

social relation (Marxists Internet Archive Encyclopedia, n.d.), gains meaning at the expense of their lives and livelihoods. Historicizing the formation and maintenance of sex binaries allows us to understand the foundations of the racialized, capital incentives that continue to act as a driving force today. One of the key sites that perpetuates this is the Medical Industrial Complex (MIC).

Brown lays out a collection of ways that the social process of producing dimorphic sex is executed in the medical environment, one being through the harmful practices of ‘correcting’ intersex infants and children (2014). Brown brings into question the following quote from Patricia K. Donahoe et al.: “Genetic females should always be raised as females, preserving reproductive potential, regardless of how severely the patients are virilized [i.e. even if they are born with a penis, for example – F.B.]” (2014, para. 15). We are able to see the distinct motivation of sex assignment as being grounded in gender roles and a fundamental belief in sexual dimorphism (paras. 16-20). What a Marxist analysis of sex has to offer is an analysis that traces how sex’s dialectical and historical manifestations are born out of colonial bourgeoisie ideology that subsumes power through structures like patriarchy and race.

Black Feminist scholars have also been at the forefront of the conversation of disrupting the seemingly unbiased sex binary on the basis that the binary is constructed on the pathologization of Blackness, specifically Black women’s bodies (Bailey, 2016; Davis, 2019; Hobson, 2003). I argue that the aesthetic realm of pathologizing Blackness both contributes to medicalization and has its own specific discourses and consequences.

Spillers attends to the violent history of enforced application of and molding Blackness to gender and sex dimorphism in the enslavement of Africans. She articulates the act of “gendering” as happening in the context of domesticity as a concept that gains legibility, validation, and power through the cultural practice of patrilineal names. These names situate and

govern their subjects following the logics of dyadic gender. However, since enslaved people are made cargo and stripped of their African names, their way of “knowing roles” according to colonial gendering-through-domesticity offers a counter-narrative to the domestic precisely because they are gendered and assigned roles without the structure of the [colonial, nuclear] family; they are gendered without domesticity (Spillers, 1987, p. 72). However, Spillers also makes the distinction that the gendering that the enslaved African woman was subjected to was not an adaptation to the womanhood that white women embodied, but rather was a subjugation to violence reserved specifically for her as an enslaved African woman; her femininity – an enforced femininity – is dictated by her enslavement (p. 73).

One instance of the particular violence that the enslaved African woman was subject to was her “ungendering” through rape: not only was rape “an interiorized violation of body and mind” of the individual, but it was simultaneously an “externalized [act] of torture and prostration” from white men to Black men (p. 68). The enslaved African woman stood as a proxy for racialized, gendered violence between white men and Black *women* as well as between white men and Black *men*. Furthermore, the gendering process superficially imposes familial roles onto her *insofar as* she is able to birth children – or rather, reproduce slaves (p. 78). Spillers contends with this loss of motherhood: “[*kinship*] can be invaded at any given and arbitrary moment by the property relations” (p. 74, emphasis in original). As mentioned previously, her children inherit enslaved status through her, intimately entangling her reproductive capacity with the slave market. Thus, the enslaved African woman is gendered as a means of subjugation to un/gendered violence and in order to continue slavery.

Reading the sex binary through a Marxist, Black Feminist lens offers us a way to understand the binary as entangled with bourgeoisie interests of maintaining a social order that



essentializes women's role in reproductive labor and further disempowering them. This project is a racialized struggle: it dually conserves white womanhood, and maps a eugenic project of subjugating Black women so as to maintain a labor source of exploitable workers who are reduced to expendable flesh. This is particularly pronounced in the devaluation and racialization of domestic labor, as Black women have been historically pushed into and exploited in domestic work (Jones, 1949). Jones notes that Black women were excluded from all sectors of the workforce, except for the domestic sector (p. 5). Furthermore, the mammy caricature, rooted in the role Black enslaved women in raising both Black and white children, is a "device of the imperialists to perpetuate the white chauvinist ideology that Negro women are 'backward,' 'inferior,' and the 'natural slaves' of others (p. 7). Here, we can see the entanglements of aesthetics, labor, and imperialism that worked to justify exploitation and pathologization.

As a crossover between aesthetics and medicine, the Tanner Scale becomes an important site in which Black women's bodies are measured against in order to draw conclusions of 'correct' anthropometric measurements of sex and sexuality. The conclusions produced lend themselves to the judgment of productivity – as we will see in the Scale's application against Caster Semenya's body. The Tanner Scale was developed by James Mourilyan Tanner to describe pubescent development in sequential stages where each stage corresponds with age (Bailey, 2016, p. 14). The scale was largely based on the pubescent development of white children (Bailey, 2016; Karkazis and Jordan-Young, 2018) and is not an accurate representation of different material realities contributing to body development of racialized people and people from the Imperial Periphery. For example, part of Bailey's investigation of R. Kelly's trial was pulling apart some of the vile justification that the survivor, a thirteen year old Black girl, was somehow deceptive because she was 'too developed' to be that young, thereby implying that it

was either not Kelly's fault for not realizing her age, and/or implying that she brought this fate on herself by intentionally deceiving him (Bailey, 2016, p. 13). Many of the attempts to support these arguments used the Tanner Scale to measure her age according to maturity, which was oppositional to how James Mourilyan Tanner had intended the scale to be used (Rosenbloom & Tanner, 1998, as cited in Bailey, 2016).

Katrina Karkazis and Rebecca Jordan-Young discuss how the Tanner Scale was one of the measurements used for analyzing high-functioning testosterone so that official sports legislators could determine 'how female or male' an athlete was; in this case, Caster Semenya (Karkazis and Jordan-Young, 2018, p. 24). The usage of the scale here demonstrates its problematic roots – the scale has the power to dictate whether or not a body is acceptable, and if not, rendering its labor useless and the person discardable. The Tanner Scale, in both its incorrect usage and ultimately deeply skewed foundations of pubescent development, demonstrate the ways in which visual indicators of secondary sex characteristics become codified as 'unbiased' or 'objective' biological bases of sex. Bailey notes, "By attempting to estimate chronologic age through observable sex characteristics, biomedical visualization is privileged over testimony by people in the girl's life" (2016, p. 15).

Black Feminists' investigation of aesthetics is significant in locating the anti-Blackness – and specifically the misogynoir<sup>3</sup> – that is foundational to dominant imperial hegemony. While there are many misogynoir-istic tropes and stereotypes,<sup>4</sup> the one that I will be contending with is the masculinization of Black women (Bailey, 2016; Hobson, 2003). "Black women have long been portrayed as masculine and inappropriately feminine in popular media; athletes are popular

---

<sup>3</sup> Misogynoir: "the particular brand of hatred directed at black women in American visual & popular culture" (Bailey, 2010, blogpost).

<sup>4</sup> Hobson shares some of the other common tropes to be hypersexual "Hottentot Venus," "Jezebel," maternalistic and asexual "mammy" which is tied into gendered and racialized reproductive labor, "Sapphire," as well as more recent stereotypes evoking socio-economic status like "welfare queen," "quota queen" and "baby mama." (p. 2003, p. 89).

targets for this negative attention because of their muscles and physical prowess” (hooks, 1999, as cited in Bailey, 2016, p. 10). Shoniqua Roach introduces Black respectable currency as

[T]he tangible and intangible forms of cultural capital that accrue to Black women who have markers of ‘respectability’ such as class privilege, an ostensibly heteronormative partnership, a clear affiliation to a Western religion, legible gender embodiment, able-bodied privilege, US citizenship (however tenuous), and so forth—creates a form of contemporary surveillance and management of Black women. (Roach, 2019, p. 11)

This is pertinent because masculinization is a process that places its targets directly outside heteronormative respectability politics. Understanding masculinization of Black women, particularly those who are athletes, in relation to Black respectability currency allows us to analyze the response of many Black South Africans who sought to protect Semenya’s status as a woman by reaffirming her femininity, hoping to reclaim currency that was lost (Bailey, 2016, pp. 10-11). For example, South African magazine *You!* featured Semenya in an article sporting a conventionally feminine look – curled hair, painted nails, makeup, and feminine attire (p. 10) in order to emphasize her status as feminine and redeem her from the controversy that surrounded her. This utilization of/access to conventional femininity is a form of Black respectability currency that sought to paint her as undeniably a woman, and therefore deserving of care.

This response can be further examined with Spillers’ un/gendering process of enslaved African women in the transatlantic slave trade. If, as we noted earlier, “ungendering” refers to enslaved African women’s subjugation to violence in a “pansexual potential” of internal and external violation from woman and man (Spillers, 1987, p. 77), then we can see the histories of masculinizing Black women and equating Blackness to “raw force, as athleticism itself” as inextricably intertwined (Doyle, as cited in, Karkazis and Jordan-Young, 2018, p. 22). In other words, the historical context in which African women were ungendered left them vulnerable to

violence enacted by both men and women alike, precisely because they were not legible as neither man nor woman. Consequently, as athleticism and masculinity are hegemonically synonymous (Heggie, 2010, p. 158), Black women find themselves being understood as impossibly female and male. It is clear that the un/gendering of enslaved African women does not map onto the masculinization of Black women in sports; the levels of violence are certainly not parallel. However, by focusing on these histories and understanding them as evolving on a continuum, we might come to the conclusion that emphasizing Semenya's femininity in order to regain the currency is futile. The womanhood that others sought out for her is one that she would not have access to in the first place because she is a pathologized Black South African woman in this neocolonial system.

Accusations of masculinity affect elite athletes like Caster Semenya as well as high school athletes like Andrea Yearwood and Terry Miller (whose stories will be explored in Chapter 2). Masculinization of Black women demonstrates the way that sex and gender are explicitly racialized. To be masculinized is to live in a body that is outside the expectations of femininity. Femininity itself is a construction based on idealized white womanhood. It is best to understand femininity as defined by and defining Black womanhood because of the ways that Black women are both denied femininity as well as define what 'isn't feminine.' "Whiteness is an essential part of the traditional image of ideal femininity in the West" (Karkazis and Jordan-Young, 2018, p. 14). However, it is not just that Black women are denied/defining femininity. As we see in Roach's definition of Black respectable currency, surveillance is a key part of masculinization – and pathologization. That is to say, Black women are surveilled and villainized to prevent them from intentionally presenting masculinity, and if/when they *are*

hypermasculinized, they are marked as needing correcting. Karkazis and Jordan-Young remind us:

Scholars calling attention to the racial and regional politics of [testosterone regulation] have pointed out how historic associations of hegemonic femininity with whiteness continue to bring women of color under particular scrutiny (Karkazis et al. 2012; Cooky and Dworkin 2013; Pieper 2014) (pp. 6-7).

Bailey uses Clarke and Olesen's (1999) concept of *surveillance medicine* to describe Semenya's existence in science and media: "She was the victim of 'surveillance medicine' that marked her as potentially ill because of social investment in discrete sexes." (2016, pp. 9-10). Clarke and Olesen define *surveillance medicine* as

[T]he creations of *potentially* diseased persons through risk analyses of individuals, communities, and populations... Based on risk factors (derived from large-scale correlational data banks made possible by computing), the new surveillance medicine involves a fundamental remapping of the spaces of illness. In traditional Western clinical medicine, symptoms indicate an underlying pathological lesion within a specific individual patient's body—localized and specified. In contrast, surveillance medicine dissolves clinical categories of healthy and ill persons in favor of new categories of individuals-at-risk and at-risk communities and populations, via strategies of pathologization and vigilance. (1999, pp. 21-22)

In other words, *surveillance medicine* describes a mechanism of the MIC that justifies invasive procedures and constant watch of people deemed unwell. This has phenomenal implications for Black people and communities due to how the MIC pathologizes Blackness, which can be seen in Semenya's treatment in both medical settings and in media. The MIC understands her body as fundamentally wrong and outside the expectations of womanhood (which are historically

foundationally defined at the expense of Black women), and so therefore, she must be “at-risk” for sickness, and consequently, must be watched.

### **Pathology and medicalization: Bodies must be corrected**

Pathologized bodies are ones that can/must be corrected, which leads to the medicalization of bodies. The desire to fix what is deemed abnormal or unhealthy has been long critiqued by scholars in Black studies, Disability studies, Feminist and Queer studies (Bailey, 2016; Bailey and Mobley, 2018; Jules Gill-Peterson, 2018; Karkazis and Jordan-Young, 2018; Spade, 2011). Surveillance medicine is one of the ways pathologization is implemented in that bodies are presumed to be *potentially* ill, and thus require attention and intervention. Using a Trans of Color critical framework, Jules Gill-Peterson investigates the centrality of trans children “to the medicalization of sex and gender during the twentieth century in a very specific way, made valuable through a racialized discourse of plasticity” (2018, p. 3). Plasticity, in relation to histories of trans medicine, refers to the ways that children’s prepubescent bodies are viewed as malleable – not yet influenced by hormones and other bodily changes that make a boy a man, and a girl a woman. This marks medicalization of trans children as the future, as signs of progress; however, the trans child subject is hegemonically white. This denial of transness from Black children can be seen from misdiagnoses of schizophrenia and/or homosexuality, leading to various forms of incarceration (p. 31). Furthermore, the futurity of white trans children rides on the continued reduction and obliteration of Black trans women and other trans women of color (p. 2). Gill-Peterson suggests that “[n]aming modern sex and gender as racialized white though *[sic]* the medicalization of plasticity in children’s bodies, for instance, implies an exclusionary and dehumanizing relation to the racialization of black trans life” (p. 30). Though medicalized gender and transness is a loaded conversation on its own, in its conceptualization it is often only

recognized in white children. Accordingly, while the attendance to pathologized trans and intersex bodies through medical procedures is often invasive, unnecessary, nonconsensual, and/or harmful, it is ultimately built on the violence inflicted on Black, Indigenous, and other racialized communities.

Black women are put in a position to be pathologized and receive no care or excessive care. Davis's book *Reproductive Injustice: Racism, Pregnancy, and Premature Birth* (2019) documents stories of Black mothers in the U.S. receiving misdiagnoses or no diagnoses as an outcome of misogynoir in the medical system. These stories, she points out, take place in the afterlife of slavery and not only *continue* violent practices of physicians towards/on Black women (Davis, 2019, pp. 89-114), I would argue they also *expand* these practices to be legitimate in the neoliberal world of the late 20th-21st century. Anti-Blackness, and specifically misogynoir, is able to continue because of the way it's written into the very medical textbooks that teach medical students and prepare them for clinical practice. Bailey states:

The models and figures within medical materials are produced for healthcare providers as examples of health and disease, and as representations of who they are in relation to their patients. I label these representations *didactic medical media* as they are created with the intent to educate healthcare professionals and students about health and disease. Didactic medical media provides doctors with representations of bodily function and anatomy that assist them in assessing health, as well as in offering constructions of their own role and place in the medical interaction. The standardization of these figures is valued because it supports consistency across the practice of medicine. However, this modeling can elide the abnormal with the pathological, making structures in real people that do not fit textbook examples not only different but aberrant. (2016, pp. 13-14, emphasis in original)

The pattern of misdiagnoses and missing diagnoses of both Black women and Black trans children highlight the processes of gendering and ungendering that shape medicalized gender

through the pathologization of their bodies and lives. In other words, Black women are gendered insofar as they are required to inherit the gendered expectations of reproduction, and they are ungendered in the ways misogyny is passed down through *didactic medical media*, teaching medical professionals and contributing to the violence experienced in their reproductive labor. Black trans children are forcibly gendered when their experiences with gender and sex are disregarded, and then are subsequently ungendered when unwanted and unnecessary medical procedures are forced onto them in order to fix perceived problems, due to their illegibility within the MIC as trans children. Thus, we are reminded that the pathologization and medicalization of Black women and children is woven into our institutions, and will continue to be perpetuated until we commit to dismantling them and building new systems of care and intentionality. Furthermore, these regimes of power through pathologization are not confined to the U.S. but are dispersed through processes of globalization from the Imperial Core (U.S. and Canada, Western Europe, Australia, and New Zealand) to the Imperial Periphery.

Part of Semenya's intersex identity is based on her levels of testosterone, which are deemed higher than those of a 'typical woman.' Her body and her story is entangled with discourse around the significance of testosterone in defining sex and gender. "T Talk," or the hegemonic dialogue surrounding testosterone and its relation to sex, (Karkazis and Jordan-Young, 2018, p. 7), presents a key example of pathologization treated as unbiased, unarguable science that is highly prevalent in the world of competitive sports today. T Talk pathologizes the sexual variation of athletes and dictates measures that sports authorities and governing bodies should take in mitigating these differences. It suggests that 'real biological women' have functioning testosterone levels that are not only considerably lower than men, but that high levels of testosterone are fundamentally dangerous to women; from that, we are to



conclude that intervention in high levels of testosterone is not only positive because it allows trans and intersex women to compete in women's athletics, but that it is presumably physiologically healthier to bring levels down to those of a 'normal woman.' T Talk is a form of surveillance medicine because it provides the justification for people like Semenya to be monitored and potentially medically intervened upon, despite the fact that in actuality, they do not report experiencing any pain or discomfort due to their testosterone levels. Surveillance medicine lends itself to paternalistic framing of these medical interventions in that medical professionals and the MIC assume they know what's best because *they know who is sick*. This sets the stage for humanitarian modes of biopolitics that work to shape people into governable subjects. In the process of intervening under the guise of moralistic humanitarianism, these biopolitics also define who is legible and who is illegible, leading to their disposal or coerced 'fixing.' Returning to Gill-Peterson, she points out that the medical model of transness often frames trans medical care as supporting people who *aspire* to be either men or women, thereby rejecting any lived/embodied knowledge of one's identity and one's body (2018, p. 17). It is paternalistic humanitarianism that dictates medicalized trans 'care.' The violence perpetuated by this 'care' is exponentially exacerbated when the person/community receiving this 'care' is Black and/or Brown and histories of anti-Blackness and other racialized subjugation inform the ways healthcare providers engage with them.

Karkazis and Jordan-Young challenge this framework of humanitarianism by engaging with Miriam Tickin's "regimes of care" to describe the mode of aid that is given as a response to medical pathologization through medical science (Ticktin, as cited by Karkazis and Jordan-Young, 2018, p. 10). In Ticktin's book *Casualties of Care: Immigration and the Politics of Humanitarianism in France* (2011), she investigates the use of care as a mechanism of

creating a legible, sick body – according to the French nation-state and border police – and evoking medical science as a common-ground force of progression, objectivity, and morality. Similarly, Karkazis and Jordan-Young note that women athletes are not seeking to be sick, but rather that they are made to be sick based on sports governing bodies' regulations: “[s]port authorities appeal to the notion of a sick or ‘suffering’ body, as do humanitarians seeking to provide some refuge within restrictive immigration laws, and in both cases, medical science is the arbiter of suffering” (2018, p. 17). Here, we can see an articulation of illness based on narrow conceptualizations of what an athletic woman’s body should look like and act like, and an insistence that bodies that do not look or act in these ways must be unwell and consequently must be made healthy.

Thus, T Talk becomes a means of locating sickness, thereby justifying the call for intersex athletes with high testosterone levels like Semenya to lower their levels – that not only is it ‘more fair,’ but it is in fact ‘good for them.’ This is coupled with the call for transgender/transsexual women to lower their testosterone levels in order to compete alongside other women – in order to be women. Furthermore, the process of pathologizing intersex and trans bodies is built on the naturalizing of sex binaries and centering the white female body as the epitome of womanhood. After all, the testosterone regulations imposed in sports are done in comparison and as a response to white women athletes, which will be explored in the next chapter.

The reality is, side effects of different treatments to lower testosterone have serious adverse health effects that should be considered by the person undergoing the process in order to obtain complete and total consent. A paper reviewing the IOC’s demand to oversee

hyperandrogenism – high levels of testosterone and/or other androgens – delves into some of these effects:

Among a large cohort of women receiving suppressive therapies, roughly two thirds experienced important side effects. These side effects can be serious for an athlete, including diuretic effects that cause excessive thirst, urination, and electrolyte imbalances; disruption of carbohydrate metabolism (such as glucose intolerance or insulin resistance); headache; fatigue; nausea; hot flushes; and liver toxicity.

Gonadectomy will cause hypogonadism, compromising bone and muscle strength and risking chronic weakness, depression, sleep disturbance, poor libido, adverse effects on lipid profile, diabetes, and fatigue. (Jordan-Young, Sönksen, and Karkazis, 2014)

To reiterate: intervention on testosterone levels is often posed as a benefit for athletes, but it is clear from the passages that there are serious health risks of doing so, especially considering the high physical demands on athletes of any level. The coercive nature of competitive sports, particularly those at the college and elite levels, pressures athletes to undergo such treatments because the alternatives are to be called a cheat, misgendered, and/or barred from competing. Prohibition from competition is a risk that many athletes cannot take when their participation in sports is also their labor, their means of financial stability. The pressure is further complicated for athletes in the Imperial Periphery because the regimes of care are being extended from within the Imperial Core, and the geopolitical move to reject the Core's 'care' is never as simple as choosing to opt out.

### **Pathology and medicalization: Bodies must be controlled**

Returning to the concept of “surveillance medicine” as conceived by Clarke and Olesen (1999) and later used by Bailey (2016), there is a social investment in manufacturing *potentially*

diseased persons through risk analyses of individuals, communities, and populations (Clarke and Olesen, 1999, pp. 21-22). Bailey expands this further and names sexed and gendered surveillance medicine as the interest in maintaining distinguishable (and dichotomized) sexes (Bailey, 2016, pp. 9-10). I argue that there is also an economic investment in surveillance medicine and in the perpetuation of the sex binary that drives not only the continued (and often coercive) consumption and participation in the MIC, but the maintenance of laborers – and the production of an expendable and exploitable workforce. The Athletic Industrial Complex (AIC) (Smith, 2014) is home to a network of expendable laborers, from the fan service to the sports corporations, from the athletes to their coaches, and from the sales worker to the state. It is also no mistake that the AIC is implicitly and explicitly connected to the Prison Industrial Complex (PIC), another source of expendable labor (Runstedtler, 2018; Smith, 2014; Roy, 2022). Runstedtler suggests that “[i]n the case of the athletic and prison industrial complexes, both involve mutually favorable relationships between public/nonprofit and private entities that benefit from the continual flow of bodies through the system” (2018, p. 154). This connection is relevant in understanding the connections between pathologization, incarceration, and control.

The preservation of sex and gender binaries is in part executed by surveillance of Black queer and trans people. In a talk delivered in 2018, Treva Ellison discusses the story of Tisha, Mary, and Rita, three Black gender nonconforming women in the domestic labor force who were racially profiled, arrested, and subsequently outed as being gender nonconforming. They explain,

The story of Tisha, Mary, and Rita is meant to act as a monstrous manifestation of the potential of interracial contact and underscore the always already lurking sexual and gender deviance of Black laborers. Black Trans reproductive labor in this instance then is about the work that ungendering does to assert the inherent trans positionality of Black gender in order to reproduce the racial and gender social relations of the post-war labor market. (29:23)

Poor and working class Black queer and trans women in particular are criminalized. They are understood as a threat to the middle class white cisheteronormative nuclear family, and punished because of it. T Talk and other forms of sex testing that target Black women and gender nonconforming athletes from the Global South is not an anomaly of power differentiation that only focuses on sex, gender, race, and region. Their status as Black laborers within the AIC plays a huge role in their navigation as professional athletes.

Chris Bambery's Marxist analysis of sports offers insight into the alienation of labor that occurs in competitive sports under a capitalist system:

Capitalist competition affects every kind of human activity – intruding into love, play and all social relations. In sport obsessive repetition – who can run fastest, who is the strongest, who can throw furthest – increases the alienation of the individual. Sports ideology, like all ideologies, conceals the real structure of productive and social relations under capitalism. These are of course seen as 'natural'. Relations between individual humans within the sporting institutions are transformed into material relations between things: scores, machines and records. In the process human bodies are treated as commodities. (1996, pp. 3-4)

The very nature of competitive sports as we know it today produces a sector of labor, and those who remain the most tenuously established in this sector are Black queer, trans, and intersex people. This is not surprising, considering that the global power that drives sports legislation and globalization of sports marketing and consumerism lies in the Imperial Core, namely the Global North. The IOC headquarters are currently in Switzerland, and it was founded in France in 1894. The IAAF headquarters are located in Monaco, and it was founded in Sweden. Many of the executive members of both organizations have been historically occupied by people from the Global North. Furthermore, the U.S. remains incredibly influential on the global stage because of

its economic and political power. Bambery brings attention to the role that sports play in imperial projects:

Imperialism was not only a question of the subjection of the colonial populations. For Lenin and other Marxists imperialism was important as a means of ideologically tying the masses to their own ruling class through the ideas of nationalism and racism. Organised sport originated in the imperialist nations – they drew up the rules and formed the governing bodies in the years between 1860 and 1890. (8)

Therefore, it should be no surprise that anti-Blackness, transphobia, sexism, and classism are woven into the fabric of competitive sports.

### **The “Us”/“Them” of Fairness**

The most significant takeaway from Karkazis and Jordan-Young’s work on T Talk (2018) is the investigation of how T Talk and the resulting regulations are mapped racially and globally. Bringing our attention back to the difference between the two unnamed British athletes and Semenya at the beginning of this chapter, we are reminded of the differentiation of rights or privileges some athletes have access to over their fellow competitors based on their geolocation, race, and other facets of their identity. Dutee Chand, a sprinter from India who also challenged the IAAF and the Athletics Federation of India (AFI) on the grounds of discrimination of DSD (Difference of Sex Development syndrome) regulations, also had the results of her (nonconsensual) sex tests leaked to the public. Karkazis and Jordan-Young state:

Privacy is not, then, a general right, but a specific form of privilege that is reserved for those with favored racial, gender, sexual, class, or national status. This regulation makes some women athletes’ bodies permanently available for surveillance and public “reading,” probing, and coercion. Our analysis of this regulation shows that the concept of “predictable failures” applies to other protections, such as fairness or health, which are constructed around the needs of those who already enjoy privilege. (2016, p. 10)

As we can see, some people are not seen as needing protection or privacy for their bodies – and it is no mistake that Black and Brown bodies are the ones systemically barred from those rights. After all, the viewing and resulting violation of racialized bodies has been a horrifically integral part of racial capitalism. Privacy is reserved for those who are legible (and ‘correct’) according to the law in the first place.

Karkazis and Jordan-Young demonstrate how T Talk is used both directly and indirectly to target Black and Brown women from the Global South through investigating who are the perpetual targets of legislative, medical, and public scrutiny. In their investigation of a presentation given at the International Convention on Science, Education and Medicine in Sport (ICSEMIS) in 2012, they reveal how urgency was manufactured against women of the Global South for hyperandrogenism. They bring in the words of Stéphane Bermon, who was at that time, a member of the World Athletics (IAAF) Medical and Anti-Doping Commission:

First, HA [hyperandrogenism], especially DSD [Difference of Sex Development syndrome], is not so rare in female sports, at least athletics. I say ‘at least athletics’ because as you probably know athletics is a whole world sports, it’s not purely the Caucasian sports. We have a lot of people coming from Africa, Asia and we have a lot of these cases coming from these countries. So, of course, there is a kind of recruitment bias, a double one. One because they have an unfair advantage, some of them, so of course they compete better and they reach more easily the higher level. And the other one is I would say an ethnic or local area recruitment bias, because they are undiagnosed at birth, so they are raised with this condition, and they arrive at the highest level with this condition, which is quite seldom in rich countries where they are treated just after birth. (Bermon, 2012, as cited by Karkazis and Jordan-Young, 2018, p. 22)

His use of “we” indicates a “them” – people from Africa and Asia; “we” have a lot of cases coming from “them.” Bermon draws clear geographical borders between those who have

high testosterone levels and those who don't, pathologizing entire regions and therefore calling for means of correcting and controlling the people from these regions.

This quote from Bermon is also insightful as to how testosterone regulation is circulated and ultimately mandated through humanitarianism. His statement about intersex women from Africa and Asia frames these athletes as accidentally competing unfairly. His suggestion that they are “undiagnosed at birth, raised with this condition, and arriving at the highest level” shifts the blame for being intersex from the athlete to their home nations, and implies that they require ‘help’ or ‘saving’ from “us” (i.e. governing bodies from the Global North).

As I mentioned earlier, medical intervention on testosterone levels is pointed to as positive opportunities. Humanitarianism is a tool of imperialism, particularly from the U.S. Empire. I link humanitarianism to neoliberal and neocolonial power because of the way that humanitarian tropes like “saving Brown women from Brown men” (Spivak, 1988, p. 92) and sanctions against socialist projects like the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) and Cuba on the basis of ‘human rights violations’ are used to justify U.S. intervention and occupation, whether that be through economic means or outright war. Karkazis and Jordan-Young note:

Colonial myths concern ‘pathological cultures’ as well as pathological bodies, recasting violent colonial interventions as “saving” women from their own (violent and misogynist) communities...The IOC and IAAF frame interventions as an unmitigated good, especially because they target women from the Global South, coming from situations that Bermon and Ljungqvist have described as ‘lacking competence’ for dealing with the conditions that are ‘revealed’ through investigations. (p. 27-29)



Humanitarianism ultimately becomes embedded within hegemonic common sense by being positioned as the ‘right thing to do’ and shapes the hegemonic body as being from the Imperial Core.

Medical pathologization and consequential intervention is also enforced through western and imperial domination in sports under the guise of “fairness.” A common misconception about gender testing in sports is that it started in the 1960s. In Vanessa Heggie’s paper titled “Testing Sex and Gender in Sports; Reinventing, Reimagining and Reconstructing Histories” (2010), she traces the scrutiny of sex and calls for verification back to the 1920s-30s, which calls on us to contextualize its origins in World War II and Cold War politics. “Gender fraud” refers to the act of competing under the “women” category in bad faith; in other words, an intentional and malicious move that threatens “fairness” in competitive sports (Heggie, 2010). “Gender fraud” can also turn into a proper noun, casting an entire person as both factually and morally incorrect – that their gender is wrong and that this wrongness is intentional, and they have been caught in the act. Heggie points out that athletes who were painted as committing “gender fraud” were those who were representing socialist/communist projects (the USSR and the GDR) and fascist/totalitarian states (Nazi Germany). This renders bodies that don’t fit sex dimorphism to be fundamentally wrong, and therefore justifiably surveilled, corrected, and controlled by hegemonically politically correct governing bodies (read: located in the Imperial Core).

What Karkazis and Jordan-Young and Heggie have in common is this interrogation of “fairness” – who is being protected, and who is left out. They reckon with the ways that sex testing functions as a protector of certain bodies as well as a definer of women’s abilities. Heggie states:

Sex testing, after all, is a tautological (or at least circular) process: the activities which we recognise as sports are overwhelmingly those which favour a physiology which we

consider ‘masculine’. As a general rule, the competitor who is taller, has a higher muscle-to-fat ratio, and the larger heart and lungs (plus some other cardio-respiratory factors) will have the sporting advantage... What the sex test effectively does, therefore, is provide an upper limit for women’s sporting performance; there is a point at which your masculine-style body is declared ‘too masculine’, and you are disqualified, regardless of your personal gender identity (p. 158).

Heggie brings our attention to the ways athletics themselves are constructed around athletic prowess, which is historically linked to masculinity. In theory, then, any woman in sports can be under scrutiny for ‘being a man’ if they get too close to male standards. “At one level, the regulation harms all women athletes. It is built upon the premise that sport is a masculine domain and it is a distortion of nature for women to enter it in a serious, competitive way” (Kahn 1998, Krane et al. 2004, as cited by Karkazis and Jordan-Young, 2016, p. 29). Both Heggie and Karkazis and Jordan-Young call our attention to the way that the entire field of competitive sports is built upon binary categories of sex, and thus those who fall outside this binary become a threat to the fairness and integrity of the sport, and a threat to the binary itself. This throws the supposed impenetrability of ‘natural’ dimorphic sex that, as we discussed earlier, satisfies the division of labor and subjugation of women into question. Anyone who falls out of these categories and/or looks to challenge them threatens this flow of capital and must be contained or erased. In practice, this kind of judgment is inflicted onto women who are already not legible as women; their womanhood is conditional to them fitting into the narrow definition of ‘woman.’ As discussed earlier in the chapter, Black women are in a constant state of being un/gendered, defining what it means to be a woman just as much as what it means *not* to be a woman; furthermore, they are read as hypermasculine both inside and out of the context of sports. Meanwhile, women from nations who are ideologically misaligned with the Imperial Core –

specifically communist/socialist projects – are perceived as a threat to those within the Imperial Periphery. There is a continuity of those who receive the most surveillance of their sex and gender, which will be explored further in the third chapter.

Recognizing the contingency of this shift is important in disrupting the soundness of the field of competitive sports as being “objectively fair.” Both Heggie and Karkazis and Jordan-Young disrupt the assumption that “fairness” is granted to all athletes by demonstrating the ways that scrutiny of sex and gender is only applied to athletes from particular regions and/or racialized athletes. Winning is built on a superficial understanding of a level playing field, where white women from the Imperial Core are threatened by the “unfairness” of the “athletic superiority” of Black women and Brown women, especially those from the Imperial Periphery (Karkazis and Jordan-Young, 2018). In the same conversation, white women from the Imperial Core saturated in capitalism and liberalism are threatened by the “unfairness” of the “unethicality” of Eastern European women. I do not want to imply that these realities are the same by any means; racialized people of the Global South have deep and violent histories and current realities of colonialism and neocolonialism. With that said, there is still space to link the application of sex testing as a mechanism of control of western hegemony and imperial power, veiled by the faux promise of fairness in competition. We can see that sex testing, gender fraud, and T talk have always been, and continue to be, saturated in anti-Blackness, anti-communism, racism, sexism, transphobia, and past/current projects of neocolonialism.

## **CHAPTER 2: CONTINUITIES BETWEEN SEMENYA, MILLER, AND YEARWOOD**

It is perhaps unsurprising that an object that expressed the directive to look would perform an instrumental role in the narrative emergence of gynecology in the United States. Investitures in the visual in the making of racial slavery meant organizing life according to who was doing the seeing and who or what was being over/seen. (Snorton, 2017, p. 31)

### **Seeing Semenya in the Afterlife of Slavery**

If one were to run a search with Caster Semenya's name, it would yield over 2.4 million results featuring news articles and think pieces, academic papers in several different fields, interviews about her, with her, and countless other links that reference her – or more specifically, her body – dating back to 2009. As discussed in the previous chapter, anti-Blackness, transphobia, colonialism, and imperialism permeate a significant amount of the narratives constructed around Semenya's body and athletic career. This includes documents and legislation passed by the World Athletics (IAAF) and International Olympic Committee (IOC), a focal point in how culturally-informed medical knowledge is cemented into society. The practice of seeing Black people and reducing them to not only Black bodies, but Black flesh is ingrained and normalized in scientific discourse. This comes from a long lineage of colonial conquest and enslavement of Africans. Spillers offers a framework of understanding bodies and flesh that is instructive in how we can understand the demarcation of race, sex, and gender:

This profitable 'atomizing' of the captive body provides another angle on the divided flesh: we lose any hint or suggestion of a dimension of ethics, of relatedness between human personality and its anatomical features, between one human personality and another, between human personality and cultural institutions. To that extent, the procedures adopted for the captive flesh demarcate a total objectification, as the entire captive community becomes a living laboratory. (1987, p. 67)

As mentioned in Chapter 1, this passage is useful in understanding the process of ciphering the body from the person, and how it defines the conditions of a class – the enslaved class – that is flattened into cargo with extractable labor. This allows a derivation of meaning stemming from atomized body parts as symbols for productive and reproductive labor. The atomizing of the captive body also provides the ground in which Black people are made fungible with each other – not as people, but as laboring bodies.

The viewing of Black people as flesh is both born out of and produces anti-Blackness, further contributing to the formation of the ideal body, the legible body. Others have noted the ways that the viewership of Semenya echoes the history of the “Hottentot Venus” (Karkazis and Jordan-Young, 2018; Chung, 2019). The first “Hottentot Venus” was a Khoikhoi woman named Saartjie Baartman (it’s important to note that though Baartman is the most well-known woman who was exhibited under the title “Hottentot Venus,” she was not the only one (Hobson, 2003, p. 89)). Baartman was taken from South Africa in the nineteenth century and put on display in Europe for her “steatopygia,” or “protruding buttocks” (p. 90) – perceived as an anomaly in comparison to white women’s ‘non-protruding buttocks.’ “The experience of Saartjie Baartman... is the quintessential example of European exploitation and commodification of African women, often enacted under the guise of scientific progress,” (Karkazis and Jordan-Young, 2018, p. 6). Similarly, the investigation of Semenya and other African runners’ primary and secondary sex characteristics as well as their chromosomes and hormones through the process of sex testing echoes this history of viewership and subsequent violation of Black women, fragmented and objectified.

But there's another story that I find relevant to our analysis of viewing that takes place during the mid-19th century in the Antebellum South: that of Anarcha, Betsey, Lucy, and other unnamed enslaved women of which James Marion Sims, the "father of gynecology," performed countless rudimentary, painful surgeries on in order to experiment methods of curing vesicovaginal fistula (VVF). His experiments included thirty surgeries on Anarcha alone, without any anesthetics. Sims claims that surgeries were "consented to" by every "patient," though as C. Riley Snorton points out, consent was never something that was available to Anarcha, Betsey, Lucy, or any of the others (2017, p. 23). The result of the years of experimenting and unquantifiable endurance of the experimentees yielded Sims' "success" in curing VVF, though we must be critical of this notion of achievement. Snorton's investigation of the violence that was enacted in Sims' home reveals the ways in which Blackness was forcibly minimized to flesh and became a site of defining gender for the sake of medical progression:

The elaborate description of procedures for turning slave quarters into a medical examination room articulates what Marie Jenkins Schwartz called the 'medical plantation,' a model for medical knowledge in which life and death were 'to be managed according to the wishes of slaveholders.' Here, the medical plantation rhetorically transverses the frontier, as the language of discovery that envelops the passage becomes an aperture with which to perceive how divided flesh was defined by its characteristic accessibility, its availability for viewing, exploration, and other modes of unrelenting, unmitigated apprehension. (pp. 22-23)

As the medical plantation became the foundations for the Medical Industrial Complex (MIC), the practice of understanding Black flesh as accessible for viewership and exploration promotes a continuum of violence against Black people in the name of medical/scientific progress. Semenya started taking oral contraceptives in 2010. At the time, there was no information that would describe how this contraceptive would reduce her testosterone levels or affect her overall health

as an athlete, making it clear that this process was new – an experiment for World Athletics just as much as it was new for Semenya (this sentiment was shared by Semenya herself during the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) trial) (*Semenya v. IAAF, 2019*, p. 18). When World Athletics subjected Semenya to hormone-suppressing drugs through the Eligibility Regulations for the Female Classification (better known as “Differences of Sex Development (DSD) regulations”) in order to compete, the medical plantation that experimented on Anarcha, Betsey, and Lucy becomes present because of the experimentation of their bodies, and consequently, Semenya’s body. The viewing and subsequent experimentation on Semenya was ultimately used to find justification for narrow definitions of sex and gender. However, she is still not ‘granted womanhood’ – her subjugation as ungendered flesh allows the further production of gender and dictation of what is female, while she herself is further mis-gendered. In other words, while the experiments might produce the parameters of what is a female, her own womanhood would continue to be questioned. This is not dissimilar from the formation of gynecology – coming forth from ungendered flesh – with Anarcha, Betsey, Lucy, and the others continuously being barred from gender, or more specifically, white femininity:

As a shared node in the collateral genealogies of blackness and transness, Sims’s archive presents one side of flesh’s vestibularizing paradigm, wherein Anarcha, Betsey, Lucy, and the unnamed other captives were rendered as raw materials for making the field of “women’s medicine,” from which they were excluded as women according to the attenuating frame of plantation medicine’s sexual economies. (Snorton, 2017, p. 53)

The significance of viewing, of being able to view, mandates that power to do so and to pass judgment based on that viewing mandates a unilateral direction of power that can be seen in World Athletics’ treatment of Semenya and in Sims’ treatment of Anarcha, Betsey, and Lucy. We saw this in Chapter 1 with the judicial use of the Tanner Scale against Semenya and the survivor

of the R. Kelly trial. Viewership power is also replicated in the public sphere, as seen with many competitors and reporters acting in concert (whether intentional or not) with each other to call into question Semenya's sex and justify medical intervention or consequential disqualification.

Lynsey Sharp, a white runner from Great Britain, has been extremely vocal throughout the years in the 'injustice' she faces from having to run against Semenya. In the 2016 Olympics, Sharp placed sixth in the 800m race. In an interview directly after the race, she states:

I have tried to avoid the issue all year. You can see how emotional it all was. We know how each other feels. It is out of our control and how much we rely on people at the top sorting it out. The public can see how difficult it is with the change of rule but all we can do is give it our best. (Sharp, as cited in Morgan, 2016, lines 21-26)

Earlier that summer in an interview with *The Daily Telegraph*, she had also said, "Everyone can see it's two separate races so there's nothing I can do" (line 40). In both instances, she evokes the language of seeing. It may be that her conscious intention was to bring attention to the times produced that day, as well as a slew of races that had taken place over the course of the previous eight or so years. However, by claiming that people can "see" the difficulties and unfairness she believes she is facing, she evokes viewing power to discern whether or not Semenya should be there in the first place based on her physique, not just her times. In doing so, Sharp juxtaposes the visuals of her own, hegemonically 'correct' body and thrusts Semenya's body into question and promotes the ungendering and dissection of Semenya.

Another function of the colonial gaze is the making of Black fungibility. Fungibility delineates a project of rearranging and interchanging "atomized flesh" (Spillers, 1987, p. 67) on the grounds of enforced sameness. Snorton suggests that:

Flesh is, above all else, a thing that produces relations—real and imagined, metaphysical and material. As Nicole Ivy argues, "[N]ot only were black women made to be the



ciphers through which medical knowledge about an imagined constituency of suffering white womanhood could be telegraphed, they also remained rendered knowable and fungible across time and geographic space. (p. 40)

In Sims' autobiography, he discusses the operations performed at the onset of his experimentation with Anarcha, Betsey, and Lucy. At one point, he calls his experimenter "Lucy" rather than Betsey, pulling our attention to how fungibility gave rise to the cure for VVF – he was working with flesh that is to be viewed, understood, marked, and acted upon according to his discretion (p. 22), not distinct bodies of different people. This is in part why we can only know "Anarcha, Betsey, Lucy, and the unnamed others" as such; the unnamed others could very well be Anarcha, Betsey, and/or Lucy – the archive only allows us this.

This practice of viewing and making Black women fungible is evident in the ways that scientists and critics approach Semenya, whether they be affiliated with the IAAF/ IOC/other sports governing bodies or not. Joanna Harper, a transgender scientist and runner who has written extensively about trans and intersex athletes in sports and advocates for testosterone regulations, commented on the competition of the Rio Olympics 800m race prior to its occurrence – the same one that Semenya was in. "With the 2015 CAS ruling in Chand case<sup>5</sup> [*sic*]," she said, "we now have a new playing field. I believe that it is not unreasonable to suggest that half of the eight-women's 800 meter final in Rio might well be intersex, and it is not unlikely that three presumably intersex women will sweep the podium" (Harper, as cited in Naik, 2016, para. 4). One of the athletes she alludes to is, to no surprise, Semenya. At that point, Semenya was already known to be an intersex athlete. However, the effect of Harper throwing in the possibility of about four intersex athletes, three of whom will dominate the race, does a lot of

---

<sup>5</sup> In *Chand v. AFI (Athletics Federation of India) and IAAF (2014)*, CAS ruled in favor of Chand and agreed that there was not substantial proof of testosterone being a clear indicator of better athletic performance in women, resulting in the suspension of IAAF hyperandrogenism regulations for two years, providing the opportunity for the IAAF to prove otherwise

work in making the three Black women – all from Africa – who were in that race interchangeable with each other. The track results of the race came out as such:

Place	Name	Country	Time
1st	Caster Semenya	South Africa	1:55.28
2nd	Francine Niyonsaba	Burundi	1:56.49
3rd	Margaret Nyairera Wambui	Kenya	1:56.89
4th	Melissa Bishop	Canada	1:57.02
5th	Joanna Józwik	Poland	1:57.37
6th	Lynsey Sharp	Great Britain	1:57.69
7th	Marina Arzamasova	Belarus	1:59.10
8th	Kate Grace	USA	1:59.57

Table 1: Results of the 2016 Olympics 800m women’s finals. Results taken from <https://olympics.com/en/olympic-games/rio-2016/results/athletics/800m-women>.

As Table 1 shows, Semenya, Niyonsaba, and Wambui came in first, second, and third place, respectively. Given that Harper had already speculated that half the athletes were intersex, and that first, second, and third place would likely be taken by these intersex athletes, she sets up the spectator to question the sex of anyone who finishes in the top three. Paired with the fact that intersex-ness is viewed as an attribute of women from the Global South, and particularly Black women, Niyonsaba and Wambui’s bodies are thrown into the same speculation that Semenya faces, because they are deemed interchangeable with each other. Sharp and Joanna Józwik echo Harper’s sentiments in interviews taking place before and after the race. Prior to the race, Sharp had told *The Daily Telegraph* “there [are] ‘obvious’ athletes with heightened testosterone amid rumours that there were two more competitors who were ‘intersex’ [*sic*]” (Sharp, as cited by Morgan, 2016, lines 56-58). Sharp confirms spectators’ suspicions that they will find the answer inevitable when they watch the race by phrasing the intersex-ness of athletes as “obvious.” Who

else would be perceived as an “obvious” threat to the ‘fairness’ of the race for an athlete like Sharp, other than the two remaining African runners on the field? Once the race concludes, spectators’ suspicions are confirmed when second and third place are won by Black women who were rumored to be intersex, and thus ‘justified’ their fungibility that Harper had already implied.

After the race, Jóźwik stated: “The three athletes who were on the podium raise a lot of controversy. I must admit that for me it is a little strange that the authorities do nothing about this. These colleagues have a very high testosterone level, similar to a male's, which is why they look how they look and run like they run” (Jóźwik, as cited by Flanagan, 2016, lines 9-14). It’s notable that both Sharp and Jóźwik assume that Niyonsaba and Wambui have elevated testosterone levels, despite the fact that that information was either not known or leaked to the public at that time, and that intersexuality refers to an array of various sexual attributes. However, as Karkazis and Jordan-Young point out, testosterone levels are currently dominating the discourse around dimorphic differentiation of sex in the ways that testosterone is essentialized as a “sex hormone” of male development (despite the fact that testosterone has an abundance of functions in all bodies (2018, p. 7). Since it is evident that Sharp and Jóźwik see the three medalists as fungible, and Semenya was known to have higher levels of testosterone, Niyonsaba and Wambui ‘must be the same.’ To return to the colonial viewing of Black women, when both Sharp and Jóźwik center the visual significance of Semenya, Niyonsaba, and Wambui’s bodies and allude to feelings of confusion as to why authorities allowed their participation, they are insisting on the continuation of the practice of “observation becom[ing] science and science becom[ing] medicine that can be evaluated in a court of law” (Vineyard, as cited by Bailey, 2016, p. 2).

Paula Radcliffe, former British long-distance runner, confirms racial and regional fears of white athletes from the Global North towards the ‘unfair,’ ‘threatening’ racialized Global South:

And I think what worries me is we know that there are certain communities where the conditions of intersex hyperandrogenism is more prevalent. We don’t want to get to a situation where people are actively going to those communities to seek out girls who *look like* [emphasis added] they’re going to be able to perform and to run fast, and then take them away and then train them, and it becomes a manipulated situation, where they have been manipulated and the ethics of fair sport with their play are being manipulated. (BBC Radio 5 Live Sport, 2016, 0:41)

Radcliffe’s evocation of sight in assuming recruiters will choose athletes based on whether they *appear* to be fast begs the question, ‘*who* looks fast?’ The idea that an individual has the ability ‘tell’ that someone is intersex or has hyperandrogenism (similar to the idea that people ‘can just tell someone is trans or a “real woman”’) is not only transphobic and blatantly false, but is rooted in anti-Black, racist presumptions of what a woman is ‘supposed to look like.’ We see the violence of these presumptions enacted by Harper, Sharp, Jóźwik, and Radcliffe’s comments about Semenya, Niyonsaba, and Wambui – as a result of these comments, their gaze becomes reason to impose surveillance medicine onto Niyonsaba and Wambui *and any other Black woman from an African country* – especially if they are successful. Her reference to “certain communities where intersex hyperandrogenism is more prevalent” also evokes the regional politics that Stéphane Bermon evokes when he explicitly linked hyperandrogenism to the Global South, as explored in the first chapter. Together, their anxieties about recruiters seeking out talent from the Global South is reminiscent of the Hottentot Venus exhibitions that extracted Black women. Both the theoretical recruitment of these athletes and the hypersexualized Venuses weaponize the white gaze to subjugate Black women and exploit their labor. The resounding effect of Radcliffe and Bermon’s panic is informed by the history of the Hottentot Venus(es),

producing pathologized bodies and suggesting their potential illness, thus rendering their bodies as disabled.

The eugenics white gaze carves Black people into subhuman bodies that are closer to animals and could potentially be “a link between animals and humans” (Cuvier, as cited by Bailey and Mobley, 2019; Karkazis and Jordan-Young, 2018; Hobson, 2003). This contributes to the pseudoscientific link between Blackness and athleticism, physicality, unruliness (Bailey and Mobley, 2019; Runstedtler, 2018; Karkazis and Jordan-Young 2018). In reference to the Hottentot Venus, Rosemarie Garland Thomson frames the spectacle of Baartman’s body as a disabled body because it “flies in the face of [an] ideal... presenting the ultimate challenge to perfection and progress” due to its status as “unmodified and abnormal” (Thomson, as cited by Hobson, 2003, pp. 88-89). As Hobson points out, this framing is similar to other stipulations that posit the Black body as diseased (p. 89). Moya Bailey and Izetta Autumn Mobley point to the ways that “Black people are afforded the curious task of being simultaneously hyper-able-bodied and disabled, while at the same time being locked into ideologies that figure us as both superhumanly strong and pathologically inept” (2019, p. 24). We can see this framework of disability in the ways that the sight of Semenya’s own “unmodified and abnormal” body presumes “hyper-able-bodiedness and superhuman strength” that grants her the ability to supposedly not train as much as her white counterparts – while also being “pathologically inept” and therefore placed in the ‘care’ of surveillance medicine. Consequently, because Harper and Jóźwik make see the top three finishers as fungible, medical speculation and surveillance medicine can be utilized against any and all future athletes who carry similar identities and geolocations, confirming Radcliffe, and Bermon’s target regional anxieties.

## **“LGBTQ Propaganda,” Medicalized Transness, and Miller and Yearwood**

Pivoting our attention to the U.S., in the past five to ten years an onslaught of anti-trans discourse has exploded on the front pages of local and national media. I will be turning to one story in particular because of its timing in relation to Semenya’s CAS trial and subsequent World Athletics rulings on women’s athletics and intersex athletes.

In 2017, Andraya Yearwood started her first year of high school at Cromwell High School in Connecticut. She ran on the girls track and field team as a sprinter and jumper – a common combination of events. She became well-known due to her success as a transgender athlete. A year later, Terry Miller of the same class joined her in the headlines as the second successful transgender athlete in Connecticut from the Bloomfield High School team. Then in 2019 three high school girls, represented by the Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF), filed a complaint about permitting Miller and Yearwood to compete on the grounds of violation of Title IX (ADF, 2019). This turned into a legal case in 2020 against the Connecticut Association of Schools, Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Conference (CIAC) and the boards of education in Bloomfield, Cromwell, Glastonbury, Canton and Danbury. Yearwood and Miller, originally known on only a local scale, were thrust into the national spotlight. Some claimed that their athletic participation was counteracting or impeding the progress of Title IX by taking away opportunities from girls in sports. The ADF rely on the transphobic understanding of Yearwood and Miller as boys, which stems out of the naturalization of dimorphic sex (ADF, 2019).

There are countless critics who outright deny Yearwood and Millers’ girlhood entirely. Then there are people like Julia Robertson, senior editor of *The Velvet Chronicle*, who call Yearwood and Miller products of “LGBTQ propaganda” (Robertson, 2019) that posits the publication and dispersal of information/resources for affirming medical care to children and

families as “child abuse” and a “new form of gay conversion therapy” (Robertson, 2020). Transphobic rhetoric like this is often found in so-called “gender critical” circles on the internet, often aligning with or outright identifying as trans-exclusionary radical feminists (TERF). It is easy (albeit, endlessly frustrating and infuriating) to point out the harm and violence that this rhetoric generates; we are in a moment where it’s being codified into law through anti-trans legislation. However, the ways that gender and sex are colloquially and scientifically separated, as discussed in the first chapter work to solidify sex binaries, giving grounds for Bianca Stanescu<sup>6</sup> to insist that she “supports trans peoples’ right to identify themselves” while also creating a petition calling for the barring of Miller and Yearwood’s participation in girls track and field in 2018. “Someone’s freedom of expression or someone questioning their gender, in a normal, everyday school environment, it’s perfectly acceptable. Nobody should have an issue with that. However, athletics should be treated differently,” Stanescu argues (as quoted by Ennis, 2019, paras. 26-27). There are many who, upon reading this news article, might find themselves agreeing with Stanescu, but still insisting that they are advocates for trans rights – they’re just being realistic. Some were likely swayed to hear Stanescu and her ADF constituents – after all, wasn’t she validating the existence of trans identities? And isn’t there an unarguable biological truth to everyone’s sex that even transness has to reckon with? These uncertainties rely on an unequivocal binary model of sex that is separable from formations of gender.

In order to think through Miller and Yearwood’s stories, we must contextualize the first iterations of trans and intersex bodies in medical literature. Historian Jules Gill-Peterson’s *Histories of the Transgender Child* traces the racial formation of gender and sex from the late

---

<sup>6</sup> Stanescu is mother to Selina Soule, one of the four girls represented by the ADF. Stanescu was also behind a petition calling for the barring of Miller and Yearwood’s participation in girls’ track and field in June of 2018 (Ennis, 2019, para. 2)

19th to the 20th century, noting the ways that plasticity – the “capacity to generate and receive imprints of form” (2018, p. 35) – relied on a few core tenants:

- The conceptualization of plasticity builds timing into its framework in the sense that the body is not endlessly plastic, and the plasticity is not permanent (p. 48);
- Racialized plasticity, where whiteness became a symbol of modernity, technological hope, and futurity for humanity; racialized flesh represented a primitivism, fungibility, and death – marks of the Other (Iain Morland, as cited by Gill-Peterson, p. 101-102)
- Eugenic interests in maintaining or advancing whiteness to idealized forms – notable, these forms were simultaneously fashioned out of and defining dichotomous sex
- The non-consensual experimentation and intervention on intersex infants and children, and the denial of trans children and adults from various forms of medical transitioning.

This racial plasticity formulated and cemented idealized male/female bodies for 20th-century endocrinologists and psychologists through their practice of correcting ‘abnormalities’ and achieving ‘desirable morphology’ for designated sex. However, the more scientists leaned into the understood malleability of biological sex, the closer the sex binary got to complete collapse (p. 35). Which brings us to the medical development of gender as a tactic to reaffirm the binary. Gill-Peterson suggests,

[T]he concept of gender was meant to save the sex binary from imminent collapse by offering a new developmental justification for coercive and normalizing medical intervention into intersex children’s bodies. Gender would make nonbinary morphology into underdevelopment, allowing medicine to claim that sex assignment was merely its normal completion. Yet from the 1970s on, feminist and, later, queer and trans projects seem to have increasingly lost sight of the conservative historical context of gender’s invention. (p. 98-99)



Gill-Peterson's exploration of the origins of medical gender reveal that gender and sex is inextricably racialized through plasticity: intersex children were white, plastic, and therefore justifiably harmed for the sake of fortifying the sex binary – for a universal humanity (p. 114, 121). Plasticity transversed the decades of the mid-20th century from openly eugenics projects into trans and intersex medicine; from surgical to hormonal sex changes. Early forms of hormonal therapy (originally a treatment for hyperplasia of adrenal glands and its sexed effects) were monumental for John Money's model of gender (p. 102). By extrapolating data from medical intervention in sex and working as a psychologist with “hermaphraditic patients” (Money, as cited by Gill-Peterson, p. 115), he, Joan and John Hampson came up with a model of gender that referred to a “psychosocial dimension of sex” and was used as another factor to guide clinicians in assigning sex to intersex children (p. 116). This original context can be seen in today's mainstream progressive (albeit ahistorical) understanding of gender: that gender is a social construct, and therefore there a multiplicity of gender identities *have the potential* of being recognizes, however there is still a static, biological truth to sex binary.

Returning to Stanescu's belief that she is somehow recognizing Miller and Yearwood's trans identities while insisting on protective biological boundaries around girlhood that denies their access, we can see how this rationale brings up questions of fairness in sports. If there's an undeniable truth about sex, then people who defy or otherwise don't fit into the two categories must be cheats. Stanescu and her daughter are not the only ones who challenge the validity of Miller and Yearwood's participation while insisting they recognize their trans identities. Jeff Jacobs, sports columnist for Connecticut-based news sources like the *Hartford Courant* and the *Connecticut Post*, writes about Yearwood's wins in the Class M championship meet in 2017, both applauding her as a trans athlete as well as arguing that on a “biologically competitive

basis,” it was not fair (Jacobs, 2017, paras. 16-17). This article was amongst the early coverages of Yearwood’s participation, before Stanescu’s petition and *Soule v. Connecticut Association of Schools* (2020). To Stanescu, she sees no contradiction in claiming her respect for Miller and Yearwood even while she, the constituents of the ADF, and other supporters of her claims continue to misgender the two girls constantly. The sound logic of unfairness based in biology that is central to her argument is incorporated into the construction of medical gender, and through extension, transgender/transsexuality. Where German endocrinologist and sexologist Harry Benjamin acknowledged a psychological factor of sex, but insisting on sex being foundationally grounded in biological morphology (Gill-Peterson, 2018, p. 64), Money reified and confirmed this belief in his model of gender.

What’s more, many of the articles discuss Miller and Yearwood’s hormone replacement therapy (HRT) status – or lack thereof. It becomes readily apparent that acceptance of gender identity is a thin facade for even liberal progressives because if they were not on HRT yet, it was a matter of when they will be in order to ‘properly’ compete on a girls team. Currently, this is largely what an inclusive platform in sport is based on – trans women being able to participate in sports with the condition of undergoing HRT. This notion of inclusivity will be discussed later in the final chapter. It is of course necessary to note that Yearwood and Miller’s decision to undergo medical transition was entirely their choice to make – as it should be. Trans people of all ages should have access to gender and sex affirming care in the ways they see fit. On the other hand, Semenya’s subjection to medicine was coercive and harmful and should’ve never happened. In this fundamental sense, the three athletes have extremely different roots. However it is perhaps *because* of this fundamental difference that we must attend to the stories of these athletes at once.

## Legislative Violence: Transmisogynoir Across Geopolitical Space

At first glance, one might develop an analysis that puts trans and intersex athletes as oppositional to each other. Many trans people, athletes or not, struggle to access affirming care due to lack of funding, familial/community support, and/or medical barriers like the requirement of a medical diagnosis (Ashley, 2019; Gill-Peterson, 2018). Trans athletes who are seeking this form of care do so for a plethora of reasons, most of which are unrelated to participation in sport. Of course, the impacts it can/will have on their eligibility is more often than not considered in the decision-making process, if they're able to access that care at all. Sometimes this leads to athletes deciding to quit competitive sports; other times, they are required to talk to administration, coaches, and doctors to discuss competing. (For Miller and Yearwood, the CIAC's policy at the time of their participation and subsequent trial was that athletes are able to compete in the category that they deem fit according to their gender identity.) That being said, these are athletes who are often (though not always!) looking for medical interventions that are typically aligned with sports legislation. As previously discussed, this is not the case for intersex athletes like Semenya and Chand. So then isn't it logical that intersex and trans athletes' interests are contradictory?

The truth is, intersex- and trans-ness have been intertwined in the MIC by the ways that sex and gender have been medically defined (Gill-Peterson, 2018, p. 63). Furthermore, reading the timeline of the events leading up to and including *Semenya v. IAAF* in tandem with the events leading up to and including *Soule v. Connecticut Association of Schools (2020)* exposes the way that international legislation has immense trickle-down effects on national and local political environments. Table 2 shows the overlapping timeline of these two court cases:

Year	Month	<i>Semenya v. IAAF (Busch, 2021)</i>	<i>Soule v. Connecticut Association of Schools (ADF, 2022)</i>
2011	April	April - IAAF announces new eligibility regulations requiring women with hyperandrogenism to take medication to lower their testosterone levels.	
2015	July	CAS rules in favor of Indian sprinter Dutee Chand leading to suspension of IAAF hyperandrogenism regulations pending further scientific evidence.	
2017	September	Bermon and Garnier (2017) publishes a study supposedly proving the effects of androgens on athletic performance.	Andraya Yearwood starts competing on the Cromwell girls' track team (Spring of 2017).
2018	April	IAAF announces updated regulations requiring testosterone suppression for female athletes competing at distances from 400m to a mile to take effect from November.	Terry Miller starts competing on the Bulkeley girls' track team (Spring of 2018); after this season, she transfers to Bloomfield High School and runs for the Bloomfield girls' track and field team for the 2018-2019 indoor track season.
	June	Semenya goes to CAS to challenge proposals with IAAF delaying implementation pending CAS decision.	Stanescu publishes a petition against Miller and Yearwood's participation in girls' track and field (Unknown month in fall of 2018).
	July	Pielke, et. al (2018) call for Bermon and Garnier (2017) to be retracted on the grounds of data replication and errors that lead to unsupported conclusions.	
	March	CAS postpones ruling to late April; IAAF confirms it hopes to have regulations in place for 2019 Doha World Championships.	
2019	May	CAS publishes decision - Semenya loses appeal against IAAF.	
	June August		ADF files a complaint with the U.S. DOE Office for Civil Rights, citing violations of Title IX.
2020	February		<i>Soule v. Connecticut Association of Schools (2020)</i> trial begins.

2021	April		Court dismisses <i>Soule v. Connecticut Association of Schools (2020)</i> on the basis of it being a moot point due to the fact that two of the four plaintiffs had graduated and the remaining two could not prove that they would inevitably be competing against trans athletes in the foreseeable future.
	May		ADF files an appeal on behalf of the plaintiffs to the court

Table 2: Timeline comparing *Semenya v. IAAF (2019)* and *Soule v. Connecticut Association of Schools (2020)*

The events leading up to Semenya going to CAS to challenge the IAAF’s testosterone regulations that were explicitly targeting Semenya contributed to an environment that encouraged the transmisogynoir-istic<sup>7</sup> attacks on Miller and Yearwood. What World Athletics’ and subsequently CAS’ decisions demonstrated is that the sociopolitical climate does not find any contradiction or alarm in the pattern of placing Black women and other women of color under hyper-scrutiny. In fact, it is made even more evident that the governing bodies and legislation passed are built upon and function by policing Black women and other women of color. Semenya, Miller, and Yearwood are made fungible through the various legislation and media – they are treated as threats to fairness and integrity of running, as anomalies to womanhood, required to answer to medical standards of sex and gender that were constructed on their exclusion.

Framing *Soule v. Connecticut Association of Schools (2020)* in relation to *Semenya v. IAAF (2019)* allows us to explicitly see how U.S. laws are intimately tied to international laws in ways that emphasizes congruences in who/what is protected and who/what is criminalized. In 2021, the IOC updated their testosterone policies such that there are no standing testosterone limits that would prevent anyone from competing in the Olympics. However, this was not legally

<sup>7</sup> Transmisogynoir: Coined by Trudy to describe the unique violence that Black trans women experience that encompass racist and anti-Black, transmisogyny, and intraracial violence on account of “[betraying] Black masculinity”, which is another identity pathologized by white supremacy. (SJWiki, n.d.)

binding, and effectively left it up to individual international sports governing bodies to decide whether or not to keep/implement testosterone level restrictions (IOC, 2021). Roughly two months later, the NCAA adopted a similar policy, having individual sport governing bodies in the U.S. decide their regulations on testosterone. This policy will be rolled out in three phases that would take place from 2022-2024, with the first two phases still adhering to the 2010 NCAA policy that requires testosterone suppression therapy for at least a year. Student athletes will also be required to meet their sport-specific serum testosterone level (NCAA, n.d.). On the surface, this mode of transferring decision-making to individual sports might seem like a step of progress, however what ends up happening is that this gives these governing bodies more room to implement tougher restrictions because they are not accountable to a legally binding set of principles. The IOC intends for their framework to be used as guiding principles for other sport federations, however the IAAF has already stated that they will not be changing their policies of requiring a testosterone limit of five n/mol that prevent Semenya from competing in the 400m – 1 mile races (Ingle, 2021). Furthermore if, for example, a college sport federation does not have an outlined testosterone regulation, athletes are subject to the greater international sport federation that governs their sport.

The policies that govern sex and gender (and inevitably, race) continue a project of universalizing humanity around a white, able-bodied subject. Reading Hortense Spillers and Jules Gill-Peterson together outlines this process: Spillers brings our attention to the ways that the process of gendering is inextricable from racialization and class status, built on the violation of the African enslaved female. She tends to the necessity of understanding binary gender along class interests – the implementation of colonial gender onto transatlantic enslaved women was in the interest of building and maintaining an economy of slavery. Gill-Peterson focuses on

medicalized gender, built on pathologized Black and other racialized people in the twentieth century and ultimately shaping transness and intersexness of today. Together, they outline the kind of subject that is defined, preserved, and served by medicalization and subsequent institutional policies (e.g. athletic federations) – white womanhood with the potentiality to property ownership.

Statements and attitudes made by competitors and media against Miller and Yearwood were also reminiscent of ones made against Semenya, reflecting a continuity of institutionalized misogyny in competitive sports and healthcare. When Semenya’s participation was questioned on the basis of her sex, we are able to see the cascading effect this had on other elite-level athletes through Harper’s comments explored earlier in this chapter. It is no surprise then that when Semenya is called a man and a cheat on international platforms, this encourages similar treatment of Miller and Yearwood in the U.S. It’s not that Semenya and the high schoolers are the same; rather, the plaintiffs of *Soule v. Connecticut Association of Schools (2020)* already have contemporary legislative groundwork that tells them they will be supported.

### **What is Human? Universalizing the Liberal Body**

The subjugation of Semenya, Niyonsaba, Wambui, Miller and Yearwood illustrates a configuration of a corporeal body that intentionally does not conceive them as legible, as human. This process is not a new phenomenon – it is a contingency of settler colonialism in the afterlife of slavery. One might argue that their subjugation is antithetical to World Athletics’ mission of social inclusion, which imposes the bold assumption that as an organization the IAAF can “use athletics to bring people together and to help overcome the challenges caused by social inequality” (IAAF, n.d.). Contrarily, as we see by the ruling of *Semenya v. IAAF (2018)*, she and her fellow 2016 champions are not considered as necessarily included. The current NCAA

policies surrounding testosterone levels also would have excluded them from participation, had they been college athletes. These sports governing entities – which are, by definition, apparatuses of the colonial and imperial state(s) of the Global North – build off of the modern liberal project of universalizing humanity. In the introduction of her book *The Intimacies of Four Continents*, Lisa Lowe posits:

We see the longevity of the colonial divisions of humanity in our contemporary moment, in which the human life of citizens protected by the state is bound to the denigration of populations cast in violation of human life, set outside of human society. Furthermore, while violence characterizes exclusion from the universality of the human, it also accompanies inclusion or assimilation into it... *Race* as a mark of colonial difference is an enduring remainder of the processes through which the human is universalized and freed by liberal forms, while the peoples who created the conditions of possibility for that freedom are assimilated or forgotten. The genealogy of modern liberalism is thus also a genealogy of modern race; racial differences and distinctions designate the boundaries of the human and endure as remainders attesting to the violence of liberal universality. (2015, pp. 6-7, emphasis in original)

Lowe is requiring us to interrogate the very definition of what it means to be human – as dictated by liberal ideology: on the one hand, a universalized humanity appears to promise notions of ‘human rights,’ a common theme in many progressive campaigns and slogans; on the other hand, this universal human is dependent on precisely the violent process of making others *nonhuman* through the transatlantic slave trade, settler colonialism, and indentured servitude. Lowe contends with the entangled histories of Africa, Asia, the Americas (so-called “New World”), and Europe, emphasizing how European Enlightenment and manifestations of the liberal free man were shaped precisely by those who were not considered human, and thus could not be granted human liberties. Part of the afterlife of slavery we must contend with is that the articulation of “human” is sutured together at the expense of enslaved Africans and their



descendants, and the indentured servants that were thought to be an acceptable replacement – all while displacing Indigenous people of the various frontiers of colonial expansion, including the so-called New World. Furthermore, as discussed both in the first chapter and earlier in this chapter, the process of racialization is gendered, just as the process of gendering is racialized, implicating legibility along racialized, gendered lines such that Black women and other gender-oppressed Black people are made to be nonhuman. Thus, when Sharp and Radcliffe name a “we” that creates a “them” out of Semenya, Niyonsaba, and Wambui, the “we” is a reference to those who are counted in the universal human, evoking the vicious histories of the creation of Man, and outlining human as *not them*.

The dialectical process of defining a universal human subject necessarily allows moments and spaces in which people and/or communities can assimilate into humanity itself, which Lowe points to in the passage above. This is a necessary aspect of the universal human to continue to have groundings in today’s consciousness – the promised freedom that comes along with those identified as human cannot be openly limited to a small subsection of the world’s population. Accordingly, part of contemporary neoliberalism is affirming peoples’ and communities’ status as human, in exchange for their governability. Lowe suggests:

To observe that the genealogy of modern liberalism is simultaneously a genealogy of colonial divisions of humanity is a project of tracking the ways in which race, geography, nation, caste, religion, gender, sexuality and other social differences become elaborated as normative categories for governance under the rubrics of liberty and sovereignty... We can link the emergence of liberties defined in the abstract terms of citizenship, rights, wage labor, free trade, and sovereignty with the attribution of racial difference to those subjects, regions, and populations that liberal doctrine describes as “unfit for liberty” or “incapable of civilization,” placed at the margins of liberal humanity. (p. 7)

Notwithstanding the rhetoric of ‘one humanity’ or ‘one human race’ that instills a sense of united beings, the universalized human figure has the capacity to nourish and encourage divisions, better known now as ‘diversity.’ In fact, the legibility of diverse humans paradoxically strengthens the case of hegemonic humanity because it further coerces folks who would otherwise be outside these definitions to shape and mold themselves in order to be intelligible by the state. Of course, this is not to reject diversity by any means, but rather to question how diversity is being taken up by the state, and the consequences this absorption has on the most marginalized people and communities of society. If someone is “unfit for liberty” and “incapable of civilization, then there is a knee-jerk reaction nurtured by the state to help people *become* fit for liberty and capable of civilization. Often, the state imposes itself as a paternal provider of the means to achieve liberties dubbed ‘human rights’ (e.g. marital status and the provisional legal migration documentation). The MIC, as an apparatus of the state, forces these standards of humanity onto populations, based on the colonial conceptualizations of what makes a human, human. Surveillance medicine as a core tenet of the MIC insists upon state authority in deeming an individual or a community as ill, and necessarily monitored so that they can be ‘fixed.’ This is tied into the logic of biological unfairness in sports which justifies and enforces requirements like lowering testosterone levels in order to compete. If one doesn’t adhere to these standards and/or makes an attempt to become governable, it becomes a personal failure. Another example is that of gender-affirming medical procedures and the public perception of who is trans. While it should be Miller and Yearwood’s personal choices to undergo hormonal therapy for their own affirmation and care, their initiation of the process becomes a ‘gotcha moment’ for even progressive journalists in order to ridicule and smear Stanescu and other critics because medical intervention in trans life is what makes transness legible. Thus, we can see that as the contours of

humanity are superficially broadened, and more people are granted citizenship and legibility of the state, still others are further pathologized.

### CHAPTER 3: WINNING AND CONTINUUMS OF GENDERED GEOPOLITICS

“...[G]ender frauds are explicitly ‘other’ to the white western world: communist, fascist, Black.” (Heggie, 2010, p. 161)

One of the fundamentals to competitive sports is the idea that there must be a winner – someone who is a stronger, faster, better athlete or group of athletes that claim victory. Some of that, of course, is affected by sheer luck: everything might unfold exceptionally right or wrong on any given day; athletes may have a competitive or genetic advantage. Other aspects of winning are conceptualized as tied to skill, determination, grit, discipline, strength, power – attributions that can increase and sharpen through training. Stripped down to its foundational structure, winning is simple and backed by concrete evidence – whichever team scores the most goals in soccer wins the game; whoever runs the fastest time in a given distance wins the race. However, the socio-economic and cultural implications of winning are not as simple, especially across gender divides and in a global context.

Crucial to our critical engagement with athletics is a basic understanding of competitive sports and the alienation of athletes’ labor. Socialist author Chris Bambery suggests:

In sport obsession repetition – who can run fastest, who is the strongest, who can throw furthest – increases the alienation of the individual. Sports ideology, like all ideologies, conceals the real structure of productive and social relations under capitalism. These are of course seen as ‘natural’. Relations between individual humans within the sporting institutions are transformed into material relations between things: scores, machines and records. In the process human bodies are treated as commodities. (1996, para. 13)

This brings into question many of the core values and practices of sport today and calls our attention to the socio-political context in which competitive sports are implemented and function in today. In the context of track and field, we see the effect of what Bambery calls “capitalist competition” on athletes and their social relation to their participation in a couple of ways: first,

once the race, throw, jump, vault is over, their results render the time and energy poured into training as virtually inconsequential as the value of their participation is judged based on their comparative performance; and second, as a result the training itself becomes not about the enjoyment of movement and learning, but about training *for the next competition*. Bamberg comes to the conclusion that,

[S]port is characterised by: (a) competition – trying to be first, beating an opponent or to do better than others (setting a new record); (b) the notion of record as central – this reflects a society where everything is measurable and quantifiable; (c) sporting scales of value which are precise, very hierarchical and obvious to all; (d) training – which is the hard labour of sport. Training is increasingly inhumane, based on techniques very similar to the production line and involving the same inhumane workplace [*sic*]. (para. 20)

Here, we can see more clearly the process in which athletes' labor is extracted and abstracted, bringing us to a point where training is getting harder while simultaneously being taken for granted and overlooked. In the context of track and field, we are in a moment of time where records are either dropping in time (in the case of races) or increasing in distance (in the case of field events) at a rapid rate. As standards of performance increase, athletes become mechanized further and the expectations to meet and exceed those standards apply more pressure. Training is no longer limited to the time spent on the track or in the gym; daily habits and lifestyles are altered to produce the highest performance, and the athlete is alienated more from the labor that goes into producing satisfactory results. This inflation of training leaks from elite-level to the high school level competition, as high school athletics are simultaneously being affected by higher expectations of professional athletes and also making great strides of their own in increasing high school performance standards. Of course, this alienation impacts athletes based

on their race, gender, and class – and those who are most vulnerable to exploitation are Black athletes.

Against the backdrop of an increasingly more difficult playing field with higher performance results to aim for, Black athletes are exposed to harm through their racialized and gendered labor. As noted in the previous chapter, Blackness is synonymous with “raw force, as athleticism itself” (Doyle, as cited in, Karkazis and Jordan-Young, 2018, p. 22), and Black women are hypermasculinized. These connections between race, gender, and labor inform a racial logic that Black athletes step into starting blocks with inherent advantages over their white counterparts. This showed up in competitors’ comments about Semenya, Miller, and Yearwood. Paula Radcliffe claimed “I fear that when we talk about it in terms of [what] we fully expect no other results than Caster Semenya to win the 800 meters, then it’s no longer sport and it’s no longer an open race” (BBC Radio 5 Live Sport, 2016, 0:01). In a voice recording uploaded on YouTube, Selina Selina Soule – the high schooler who was amongst the first plaintiffs of *Soule v. Connecticut Association of Schools (2020)* and whose mother wrote the initial petition to prevent Miller and Yearwood from competing – echoed this, commenting:

The media has been even worse, attacking us and portraying girls as sore losers, and that we should try harder. We *do* train very hard, but when a mediocre boy athlete can outperform the best girl out there any day because of their physical superiority, we are just losers not sore losers. (Female Human, 2019, 2:36, emphasis in original)

These comments are insulting for a plethora of reasons, summed up best by Karkazis and Jordan Young's point that “The idea that these women ‘reach more easily the higher level’ signals that they have not worked hard, that they have just magically jumped the line,” (2018, p. 22) despite the factors that work *against* their favor for athletic success. For athletes in the Global South, Karkazis and Jordan-Young point to “inadequate nutrition, lack of access to specialized

equipment and excellent training facilities, and the enormous risk of pouring time and energy into sport instead of more secure income generation” (p. 22). For trans athletes, mental health issues linked to problems within their surrounding communities (family, school, and other institutional spaces) and lack of access to gender-affirming care can create barriers that their cisgendered counterparts do not face. The rhetoric asserting that athletes like Semenya, Miller, and Yearwood don’t have to train as hard demonstrates the alienation of labor targeted specifically at Black women because of their racialized, sexed bodies. It doesn’t matter that Semenya, Miller, and Yearwood train just as hard, if not more (given their material conditions) than their cis white competitors.

Theresa Runstedler, Professor African American history, highlights the movement of Black athletes through public and private entities and their subsequent commodification is used to “sell the American Dream and color blindness in post-civil rights in America” (Leonard and King, as cited by Runstedtler, 2018, p. 158). Within the context of track and field, “color blind post-civil rights America” is able to be perpetuated because of the alienation of labor (hyperfocus on results) – times and distances seemingly can’t be argued with. Fairness, then, is an imposed assumption that everyone is coming to the starting line with relatively the same advantages. The reality is that people *don’t* show up to the line with the same racial, gender, class identities. “Far from being objective or universal,” Karkazis and Jordan posit, “[testosterone regulation] mobilizes a version of ‘fairness’ that is a privilege reserved for those with favored racial, gender, sexual, class, or national status. This exclusion from the purview of ‘fairness’ is occluded by magnanimous claims of protecting Health” (2018, p. 28). The national status they allude to is that of Imperial Core nations. Thus, we can understand conceptualizations of ‘fairness’ as a key

contributor to the alienation of athletes' labor that specifically harms Black and Brown athletes, particularly from the Global South.

### **Winning: What is at Stake?**

The argument in favor of the sex binary existing in sports relies on two entangled concepts of fairness and winning, such that the necessity of fairness yields justifiable, acceptable wins. Many people who are asked about the binary in competitions formulate responses that insist we, as a society, must have a male winner and a female winner in order to be fair. This in itself is reliant on the presumption that males are undeniably stronger, faster, more powerful, and thus will dominate the winners' podium (Karkazis and Jordan Young, 2018). However in the Athletic Industrial Complex (AIC), winning isn't simply coming in first – the capital and power at stake for an individual, team, club, and nation informs the dynamic social relations that affect athletes' experiences and decisions. Earl Smith defines the AIC as “an institution embedded in both higher education and the global sports economy and as such it has the power to shape hegemonic ideology and collude with other institutions in the enterprise of sports” (2014, p. 72). For example, if we take a look at the Olympics of 1952, the Soviet Union sent athletic representatives for the first time, collecting an outstanding amount of medals (71 medals, compared to the U.S. 's 76). Soviet Union women won roughly about a third of those medals (amounting to 23 out of the 71), whereas only eight U.S. women brought home medals. Padawer shares:

As the Olympics became another front in the Cold War, rumors spread in the 1960s that Eastern-bloc female athletes were men who bound their genitals to rake in more wins.

Though those claims were never substantiated, in 1966 international sports officials decided they couldn't trust individual nations to certify femininity, and instead



implemented a mandatory genital check of every woman competing at international games. In some cases, this involved what came to be called the “nude parade,” as each woman appeared, underpants down, before a panel of doctors; in others, it involved women’s lying [*sic*] on their backs and pulling their knees to their chest for closer inspection. Several Soviet women who had dominated international athletics abruptly dropped out, cementing popular conviction that the Soviets had been tricking authorities. (More recently, some researchers have speculated that those athletes may have been intersex.) (2016, p. 35)

The significance of the Soviet Union, a nation that was ideologically opposed to the U.S., being highly successful in sports threatened U.S. global dominance – especially since the number of Soviet medals was incredibly close to the number of U.S. medals. This was such a concern that rumors were spread to destabilize the validity of their medals, and therefore delegitimize their challenge of the U.S. Winning, then, receives its power through capital and its meaning through hegemony, but this power and meaning are manipulated by the Imperial Core. In this instance, the AIC served as a proxy for imperialism to reassert its hegemonic dominance.

Returning to Heggie, Krakazis and Jordan-Young’s conversation around fairness in the first chapter, we are faced with the contours of a figure that, for all intents and purposes, could win and gain the social and capital rewards. However, their potentiality to do so challenges the hegemonically correct body, resulting in hyper-surveillance and non consensual medical interventions. Fairness ends up being a tool for Imperial hegemony because of its racialized and gendered implications, and the stakes of winning justifies them.

Tending to the flow of capital in the AIC provides insight on what is behind every win on the elite level. Superficially, the AIC refers to coaching and training staff, medical staff and sports medicine specialists, and athletes’ compensation. It also looks like sponsorships, fan service and fanfare, entertainment and broadcast systems, stadium/arena upkeep and revenue,

and other explicit forms of capital exchange in the market. However, the AIC's reach is even deeper. Many different sectors within the university are built on the AIC, affecting both student-athlete and non-student-athlete behavior and exploiting student-athletes for their labor (Smith, 2014). Intercollegiate athletes are a particularly formidable site of the AIC; not only are current students' lives deeply informed and affected by the complex, but so are countless *future* students.

In the aforementioned video recording, Soule discussed her account of her high school experience: “[Equality Act (H.R. 5)]<sup>8</sup> will take away our medals, records, scholarships and dreams. I can't allow this... I'm standing up to tell Congress. Protect us. Don't take away our dreams. Don't pass H.R. 5.” (Female Human, 2019, 3:24). This comment is significant because it encapsulates the material stakes that Soule and the other high school girls involved in *Soule v. Connecticut Association of Schools (2020)* (the case we looked at in the previous chapter) felt they were being denied access. Here, we can see a clear correlation between winning and capital gain for high schoolers in the form of scholarships. Of course, this varies between divisions in universities of the U.S. – athletic-based scholarships are only available to Division I and Division II athletes, providing full- and partial-scholarships, respectively. While Division III schools are unable to grant athletic-based scholarships, they are able to provide aid in the form of non-athletic merit scholarships – a loophole that benefits Division III athletes to a certain degree, but does not completely protect them from the alienation of their labor. Nevertheless, the fact still remains that participation in collegiate sports stands as a powerful incentive for high school athletes that accentuates a hierarchical value system in sports.

---

<sup>8</sup> “This bill prohibits discrimination based on sex, sexual orientation, and gender identity in areas including public accommodations and facilities, education, federal funding, employment, housing, credit, and the jury system. Specifically, the bill defines and includes sex, sexual orientation, and gender identity among the prohibited categories of discrimination or segregation.” (Equality Act, 2020)

Athletics in universities are a particularly egregious example of the fast-paced, unforgiving nature of the AIC. The quote above highlights the ways that even early high school students are already performing not just for the sake of enjoying their body in movement, collaborating with a team, and developing ‘hard’ (kicking a ball, hurdling technique, diving) and ‘soft’ (leadership, problem-solving, cultivating motivation) skills, but for the potentiality of continuing in college. Of course, this in itself is a complicated terrain to navigate because participating for enjoyment is not mutually exclusive from participating for future athletic opportunities. However, it is necessary to interrogate the web of promises that ensnares students into situations where their educational opportunities become second to athletic commitments.

As a former student-athlete myself, I can attest to the demands that athletics places on people, even in a Division III school. In fact, these schools are amongst the most interesting to analyze how the AIC gets continued, even without the full-scholarship compensation. Division III institutions advertise themselves as being an epicenter for student-athletes devoted to sports for the sake of playing: “Division III student-athletes are fueled by passion. They strive to do their best on the field and in the classroom because they realize the value in athletics lies beyond a scoreboard” (Division III, 2022). In some respects, there is an element of truth to that – these students are not at risk from losing their position at school if they are not able to fulfill the athletic obligations they agreed to at the onset of their participation. Figure 2 depicts two athletics departments’ mission and vision statements, one from a Division III institution and one from a Division I institution lying in the Western Massachusetts area. Given these institutions’ physical proximity to each other, the comparison between them shows the difference in cultivating student-athlete experiences.

## Mount Holyoke College

### Mission

The mission of the Department of Physical Education and Athletics is to challenge and empower individuals through intercollegiate athletics, physical education and physical activity while developing and fostering a lifetime commitment to wellness.

### Vision

The Department of Physical Education and Athletics is committed to preparing our students for purposeful engagement in the world through participation in physical activity.

Our varsity athletics program is integral to the educational process and strives to provide challenging, meaningful, and competitive experiences for student-athletes. We seek to enhance life skills and develop values that foster teamwork, sportsmanship and leadership as well as develop their talents to the highest degree possible.

Our physical education program is committed to providing quality instruction in a wide range of activities. Participation allows each student to develop a basic proficiency in a lifetime sport or physical activity and understand the components of fitness and how they relate to wellness. Students will increase their level of comfort and confidence in and through movement.

Our department is committed to providing and maintaining facilities and programming that support the recreational and fitness needs of the MHC community. In collaboration with the Office of Student Involvement, the department also supports competitive opportunities through club sport participation.

## University of Massachusetts Amherst

**Athletics Department Mission:** to develop, graduate and inspire champions through athletics

**Athletics Department Vision:** to build champions and instill pride through excellence in the classroom, community and competition

Figure 2: Mission and vision statements of a DIII institution (Mount Holyoke College) and a DI institution (University of Massachusetts Amherst)

The language used in the Division III institution's mission statement champions thinking about the student athlete's experience from a holistic view, while the Division I institution's mission statement is concerned with producing champions. The salient differences in these departments are their division status and their subsequent funding, resulting in visceral on-campus *and* off-campus cultures (i.e. socio-cultural perspectives of Division I athletes privileging these student-athletes as the 'crème de la crème' – the epitome of health, the super athlete – versus the committed, humble, earnest, well-rounded, virtuous Division III athlete). Of course, it is notable that the 'superhero' Division I athlete and the 'good-guy hero' Division III athlete are both admirable and highly celebrated in the U.S.

Furthermore, the structures of Division III compared to Division I schools are drastically different – there are no commitments to long-distance travel that disrupts weekly educational schedules, or limitations on what students can study, regimented meal plans, and other

contractually mandatory athletic programs.<sup>9</sup> In many aspects, Division III athletics are appreciated and understood *because* of their dedication to the creation of a student-athlete experience that is presumably not only about sports, but also about school and extracurriculars. Thus, even though participating in Division I athletics is the ‘ultimate honor,’ Division III athletics is just as much valued for its distinct traits of non-contractual athletic obligations and perhaps a more ‘humane’ approach to collegiate athletics. However, is that truly the case?

During my time as a Division III collegiate athlete, I have been struck by the amount of unpaid labor asked of student-athletes – especially Black and Brown student-athletes. The signature “fueled by passion” becomes an expectation that one is participating because they unabashedly love the sport as they are not compensated for their time spent training or competing. However, this passion for the sport slowly starts to spread to other activities that contribute to the program’s stability. One sector of collegiate athletics we can look to is the marketing sphere. It is true that compared to Division I, Division III schools typically lack the funding to run multifaceted marketing programs, so there aren’t paid marketing and communications positions for every team. Nevertheless, the AIC requires that marketing be done to sell the team (and consequently the school) to prospective students-athletes. That labor gets pushed onto coaches who often call on students-athletes to pick up that work. One instance of this is due to the lower budget of DIII athletics, coaching staff are given the responsibility of marketing to prospective students on top of the actual recruiting process (i.e. interpersonal interactions like phone calls and campus visits). This responsibility is often unequally distributed to current students to conduct all their advertising for the team without compensation. It is important to note again that every institution has its own financial capacities and programs based

---

<sup>9</sup> Many of these programs are instituted at large Division I schools, but even within this division there is a lot of variation in school funding that affects program offerings.

on these capacities. Generally speaking, that student labor is unpaid. This is on top of the advertising that is built into gametime – uniforms with school colors and logos, successful competition results as an incentive to choose that school, etc. This labor is unpaid, however the work required of students is often hidden through messaging like ‘it’s for your teammates,’ ‘it’s a privilege to be a part of this team,’ and the likes. Moreover, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives implemented in predominantly white institutions (PWIs) place even more work on racialized student-athletes than their white counterparts. This is not to suggest that the initiatives are inherently bad, but rather to problematize the ways that they are offered to racialized student-athletes as solely a celebratory benefit. What is often the case behind the scenes is that while racialized student-athletes become the face of athletics marketing strategies at PWIs, systemic harm and violence is being perpetuated by teammates, coaches, and athletics administrators alike. Furthermore, athletics departments seldom, if ever, wrestle with the optics of highlighting Black and Brown people for their athletic abilities *only*. The DEI initiatives intended to bolster student-athletes of color through representational politics for recruits without ever attending to the power dynamics insinuated in these initiatives (who is including who into what space?) or the harm that exists within the institution and/or athletics department.

Additionally, the alienation of labor that exists in professional, Division I, and Division II athletics still maintains – the student-athlete’s training and performances are flattened into statistics, times, and marks used by institutions to advertise their brand to prospective students and potential donors. We can see this most clearly during the NCAA championship season. Leading up to the 2022 NCAA Division I National Championship meet (Nationals), North Carolina State Track and Field team posted images of their student-athletes as they qualified for Nationals on Instagram. Their posts typically included a cover photo of the qualifying

student-athlete in action, followed by the same repeated photo with their name, event, qualifying performance mark, and bold text that reads “NATTY BOUND” (NC State T&F/XC, 2022). Their times serve as an enticing incentive for prospective student athletes, their families, and coaches to consider enrollment in the school. Given the demographic of athletes, performance marks also signal to potential professional teams and/or brand sponsors that the NC State Wolfpack athletes are worthy of consideration for sponsorship, national team membership, and other benefits granted to elite athletes. Finally, performance marks are intended to attract past, present, and future donors to the program because they signify that the Wolfpack is a successful investment. What the presentation of these athletes’ statistics don’t recognize is the human behind them.

Of course, this is not to say that being on a Division III team does not come with its own class implications – it is likely the case that Division III athletes are part of the middle, upper-middle, and upper-class. After all, collegiate sports are extremely time and energy consuming, and thus are not conducive with working-class students who must be working instead of participating in a sport, whereas top student-athletes receive athletic scholarships at Division I and Division II schools might depend on that scholarship in order to attend school at all.<sup>10</sup> Unfortunately, this investigation is outside the scope of this paper. I mention this to highlight the extractive nature of athletics, even in a system that appeals to people for being more flexible. Part of the AIC is the presumption that athletes not only ‘love’ the sport, but have a keen interest and intrinsic motivation to maintain it. This presumption shifts athletic performance onto the individual’s motivation to do well and seldom discusses the significance of the social environment of the team and/or financial factors that facilitate high athletic performance. As a

---

<sup>10</sup> This phenomenon of amateur college student-athletes receiving a spot in higher education on conditional terms of their athletic prowess has serious racialized and gendered implications that highlight the alienation of athlete’s labor explicitly. For this reason, I turn to Division III athletics to highlight the ‘humane’ version of this to show the limitations of working within our current imaginations of competitive sports.

former teammate and friend framed it, through this co-optation of motivation, “love of the sport is something that defangs the realities of student-athlete exploitation” (E. Raney, personal communication, December 3, 2022).

Returning to Soule’s comment about the proposed Equality Act in relation to the conditions of collegiate athletics, we are able to see a pre-college-to-college (and for a select few, post-college) continuum of alienated labor in competitive athletics within academic settings. In high school, those who are interested in continuing playing at a higher level in the U.S. are prepared and funneled into college, naturalizing this alienation by drilling it into young athletes’ heads that their performances are the most valuable aspect of their experiences – the aspect that could lead to future opportunities in university. The AIC builds off of the hopes and dreams of athletic success; of the promises that training, dedication, time, energy, injury, everything that young athletes put into their sport will pay off in the end. Theresa Runstedtler analyzes the hidden effects of the AIC on Black boys in the U.S., pointing to the high-level/“elite” feeder clubs, sports camps, and teams, the Complex has been folding these boys into itself at younger and younger ages (2018). She suggests,

Despite all of the evidence that the AIC, much like the [Prison Industrial Complex (PIC)], is designed to produce failure and that it relies on continued race and class inequality and capitalizes on the logics and effects of neoliberalism, some scholars still approach the supposed Black “fixation” on playing sports as a form of cultural pathology. (p. 166)

In other words, the AIC capitalizes off young athletes – both winners and non-winners – in keeping them in a cycle of participation through environments that champion improvement for the sake of winning. The tantalizing social and capital rewards of being a successful and recognized athlete obscures the labor required to obtain this status. Once a level of success is reached, sacrifices made in the process become sensationalized and romanticized, disfiguring the



chance to engage with sport participation critically. Bambery comments, “Discipline and training in modern sport often equals a massive distortion of the human body which can lead to all sorts of horrors... In these cases it is not an exaggeration to say that in the pursuit of success the notion of childhood has been destroyed” (2017, para. 17). The “elite” youth basketball clubs that Runstedtler looks at implements tiers in youth sports, painting them as early development programs that both funnels children through high-level competition and sets standards for those not chosen to *desire* those positions. Plus, these camps and clubs are designed so that children begin specializing in a sport, a practice that has been criticized for its alarming negative effects on their psychological health, burnout, physical injury, and social isolation (Hecimovich, 2004; Jayanthi et al., 2013). There are connections that can be derived from sports training and industrial work, emphasizing further what makes athletics a Complex. John Hargreaves tends to this connection, noting “a high degree of specialisation and standardisation, bureaucratised and hierarchical administration, long term planning, increased reliance on science and technology, a drive for maximum productivity and, above all, the alienation of both producer and consumer” (Hargreaves, as cited by Bambery, 1996, para. 39). Bambery goes on to argue “The ‘manufacturing of champions’ is no longer a craft but an industry, calling on specialised laboratories, research institutes, training camps and experimental sports centres” (para. 48). Of course, training doesn’t map perfectly onto the factory, but the comparison sheds light on how the increasing pressure of achieving ‘elite athlete’ status and wins in the AIC mechanizes participation in sports. This is not to suggest that athletic improvement is inherently bad, but rather to challenge the notion that in order to be an athlete worthy of recognition, athletes’ – especially *children* – should have their participation reduced to numbers and accolades. This

compulsory improvement culture in athletics is grounded in the naturalization of winning, and the acclimation of capital (medals, recognition, financial and other forms of compensation).

For the racialized and gendered athlete, the alienation of labor in athletic performance bears the historical and contemporary weight of anti-Blackness and racism that exposes them to increased exploitation and surveillance in service of the AIC. Runstedtler's essay discusses the implications of various facets of the AIC preys on Black athletes:

The overrepresentation of Black athletes at play (especially those who do not follow the prescribed 'rules' of sporting etiquette, both on and off the court) reinforces the notion that Black people, particularly poor and working-class African Americans, are inherently incompatible with the needs of our postindustrial society, and therefore must be closely managed and, if necessary, caged (2018, p. 158)

Runstedtler's framing ties together this overrepresentation with surveillance medicine in the way that the AIC exploits Black athletes for their labor by predominantly representing Black athletes in sports settings, which works to promote sports and Blackness as inherently connected, as well as reinforcing the pathologization of Black people through the ties between the AIC and the Medical Industrial Complex (MIC). Furthermore, the afterlife of slavery informs the alienation of labor for Black athletes in that within colonial and neocolonial contexts, their bodies are only meant to be consumed; that the labor that they produce is not entirely theirs. Therefore, uncritically increasing representation of Black athletes into our current system with the hopes that representation can achieve some semblance of self-determination is a fallacy.

### **Nation, Hegemony, and National Identity at Play**

When Caster Semenya was targeted by the IAAF and the results of her sex tests were leaked in 2009, South African Parliament was "[outraged] regarding the invasion of Semenya's

privacy” (Hart, as cited by Bailey, 2016, p. 11). South African officials denounced the testing, and Black South Africans across the country rallied in support of her, protesting the racism, imperialism, and sexism of the IAAF’s decisions (p. 11). Though Bailey problematizes this outrage, calling into question some of the ableism and heteronormativity pervasive in many of these responses, it is useful to think through the ways that we see actors such as national identity, nationalism, and hegemony play out. The offense that was taken on behalf of/in conjunction with Semenya by other Black Africans portrays how national identity and nationalism is tied to specific athletes, and through extension, to professional sports on an international level. In fact, national identity is embedded into high-level international sporting events like the Olympics, the World Athletics Championship, and even regional events like the Asian Games.<sup>11</sup> Nationalism and national identity is inescapable.

In the U.S. nationalism is often evoked as a white supremacist, fascist ideology, and for those of us located within the U.S., we are often inclined to denounce any kind of nationalism. While it is true that U.S. nationalism is violent in that it stands for a settler colonial nation-state that is built upon and continues the subjugation of oppressed peoples both within and outside official borders, at this moment in time nationalism and national identity in itself are not inherently wrong. In fact, peoples’ struggles around the world led by the principles of Marx, Lenin, and Mao must first contend with defining their nation in order to fight against colonial and imperial forces. The right to self-determination continues to be a crucial fight for many – Palestine, DPRK, the Philippines, and South Africa to name a few. Thus, the nationalism of people from the Imperial Periphery shown in sports is fundamentally different from that of nationalism of the Imperial Core. An interview with Gavin Walker on the podcast *Against*

---

<sup>11</sup> A championship track and field meet for athletes from across the Asian continent.

*Japanism: Destabilizing Japanese History from the Left* explains the significance of nationalism and nationhood:

The national question has always been a crucial question for Marxism not just in Japan but everywhere outside the West, and in that sense the national question is almost the decisive question of twentieth-century Marxism... The reason for this is precisely that in all the countries around the world other than essentially those of Western Europe and to a certain extent, North America due to their late development, the national element – the literal integration of the nation, formation of the nation as a unified economic juridical social political space was actually not an accomplished task; by the time the 20th century rolled around, many of these nations were still under the yoke of colonial power in Africa, Asia, and Latin America for instance. And, under the yoke of colonial power, the task of national independence was absolutely on the agenda and an active, open question at precisely the same time as the question ‘how to think about the economic mode of development of the country.’ So, capitalism was placed into question at precisely the same time as the very constitution of the nation was being considered. (Kota, 2021, 15:22-16:58)

This discussion highlights the significance of nationhood for colonized peoples; independence and self-determination are on the line. As sports are an integral part of national identity in the 20th through 21st century, the national identity of an athlete or team of athletes stands as representative for the nation. Of course, nationalism in sports becomes problematized by the prevalence of recruitment of athletes from the Imperial Periphery by the Imperial Core. It is also true that nationalism from colonized nations can be filled with contradictions that should be attended to through a principled analysis. However, the sentiment still holds that sports becomes a site in which colonized nations can exercise a sort of victory over their colonizers, evoking feelings of hope and celebration. This serves as a stark contrast against nationalism of colonizing nations, which feels boring at best and actively, aggressively racist at worst.

### **Flow of power: from the Imperial Core to the Imperial Periphery**

The construction of competitive sports occurred alongside the rise of class societies (Bambery, 1996, para. 20). These foundations inform the socio-political function of competitive sports today in the way that they are embedded in and serve the state. Bambery provides background on the inception of the Olympics in Ancient Greece in 776 BC:

The Olympics originated as part of a religious festival dedicated to Zeus. The games were only open to a privileged minority – they excluded slaves and women. The games were closely associated with the development of the state, with warfare between the states, and with the state internally having a monopoly of violence. (para. 21)

The origins of the Olympics contextualizes its reinstitution as the modern Olympics at the turn of the 19th century. The 1896 Olympics didn't allow women, and almost all of the participating nations were from the Global North (Chile being the only nation that participated that we'd consider as part of the Global South today). Furthermore, the connection between the games and warfare is monumental in thinking about how the Olympics and other elite international sporting competitions are developed out of and contribute to geopolitics today.

In order to investigate the ties between sports, nationalism, and imperialism more explicitly, we must first attend to U.S. aggression towards nations and ideologies they consider enemies and/or want control over resources (i.e. natural resources, cheap labor force, etc.). In a presentation hosted by The People's Forum NYC, Vijay Prashad discusses the terms *hybrid war* and *MOOT war*. Hybrid war refers to the different avenues the U.S. enacts warfare, including (but not limited to) “low-intensity conflict,” “small wars,” “counterinsurgency,” “foreign internal defense,” and the one we will be looking at: Military Operations Other Than war (MOOT war). As Prashad notes, this terminology comes directly from U.S. military policy and dates back to the formation of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) (The People's Forum NYC, 2019, 0:36).

Ideological warfare that works to justify U.S. intervention and violence falls under MOOT war; this warfare works to desensitize and recruit sympathy, talent, and bodies into the military so that if/when physical aggression is necessary, U.S. troops can be mobilized instantaneously. Ellis

Cashman describes the usefulness of the Olympics as a mechanism in which the state

[obtained] a legitimate monopoly over violence and [established] norms of behaviour which discouraged the open expression of violence by citizens and encouraged saving violence for the possible repulsion of attacks from outside powers. Contests, challenges, and rivalries were ways in which the impulse could reassert itself, but in socially acceptable forms. (Cashman, as cited by Bambery, 1996, para. 21)

Reading Prashad and Bambery's work together, we come to understand competitive sports as a tool to control violence until/unless it no longer serves the state to do so. Competitive sports evoke nationalism, persuading and/or encouraging people that there is a common identity they share that should be acted upon. Athletes and teams from the U.S. evoke these sentiments, averting the gaze from the state apparatus that they represent and absorbing attention so that while the individual athlete or team gets celebrated, so does the state; however, if the individual is no longer celebrated or welcomed, then the state will turn on them and abandon them for challenging and/or otherwise feeding into hegemony.

In order to trace the geopolitical significance of our current moment in sex testing, we must first return to Heggie's work historicizing sex testing in the early 20th century against the climate of war and dive deeper into the regional politics that Karkazis and Jordan-Young bring our attention to. Heggie points out that athletes who were painted as committing "gender fraud" were those who were representing socialist/communist projects (the USSR and the GDR<sup>12</sup>) and fascist/totalitarian states (Nazi Germany) (2010, pp. 158, 161). As explored in Chapter 1, the "gender frauds" who were supposedly 'masquerading' as women in order to compete were

---

<sup>12</sup> GDR – German Democratic Republic

surveilled *because* they came from the USSR and affiliated nations – they were seen as threats to the West. This is despite the fact that sex testing was imposed onto two British athletes in the Rome Olympic games in 1960 – they never faced the same public condemning and backlash that athletes from Ukraine and Poland<sup>13</sup> did (p. 159). It is important to note that Western propaganda associates communism as synonymous with fascism; anticommunism becomes anti-fascism, and Nazi Germany is connected to the USSR, despite this being a significant (and violent) historical inaccuracy. Tagging someone as having committed gender fraud is clear political maneuvering dictated by Western hegemony that posits non-Western-European bodies (read: communist bodies) as dangerous to the integrity of competitive sports (read: fairness for the white Western athlete against the ‘moral incorrectness of communism’). Meanwhile, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, Karkazis and Jordan-Young point us to the regional North and South politics that are evident in T Talk, the hegemonic framing of testosterone as an (over)determinant of sex.

At first glance, these two papers seem to contradict each other: Karkazis and Jordan-Young are noting harmful practices of sex testing perpetuated against Black and Brown athletes from the Global South, but the athletes of Heggie’s narratives are white Eastern European athletes. However, what links these two narratives of “gender fraud” and T talk is the driving force of Western colonialism, imperialism, and neoliberalism. The Cold War’s last decade took place from 1981-1991; this also happens to be the same time period that Ronald Regan was president of the U.S. and Margaret Thatcher was Prime Minister of the United Kingdom. These figureheads signify the drastic acceleration of neoliberalism as a driving

---

<sup>13</sup> At the time, Poland was an affiliated nation of the USSR, and Ukraine was formally a nation of the USSR. That being said, both nations have been under rightful critique for their anti-Black racism, as well as regime changes backed by/in favor of the U.S., and thus their locations within the Global North is brought to the foreground in how they align themselves geopolitically.

idiosyncrasy of Western Empire. The shift in attention from suppressing the Soviet Union<sup>14</sup> to suppressing peoples' struggles and maintaining colonial and imperial power over territories and nations in the Imperial Periphery can help explain the shift of the "threat" of Eastern European nations (read: communism) to the "threat" of colonized nations engaged in decolonial struggle. Prashad suggests,

We've periodized U.S. foreign policy: on the one side you say there's the Cold War, the other side is the War on Terror, and the gap is somewhere in the 1990s. The Cold War 1945 to the 1990s, and then from the 1990s onwards, War on Terror. In fact, I would say this is a completely erroneous periodization – this is one long period, where it's the war against the United States seeking primacy<sup>15</sup> on the one hand and the forces of decolonization on the other. (The People's Forum, 2019, 14:04)

He offers a way of countering the compartmentalization of colonial and imperial violence in the second half of the 20th century, providing a narrative of continuous suppression that informs and leads our current socio-political context. This counternarrative exposes the U.S.'s rampage for global authority. Of course, this is not to suggest that hegemonic violence against colonized nations and colonized people was a new phenomenon of the 1980s; rather, this is to point to the ways in which Western hegemony highlights the Other based on the perceived threat, and that "Other" is a shifting group – changing size and form when convenient. It is also worthy of noting that the late 20th century into the 21st century was a crucial time for counterintelligence programs to suppress Third World People's struggles globally. To reiterate, this is on top of existing systems of colonization that have been rampant for hundreds of years by Western European nations. Thus, the geopolitical attention shift from the ideological threat of Eastern

---

<sup>14</sup> Of course, it is vital to recognize that on a global scale, the Cold War itself was a struggle of decolonization; the USSR and affiliated nations fought/were in solidarity with colonized and working class people – the Cold War is not isolated to Soviet-U.S. relations, but encompasses U.S. aggression towards colonized people internationally.

<sup>15</sup> Prashad points out that the U.S. goal of primacy is not one he extracted from reading between the lines, but rather was written in a State Department document from 1947: "to seek less than preponderant power would be to opt for defeat." (The People's Forum, 2019, 11:33)



European nations to the racialized ideological threat of the Global South can explain the shift from Ukraine's Irina and Tamara Press and Poland's Stella Walsh to Dutee Chand and Caster Semenya.

Of course, this is not a drastic shift that is easily detectable and potentially combatted. This is done through multi-faceted efforts that make some people legible and others not. Regimes of care implementing surveillance medicine saturated in humanitarian rhetoric is one way this project gets done. Prashad notes that humanitarian intervention is fundamentally built on an *implicit faith* in the U.S. government – “when the US government does something, it's not doing it for some nefarious motives, always doing it for good.” (The People's Forum, 2019, 3:50). This faith is important in the ways that it shapes attitudes towards the U.S. domestically, but it also shapes the way all nations within the Imperial Core navigate international relations: they move on the premise that the U.S. and its allies (with an emphasis on those in the Global North) are fundamentally just and morally correct, and therefore have the right to intervene. The IAAF, for example, has always been located in the Global North – first Sweden, then in the UK, and currently it resides in Monaco.

Furthermore, Stéphane Bermon, who was at the time of Semenya's case, a member of the World Athletics Medical and Anti-Doping Commission, and Pierre-Yves Garnier, then-Medical and World Athletics Scientific Senior Manager, were from Monaco. Together, they published a study for the sole purpose of providing scientific evidence on the effects of testosterone on athletic performance, used by the IAAF to implement testosterone regulations for races ranging from 400 meters to one mile (Bermon and Garnier, 2017; Busch, 2021). Evidently, the study itself was incredibly flawed due to duplicated athletes, duplicated times, and phantom times – all components of the data that would skew the results and derived conclusions of the study (Pielke

et al., 2018). Pielke et al. (2018) called on Bermon to redact the study and correct the mistakes, leading Bermon and a new team of Polish authors to publish a follow-up study that supposedly amended the errors. Bermon et al. (2018) still contained a multitude of data errors significant enough to affect results, and yet the IAAF continues to use the data produced to justify its testosterone legislation (Pielke, 2018).

The significance of the headquarters of World Athletics being in Monaco as well as the leading scientists being from Monaco and Poland is that the production of knowledge and the implementation of legislation are located in the Global North. Furthermore, the implications of Polish scientists contributing to scientific literature on sex are even heavier, given the nation's contemporary history of rampant anti-trans, anti-queer, anti-migrant, and anti-Marxist attitudes. Since the early 2000s, the nation's politics and popular consensus has been heavily influenced by ultra-right Catholic ideology, conflating "gender ideology" with Marxism and communism and positioning them as a threat to "traditional family values" (Graff and Korolczuk, 2021). Jarosław Kaczyński, member of the right-wing Law and Justice Party, stated "the LGBT movement and gender pose a threat to our identity, a threat to our nation. They threaten the Polish state." (Chrzczonowicz, as cited by Graff and Korolczuck, 2021, p. 79). According to Graff and Korolczuck, Kaczyński's statement is indicative of a greater anti-LGBT movement dwelling in the nation. Given the context in which the scientists who worked with Bermon are coming from, it's no surprise that their research served as a confirmation bias that justifies the maintenance of a strict sex binary in sports. The ways that these scientists and governing bodies as a whole targeted Semenya is demonstrative of an exercise of hierarchical power structures that maintain a universal humanity dictated and enforced by the North, including the ability to apply patriarchal humanitarianism in the so-called 'solutions' that they offer her and other athletes. Given the fact

that this is in the context of elite sports, and therefore connects to various nation-states and commercial spectacles, this further reifies the North's ability to extract labor from the South. If the spectacle is not to their liking because it critically disrupts the “visual narratives of White conquest over primitive peoples of color at home and abroad” (Runstedtler, 2018, p. 156), they are able to manipulate the field to better fit their ideals.

Part of the ideological warfare that is implemented through the subjugation of Semenya and other Black and Brown women from the Global South – particularly from African countries – is confirming and encouraging that not just the athletes, but the *people* of the Global South can and *must* be governed by the U.S. and the Global North. The regimes of care that inform the ‘necessity’ to ‘heal’ or ‘fix’ Black women (or otherwise discard them) also come with the implications that their home countries are not developed enough to take care of their people – a continuation of colonial rhetoric. Arne Ljungqvist, a Swedish medical researcher with close relations with the IOC, audaciously implicated that the Global South lacks the “competence” to screen and ‘treat’ intersex bodies at young ages, and thus the responsibility of managing intersex and *potentially* intersex athletes falls on sports governing bodies like the IOC and the IAAF to bestow what we might call *medical saviorism* onto them (Ljungqvist, as cited by Karkazis and Jordan-Young, 2018, p. 19). This saviorism has the ability to be imparted onto athletes at younger and younger ages, as they are groomed into being elite athletes through programs like the Indian state-sponsored sports camp that Chand was accepted in at the age of 10 years old. Western industrialized medicine stands for progress (p. 19), thus applying pressure on Imperial Periphery nations to keep up in order to win on international stages.<sup>16</sup> Medical saviorism ratifies

---

<sup>16</sup> This pressure to keep up is built on the West's violent practice of ‘corrective’ surgeries and other medical intervention of intersex infants and children in order to produce and maintain systemic sex dimorphism. Countless intersex people and their accomplices have spoken out against this coercion. Gill-Peterson points out that historically, Black intersex and trans children and their family's wishes and relationships to their bodies were disregarded, and experimental procedures were performed on them in the name of ‘fixing’ their intersex and transness (Gill-Peterson, 2016, p. 76)

paternalistic and predatory attitudes that people of the Periphery are in need of medical intervention from the so-called ‘progressive’ Empire, and that these interventions will undoubtedly help them. Not only is this colonial presumption indubiously wrong – interventions *do* have harmful and violent effects on the individual and community level – but it also exposes Peripheral countries to other forms of harm because of the ways that the people are framed as needing governing by Empire, thereby justifying economic and political intervention beyond medicine. By doing this, the U.S. and its allies are able to dominate the ideological battle by insisting that they must be there as saviors.

The targeting of African women athletes in 2016 took place two months shy of the eighth year of the United States Africa Command (AFRICOM). While a full investigation of AFRICOM’s history, current status, and implications is outside the scope of this paper, it is important to contextualize Semenya, Wambui, and Niyonsaba’s treatment against the U.S.’s continued plundering of Africa. The U.S.’s rapacious interest in the resources of land, resources, and labor drives its affairs with African countries. AFRICOM is a proxy in which the U.S. is able to increase its influence across the continent with the installation of military bases and other forms of military-to-military relations with many countries of the continent (Hood Communist Collective, 2020, para. 3). As of a recent post by the Collective, “U.S. Special Forces troops now operate in more than a dozen African nations” (Hood Collective, 2022, para. 3).

Military-to-military relationships can be weaponized in a number of ways (e.g. allied forces against a ‘common’ enemy – other nations, organized forces of peoples’ struggle), and the involvement of the U.S. indicates reason to be apprehensive of these relationships – at the very least. What these relationships often translate to is the ability for the U.S. to influence how and when a nation’s military will be used – especially against principled anti-imperialist struggles.

More explicit U.S. bases indicate a continued threat to not just a nation's jurisdiction over its own people, but to become active assailants towards the people of that area. These tactics are methods that serve the hybrid wars Prashad referred to in his webinar – Foreign Internal Defense<sup>17</sup> (FID) and MOOT war.

The purpose of bringing our attention to larger iterations of imperialism is not to suggest that the treatment of Semenya, Wambui, and Niyonsaba directly affects U.S. occupation of African nations. Rather, by recognizing that subjecting them to international scrutiny of their sexes and genders lends itself to justifying U.S. and allies' intervention of their nations and the nations of Africa on account of them being 'backward.' This is built on the implicit faith in the U.S. to be morally correct and justified, and so the everyday person located within the Empire is less likely to question the U.S., and possibly even celebrate its occupation. We see that athletes aren't the only ones on the track; geopolitics are one of the stars of the show, played across the bodies of Black women in the afterlife of slavery.

Meanwhile, the treatment of Miller and Yearwood following the international sensationalization and demonization of Semenya allows us in the U.S. to contextualize our current moment of history where we are witnessing an onslaught of anti-trans legislation increasing in severity across the country. While it is true that transphobia can be traced throughout U.S. history, the amount of transphobic legislation has skyrocketed. In 2022 alone, there were 177 bills proposed in 34 different states that criminalize the existence of trans adults and children in public and private spaces (ACLU, 2022). Four years ago, the number of bills proposed was 18 across 10 states (ACLU, 2018). The persecution of Semenya from 2009 – 2019

---

<sup>17</sup> A document titled "Joint Publication 3-22: Foreign Internal Defense" written by the U.S. Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, Space Force, Air Force, and Joint Chief of Staff defines FID as "the participation by civilian agencies and military forces of a government or international organization in any of the programs or activities taken by a host nation (HN) government to free and protect its society from subversion, lawlessness, insurgency, violent extremism, terrorism, and other threats to its security" (Chairman of the Joint Chief of Staff, 2021, p. ix).

and Miller and Yearwood from 2017 – 2021 and the exponential increase of anti-trans bill proposals is connected: attempts to prohibit queer, non-conforming bodies and identities in public spaces of entertainment, then schools, and now bills like Michigan’s HB 6454, which proposes sentencing parents, guardians, and other authority figures of a child who attempt to provide gender-affirming care under the accusation of child abuse (House Bill 6454, 2022), are able to garner enough support to bring it to the House of Representatives.<sup>18</sup> In other words, the public attack on trans people in the public sphere without substantial condemnation of such attitudes with lasting effects justifies the theoretical legalization of fascist transphobia. In the meantime, trans people continue to experience violence and death at alarming rates – with Black trans women as the most vulnerable cohort.

The persecution of trans and intersex people domestically and internationally signifies a progression of conservative, fascist movements to criminalize trans and intersex people, thereby expanding prison populations (and consequently, expanding prison labor as well). In the afterlife of slavery, indentured servitude, and racial capitalism, this will harm Black and Brown people the most. As this process takes place within the context of neoliberal capitalism, the conditions of subjectivity, meaning the conditions in which people are/look to become legible, get increasingly more violent and harmful. The sports fields have always been, and continue to be, sites of this geopolitical and ideological battle due to its entanglements with capital and nationhood, treating Black women as inconsequential collateral damage in the process. However, while we struggle through contradictions and fight the monstrosity of colonial and imperial repression, we must actively fight against notions of ‘solutions’ that are based in inclusion into the very systems that seek to increase capital and power for the ruling class and exploit racialized, gendered, and sexed poor and working class people.

---

<sup>18</sup> This bill’s status is still pending a verdict, at the time that this was written.



### CHAPTER 3.5: WHAT IS TO BE DONE?

The way we understand competitive sports and athletics is strictly within the confines of a globalized, colonized world. The question of sports has become vital to investigate because of the ways that identity of the Empire, globalization, and colonial/imperial powers are entangled in national and international competitions. This project outlines spatial continuities of transmisogynoir and then attends to the ideological sex testing continuum from the 20th into the 21st century. From this, we can come to the conclusion that enforcing sex binaries through sports legislation and media's sensationalization of athletes' bodies is part of ideological warfare that satiates imperial intervention and signifies a progression of conservative, fascist movements from the beginning of the Cold War to the present. While we may not have the answers of where to go next, there are ways we can contribute to the destabilization and ultimate collapse of the neoliberal capitalist and imperialist notions of sports and winning by continuing to challenge their stability and validity while also resisting rhetoric of liberation being achievable through inclusion into the Empire.

Competitive sports and the Athletic Industrial Complex (AIC) are bound to the violence perpetuated in the afterlife of slavery and U.S. imperialism due to their ties to the Medical Industrial Complex (MIC) and the nation-state. It remains true today that those who are the most harmed by our current modes of sports and play are gender-oppressed Black folks, particularly from the Imperial Periphery. An essay written by New Zealand researchers Taryn Knox, Lynley Anderson, and Alison Heather titled *Transwomen in Elite sport: Scientific and Ethical Considerations* (2019) sought to develop a multifaceted solution to including trans women in sports. This essay first addressed key assumptions that affect public opinion on trans women in sports:



1. Testosterone was indubitably an advantage of men over women due to its positive effects on the boy, and therefore of trans women over cis women;
2. Trans women who have undergone hormonal therapy for at least a year still maintain enough of the physiological measurements of their bodies pre-treatment, such that the effects of testosterone are still relevant. (p. 398)

They then continued to engage with the ethical considerations of a non-inclusionary mode of sports that would prevent trans women from competing (as is the case for most athletic arenas we find ourselves in today). The logics they explore are as follows:

1. Those transwomen athletes who meet the criteria set by the IOC should compete in the women's division.
2. Transwomen identify as women and so should be able to compete in the women's division.
3. The advantage that transwomen have is a tolerable unfairness.
4. As trans people face discrimination in many spheres of life, they should compete in the gender division in which they identify.
5. Science has been developed using a cis-normative lens.
6. The male/female binary is socially constructed, so athletes ought to be able to switch between men's and women's divisions. (p. 398)

Many of the ethical considerations are questions that, in the short-term, I would agree with: trans women are women, and should be competing as such; the science developed *is* using a cis-normative lens; the male/female binary *is* socially constructed. However, the kind of reasoning presented here doesn't answer questions around the greater system of exploitation that relies on exclusion at its core. The conclusion that Knox and their colleagues came to was that

trans women held an “intolerable fairness,” however it is necessary to consider inclusivity and diversity in sports, thus the male/female binary must be “discarded in favour of a more nuanced approach” (p. 402). In other words, while they did not have an immediate tangible solution, they were willing to challenge the validity of sex binaries and search for a framework of sex that supports some trans folks in sports.

Frankie de la Cretaz, freelance writer who focuses on gender in sports, discusses how the conversation about gender in sports is often reduced to binary thinking – most notably, whether trans women belong competing with/against other women<sup>19</sup> and whether or not intersex women should have to lower their levels of testosterone (and other anthropometric measures of the body). What – or rather, who – falls through the cracks of this binary discussion are nonbinary and other gender-queer athletes, like Layshia Clarendon of the WNBA (de la Cretaz, 2021). De la Cretaz discusses the reality that nonbinary and gender-queer athletes understand their identities, experiences, and relationships to gender in a plethora of ways that cannot be encapsulated by a simple third category. Some, as they point out, might want to undergo hormone replacement therapy – specifically testosterone therapy – that would put them at risk for violating regulations preventing access to care (para. 43). These regulations can be centered around sex and/or extend into questions of doping and usage of performance-enhancing drugs – a separate, but related conversation that is outside the scope of this project. Others may be dissatisfied with competing in a sex or gender category that is at odds with their sense of self-identification. Hence, participatory legislation based on sex is problematic for its failure to see nonbinary and

---

<sup>19</sup> The question of trans men in sports is often not on the table, given the expectation that they will automatically be at a disadvantage. This is a gap within many studies that attend to trans people in sports, including this project. Unfortunately, this area of study is beyond the scope of this project; although I encourage others to pick up this train of thought utilizing my framework and my modes of analysis.

gender-queer athletes. Thus, de la Cretaz Knox and colleagues' conclusions are in line with each other in calling for more inclusive, more informed participatory regulations.

Carving out new regulations based on the outlined ideas above is a starting point for an upward battle to create the space for Semenya, Miller, and Yearwood to compete. At face-value, I agree with this project because I fundamentally stand by the three athletes (and others with similar/shared identities) to be able to participate alongside other women. However, this solution framed as liberation and resistance is lackluster, limited to finding inclusion into a system that exploits Black and other racialized workers, from the athletes to the manufacturers of the fan attire.

Trans legal scholar and lawyer Dean Spade points out that, "Before trans people sign on to what looks good about being recognized by law in ways that seem desirable, we have to strongly consider why those laws have failed to provide the change that many have hoped for" (2011, p. 20). As we consider ways to ensure that more people are let into the competitive sports arena, we must also consider who will be further pushed out. Similarly, Russian revolutionary Vladimir Lenin reminds us that "Freedom in capitalist society always remains about the same as it was in the ancient Greek republics: freedom for the slave-owners" (1976, p. 106); meaning that the only people who experience freedom in a neoliberal capitalist world will be the ruling class, the corporations, and the Empire. Spade investigates the implications of anti-discriminatory/hate crime law tactics in maintaining social hierarchies because the institutional, systemic harm is disregarded in favor of a model of individual harm (p. 29). This is relevant to sports in that one side of anti-discriminatory/hate crime laws outline 'incorrect' individual behavior towards another individual, while the other side delineates protection of rights on an individual level – those who are protected by regulations (i.e. intersex and trans people whose testosterone levels

fit into acceptable levels) and those who are not. Those who are permissible are celebrated as wins for diversity (e.g. the ruling that came out in 2015 that permitted Dutee Chang to compete) and ultimately weaponized against those who are not permissible under the guise of ‘small wins’ rhetoric. Articles and papers written to push for broader inclusion in competitive athletics functionally treat the IAAF as an individual perpetrator who is harming Semenya by maintaining restrictive regulations that take her off of the roster as a valid competitor.

Another outcome of framing discrimination as an issue of the individual perpetrator (in this case, the IAAF), as discussed by Spade, is that it removes the incident or ruling from the historical context that it is built out of. As we have seen throughout this project, the pathologization and extraction of labor of Semenya is occurring on a continuum of bourgeois, anti-Black, sexist ideologies that are integral to fascism today. Moya Bailey discusses the necessity for a Black Feminist Health Science that rejects ideas of “normal” and “average” in relation to the body because they have the “effect of marginalizing minority forms of embodiment so that bodily diversity is pathologized” (2016, p. 7). Rejecting the notion of a “normal body” disrupts the universal human construct through regulations that dictate the parameters of sex. However, attempts at dismantling the sex binary for the sake of inclusion/legibility into the Empire is not enough alone; we must attend to the entire capitalist system that imbues gendered, racialized labor into its fabrics and commit to forcibly removing power structures that continue to profit off of this exploitation.

### **Where do we find competitive sports and athletics?**

As we take on considerations of competitive sports in a neoliberal capitalist world, we are left to ponder where to take competitive sports next. If competitive sports, with their demand for a distinguishable winner and subsequent capital gains for corporations and colonial/imperial

nation-states, are harmful in their histories and current iterations, then where do we find a future for them? Are they a part of a liberated future? Chris Bambery reminds us that participation in sports, either as an athlete or a spectator, is not feasible to completely discard:

Naturally socialists understand why people take part in or watch sport. It is an escape from the harsh world in which we live. That is why we do not ignore sport. Rather socialists campaign, for instance, against racism on the terraces and seek the support of sports men and women for such campaigns. Neither would socialists dream of banning or prohibiting participation in sports. (1996, para. 54)

In other words, perhaps what we can begin to imagine is a transitory state (defined as the dictatorship of the proletariat) in which sports still have a presence and function in society. In addition to this, however, there ought to be a de-centering of competitive sports as the ideal, most celebrated form of physical activity. One such organization, titled “The Venture Out Project”<sup>20</sup> periodically hosts races and awards prizes to participants. However, rather than following the traditional format of awarding first, second, and third place, they recognize people for aspects of the race like “made the closest prediction of their finish time” or “best dressed” (A. Martin, personal communication, December 10, 2022). While this model isn’t perfect, it does provide an alternative mode of hosting competitions that does not work to alienate runners from their performances by reducing their performance to just their statistics. Bambery suggests that “[p]hysical recreation and play are about the enjoyment of one’s body, human company and the environment” (1996, para. 53) and thus a liberated future would emphasize this aspect of being in movement and involved in athletics. Of course, this hardly begins to answer the question or implementation of sports in a liberated future. What might it mean to participate in sports and athletics in a socialist transitory state or a communist world? Where would there be space for

---

<sup>20</sup> The Venture Out Project is a non-profit organization that aimed to provide spaces for “queer, trans, and LGBTQ+ youth and adults [to] create community, develop leadership skills, and gain confidence through the shared experience of outdoor adventure and physical activity.” (The Venture Out Project, n.d.).

competitive sports? Is a 'healthy' and 'principled' approach to competition even possible in the first place?

## Work Cited

- ACLU. (2022). *Legislation affecting LGBTQ rights across the country*. American Civil Liberties Union. Retrieved December 1, 2022, from <https://www.aclu.org/legislation-affecting-lgbtq-rights-across-country>
- ACLU. (2018). *Past legislation affecting LGBT rights across the country (2018)*. American Civil Liberties Union. Retrieved December 1, 2022, from <https://www.aclu.org/past-legislation-affecting-lgbt-rights-across-country-2018>
- ADF. (2019). Title IX discrimination on behalf of minor children Selina Soule, [second complainant], and Alanna Smith. ADF. <https://adflegal.org/sites/default/files/2020-04/Title%20IX%20complaint%20-%20Complaint%20filed%20with%20U.S.%20DOE%20Office%20for%20Civil%20Rights%20%282019-06-17%29.pdf>
- ADF. (n.d.) *Soule v. Connecticut Association of Schools*. Alliance Defending Freedom. Retrieved December 7, 2022, from <https://adflegal.org/case/soule-v-connecticut-association-schools>
- Armstrong, J. (2016, July 3). Transgender British athletes set to make history at Rio Olympics. *Daily Record*. <https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/sport/other-sports/athletics/transgender-british-athletes-set-make-8341852>
- Ashley, F. J. (2019). Gatekeeping hormone replacement therapy for transgender patients is dehumanising. *Med Ethics*, 45(7), 480-482. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1136/medethics-2018-105293>
- Bailey, M. (2016). Misogynoir in medical media: On Caster Semenya and R. Kelly. *Catalyst: Feminism, Theory, Technoscience*, 2(2), 1-31. <https://doi.org/10.28968/cftt.v2i2.28800>
- Bailey, M., Mobley, I.A. (2019) Work in the intersections: A black feminist disability framework. *Gender and Society*, 33(1), 1-40. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243218801523>
- Bailey, M., Peoples, W. (2017). Towards a black feminist health sciences. *Catalyst: Feminism, Theory, Technoscience*, 3(2), 1-27. <https://doi.org/10.28968/cftt.v3i2.28844>
- Bamberg, C. (1996). Marxism and sport. *International Socialism*, 2(73). <https://www.marxists.org/history/etol/newspape/isj2/1996/isj2-073/bamberg.htm#top>
- Barnard Center for Research on Women. (2014, March 14). *Treva Ellison: Black trans reproductive labor* [Video]. Youtube (2022, March 14). <https://www.youtube.com>

[/watch?v=4n\\_luqggrVPs](#)

- BBC Radio 5 Live Sport. (2016) In Short - Radcliffe: Caster Semenya Rio gold “won’t be sport”. [Audio recording]. *BBC Sounds*. Retrieved December 7, 2022, from <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/p0425m52>
- Bermon, S., & Garnier, P. Y. (2017). Serum androgen levels and their relation to performance in track and field: mass spectrometry results from 2127 observations in male and female elite athletes. *British journal of sports medicine*, 51(17), 1309–1314.  
<https://doi.org/10.1136/bjsports-2017-097792>
- Bermon, S., Hirschberg, A. L., Kowalski, J., & Eklund, E. (2018). Serum androgen levels are positively correlated with athletic performance and competition results in elite female athletes. *British journal of sports medicine*, 52(23), 1531–1532.  
<https://doi.org/10.1136/bjsports-2018-099700>
- Brown, F. (2014, February 24). On the Social Construction of Sex. *Anti-Imperialism.org*.  
<https://anti-imperialism.org/2014/02/24/on-the-social-construction-of-sex-part-1/>
- Busch, S. (2019, April 30). *Caster Semenya loses testosterone case against the IAAF in CAS ruling*. Olympics.Com. <https://olympics.com/en/news/caster-semenya-cas-testosterone-decision-iaaf>
- CAS. (2015). “CAS2014/A/3759 Dutee Chand v. Athletics Federation of India (AFI) & The International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF).” Lausanne, Switzerland: Court of Arbitration for Sport. [http://www.tas-cas.org/fileadmin/user\\_upload/AWARD\\_3759\\_FINAL\\_REDACTED\\_FOR\\_PUBLICATION\\_.pdf](http://www.tas-cas.org/fileadmin/user_upload/AWARD_3759_FINAL_REDACTED_FOR_PUBLICATION_.pdf)
- CAS. (2019). “CAS2018/O/5794 & CAS2018/O/5798 Mokgadi Caster Semenya v. International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) & Athletics South Africa (ASA) v. IAAF. Lausanne, Switzerland: Court of Arbitration for Sport. [https://www.tas-cas.org/fileadmin/user\\_upload/CAS\\_Award\\_-\\_redacted\\_-\\_Semenya\\_ASA\\_IAAF.pdf](https://www.tas-cas.org/fileadmin/user_upload/CAS_Award_-_redacted_-_Semenya_ASA_IAAF.pdf)
- Chung, L. (2019). Run like a girl: Renewing the western gender binary through testosterone regulations in an age of neocolonialism. *UC Berkeley: Library*. Retrieved July 16, 2022 from <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/7cd6j4zz>
- Chairman of the Joint Chief of Staff. (2021). *Joint publication 3-22: Foreign internal defense*.  
[https://www.doctrine.af.mil/Portals/61/documents/AFDP\\_3-22/3-22-AFDP-FID.pdf](https://www.doctrine.af.mil/Portals/61/documents/AFDP_3-22/3-22-AFDP-FID.pdf)
- Clarke, A. E., & Olesen, V. (2013). *Revisioning women, health and healing: Feminist, cultural*



- and technoscience perspectives*. Routledge
- Davis, A., & The BSE Collective (Eds.). (2019). *Black sexual economies: race and sex in a culture of capital*. Urbana, Chicago; Springfield: University of Illinois Press. 15-58. Retrieved December 2, 2022, from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5406/j.ctvmx3hw6>
- de la Cretaz, F. (2021, April 16). Living nonbinary in a binary sports world. *Sports Illustrated*. <https://www.si.com/wnba/2021/04/16/nonbinary-athletes-transgen>
- <https://www.si.com/wnba/2021/04/16/nonbinary-athletes-transgender-layshia-clarendon-quinn-rach-mcbride-daily-cover>
- Ennis, D. (n.d.) A Question of Fairness. *Connecticut Voice*. <https://ctvoice.com/2019/09/10/a-question-of-fairness/>
- Equality Act, H.R. 5, 116th Cong. (2020). <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/5/summary/00>
- Fausto-Sterling, A. (1993). The five sexes. *The Sciences*, 33(2), 20-24. <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2326-1951.1993.tb03081.x>
- Female Human. (2019, April 12). *Selina Soule Speaks Out Against the Equality Act (H.R. 5)* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3DsejTFZQ7k>
- Flanagan, J. (2016, August 25). "I came second in the WHITE race": Pole sorry for causing outrage. Mail Online. <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/~/article-3756509/index.html>
- Ghandy, A. (2016). *Philosophical trends in the feminist movement*. Christophe Kistler
- Gill-Peterson, J. (2018). *Histories of the transgender child*. University of Minnesota Press. <https://doi.org/10.5749/j.ctv75d87g>
- Graff, A., & Korolczuk, E. (2021). *Anti-gender politics in the populist moment (1st ed.)*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003133520>
- Hanania, R. (2020, December 10). Trump announces Morocco and Israel will normalize relations. *Arab News*. <https://arab.news/rffhy>
- Hecimovich, M. (2004). Sport Specialization in Youth: A Literature Review. *Journal of the American Chiropractic Association*, 41(4), 32-41.
- Heggie, V. (2010). Testing sex and gender in sports; reinventing, reimagining and reconstructing histories. *Endeavour*, 34(4), 157-163. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.endeavour.2010.09.005>
- Hobson, J. (2003). The "batty" politic: Toward an aesthetic of the black female body. *Hypatia*, 18(4), 87-105. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1527-2001.2003.tb01414.x>

- House Bill 6454. H.I.B. 6454. (2022). <https://www.legislature.mi.gov/documents/2021-2022/billintroduced/House/pdf/2022-HIB-6454.pdf>
- IAAF. (n.d.) *Athletics for a Better World*. World Athletics. Retrieved November 23, 2022, from <https://worldathletics.org/athletics-better-world>
- IAAF. (2019). *Eligibility regulations for the female classification (athletes with differences of sex development): Explanatory notes*. <https://www.iaaf.org/download/download?filename=b6f96abb-91fb-40c1-8fbb-82375efa75f7.pdf&urlslug=Explanatory%20Notes%3A%20IAAF%20Eligibility%20Regulations%20for%20the%20Female%20Classification>
- Ingle, S. (2021, November 16). Trans women should not have to reduce testosterone, say new IOC guidelines. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2021/nov/16/trans-women-should-not-have-to-reduce-testosterone-say-new-ioc-guidelines>
- IOC. (n.d.). *Rio 2016 800m women Results—Olympic athletics*. Olympics.com. Retrieved December 7, 2022, from <https://olympics.com/en/olympic-games/rio-2016/results/athletics/800m-women>
- IOC. (2015). *IOC consensus meeting on sex reassignment and hyperandrogenism November 2015*. <https://stillmed.olympics.com/media/Document%20Library/OlympicOrg/IOC/Who-We-Are/Commissions/Medical-and-Scientific-Commission/EN-IOC-Consensus-Meeting-on-Sex-Reassignment-and-Hyperandrogenism.pdf>
- IOC. (2021). *IOC framework on fairness, inclusion and non-discrimination on the basis of gender identity and sex variations*. <https://olympics.com/ioc/documents/athletes/ioc-framework-on-fairness-inclusion-and-non-discrimination-on-the-basis-of-gender-identity-and-sex-variations>
- Jacobs, J. (2017, June 1) Jeff Jacobs: As we rightfully applaud Yearwood, we must acknowledge many questions remain. (n.d.). *Hartford Courant*. <https://www.courant.com/sports/hc-jacobs-column-yearwood-transgender-0531-20170530-column.html>
- Jayanthi, N., Pinkham, C., Dugas, L., Patrick, B., & LaBella, C. (2013). Sports Specialization in Young Athletes. *Sports Health: A Multidisciplinary Approach*, 5(3), 251–257. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1941738112464626>
- Johnson, K. “R.” (2021, April 21). *Organizing the People: On the Panther Solidarity Organization and Intermediate Organizations – Part One (2021)*. Kevin “Rashid” Johnson. <https://rashidmod.com/?p=3006>

- Jones, C. (1949, June). *An end to the neglect of the problems of the negro women!*. Political Affairs
- Jordan-Young, R. M., Sönksen, P. H., & Karkazis, K. (2014). Sex, health, and athletes. *BMJ (Clinical research ed.)*, 348, g2926. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.g2926>
- Karkazis, K. & Jordan-Young, R.M. (2018). The power of testosterone: Obscuring race and regional bias in the regulation of women athletes. *Feminist Formations*, 30(2), 1-39. <http://doi.org/10.1353/ff.2018.0017>
- Knox, T., Anderson, L. C., & Heather, A. (2019). Transwomen in elite sport: Scientific and ethical considerations. *Journal of Medical Ethics*, 45(6), 395. <https://doi.org/10.1136/medethics-2018-105208>
- Kota (Executive Producer). (2021, April 20). The history of Marxism in Japan w/ Gavin Walker - pt. 1 (No. 6) [Audio podcast episode]. In *Against Japanism: Destabilizing Japanese history from the left*
- Lowe, L. (2015). *The intimacies of four continents*. Duke University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1215/9780822375647>
- Macharia, K. (2009, September 20). On Caster Semenya. *Gukira*. <https://gukira.wordpress.com/2009/09/20/on-caster-semenya/>
- Morin, O. (2016). *Lynsey Sharp (centre) has been lambasted for criticising South Africa's Caster Semenya (right) who won a gold medal in the 800m women's final on Saturday* [Photograph]. HuffPost. [https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/lynsey-sharp-defends-caster-semenya-comments-after-coming-sixth-in-womens-800m-final-in-rio\\_uk\\_57b9ae1de4b0f78b2b4a53c1](https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/lynsey-sharp-defends-caster-semenya-comments-after-coming-sixth-in-womens-800m-final-in-rio_uk_57b9ae1de4b0f78b2b4a53c1)
- Marxist Internet Archive. (n.d.) Capital. In *Marxist Internet Archive Encyclopedia*. <https://www.marxists.org/glossary/terms/c/a.htm#capital>
- Mingus, M. (2015, February 6). *Medical Industrial Complex Visual*. Leaving Evidence. <https://leavingevidence.wordpress.com/2015/02/06/medical-industrial-complex-visual/>
- Morgan, T. (2016, August 21). Caster Semenya wins 800m: Beaten GB finalist Lynsey Sharp criticises rule changes over “obvious” hyperandrogenous women. *The Telegraph*. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/08/21/lynsey-sharp-criticises-obvious-hypoadrogenous-women-having-bein/>
- Naik, S. (2016, July 15). Rio 2016 Olympics: Half of the 800m finalists in Rio might well be

- intersex, says Joanna Harper. *The Indian Express*. <https://indianexpress.com/sports/rio-2016-olympics/half-of-the-800m-final-in-rio-might-well-be-intersex-2914557/>
- NC State T&F/XC. (n.d.). *NC State T&F/XC* [Instagram page]. Instagram. Retrieved December 17, 2022 from [https://www.instagram.com/wolfpack\\_tf\\_xc/](https://www.instagram.com/wolfpack_tf_xc/)
- NCAA publications - NCAA inclusion of Transgender Student-Athletes. (2011). Retrieved February 28, 2022 from <https://www.ncaapublications.com/p-4335-ncaa-inclusion-of-transgender-student-athletes.aspx>
- NCAA Sports Science Institute. (n.d.). *Transgender Student-Athlete Participation Policy*. Retrieved December 7, 2022, from <https://www.ncaa.org/sports/2022/1/27/transgender-participation-policy.aspx>
- NCAA. (n.d.). *Our Division III Story*. (n.d.). NCAA. Retrieved December 8, 2022, from <https://www.ncaa.org/sports/2021/2/16/our-division-iii-story.aspx>
- Pielke, R. A. (2018, October 25). *A critique of the use of evidence in IAAF regulatory policy making* [Presentation]. ISLJ Annual Sports Law Conference, The Hague, Netherlands. [https://drive.google.com/file/u/1/d/18jJr6kxeqW\\_n4vRYi2muPN\\_xC4H5hUH/view?usp=embed\\_facebook](https://drive.google.com/file/u/1/d/18jJr6kxeqW_n4vRYi2muPN_xC4H5hUH/view?usp=embed_facebook)
- Pielke, R. A., Tucker, R., & Boye, E. (2018, July 9). *Serious problems found in a partial replication of Bermon and Garnier*. <https://www.sportsintegrityinitiative.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/FINAL-Serious-Problems-Found-in-a-Partial-Replication-of-Bermon-and-Garnier.pdf>
- Ready for Revolution. (2022, September 29). A Guide To #ShutDownAFRICOM. *Hood Communist*. <https://hoodcommunist.org/2022/09/29/a-guide-to-shutdownafricom/>
- Ready for Revolution. (2020, May 28). *BLACK ALLIANCE FOR PEACE: Rise Up to Shut Down AFRICOM*. Hood Communist. <https://hoodcommunist.org/2020/05/28/africom/>
- Roach, S. (2019). Black respectable currency: Reading black feminism and sexuality in contemporary performance. *The Journal of American Culture*, 42(1), 10-20. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jacc.12970>
- Roberts, C. (2007). *Messengers of sex: hormones, biomedicine, and feminism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511489174>
- Robertson, J. D. (2020, March 26). DOJ sides with 3 Connecticut hs girls about fairness in sports. *The Velvet Chronicle*. <https://thevelvetchronicle.com/doj-sides-with-three->

- [connecticut-hs-girls-about-fairness-in-sport/](#)
- Robertson, J. D. (2019, April 19). 16 year old Selina Soule speaks up: Fairness in sports, media retaliation and the Equality Act. (2019, April 18). The Velvet Chronicle. <https://thevelvetchronicle.com/selina-soule-connecticut-state-championships-the-equality-act/>
- Roy, S. D. (2022). Sports, neoliberalism and crime in India: Towards a Marxist analysis. *Capital & Class*, 46(4), 495-501. <https://doi.org/10.1177/03098168221074089>
- Runstedler, T. (2018). More than just play: Unmasking black child labor in the athletic industrial complex. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, 42(3), 152-169. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0193723518758458>
- SJWiki. (n.d.). *Transmisogynoir*. SJWiki. <http://sjwiki.org/wiki/Transmisogynoir>
- Smith, E. (2014). The athletic industrial complex: Conference realignment, race and title ix. In J. L. Conyers, Jr. (Ed.), *Race in American sports*. pp. 71-83. McFarland & Company, Inc.
- Snorton, C. R. (2017). *Black on Both Sides: A Racial History of Trans Identity*. University of Minnesota Press. <https://doi.org/10.5749/j.ctt1pwt7dz.4>
- Spade, D. (2015). *Normal life: Administrative violence, critical trans politics, and the limits of law*. Duke University Press
- Spartacist South Africa. (2009, September 22). Racist, sexist furore over Caster Semenya: Leave her alone!. *Workers Vanguard*. <https://www.icl-fi.org/english/ssa/6/semenya.html>
- Spillers, H. J. (1987). Mama's baby, papa's maybe: an American grammar book. *Diacritics*, 17(2), 65-81. <https://doi.org/10.2307/464747>
- Spivak, G. C. (1985). Can the subaltern speak?. In L. Grossberg & C. Nelson (Eds.), *Marxism and the interpretation of culture* (pp. 271-313). Macmillan Education: Basingstoke
- teleSUR. (2016, July 4). *Transgender women make history at Olympics for UK*. teleSUR. <https://www.telesurenglish.net/news/Transgender-Women-Could-Make-History-at-Olympics-for-UK--20160704-0029.html#comsup>
- The People's Forum NYC. (2019, November 1). *Vijay Prashad—Hybrid Wars and US Imperialism* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D-uxISFZbG8>
- The Venture Out Project. (n.d.). *Our Vision*. <https://www.ventureoutproject.com/#mission>
- Ticktin, M. (2011). *Casualties of care: Immigration and the politics of humanitarianism in France* (1st ed.). University of California Press. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/j.ctt1ppmv8>

