
A Nobel Sport: The Racial Football Rhetoric of Mandela, Obama, and Martin Luther King Jr.

Journal of Sports and Social Issues
36(4) 361–386
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DOI: 10.1177/0193723512437349
<http://jss.sagepub.com>



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Abstract

This article advances a twofold argument regarding the intersection of globalization, sport, and race. Such is world football's popularity, first, that the sport itself is now a rhetoric in its own right. So freighted is football with internationalist associations that this rhetoric has been enlisted in support of various political invocations of the global from the middle decades of the 20th century forward, as the following abbreviated case studies of Nelson Mandela, Martin Luther King Jr., and Barack Obama will demonstrate. Second, football's unique transnational reach has simultaneously yielded a self-negating rhetoric of race. The global paradigm by which the sport is typically referenced has eroded race as a category of cultural analysis—this, despite football's obvious dependence on racially heterogeneous modes of production and reception. Football has overcome the color line in neither society nor sport as a result. The color line instead has been reified through transnational abstraction, obscured on the strength of football's insistent internationalism.

Keywords

football, race, rhetoric, transnationalism

Football is faster than words.

Orhan Pamuk, interview in Spiegel (Biermann & Gorris, 2008)

Fortunately, the footballer does not have to break through a wall. . . .

Klaus Theweleit (interview, Golz, 2005)

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To have witnessed South Africa's dramatic staging of world football's showcase event is to recall that all sport is rhetorical in its persuasive appeal and that football in particular has attained the status of a lingua franca. Less evident than football's rhetorical forms and functions, however, is the racially problematic tie that binds its usage in the African subcontinent to both the Civil Rights struggles of Martin Luther King Jr. and the foreign policy initiatives of U.S. President Barack Obama. This article posits such a triangular tie.

More important, this article advances a twofold argument concerning the intersection of globalization, sport, and race. Such is football's popularity, first, that the sport itself is now a rhetoric in its own right. So freighted is football with internationalist associations, so freely circulating is the "metaphor" that has made football a figure for what Franklin Foer calls "globalization on the pitch" (Foer, 2004) that this rhetoric has been enlisted in support of various political invocations of the global from the middle decades of the 20th century forward. Here, I recast this familiar figure, employing a comparative cultural geography to demonstrate the sport's integrative rhetorical force in modern advocacy and policy debates. Second, following in the tradition of C. L. R. James, who established in his eponymous study of Caribbean cricket the interpretive rewards of looking *Beyond a Boundary* (1963/1993) for the societal ramifications of sport, I contend that football's unique transnational reach has simultaneously yielded a self-negating rhetoric of race. I make this claim in accordance with a trend that has seen both race and ethnicity widen "the scope of analysis" in our understanding of sport, as Daryl Adair and David Rowe explain in their review of the subject. My argument furthermore proceeds from the core assumption of critical race theory. That is to say, *because* we live in a racist society, our dynamic understanding of race must at once be operational and situational. Sport affords one such situation, the main social stage under investigation here. My study departs from recent commentary in the field, however, in that the final source of my inquiry into football's global associations is not just sociological, racial, or critical but rhetorical. I conclude that the internationalist paradigm by which football is typically referenced has eroded race as a category of cultural analysis both within and beyond its "boundaries"—this, despite the sport's obvious dependence on racially heterogeneous modes of production and reception.¹

Restated, football in its most global manifestations often eliminates cognate expressions of race from public discourse, whether we construe that public to exist at the local, regional, or transcontinental levels. It is but another of football's many ironies. The sport's early, professional, and ostensibly democratic dissemination relied in part on the organizational enthusiasm of expatriate members of the British Empire. Its most recent apotheosis has come in a post-apartheid South Africa controversially described by Archbishop Desmond Tutu as a "Rainbow Nation." Such universalist associations notwithstanding, football has nevertheless been on occasion a forum for race baiting, tribe hating, and ethnic cleansing, as is well known. A cultural practice otherwise received in many quarters worldwide as a solvent of socially constructed difference thus stands in ongoing danger of distortion. One result of football's runaway global success, the one under consideration here, has been the elision of race from football's

constitutive language systems. Football has overcome the color line in neither society nor sport as a result. The color line instead has been reified through transnational abstraction, and so obscured precisely on the strength of world football's insistent internationalism.

There is no denying that the most beautiful of games (*joga bonito*, as the Brazilians say) has had an ameliorative impact on global politics. On one hand, football has played a facilitating role in the signifying systems aligned against South African apartheid, in addition to helping repair what Adair and Rowe again describe as the "chronically divided societies" of Northern Ireland, Sri Lanka, and the Middle East, among other international locales (Adair & Rowe, 2010, p. 253). Football has even provided a by turns incidental, accidental, and subtly influential backdrop for continuing encounters in the United States with racial prejudice. On the other hand, football has seen concomitant use as a framing device in the first African American President's diplomatic relations with other nations. Even a cursory examination of the public rhetorical strategies employed by Nelson Mandela, Martin Luther King Jr., and President Obama—the combined case study on offer here—reveals the high-minded idealism and lyricism that one would *reasonably* expect from our most eloquent Nobel laureates. It also suggests the common debt owed by each of these rhetoricians to football's internationally oriented sayings, phrases, images, and ideas, with proper allowances made for the differences between their respective sociohistorical contexts. Football is "faster than words," another Nobel Laureate, Turkish author Orhan Pamuk, reminds us (Biermann & Gorris, 2008). And because the most global of games has the capacity to transcend the limitations of time and space, the collective fact and figure of football has evolved into a vehicle for expressing transnational consciousness. Football improbably performed such rhetorical work a half-century ago in the segregated South of the United States. It continues that rhetorical work today, whether one conceives the world from Johannesburg and Durban, or New York and Washington, DC.

But in tracing football's ready deployment in a contemporary rhetoric of transnational transcendence, this article registers what must be read as the unintended removal of race from our continuing conversation on sport. There is, in other words, ample rhetorical evidence to substantiate the irony already named above. An abiding political drive to surmount the comparative narrowness of nation has in certain settings served only to occlude race from what to date have been racially conscious—and locally resonant—discussions of national belonging. So insistently has football informed that occlusion that the global rhetoric with which the sport has become synonymous warrants the interrogating treatment it receives in these pages. Note that I do not claim causality; my argument is not for a direct line of racial, rhetorical, or historical descent connecting the internationalist idioms employed by King, Mandela, and Obama. Nor do I contend that football exerts more than indirect influence in situations (chief among them the case of King) where it at best affords an interpretive context through which to read, in retrospect, public pleas for the dissolving of difference. My argument, rather, is that a self-identifying rhetoric of race and an internationally tending idiom of sport have proved incompatible (or, at the very least, mutually problematic) in the

discursive form of football. The premise of this piece is that the “complicated game,” in the words of one fan, has subsumed a corollary discourse of race under its own planetary orientation and aspirations (Whalley, 2011, p. 7). Celebrate as we might, then, football’s worldliness, the cosmopolitan rhetoric that it regularly produces in practice would seem to just as regularly lack the “integrative” and “intercultural” qualities that Andrei Markovits, among many commentators, attributes to the sport (Markovits, 2011, p. 17). Grassroots activist Gabriel Kuhn says that football can “go some way to breaking divisions of nation, race, and culture [in surroundings] where overtly political interventions often fail.” Yet a football rhetoric that denies its interpolation by race would seem equally capable of the “counter-cosmopolitanism” that Kwame Anthony Appiah identifies as an inherent “ethical” problem in a “world of strangers” (Appiah, 2006, pp. 137-154).

Football Mandela

“Sport,” Nelson Mandela says, “has the power to change the world” (Blair, 2008). Football especially has inflected Mandela’s own rhetoric with a deliberate global-mindedness that predates his involvement in South Africa’s hosting the 2010 World Cup football tournament. From the beginning of this celebrated human rights leader’s career, various articulations of football have helped precipitate and sustain his dialogue with nonnative peoples and places. Football in this respect might be said to constitute both Mandela’s medium and message or what Douglas Booth would call his “narrative content” and “narrative form” (Booth, 2010).

Mandela came to disseminate a universal(ist) message through the diffuse medium of world football while residing in the most parochial of places. In June 1964, the sometime radical political activist began what was meant to have been a lifetime term of imprisonment on Robben Island, a hardscrabble scrap of land located several miles off the coast of Cape Town. Sentenced by the then-ruling apartheid government for alleged crimes of sabotage against the state, Mandela spent the majority of the next 18 years (before being relocated to a succession of mainland prisons in 1982, preceding his final release in February 1990) in literal solitary confinement at what must have seemed the figurative ends of the earth. Although “legally” sentenced and physically secured, Mandela continued to serve during the next several decades in his preexisting capacity as a senior leader of the outlawed African National Congress (ANC); he likewise remained in contact with the ANC’s exiled members, who meanwhile had shifted their oppositional base of operations abroad. The lawyer Mandela made the tactical decision to concentrate on domestic matters at his trial. There, he was keen to deny “the influence of foreigners” in what he conventionally called “the struggle in South Africa” (Mandela, 1964). Barely 3 years into his sentence, however, Mandela began a rhetorical reversal of sorts, *in absentia*, that leagued him with Robben Island’s inmates in adopting organized football as both a means of personal expression and an instrument of political exchange with an international audience that was ever more inclined to condemn the racial injustices of his homeland.

Isolated in his solitary cell, Mandela looked on approvingly as members of the general prison population instituted competitive football matches under the auspices of their own Makana Football Association (MFA). “Makana” itself was more a local than global gesture in nomenclature, since it referred to the black South African Xhosa clan’s revered warrior-prophet who was similarly sentenced to Robben Island by the resident British military in 1819 for resisting colonial rule. *Matyeni* (from the tribal dialect for “stones”) had been the association’s identifying name in its infant stages; the term was still more insular than “Makana,” in that it recalled the island quarries where prisoners labored, even as it suggested a people sprung from the subcontinent’s very earth. But if they were alert to the local reference, the officers, match officials, and players of the MFA were also wise to the symbolic significance of attaching—both in word and deed—their athletic enterprise to the greater footballing world. Participants, for example, selected team names from a constellation of well-known professional club sides in Great Britain, including the mighty “Rangers” of Glasgow, and historic London rivals Tottenham “Hotspurs” and Arsenal’s “Gunners.” Teams exercised equal care in deciding upon the make, shade, and grade of their playing kits. Purchased from the mainland through a combination of personal and donated funds, these uniforms suggested in their insignias and color combinations an allegiance to various clubs and/or countries from across the sporting map. Within this network of global reference, players fittingly coined the phrase “border crossing” for the secretive means by which teammates who were held in separate facilities managed to assemble in the same cell blocks on nights before matches. Yet it was the MFA’s decision to conduct itself in accordance with the rules and regulations of world football’s governing body, the Swiss-based Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA), which most readily announced the rhetorical, and political, aims of the island organization (Korr & Close, 2008). FIFA famously imposed its sports boycott on the apartheid regime in 1976. Well before then, South Africa’s most disenfranchised footballers remained integrated, through FIFA, into a global football culture that circumvented their prison condition. As the German sociologist (and football enthusiast) Klaus Theweleit has said, “Fortunately, the footballer does not have to break through a wall” (Golz, 2005). Football itself in other words afforded a way around all manner of obstacles.

Upon his release, Mandela retained his rhetorical faith in football. It was a calculated decision that carried controversial consequences at home and secured (mostly) favorable opinion of South Africa’s post-apartheid democratic experiment abroad. Just prior to the lifting of its domestic ban in 1990, the ANC extended its community organizing activities into “the sporting arena,” as Grant Farred explains (Farred, 1992, p. 229). The Congress at the time faced increasing opposition from both internal factions and the rival Inkatha party as it mobilized the political support of populous black townships like Soweto in anticipation of apartheid’s demise. Much of this mobilizing occurred through the “footballing front” of the Mandela United Football Club (FC; Farred, 1992, p. 231). Paying homage in its name to the English Premier League’s vaunted Manchester United side—staunchly supported by Mandela to this day—Mandela United in fact found its primary means of expression not on the playing field

but in the occasional criminal activities of its “players” and “coaches.” The chronic harassment of rivals seemed Mandela United’s preferred sport; the February 1989 murders of activists Stompei Mokhetsi and Finki Msomi are but the most notorious example of the club’s illicit behavior.²

“Sports-savvy” is how *Sports Illustrated* understates the case for (and not against) Mandela (Carlin, 2008), who, as the ANC’s then-recently freed leader, identified in football a means of ideological persuasion that proved most effective in foreign circles, however much ANC’s detractors might question the sincerity, and legitimacy, of the Congress’s commitment to fair play. The trope of teamwork, or “unity,” may have turned bloody in the body of 14-year-old Stompei Mokhetsi. Mandela United in due course distanced itself from such crimes, however, with the election and apotheosis of *President* Mandela, whose Government of National Unity (GNU) assumed control of the country in May 1994 at least in part on the strength of its anointed spokesperson’s masterful rhetorical performance on world football’s signifying stage. Mandela switched abruptly from the comparative passivity of sports spectatorship at Robben Island to active involvement on the international interview circuit during the early years of the decade. His intellect and pregnant pauses made him a prime televised spectacle—a “media colossus,” one commentator remarked (Nixon, 1991, p. 45)—whose personal magnetism overrode the linguistic and cultural divides within and between nation-states. Weekly satellite broadcasts of England’s top-flight football matches today reach an estimated 100 million viewers around the world. Mandela’s audience, if more modest than those of the age’s reigning “media sports,”³ was and remains similarly equipped to cross dividing lines at once generational, continental, and racial.

Indeed, the text of Mandela’s message—humanitarian tolerance, broadly conceived—and the powerful means of its global transmission are (in the same spirit as football) to a certain extent coextensive. Accepting his shared Nobel Peace Prize in December 1993, Mandela declared on behalf of the largest conceivable constituency, “humanity,” a suitably sporting “common victory over racism,” “both inside and outside [his own] country.” A self-proclaimed “representative” of “millions of people across the globe,” he conjured the widest habitable field for the future, stating, “The children must, at last, play in the open veld.” Recalling “the name of another outstanding Nobel Peace Prize winner, the late African American statesman and internationalist, the Reverend Martin Luther King Jr.” (Mandela, 1993), Mandela spoke to and through an assembled audience of onlookers in Oslo whose presence was but a proxy. That is to say, Mandela ultimately had in mind an “international community” (Jolly, 1995), as Rosemary Jolly writes, for whom the rise and fall of South African apartheid made riveting viewing. Mandela furthermore reached this audience with an implicitly *post*–postcolonial discourse, in that even prior to his presidency he championed benevolent, humanistic alliances between disparate persons as a principle for world organization.⁴

Athletic representations of this rhetoric soon followed. The Nelson Mandela Challenge Cup, for instance, began in 1994. This annual one-off “friendly” pitted

South Africa's national football side against a revolving cast of international opposition. Typically played on "home" ground, the Cup in past years has seen hosts Bafana Bafana ("The Boys," a vaguely patronizing appellation bestowed by three South African journalists in July 1992) compete against a global assembly of nations, including Brazil, Argentina, and the Netherlands, in addition to Nigeria, Cameroon, Senegal, and the United States, among others. Yet Mandela's administration had more than an eponymous Cup in mind as it sought to end apartheid's self-defeating legacy of state isolation. As early as 1998, at the biannual Africa Cup of Nations final (held that year in Burkina Faso), the South African Football Association (SAFA) announced its intention to launch a bid to host the grandest of what one writer calls "sports mega-events," football's World Cup (Cornelissen, 2004, p. 1297). The announcement surprised in some respects. South Africa, after all, would need to undertake massive internal economic and infrastructural investment if it were to stand a realistic chance of accommodating *the* Cup competition as early as 2006, the original date for which SAFA prepared its bid. SAFA's move was in other respects not surprising. With the World Cup would come obvious financial rewards. So, too, were there domestic political benefits to be expected, as the country's reconciliatory staging of the 1995 World Cup rugby tournament demonstrated. More than that, the *world's* most coveted Cup seemingly would have represented for Mandela a fitting vehicle for the internationalist chapter and verse that comprised for him a private principle, governmental policy, and signature discourse. Communal sports events such as the World Cup increasingly have become, as scholar Scarlett Cornelissen observes, an "important facet of international engagement, with important effects on states' interactions with one another" (Cornelissen, 2004, p. 1294). Mandela's men from SAFA accordingly moved rhetorically, in order to capitalize on just these prospects for liberal "interactions" that world football affords. Casting the final votes in the hosting decision was FIFA's 24-member executive committee, which would have deemed SAFA's appeal oddly combative. SAFA had settled upon the exclamatory slogan, "It's Africa's Turn!" for a promotional campaign that ended in defeat to a competing bid from Germany. It was a campaign designed to remind the world of Africa's perennial neglect—of the continent's being denied for centuries the rights of global "engagement," save at the receiving end of colonial exploitation. SAFA's was a precedent-setting effort, however, and it was one that successfully managed to set all of Africa firmly within a planetary football context from which, until recent years, it had suffered *de facto* exclusion.

There is no excluding Africa from world football now. FIFA's decision early in the new millennium to rotate the World Cup among its six composite confederations ensured that an African nation would be chosen to host in 2010. Arriving as it did on May 15, 2004, the announcement awarding South Africa World Cup honors was widely perceived as an approving commemoration by FIFA of 10 years of democratic rule within the country. ANC spokesman Smuts Ngonyama was only one among many who interpreted the decision in this light. His party, he declared at the time, "joins all South Africans in joyously celebrating the long-awaited announcement" (Parekh, 2004). But the repercussions of and for a World Cup in South Africa carried far beyond

one nation. Issuing as it did from a press conference held in Zurich's aptly named World Trade Center—with Mandela himself in attendance alongside the other members of SAFA's bid committee—FIFA's ruling in favor of South Africa (over Morocco and Egypt) was a win that resonated throughout the continent. As FIFA President Sepp Blatter said, "The victor is football, the victor is Africa." Or, as SAFA's own bid book predicted, "Africa's time has come" (Parekh, 2004; *We Accept With Humility*, 2004). Yet, even this pan-African reading circumscribes the reach of SAFA's promotional rhetoric. Then-South African President Thabo Mbeki testified on the eve of the award to an "African journey of hope" that led inexorably toward an "African Renaissance" (Cornelissen, 2004, p. 1303), with his own country understandably, if self-servingly, identified as the World Cup's destination for 2010. One day later, Mbeki adjusted his rhetoric to better reflect that of his presidential predecessor, Mandela, heralding FIFA's decision by remembering "the important role" that the organization "played in the *international* struggle against apartheid" [author's italics] (Mbeki, 2004). Resituating South Africa's "story" within what Mark Chapman (1998, p. 86) names the "global neighborhood," Mbeki with Mandela assumed provisional control of the Cup for his country while diplomatically relinquishing its control to the wider world.

Tempering such optimism are the racial realities of football as it has been practiced in South Africa. For any reading of football rhetoric in the country must reckon with the legacy of an apartheid system that at once colors the business of sport, the meaning of sports metaphors, and scholarly methodologies (including my own) that would rely on such metaphors to perform their interpretive work. Mandela's close association with his beloved Manchester United, first, conveys at best a mixed racial message. The much-decorated Midlands club tours South Africa intermittently and maintains a vested interest in football development there through its sponsorship of youth training academies and annual tournaments. Based on his ethnographic studies of football's domestic reception, however, Marc Fletcher reveals that Mandela's Manchester United enjoys "a predominantly white, English-speaking fan base" in South Africa. Given that a vast majority of the players, officials, and spectators of the country's Premier Soccer League (PSL) are black and that a Soweto side like fans' favorite Kaizer Chiefs finds its strongest support among "predominantly black areas" in Johannesburg from outside South Africa's expanding middle class, Fletcher can additionally declare that "there are well-defined racial boundaries"—"segregation," even—"within the sphere of South African football fandom." Indeed, many black South Africans colloquially know football not as the world's game but as "our game." Fletcher thus concludes that while "elites" may have "framed" the recent World Cup "as a tournament for all South Africans, this vehicle [world football] has clear fractures" (Fletcher, 2010, pp. 80-81, 84-85). The competing nationalist, pan-Africanist, leftist, and xenophobic discourses that in fact accompanied (and critically still encompass) the World Cup in its build-up and aftermath similarly speak of "fractures" that are as much social as rhetorical (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2011a, pp. 279-293; 2011b, pp. 401-413). With many observers of South African sport, moreover, adopting a blanket heroic-tragic conception of the subject, the "emancipatory" scholarship that has emerged for a racially implicated game

like football can often come to rest upon metaphors that, Douglas Booth (2010) explains, suffer under “the weight” of an “abstraction” at odds with the strict empiricism of most students of South African society. A sport already “segregated” is accordingly further “silenced” (pp. 474–475).

When it does speak, world football retains to this day an ambivalent relation to the racial divides that have long since qualified Mandela’s rhetorical turn toward sport. FIFA President Blatter prompted a backlash against his organization (namely, his leadership of the same) in late 2011 when he was asked by CNN World Sport if he thought that racism remained on the pitch in the new millennium. As the acknowledged spokesman for the sport, Blatter was speaking within the context of continuing racial controversies in the game he administers. A white East Londoner John Terry,⁵ sometime captain of England’s national squad, then stood accused of racially abusing an opposing black player during a domestic Premier League match. A black Manchester United defender, meanwhile, the Frenchman Patrice Evra, had at the same time issued a formal complaint over similar abuse against a Uruguayan playmaker from club side Liverpool. Against this backdrop, Blatter argued that “there is no racism” in football:

There is maybe one of the players towards another, he has a word or a gesture which is not the correct one. But also the one who is affected by that, he should say that this is a game. We are in a game, and at the end of the game, we shake hands, and this can happen, because we have worked so hard against racism and discrimination. I think the whole world is aware of the efforts we are making against racism and discrimination. And on the field of play sometimes you say something that is not very correct, but then at the end of the game, the game is over and you have the next game where you can behave better.

International news agencies and social networking sites were quick to spread Blatter’s remarks; the greater football community was in turn swift to condemn the 72-year-old for his apparent insensitivity to the racial questions that envelop the sport he purports to represent. England’s nonprofit Kick It Out organization, for example, reiterated its “ultimate goal of kicking racism out football and making it a discrimination free zone.” The country’s Professional Footballers Association (PFA) chief executive, Gordon Taylor, was for his part one among many interested parties to call on FIFA’s Swiss official to resign. No less critical was the black Manchester United defender Rio Ferdinand,⁶ who responded to Blatter via Twitter by saying that the FIFA head’s comments were “condescending,” “almost laughable.”

Blatter dismissed such criticism out of hand by posting on his own Twitter account a photograph of him with Tokyo Sexwale, South Africa’s current Minister of Human Settlements—a man who, like Mandela, was a prisoner on Robben Island during the apartheid era. Blatter stated defiantly that he and Sexwale had conducted “several joint activities to raise awareness on the struggle against racism in South Africa.” He added in afterthought that “FIFA has a long standing and proud record in the area of anti-discrimination which will continue” (Blatter, 2011a, 2011b, 2011c). And so Blatter

brought football's internationalist rhetoric full circle. Having initially "denied" race a place in the sporting discussion, he all but embraced a proximate embodiment of Mandela's rhetoric of togetherness in the person of Sexwale. A contradictory posture in itself, Blatter's imbroglio suggests that racial considerations per se contradict the global vision—or, at minimum, the global discourse—that no less a sanctioning body than FIFA maintains with respect to its own game. In January 1960, François Thebaud could editorialize in France's *Le Miroir du Football* that the "power" of "footballers" had "allowed FIFA to unite . . . nations under its umbrella, without discrimination against race, religious belief, and political convictions" (cited in Kuhn, 2011, p. 72). The net effect of Blatter's comments is less sanguine by comparison.

King Football

If Nelson Mandela turned rhetorically toward sport in his prison cell on Robben Island, then Martin Luther King Jr. resorted to football's *capacious* discursive space in similar close confinement, inside a jailhouse in Birmingham, Alabama. Football there had little resonance with an American raised away from the global game's international playing fields. Still, much as Mandela redundantly deploys the rhetoric of international sport to spread his universalist attitudes and aims, King, too, some 50 years ago, indirectly adopted the cadences, if not the content, of football's worldly rhetoric to advocate for an expansive conception and application of Civil Rights. King makes no explicit mention of football in his extant writings and speeches. World football's global reach remains the subtext for much of his rhetoric, however, enough so to recast him as Mandela's sporting forbear.

Although King lacked Mandela's avidity for sport, he "understood with remarkable acuity" sport's "political and symbolic power," in the words of a journalist for *Sports Illustrated*. That is to say, King "understood that the athletic field—and athletes—could be a powerful megaphone for civil rights and racial justice" (Zirin, 2010). The future Atlanta pastor watched with rapt attention in early life as Jackie Robinson broke American baseball's racial barrier in 1947. A decade later, as King's rise to international prominence coincided with Robinson's increasing outspokenness (and declining performance on the baseball field), he would credit the future Hall of Famer with being a "a pilgrim that walked in the lonesome byways toward the high road of Freedom . . . a sit-inner before sit-ins, a freedom rider before freedom rides" (Zirin, 2010). Privately, meanwhile, King was also an enthusiastic supporter of the charismatic prizefighter Muhammad Ali, whose membership in the separatist Nation of Islam made him *persona non grata* in U.S. Civil Rights circles, even as it lent him a global stature that was surely not lost on King. King, in turn, would have found further confirmation of sport's transcendent force while abroad. He traveled to Rio de Janeiro during the early summer of 1960 to attend a meeting of the Baptist World Alliance. There King attended an impressive closing session that featured the Reverend Billy Graham addressing a crowd of more than 100,000 attendees at the Maracanã, Brazil's largest football stadium.

This was perhaps King's only close encounter with even the trappings of football during his short lifetime, and it was an instructive one. For the heady, hemispheric mix of religion and quasi-sport on offer was rich with symbolic suggestiveness. With the first Brazilian football club for nationals having been founded in 1898 by U.S. missionaries,⁷ football had already established a sporting connection between the two countries, to complement their preexisting ties through evangelical Christianity. Brazilian religion, like Brazilian sport, moreover, was each in its way a venue for the kind of purposeful racial integration that was then underway in the United States, albeit in the face of stiff conservative resistance. The South American nation's professional football clubs—arguably today as influential an institution as the state itself⁸—had begun to admit black players (many of them the descendants of slaves) only as recently as the 1920s and 1930s, several decades prior to the appearance of Jackie Robinson. As for the church, King would not have had to await visual signs of seeming racial progress until a day when football was to be recognized as an ecumenical faith.⁹ Coinciding with his visit to the Maracanã, he attended a dinner of Southern Baptist leaders at Rio's Copacabana Hotel. Organized by the Reverend Graham to “build a bridge,” in the latter's words, “between blacks and whites in our own South,”¹⁰ the event ensured that King was on hand for a potentially redemptive racial experience, the inspirational and international arc of which extended from one of the cathedrals of world football to one of the Protestant world's most notable proselytizers.

Back in his United States, King would “build” a comparable “bridge” to combine the urgent press of local racial politics with the mass rhetorical appeal of sport. Whether he expressed himself with pen or from the pulpit, King's justifiably famous words often exerted a unifying pull on his audience, in seeming contradiction to the claim made here: that football was a diffusive force in his rhetoric. Indeed, King at times could define his goals quite narrowly, as he did when he addressed the 11th convention of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) in August 1967. He spoke then simply of wanting “to bring the Negro into the mainstream of American life as quickly as possible” (King, 1967). “Integrative” is how one commentator describes King's rhetoric on these and like occasions; this same writer notes the “merging” that so often occurs as the rhetor, King, diminishes through a variety of classical affective appeals what another names the “symbolic space” that exists between him and his listeners/readers (Osborn, 2004, p. 23; Vail, 2006, pp. 53-54). Strive as he did for the social *integration* of African Americans, King was perhaps wise in adopting this literally reductive posture. For the rhetorical returns of *small* talk could be great, especially when King, as one study relates, “was able to mobilize white support” within the United States by “associat[ing] his program of change with accepted ideals and homilies within American society” (Sharman, 1999). Already aiming rhetorically for oneness, King invoked his birth nation's belief in a divinely endowed democracy in order to further draw disparate peoples together.

But like his contemporaries, the rock-breaking Makanans of 1960s Robben Island, King was as prone to project his Civil Rights message outward as he was to restrict his rhetoric to a local frame of reference. Attached, as one scholar remarks, to the

"*particularity* of the American creed and its ideals"—and thus tailoring the content of his declamations to the immediate emotional context of his own American moment (Triadafilopoulos, 1999, p. 754)—King paradoxically (yet tactically) spoke and wrote with the greatest sense of scope. That is, he set no limits on the province of his rhetorical work, which called on *all* peoples, everywhere and always, to overcome the spurious limitations of religious, ethnic, and racial prejudice that King encountered inside an unaccommodating Southern United States. His accordingly constituted what Jürgen Habermas would call a "valid" public discourse—one whose essential "statements" "transcend the provincial standards of the merely particular community of interpreters and their spatiotemporally localized communicative practice" (Habermas, 1993, p. 52).

This "public" imperative to "transcend," this footballing tendency for the global trajectory, appears most plainly in King's aforementioned experience with prison confinement in the U.S. state of Alabama. Early in 1963, the SCLC resolved to launch a nonviolent direct action campaign in the state's largest population center, Birmingham, so as to force the city to repeal its segregation laws. By precipitating their own arrests through acts of civil disobedience, participants reasoned, and thus filling the municipality's jails to capacity, they could force concessions from local officials over the area's discriminatory practices. King in turn descended upon the city to lead a march of protest that had been planned for Good Friday, April 12. His expected arrest followed. King spent 8 days in prison, since he refused to post bail until April 19. In the interim, he assessed his predicament, and presumably read with displeasure an open letter published by eight local clergymen in a city newspaper, which called on black residents to abandon their demonstrations. King ostensibly responded to the clerical criticism with a letter of his own, his "Letter from Birmingham Jail." Although it did not appear in print until the first week of May, and notwithstanding its being at least partially composed subsequent to the writer's release, King's "Letter" betrays the straitening conditions in which it was written (Leff & Utley, 2004, pp. 37-47). A perfunctory introduction gives way to the first line of the first paragraph, where the epistolary persona writes of being "confined in the Birmingham city jail." Acute consciousness of place in fact becomes a kind of early refrain, with the nearly identical phrases "here in Birmingham" and "in Birmingham" initiating the second and third paragraphs, respectively. "Letter" then breaks off into a radically different direction, one that carries writer and reader alike far from the injustice of local race laws. Paragraph 4 begins with an abrupt shifting of the scene out of Alabama, into a realm where there pertains an "interrelatedness of all communities and states" (King, 2000, pp. 263-264). It is an alternate, idealized vantage point compared to that which opened "Letter," one that situates the particularities of state and race within a Civil Rights perspective. "Injustice anywhere," King's persona now recognizes, "is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality. . . . Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly." Within this web of "mutuality," King goes on to enhance his rhetorical authority precisely by preaching in the direction that "Letter" is reaching, which is to say, toward the world outside his prison walls. An abundance of references to world history, Judeo-Christendom, and the Western

intellectual tradition not only implicitly place “Letter’s” writer on a par with such exemplars as Socrates, Jesus, and Abraham Lincoln; they chart an epistolary geometry (and literary chronology) that is less hyperbole than parabola, with ever-diverging lines receding endlessly into the distance.

This outer-directedness is world football’s domain, a territory that not a few Americans visited for the first time during the height of King’s influence. It might be a mere historical coincidence that racial and football consciousness should have dawned simultaneously in the United States, but they did. Only 3 years after the May 17, 1963, issue of *Life* magazine released for international circulation its timeless Civil Rights images of the disturbances in Birmingham—in the process creating an iconography from visual scenes of embattled blacks confronting police dogs and fire hoses¹¹—England’s landmark World Cup success in the 1966 finals scored impressive Nielsen television ratings in the United States. There is no evidence that directly connects these apparently separate “image events” (Johnson, 2007, p. 1), to borrow the phrase bestowed by one observer on the photographic media coverage of King’s Birmingham. Yet U.S. football’s mature emergence corresponds so closely with King as to suggest a more than random connection between them. Both phenomena—one a global spokesman, the other a global game—presupposed and underwrote a willingness among “image” witnesses in the United States to suspend local attachments and invest themselves emotionally in movements that were captivating enough to carry them across the delimiting boundaries of nation-states. It was with much international suggestiveness, then, that two competing groups of franchise owners from the nascent United States Soccer Football Association (USSFA) inaugurated professional domestic matches in 1967.¹² The two ventures merged in 1968—the same year as King’s tragic assassination in Memphis, Tennessee—to form the North American Soccer League (NASL). NASL’s popularity (and financial viability) would jump dramatically with the arrival 7 years later of Brazilian footballing legend Pelé, whose late-career contributions to his New York club side Cosmos were regularly, and sensationally, documented by the world press corps. Americans, too, were riveted with the rest of the African-Brazilian’s planetary fan base, without perhaps realizing the reservations felt by the sports star prior to his arrival: Pelé’s advisors warned him beforehand of the social disadvantages of being “black in the USA,” while Pelé himself, unaccustomed to race prejudice in his home country, had made an emotional tour of his ancestral Africa with club side Santos only as recently as 1967.¹³ Summarizing the conventional U.S. wisdom on football, Thom Satterlee explains that it was long thought within the United States that football “goes against the national identity,” and thus “belongs on foreign soil, where it began in the first place.” An orchestrated campaign conducted among various American print, radio, and television media outlets nonetheless managed through deliberate “rhetorical strategies” to educate and entertain the domestic audience for football during Pelé’s 3-year stay. The end result, says Satterlee, was to “effectively undercut decades-old stereotypes and present the sport in a way that was more appealing to the ‘average American’.” Even post-Pelé, American sports fans in the aftermath of the star’s departure continued to communicate without what Satterlee

once more calls a “common soccer jargon” (Satterlee, 2001, pp. 306-308). And yet Americans, en masse, for perhaps the first time were participating indirectly in a world sporting institution from which, not quite Jim Crow-like, they previously had been denied access—albeit largely on the basis of their own longstanding indifference to a language that they did not or would not understand.

King commanded football’s idiom, and internalized its transnationality, without apparently knowing (or needing to know) the rules of the game. Accepting his Nobel Peace Prize in Norway on December 10, 1964, he evoked a circuitous international journey that might have described any one country’s route to some World Cup, past, present, or future. It had been, King said, a “tortuous road which has led from Montgomery, Alabama to Oslo.” “This is,” he would add, “a road over which millions of Negroes are traveling to find a new sense of dignity.” King elaborated the following day when he further indicated the ethical, global direction in which his words were tending. The “United States Negro” hero of his Nobel Lecture, having been “reminded . . . of his birthright of freedom,” is pictured “moving with a great sense of urgency toward the promised land of racial justice” in tandem with “his black brothers of Africa, and his brown and yellow brothers in Asia, South America, and the Caribbean.”¹⁴ It is an image worthy of any World Cup. It is likewise a fitting figure for King’s own politico-sporting legacy in the United States. For if King himself missed the egalitarian freedoms of football, his fellow citizens have found in the form of the sport an outlet for living King’s dream. Pelé himself would make the connection. Asked in later life by a reporter whether there were anyone he wished he’d met during his travels, the consensus “King” of football replied, “Of all the people I’ve met, I was struck by Martin Luther King. And Nelson Mandela.”¹⁵

New York’s Martin Luther King Jr. High School continues a tradition that pairs the local realities of race with the internationalist idealism of sport. The school itself opened in the late 1970s as a social experiment modeled on King’s message of peaceful integration; it thereby became the first fully integrated educational facility in Manhattan. Area whites responded by enrolling elsewhere, leaving MLK with an overwhelmingly minority enrollment drawn from the city’s poorest immigrant families. Its close proximity to the wealth and promise of neighboring Lincoln Center has not prevented the school from undergoing an all too familiar inner-city nightmare: metal detectors, shootings, and stabbings depreciate the educational experience at MLK. And yet the school’s football field—surrounded by a chain-link fence, and described by one journalist some 45 years after Birmingham as a “virtual prison yard” (Spangler, 2005)—hosts one of the nation’s elite high school boys’ teams. The MLK side is also perhaps the nation’s most diverse. Since 1995, players from more than 40 countries have been included in the squad and from this international *assemblage* have secured a consecutive run of no less than five city championships. Not all of MLK’s players are native speakers of English. All signs indicate that they are fluent in football, despite the severe social challenges confronting them.

Football Obama

Unlike Nelson Mandela and Martin Luther King Jr., U.S. President Barack Obama obviously has not served prison time. He has broken through racial barriers, however, in becoming the first African American to win his country's highest elected political office. And he, too, has conversed through sport in pursuit of serious ideological and policy goals.¹⁶ Football has been central to that conversation. If, as former U.S. National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski writes, the primary fact of President Obama's foreign policy is "to reconnect the United States with the emerging historical context of the twenty-first century," and its fundamental effect a more "fair-minded" and "strategic" "commitment" to "geopolitical realities" (Brzezinski, 2010), then world football has emerged under Obama as an informing figure of his administration's rhetorical relations with other nations. The football evocative speeches, writings, sayings, and phrasings of Mandela and King combine to offer an expressive Nobel precedent in athletic internationalism. Obama continues in much the same rhetorical vein, resorting as he has to the world's sport to supply himself with a more-than-metaphor for America's reintegration into a global league of nations.

It warrants emphasizing how anomalous Obama's football rhetoric is and how unlikely has been the gradual evolution of the nation's sports discourse to include the internationalist imperatives of the global game. Since FIFA's founding in 1904, football has shown consistent growth worldwide, save for the residual resistance with which it has been met in the United States. Andrei Markovits and Steven Hellerman cite an abiding U.S. "sports exceptionalism," which they claim has relegated football to the comparative margins of mainstream acceptability—this, despite the sport's more favorable reception States-side in recent decades, and despite, too, the nation's having developed along modern industrial lines comparable to those of Western Europe, where football's supremacy is largely uncontested. Markovits and Hellerman attribute Americans' historical aversion to the sport "to a certain kind of self-contained nationalism" that has seen the United States over the past century "acting apart from the rest of the international arena." Koen Stroeken agrees. "The success of international football," he says, "is based on its ability to foster a sense of global involvement"; it affords the devoted fan a channel through which to experience "synchrony," and a presumed parity, "with the world." Having enjoyed sole superpower status since at least the fall of the Berlin Wall, from Stroeken's perspective the United States would have "little to gain" by partaking of football's most dubious "pleasure," "seeing the established hierarchy of nations in world politics subverted by an alternative one" through "carnavalesque" reversals of sporting fortune. U.S. resistance to football is thus a mechanism by which the country can "confirm" its supposed "role of leader and outsider transcending the game and the rules that apply to the rest of the world." Americans might have participated in the first World Cup, held by Uruguay in 1930. They might have witnessed from afar football's growing overseas influence with the

end of the Second World War. Yet, only with football's relative 1980s domestic ascendance, prompted in part by demographic changes in the U.S. suburbs and Sun Belt, has the world's sport become a rhetorical tool with the potential for mobilizing Americans. That Washington now boasts a bipartisan Congressional Soccer Caucus (CSC) and, in turn, defers (or not) to a self-described "soccer Dad" of a President, suggests not only that football has begun to earn nonseparate cultural status in the country. There is now the suggestion that what Ryszard Kapuściński says of Latin America applies to the United States as well: "The border between soccer and politics is vague."¹⁷

Obama's rhetorical resort to football indicates in part the sport's having found at long last at least grudging acceptance within the United States; more important, it marks a new, nonbelligerent brand of international participation by the United States in a world where there are Cups, rather than wars, to be won. The man reputed to be a fan of East London's English Championship football side West Ham would seem to have learned to look past the cockney connotations of the game.¹⁸ The U.S. President is guided, instead, by an informed appreciation for the close correspondence that pertains between the spirit of open competition that ideally informs world football and the diplomatic changes that must accompany his promise to end Americans' historical pattern of by turns isolationist and military interventionist global behaviors. If Obama's insistence on team play has seen basketball (originally an "American" sport, although increasingly internationalist in its implications) emerge as his preferred domestic signifier for political bipartisanship, then football signals his administration's more far-reaching figure for a general revision of U.S. relations with other nations.

Those relations entail more than token words of sport. The United States first hosted the World Cup in 1994, and, with the President's influential backing, tried unsuccessfully to repeat the feat at the 2022 rendition of the tournament, only to lose to a rival bid from Qatar. Obama's rhetorical support for this failed U.S. undertaking was longstanding; it was likewise consistent with his planetary commitments. On July 27, 2009, he met at the White House with FIFA President Blatter, who was himself visiting the country to watch the final match of the Gold Cup, a regional confederation football competition. The two men are reported to have talked football for upwards of half an hour, with Blatter then and there inviting Obama to attend the opening ceremonies of World Cup South Africa in June 2010. Obama's response, by letter, was non-committal with respect to his attendance at the Cup, yet effusive in its praise of football as foreign policy. Thanking Blatter for FIFA's work,¹⁹ the American wrote, "I must congratulate you on your determination to break down social barriers, promote tolerance, and encourage harmony between people around the world by spreading a message of hope by means of football" (Obama, 2009b). Some 5 months later, the U.S. President found himself in Oslo, receiving a Nobel Peace Prize, which, if pressed upon him somewhat unexpectedly, provided at once the occasion for an acceptance address that followed logically upon his meeting with Blatter, even as it placed him within a tradition established by two of the Nobel Committee's prior black rhetorician "winners." These latter global humanitarians Obama mentions by name when he alludes to King and Mandela in his speech; his unconscious (or not) concern for the World Cup

he reveals with an ambivalent lecture that reaches a word count for “world” of twenty-three, en route to calling on the Earth’s citizens to “strive for peace” while recognizing “that there will be war” (Obama, 2009a).

Both preceding and contextualizing these events is Obama’s earlier, April 2009, letter to Blatter, in which the U.S. President pointedly endorsed the U.S. Bid Committee’s proposal to host one of two upcoming World Cup competitions. Media speculation traced the President’s support to former U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger (Scott, 2009), who not only sat alongside the likes of California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg, and film director Spike Lee as a Bid Committee member but also is known to have had enjoyed diplomatic access to football’s highest administrative functionaries for years. The words of Obama’s letter, however, are his own. This much he made clear during a televised interview with Univision anchorman Jorge Ramos. Assuming responsibility, then, for a task that he might have assigned to White House Press Secretary Robert Gibbs (Dell’Apa, 2009), himself a sometime second-string goalkeeper during his playing days at North Carolina State University, Obama lent his considerable rhetorical skill to an ambitious plan that would bring the Cup “home,” even as it underwrote an ongoing reformation in international relations by the United States. As reporter Frank Dell’Apa writes, “Obama might not be able to bend the ball [like former England midfielder star David Beckham], but he can bend opinions as no other head of state can” (Dell’Apa, 2009).

If Obama’s World Cup rhetoric is purposefully instrumental—he makes explicit mention in his (ineffective) bid letter to Blatter of wanting “to bring the Cup back to the United States”—then it is also unequivocally global in the epic sweep of its overarching claim. The fate of football is “important to me personally,” he writes, as a prelude to the pronouncement that well might serve as a mission statement for his presidential tenure to date:

As a child, I played soccer on a dirt road in Jakarta, and the game brought the children of my neighborhood together. As a father, I saw that same spirit of unity alive on the fields and sidelines of my own daughters’ soccer games in Chicago. Soccer is truly the world’s sport, and the World Cup promotes camaraderie and friendly competition across the globe. That is why this bid is about much more than a game. It is about the United States of America inviting the world to gather all across our great country in celebration of our common hopes and dreams.²⁰

Temporally, the passage bridges the past of the President’s childhood stay in Indonesia with the present of his parenthood in the United States. Spatially, it similarly works collaterally by collapsing the geopolitical distance between Jakarta and Chicago. Ideologically, it transforms football—“truly the world’s sport”—into a unifying signifier, the very significance of which is its capacity to unite footballing countries from “across the globe” through a collective “camaraderie” earned in “friendly competition.”

A conjectural, wished-for World Cup, Obama's is less a divisive "competition" than a "celebration of our common hopes and dreams." Martin Luther King held a not dissimilar "dream," of which he spoke from the steps of the Lincoln Memorial during his March on Washington in August 1963,²¹ much as he had written earlier from the less auspicious surroundings of a Birmingham jail. The nonagenarian Nelson Mandela also dreams Obama's "dream" of global "unity." A July 18, 2007, celebrity football match held in Cape Town manifested as much. Paying twin tribute to "Madiba" (the honorary Xhosa title bestowed on Mandela) on his 89th birthday and Robben Island's long-since-dispersed Makana FA, the two regulation 45-minute halves arranged for the occasion featured 50 footballing "greats" from around a world that Mandela, Obama, and King would make whole. Pelé, still fit after his 1970s stint in New York, put in an appearance. Cameroon striker Samuel Eto'o (who now features for Russian upstarts Anzhi Makhachkala, following his spell with the appropriately named Internazionale of Milan) also participated. Although proceeds from the match went to the indigenous South African youths who are assisted by the Nelson Mandela Foundation, pitch play on the day was concerned with alternate latitudes. The game, in fact, was conducted in "that same spirit" of which Obama speaks to Blatter—shorthand for a holistic world-view, or what we might call "World Cup-ness," that appears in these and similar football spectacles occurring far from South Africa. In the minority paradox of their dominating presence, in the inspiration afforded by their remarkable persons, and, most crucially, in the willingness they evince to "sport" rhetorically with the weighty issues of being and belonging that impact all societies, the three black Nobel laureates who grace these pages epitomize more than Cornell West's description of "the place of play" in confronting "the structures of unfairness" "in the human experience" (West & Gates, 1995). They provide something other than an object lesson in the worldly success that awaits the aspiring classes of the diaspora. What they finally suggest is the optative more-than-mood that surrounds the World Cup. Such games are played, at least hypothetically, in accordance with the lessons of Birmingham; teams here reserve their best "90 Minutes for Mandela"²²; interested performers play with the *jeu d'esprit* of a Seattle, Washington graffitist, who would invite those with football knowledge to "GIVE" maximum backing—their "FULL 90"—to the internationalist aspirations of the United States' most persuasive sports spokesperson, Barack Hussein Obama (Figure 1).

Persuasive, but not without paradox, the President's rhetoric both at home and abroad has often engaged internationally by proving evasive racially, distancing itself in the process from the discursive work with sport undertaken by Mandela and King. Preceding his election in November 2008, then Senator Obama was already, in the minds of two close students of his campaign speeches, "rhetorically presenting himself as a post-racial candidate" (Utley & Heyse, 2009, p. 153). The tendency grew more pronounced in the wake of the March 2008 scandal surrounding the Reverend Jeremiah Wright Jr., Obama's sometime pastor and spiritual advisor, who had gone to great rhetorical lengths to create a media sensation over race that at once anticipates and inverts FIFA President Blatter's. Football's Swiss head insisted on



Figure 1. Urban reworking of a promotional campaign poster for Major League Soccer (MLS) franchise Seattle Sounders. Photograph from the collection of the author (Capitol Hill neighborhood, Seattle, Washington, USA, July 11, 2009)

race's irrelevance in the game, before being chastened by his peers. The Reverend Wright argued in the reverse, accusing the U.S. government of any number of racial atrocities in a series of unsporting sermons. Among the outrages he enumerated were genocide, in the government's documented mistreatment of Native and African Americans; martyr-making, in its supposed complicity in the imprisonment of Nelson Mandela; and blasphemy, in manipulating the will and word of God to condone slavery and, failing that, segregation (Utley & Heyse, 2009, p. 158; Simba, 2009, p. 187). Obama predictably responded by renouncing the Reverend Wright in his "A More Perfect Union" address from March 18. Less noticeably, he began to gravitate toward what the above commentators call a "race-neutral rhetoric" that has since seen him downplay his African ancestry (countering Pelé's 1960s overtures back to Africa), relegate racism to the acknowledged injustices of the past, while attempting to remove the traces of African American rhetorical traditions from his own formal discourse. An econometric analysis of world football today might contend that outright discrimination against black players has ended—that blacks, in fact, are if anything overrepresented

in the game relative to their demographic percentages in society.²³ There is an argument to be made that Obama's rhetoric has charted a diametrically different course. Whereas the world arena of sport would appear to have accorded minorities disproportionate space—this, after centuries of conventional societies insisting they occupy a place apart—a reputed internationalist on the order of Obama understates the case to be made against a racial playing field that many would say remains anything but level.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Notes

1. James (1963/1993), Adair and Rowe (2010, p. 251), and Hylton (2010, pp. 339-340). Adair and Rowe situate their study within a series of recent international conferences (University of Iowa 2006, University of Technology Sydney 2008, University of West Indies, Cave Hill and George Mason University, 2010) that have sought to add ethnicity to an increasingly racially constructed understanding of sport.
2. The subsequent trial stemming from this crime additionally implicated, without conclusively proving, Winnie Mandela's involvement.
3. Ruud Stokvis (2008), "Ajax," p. 497. Stokvis defines "media sports" as "those forms of top sport that have been reconstructed by commercially motivated sport, marketing, and broadcast organizations with the purpose of maximizing the number of television viewers for the games, matches, or races." He notes as well that football is the "paramount" example of a "media sport" in Europe.
4. Karin Barber (2001), *Cultural Reconstruction in the New South Africa*, p. 177. Also instructive is the distinction drawn by scholars Charles Wolf, Jr. and Brian Rosen between Mandela's pre- and post-imprisonment rhetoric. The former they describe as "negative," by which they mean containing frequent "references" to and "identification" of some named "adversary." The latter they describe as "positive," by which they would indicate a "peaceful" mode of speech focused on "the good or value to be obtained" by some named "constituency." Wolf and Rosen (2005), "Public Diplomacy," p. 70.
5. Terry began his professional playing career with East London's West Ham United, who currently ply their trade in the second flight of English football. He now captains fashionable West London side Chelsea, who, thanks in no small part to their Russian billionaire owner, inhabit an altogether different socioeconomic universe than the aforementioned "Hammers."
6. Ferdinand was hardly a neutral participant in the controversy, since his brother Anton was the alleged victim of Terry's abuse. The Ferdinand brothers are also East Londoners by birth, Rio being a former teammate of Terry's at the start of his playing career at West Ham.

7. Under the leadership of the school's Presbyterian missionaries, São Paulo's Mackenzie College was the first to field in Brazil a competitive football team of nationals, as opposed to the expatriate players who had imported the sport into the country. Brazilians of African descent were appearing professionally for vaunted club sides like Vasco da Gama and Flamengo by the 1920s, although the Rio club Fluminense did not integrate until the 1950s—only several years prior to King's visiting the city.
8. Governed collectively by the respective presidents of the country's 27 constituent state football federations, the supervisory Brazilian Football Confederation (CBF) enjoys the balance of sports administrative power relative to individual clubs. Domestic resistance to this "power structure" has taken the form of street protests by club supporters in recent months, demonstrations that Tim Vickery describes as "Brazilian football's version of 'Arab Spring,'" Sambafoot (Vickery, 2011).
9. Alan Edge (1999), *Faith of our Fathers*. For more on football as a "theological" metaphor, see Carmen Nanko-Fernández (2011), "Not Just a Game," pp. 75-78.
10. Graham reports on both events—one at the Maracanã, the other at the Copacabana (like the World Cup, often known simply as the "Copa")—in *Just as I Am* (Graham, 1973/1997, p. 360).
11. Davi Johnson reports that more than 250 domestic and international journalists were on hand to provide direct media coverage of the events in Birmingham, events that both preceded and followed King's short jail sentence (Johnson, 2007, p. 19).
12. Although one of these groups, the United Soccer Association (U.S.A.), failed to win the sanction of FIFA, it did manage to sign a short-term contract with the American broadcast company CBS, which in turn agreed to provide weekly television coverage of league matches.
13. From Richard Witzig (2006), *The Global Art of Soccer*, p. 63. Pelé descended from Africans who had been brought to Brazil as slaves; his grandparents were the first members of his family to be born free.
14. King, Nobel Acceptance Speech and Lecture (King, 1964a, 1964b). By the close of 1965, King had come to include South Africa, specifically, in his global vision for what he called the "*international* potential of nonviolence." Addressing a New York audience for the American Committee on Africa (ACOA; King, 1965), King endorsed what he described as a "massive *international* boycott" against the apartheid state; he believed that such a "far-flung effort" would constitute an "alliance of all nations against racism" [author's italics]. King (1965), *Address to the South Africa Benefit of the American Committee on Africa*.
15. Pelé's comments appear in Dax Liner (2011), Pelé, p. 60. Gracing the cover of *Sports Illustrated* on June 23, 1975, the Brazilian's image accompanied the headline, "Pelé's Triumphant Debut: U.S. Soccer Finds a Savior."
16. In their contrary view, Simon Kuper and Stefan Szymanski (2009) assert "that in soccer"—President Obama's rhetorical sport of choice—"there is no room for ideologies" (p. 98).
17. Markovits and Hellerman (2001), *Offside*, pp. 39, 49; Stroeken (2002), "The World," pp. 9, 11; and Kapuściński (1991), *The Soccer War*, p. 159. Also see David Wangerin (2008), *Soccer in a Football World*, pp. 15, 24. According to a CSC Report (*The Congressional Soccer Caucus*, n.d.), more than 16 million Americans of all ages were playing soccer as of

- 2009; of these, nearly two thirds were under the age of 18, and two out of five U.S. soccer players are female.
18. President Obama is reported to have converted to the footballing cause of West Ham's traditionally working-class "Hammers" in 2003, during a visit to London to see his half-sister Auma. From Vicki Hodges (2008), *Up the Irons*.
 19. As recently as 2005, FIFA launched an initiative that, in the words of its own slogan, would "Build a Better Future" through global social change. Central to this initiative is FIFA's partnering the same year with streetfootballworld, an integrated network of 83 (and growing) nongovernmental organizations from more than 50 countries—all of them devoted to utilizing football as a means of policy implementation. Ongoing projects include the following: efforts to encourage health, promote peace, advocate for children's rights and education, combat discrimination, support social integration, and sustain the environment. Two of the above groups, by way of illustration, include the U.S.-based MLS W.O.R.K.S., which is involved in worldwide community outreach, and Grassroots Soccer, which focuses on HIV/AIDS prevention in 11 African countries, South Africa among them.
 20. FIFA announced its bid winners for the 2018 (Russia) and 2022 (Qatar) World Cups in December 2010. Given the sensitive nature of the proceedings, the White House Press Office released only excerpts of Obama's letter for general circulation. At the time of writing, the author was denied access to the letter's full text by the U.S. Soccer Federation (USSF), which worked closely with the President in support of the Federation's bid. Extracts from the letter can be found at the following websites: *Barack Obama Issues Support* (2009, April 14; see <http://www.guardian.co.uk>) and "Words of Support From President Obama" (2009, April 15), *USA Bid Committee Press Release* (<http://www.ussoccer.com>).
 21. Not by coincidence, Obama accepted his Democratic Party's nomination for President on August 28, 2008, 45 years to the day after King's "I Have a Dream" speech.
 22. "90 Minutes for Mandela" was the official name given by event organizers to the above-named benefit match in Cape Town.
 23. Kuper and Szymanski (2009), *Soccernomics*, pp. 106-107. In their analysis of professional football in England, the authors find abundant evidence of racial discrimination against black players in the 1970s and 1980s. Beginning in the 1990s, however, they see a reversal of this trend. Based on their reading of the available data provided by player performance indexes, they say it made increasing economic sense for clubs to invest in black players, who, English pound for English pound, consistently performed at or above the level of whites of comparable value. Since "black players were systematically better value for money than whites," Kuper and Szymanski conclude, the documented rise in black players among teams from the 1990s forward was (and remains) all but inevitable. The authors do, however, find a "new discrimination" in the "new soccer," black managers being largely absent from the game (pp. 109-112).

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Bio

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