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Leisure and the Racing of National Populism

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Leisure and the Racing of National Populism

This is the introduction to the Special Issue on “Leisure and the G/local Challenges to National Populist Politics”

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Openings

We introduce this special issue on “Leisure Cultures and G/local Challenges to National Populist Politics” with a particular example: the exhibition of Deborah Roberts’ artwork *O! Say Can’t You See*, which featured in the show *Sidelined* at Gallerie Lelong and Co. in New York City in 2018. It illustrates the complex circumstances and rich forms in which the challenges, ambiguities and resistances we focus on in this collection play out in/through the realm of leisure.

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3 The visit of one of us (Stanley Thangaraj) to the gallery offered a timely and provocative way with
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5 which we start this paper. Lelong is the New York branch of an international art business. It boasts
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7 that it “diversifies dominant understandings of modern and contemporary art”
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9 (<http://www.galerielelong.com/gallery>), while making its money by representing lucrative well-
10
11 established artists. It is located in the gentrified area of Chelsea, where working-class communities,
12
13 immigrants, and communities of color once lived alongside large industries and factories, and near
14
15 the river piers that once famously served as gay cruising spots (Manalansan 2005; Matthew 2005).
16
17 The area has now been strategically transformed and sanitized—the stately gallery itself is a
18
19 converted factory—becoming a major retail, art, and financial district serving the needs of
20
21 corporate capital and bourgeois white sensibilities. We begin the discussion of this paper with a
22
23 deliberate interrogation of *Sidelined* as a way to reference the ways that leisure, national populism,
24
25 and protest spill into other arenas; to capture the dialectical relationship between power, resistance,
26
27 and leisure cultures; to demonstrate how processes of national populism and its relationship to
28
29 leisure bleed into every day representational and cultural spaces; and to address the ways that
30
31 leisure provides a space for representation of key social phenomena and significant social actors.
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33 Whereas sport is often seen and removed from the realm of art, beginning with a review of the art
34
35 exhibit extrapolates the links between art, representation, pleasure, and power (Pringle *et al*, 2015).
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37 In particular, the art exhibit, *Sidelined*, allows us to decipher both a micro-level and macro-level
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39 analysis of leisure and national populism.
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50 While the location and aesthetic of the gallery bespeak and invite white-dominated art
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52 consumption as a leisure activity, *Sidelined* itself references a different realm of activity, cultural
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54 production and politics (see Saha, 2018). The installation was inspired by the protests of the
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3 National [American] Football League's (NFL) Colin Kaepernick (Burin, 2018; Thangaraj, 2017).

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6 In 2016, in conversation with and informed by the BlackLivesMatter movement, Kaepernick (then
7
8 of the San Francisco 49ers) refused to kneel during the pre-game US national anthem as a way to
9
10 call attention to serious racial issues in United States society. This, in turn, inspired others –
11
12 athletes and non-athletes – to follow his lead. The title of the art show, *Sidelined*, refers at once to
13
14 the location of players' protests (which took place at the edges of the gridirons by the team
15
16 benches); to the sidelining of Kaepernick's career (given that NFL team owners have refused to
17
18 sign him since); and to the ways through which Donald Trump, NFL owners, white nationalists,
19
20
21 and everyday people have dismissed, or sidelined, acts of protest and calls for justice (Flaherty,
22
23 2017; Futterman & Mather, 2018; Willingham, 2017). In different ways, Roberts and the other
24
25 artists in the show address this dialectical relationship between power and protest, conjuring up
26
27
28 the many ways that sport and leisure spaces, cultures and structures become one site for the
29
30 articulation and contestation of politics locally, nationally, and globally (Carrington, 2012;
31
32 Hartmann 2003; James 2005; Rand, 2011).

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38 Roberts' *O! Say Can't You See*, a mixed media artwork on paper (2017, reproduced at
39
40 <http://www.galerieelong.com/exhibitions/sidelined/selected-works?view=slider#2>), disrupts and
41
42 queers the historical and sporting archive by assembling divergently gendered and raced black
43
44 sporting bodies. Roberts presents what appears to be a young black girl's face atop a dress made
45
46 out of African-inspired fabric and a skirt suggesting the stripes of the U.S. flag. Limbs and feet
47
48 extend out. The legs could belong to the young girl, but the feet and one arm, adult-sized and
49
50
51 varied in skin tone, anatomically cannot. The parts and the whole gesture in different directions.
52
53 The arm with the fist, for example, calls up Black Power, but also suggests Adam's fist on
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3 Michelangelo's Sistine Ceiling, with an odd suggestion of limp-wristedness on the muscled form.
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6 The ring on the girl's eye suggests injury, although her gaze is steady. Roberts writes in the artist's
7 statement on her website that she is "interested in the way young girls symbolize vulnerability but
8 also a naïve strength" (<http://www.deborahrobertsart.com/artist-statement/>).
9
10

11
12 The title of Roberts' work, especially in the context of *Sidelined*, invites us to think about
13 the gendered and raced body in the nation state. *O! Say Can't You See* plays on "O' say can you
14 see?", the opening line of the US national anthem that refers to the US flag, and hence to the US
15 itself, prevailing through military battle. Significantly, the national anthem is central to the role of
16 sporting protest, for it is during its performance that notable acts have taken place, from the African
17 American athletes on the Olympic medal podium in 1968 to Kaepernick and other leading sport
18 stars, such as soccer star Megan Rapinoe, at the current time. Roberts' work asks us to consider a
19 number of questions: What can or cannot the girl see as she looks out? What forces structure her
20 gaze, her possibilities? Is it overreaching to see in the tangle of black bodies the forces of the birth
21 to prison pipeline and the athletic industrial complex? What do we see in leisure practices when
22 we look at her, with her? What cannot we see? What can we create, embody, envision, and do?
23
24 These matters of looking, spectatorship, activity, and action—and the ways that race, racism, and
25 racialization necessarily factor in—shape the possibilities and limits of time and activities
26 understood as leisure and their contexts. Leisure presents possibilities for simultaneously seeing
27 and not seeing the socio-historical context aligned with national populism (be it progressive or
28 conservative). Roberts' work invites us to look beyond the meritocracy of leisure and sport to see
29 the larger structure of race and gender in political formations.
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3 The papers in this special issue spotlight practices of power and resistance with particular
4
5 attention to the layers of racism and racialization to which this image, in context, gestures. We
6 focus, in particular, on the sometimes predictable, sometimes contradictory and conflictual, uses
7
8 of leisure by a wide array of actors in order to garner or challenge a populist agenda. As US and
9
10 UK based scholars, our examples of this relationship are specific to our local contexts. We are
11
12 informed by these examples, while trying to expand the relationship between leisure and national
13
14 populism on a global scale. For instance, to entrench his national populist agenda, Donald Trump
15
16 has been on the offensive by highlighting the actions of Colin Kaepernick and protesting athletes
17
18 – which are framed by Trump and his acolytes as unpatriotic and disloyal to the military and
19
20 uniformed services – to amass public, especially conservative, white supremacist support. Most
21
22 notably, in September 2017, Donald Trump ranted about the protests and called Colin Kaepernick
23
24 a “son of a bitch” (Legum, 2017; Porter, 2017). Through such discourses, Trump mobilizes long
25
26 histories of racism in the United States through the uber-patriotic realm of sport to demean the
27
28 protests by chastising #BlackLivesMatter through the racialized othering of black mothering,
29
30 children, and kinship. Artists, writers, musicians, and some of these protesting athletes, on the
31
32 other hand, have played a pivotal role in eliciting support for the BlackLivesMatter campaign in
33
34 order to challenge the racial stratification of US society (Price, 2016; Orejuela & Shonekan, 2018;
35
36 Taylor, 2016; Zirin, 2016). Securing populist support (and forms of resistance) through various
37
38 forms of leisure illustrates how hegemony and counter-hegemony operate across various g/local
39
40 contexts (Laclau & Mouffe 1985), which we hope to unravel and deconstruct in this special issue.
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52 **Framing the papers: authoritarian and populist political times**

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3 In framing the issues and problems addressed in this collection of papers, we wanted to highlight
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6 both their inveterate genealogies, *and* the multitude ways that they are influenced and responsive
7
8 to the nuances of the contemporary political conjuncture. For this reason, we situate current
9
10 developments with a frame of authoritarian politics, populism, and increasing public resentment
11
12 and violence towards racialized and nationally-excluded Others.

13
14
15 Thirty years ago, Stuart Hall wrote, with typical prescience, about an emerging populism
16
17 in British politics. Populism, for Hall, was:

18
19 something more than the ability to secure electoral support for a political programme, a
20
21 quality all politicians in formal democracies must possess. I mean the project, central to
22
23 the politics of Thatcherism, to ground neoliberal policies directly in an appeal to “the
24
25 people”; to root them in the essentialist categories of commonsense experience and
26
27 practical moralism – and thus to construct, not simple awaken, classes, groups and interests
28
29 into a particular definition of “the people” (Hall, 1988, p.71).

30
31
32 While Hall himself would caution against any superficial application of his ideas across different
33
34 historical epochs and geographical sites (Hall, 1979, 1990), the relevance of the above statement
35
36 to contemporary, global ‘unsettling times’ (Ahluwalia & Miller, 2016, p.454) is apparent. What
37
38 he offers us is a useful and provocative model with which to name how conceptions of “the people”
39
40 emerge in our current historical moment through a national populism that relies on, demands, and
41
42 secures sites of leisure.
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46 Since the election of President Trump in the United States and the Brexit vote in the UK,
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48 along with the rise of radical-right movements in a significant number of European states (Gidron
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50 & Hall, 2017) and in parts of the Global South, populism has increasingly been subject to scholarly
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52 debate (see e.g. Dodd *et al*, 2017; Freedon, 2017, Ouellette & Banet-Weiser, 2018). However, the
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1
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3 meaning of populism remains contested and ambiguous, related to a range of ideological positions,
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5
6 discourses and practices. As Bart Bonikowski (2017) notes, populism has been conceptualized
7
8 variously as an ideology, a method of political mobilization, and a discursive category. There is a
9
10 degree of agreement among scholars as to its fundamental principles though. He states that:

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15 Fundamentally, populism is a form of politics predicated on the moral vilification of elites
16
17 and the veneration of ordinary people, who are seen as the sole legitimate source of political
18
19 power. The specific elites targeted by populists vary depending on the populists'
20
21 ideological predilections. While elected politicians are often the immediate targets,
22
23 populism just as often focuses on economic leaders, civil servants and intellectuals, who
24
25 are seen as exercising undue influence on politics in the pursuit of their own self-interest
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28
29 (Bonikowski, 2017, p. 184).

30
31 In the case of protest in sport, we see how political and corporate elites vilify the racialized
32
33 minorities, women, and queer athletes who challenge the racial, gender, and sexual stratification
34
35 in western nations. The athletes are conjured to have only self-interest and thus not speak to the
36
37 masses. As a result, Trump strategically uses the case of protesting athletes as antithetical to the
38
39 needs of “everyday” people, whereby creating (a)venues for governing (racial) national politics
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41 through affect (Berlant, 1997). Critically, nonetheless, populism does not provide the only
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44
45 intellectual explanation for the phenomena under analysis here. Bonikowski (2017) notes that
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47 while populism has become the preferred label to describe contemporary right-wing parties, this
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49 can actually obscure other important elements that underpin and emerge from radical-right politics,
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52 such as ethno-nationalism and authoritarianism. As Rogers Brubaker (2017, p.1191) argues, ‘the
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3 present conjuncture is not simply populist; it is (with a few exceptions) national-populist' (see also
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5 Gusterson, 2017).

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8 In fact, the processes of ensuring and securing a populist agenda have often required
9
10 mobilizing various racial projects to re/construct imaginaries of the nation (Omi & Winant, 1994).
11
12 In a Western European context, this has increasingly been taken up through far-right fascist
13
14 ideologies in the name of "ordinary" white working-class communities: the so-called "left-
15
16 behinds" (Bhabra, 2017). This rhetoric is evident in the politics and policies of Tom Van
17
18 Grieken's Vlaams Belang Party in Belgium, Geertz Wilder's Dutch Party for Freedom in the
19
20 Netherlands, and Marine Le Pen's National Rally (formerly National Front) in France (Cammaerts,
21
22 2018; Harsin, 2018). "Exploiting the public's ignorance and ethnic and religious resentments"
23
24 (Judis, 2016, p.120), they present an image of white working-class communities forced into silence
25
26 by "femi-nazi" and/or anti-racist campaigners, and the so-called irrational, leftist "politically
27
28 correct brigade" (Cammaerts, 2018). Such ideological posturing fosters a public sense of relief; a
29
30 populist form of emotional affirmation and healing that the political elites are *finally* listening to
31
32 the needs of "ordinary people" (Fraser, 2008). But this type of populist catharsis is merely
33
34 symbolic (Azmanova, 2018). It does very little to disrupt the financial and social precariousness
35
36 of those living in poverty, whether they be white working-class communities or people of color.
37
38 Blaming socio-economic inequalities on people of colour and migrants is not only a falsification
39
40 of material conditions, but also arguably serves to mask state machinations of neoliberal, white,
41
42 able-bodied and hetero-patriarchal forms of social control and power (Fraser, 2008; Shilliam,
43
44 2018; Valluvan, 2017). By combining vertical (elites versus the people) and horizontal (insiders
45
46 versus outsiders) axes of power, "internal outsiders" are re/cast as threats to the financial and social
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48 security of the nation (Brubaker, 2017).
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3 For instance, whilst the Dutch Party for Freedom has narrated a long-history of openness
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6 to difference and liberal attitudes towards gender, sexuality, and drug cultures, the arrival of
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8 immigrants – particularly those of Muslim faith – nevertheless, has been used to demarcate the
9
10 allochthonous (not from here) and the autochthonous (of here). For example, Dutch nationalist
11
12 politician, Geert Wilders, racialized Moroccan immigrants as “scum” and thus *dangerous* “matter
13
14 out of place” (Douglas, 2002) from within the nation-state (Goldman, 2017). The language utilised
15
16 is significant; evoking racial, ethnic and religious differences in a form of what Wallerstein and
17
18 Balibar (1991) call “cultural racism”, whilst simultaneously masking “race” as a marker of national
19
20 inclusion and exclusion (Cammaerts, 2018; Valluvan, 2016). In addition, a form of pink-washing
21
22 is at work here: the use of surface-level support for various civic and human rights, e.g. gay rights
23
24 and gender rights (see Harsin, 2018; Hatfield, 2018; Puar, 2007) which abet and camouflage
25
26 regressive politics. In this case, the presentation of a progressive and enlightened nation and
27
28 national culture is used to vilify Muslim communities, purportedly eroding the nation from within
29
30 by their supposedly “backward” fundamentalist values (see Abu-Lughod, 2013; Lenneis &
31
32 Agergaard, 2018 [this volume]). We also recognize the rise in authoritarian and fundamentalist
33
34 rule in places including India, Syria and the Philippines (Thangaraj, 2017), where religious and
35
36 ethnic insularity and discrimination have given rise to a pernicious politics of division (Valluvan
37
38 and Kapoor, 2016). These discords and manifestations of dispossession have fueled a rise in
39
40 demands for redistribution of wealth and land based on citizenship rights or one’s socio-historical
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42 location within newly formed nation-states.
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3 The demarcation of racial, ethnic and religious insiders from outsiders in and through state
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5 authoritarian politics and policies thus gives rise to *ethno*-nationalist forms of populist politics.

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7 Bonikowski (2017, p.184) summarizes:

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12 exclusionary forms of populism—that is, those that infuse populism with ethno-nationalist
13
14 content—often employ more restrictive definitions of the polity, based on ethnic, racial, or
15
16 religious criteria. In such formulations...it is not only elites who are vilified, but also
17
18 various scapegoated minority groups, who
19
20 are seen as having co-opted the elites for their
21
22 own nefarious ends. It is in contrast with these unwelcome groups that the identity of the
23
24 ‘true’ people becomes crystallized.
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29 This entails the displacement of the values and content of race away from white working-class
30
31 (stereotyped) bodies (e.g. as welfare scroungers) onto those of people of color and/or immigrants.
32
33 Through this performative act, we see how, at least in the case of North America and the UK, the
34
35 “mythical norm” (Lorde, 1984) works to secure racial affinity between white communities and the
36
37 powers of the nation-state. To further illustrate, mainstream LGBT movements and queer
38
39 organizing have often been complicit in perpetuating white supremacy, racial capitalism, and, as
40
41 Puar (2007) emphasizes, homonationalism and homonormativity: that is, the promotion of the
42
43 good gay citizen as white, gender-normative, Christian, cisgender, and male (see also Harsin,
44
45 2018; Hatfield, 2018).
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52 Populist slogans, e.g. “British jobs for British workers” (Shabi, 2017) also summon a desire
53
54 for closing borders, recalling a “past-truth” when the nation was imagined as racially pure (read:

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2
3 white), free from the “wrong” types of migrants (meaning: those positioned as unassimilated to
4
5 the dominant “values” of the nation). But, significantly, these slogans and connected border
6
7 control policies are based, in Trumpian language, on “alternative facts” (Bradner, 2017) and
8
9 inadequate accounts of the past. They do not address the long histories and presence of people of
10
11 color, the indigenous communities destroyed through forms of settler-colonialism across Western
12
13 nations, nor the hetero-patriarchal capitalist systems that fuels globalization and drives further
14
15 g/local inequalities. Sadly, as Azmanova (2018, p.401) argues:

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18 even the most derided forms of recent populist mobilizations (those by the anti-immigrant
19
20 far right) have used successfully the channels of electoral politics, which has allowed them
21
22 to affect not only specific policies, but to influence the whole policy agenda in Western
23
24 democracies.
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29 No longer the out-dated politics of “the nasty party” (e.g. the British political parties of UKIP and
30
31 the BNP), anti-foreigner sentiments have become mainstream, as fear of losing electoral votes has
32
33 effectively forced many centre-left and centre-right parties to absorb them (Valluvan, 2017). Thus,
34
35 hosted by the institutional framework of liberal democracies, the radical (and racist) voice of
36
37 populism is having real political purchase; it is effectively regenerating the dynamics of
38
39 supposedly fair, democratic politics.
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43 In a supposedly fair, “post-racist” society, the ongoing denial of racism and white
44
45 supremacist ethno-nationalist discriminatory politics is evidence of what Lentin and Titley (2011)
46
47 call “post-racialism”. They argue that post-racialism situates race as an empty signifier, and
48
49 residual acts of racism as free from any deeper racial context. It resembles, as Bonilla-Silva
50
51 (2007), Burdsey (2016), and Meghji and Saini (2018) remind us, the premise of racism without
52
53 racist. Through the (problematic) logic of post-racialism, race is evacuated at the very moment of
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3 its emergence; that is, as a foundational element of ethno-national populist politics. Both those in
4
5 power *and* subjugated communities can also potentially embody the mythical norm of post-
6
7 racialism in ways they do not even often realize (Lorde, 1984). In and across various sites of
8
9 leisure, people of colour and migrants become key actors in the reproduction of racist ethno-
10
11 national populist politics. For example, as Ratna (2018) argues, first-generation Gujarati Indian
12
13 citizens of the UK must continue to negotiate their precarious senses of citizenship even although
14
15 their legal status has already been granted (see Bhabra, 2017), using dominant supposedly non-
16
17 racial tropes about citizenship, belonging and “values” of the nation (see also Jones *et al*, 2017) in
18
19 and through their engagements in walking as an informal leisure pastime. Some racialized groups
20
21 in turn use ethno-nationalist and individualised discourses as a tactic to continually reproduce their
22
23 citizenship as hard-working “good” migrants rather than supposedly lazy and welfare-scrounging
24
25 “bad” ones. In the British context, at different moments of time, and in differential ways, those
26
27 people may include Muslim communities, Eastern Europeans, African, African Caribbean groups,
28
29 and lower-class and lower-caste South Asian groups (whoever they, respectively, may be imagined
30
31 to be). Thus, even practices of resistance unintentionally can incorporate and reinforce
32
33 exclusionary language and racialised systems of power. Conversely, we have also seen the rise of
34
35 the Democratic Football Lads Alliance, which represents a sport and leisure based manifestation
36
37 of white populist politics. This organization claims to be “protesting against ‘returning jihadists’,
38
39 ‘thousands of Awol migrants’, ‘rape gangs and groomers’ and ‘veterans treated like traitors’”, but
40
41 has been identified by anti-racist groups as, in reality, propagating racism, Islamophobia, and a
42
43 supposed war against terror (Gayle, 2018). Critically navigating post-racial logics during
44
45 neoliberal times can be tricky, and it is not our intention to reduce racisms to simply the actions of
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47 rogue or self-serving individuals (and/or collectives), but to view them as systemic, complex, and
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3 connected to wider geo-political conditions and evolving histories (Alexander, 2016; Valluvan,
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5
6 2016). We concur with Valluvan's contention (2016), that neo-liberal post-racist times are, in fact,
7
8 captured through the proposition "racisms without racism". In other word, masking the
9
10 continuities of cultural and biological racisms, and, as we would add, institutional racisms.

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14 This timely special issue is situated within, and writes against, a contemporary
15
16 consolidation and expansion of white supremacist, ethno-nationalist, anti-immigrant, neoliberal
17
18 and neoimperial / neocolonial regimes and discourses across Europe, in the United States, and in
19
20 many countries in the Global South. The papers in this special issue showcase the constant tension
21
22 and unfinished (racial, classed, gendered, ethnic, and sexual) projects embedded in national
23
24 populist politics. They consider on-the-ground analyses of power asymmetries and forms of
25
26 populism that manifest and are resisted in/through leisure, uncovering and critically analyzing
27
28 macro-micro levels of resistance, the management of power, and localized experiences of
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30 solidarity, conviviality and pleasure.
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39 **(Re)politicizing race, racism and resistance in leisure studies**

40
41 We must take into account and understand the power asymmetries and forms of national populism
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43
44 through a critical engagement with the materialities of race. By politicizing and naming race,
45
46 racism, leisure studies, and national populism, we foreground race as central to the production of
47
48 nation, populism, and belonging in this sphere of popular culture (Alexander, 2016; Burdsey,
49
50 2016). Thus, we, as the co-authors and co-editors, underscore race as one key facet of leisure and
51
52 its relationship to national populism. "If we are correct about the depth of the rightward turn,"
53
54 writes Stuart Hall (1979, p.15), "then our interventions need to be pertinent, decisive and
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3 effective.” We locate leisure as a significant and timely medium, means, and method for these
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5
6 interventions to take place. In this special issue, we, the co-editors, along with the authors, are
7
8 specifically interested in existing and new forms and cultures of leisure, sport and physical activity
9
10 that remake, reframe, and interrogate racial belonging locally, regionally, nationally, and globally.
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14 We also perceive this special issue of *Leisure Studies* as an opportunity both to *foreground* and
15
16 *(re)politicize* the debate around race and racism in leisure studies (Carrington, 2004, 2012), which,
17
18 we would argue, is often ignored and/or treated uncritically in the contemporary field; unnamed
19
20 or subsumed within concepts such as nation, culture, identity and super-diversity (see also Nayak
21
22 and Meer, 2015). It is critical to centralize and name race in relation to the contemporary socio-
23
24 political conjuncture as a site and setting for leisure for a number of reasons. The conditions of
25
26 austerity re/produced and reinforced by these politics have a disproportionate negative effect on
27
28 people of color (Bhambra, 2017). More worryingly, in the UK, for example, the post-Brexit
29
30 climate has seen a rapid and substantive rise in racially motivated hate crimes. As Jon Burnett
31
32 (2017, p.89) notes, “the racist violence that has followed the [Brexit] referendum is not a just a
33
34 ‘spike’, a ‘jump’ or a ‘spate’, as the mainstream consensus has it. It is the literal manifestation of
35
36 the political climate which sustains it”. Placing race at the center of our analysis is also required
37
38 to write against the interpretative sleight-of-hand that has sought to deracialize the rationales and
39
40 underpinnings of contemporary populism. As Gurminder Bhambra (2017) identifies astutely, the
41
42 ways in which the so-called socio-economic “left-behinds” – the communities erroneously held
43
44 (solely) responsible for the Brexit vote and Trump election – are racialised as white, has significant
45
46 consequences. Not only are minority ethnic groups and people of colour erased from any notion
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48 of working-class consciousness or politics (Shilliam, 2018; Virdee, 2014), but this rhetoric “further
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3 displaces structures of racialized inequality from the conversation, seeking, as it does, to make
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6 white working-class identity, and not structural issues of relative advantage and disadvantage, the
7
8 primary issue in explanations of the outcome” (Bhambra, 2017, p.218-19); see also Valluvan,
9
10 2017). Put simply, we are living in/through an epoch where race structures a majority of
11
12 contemporary despotic regimes and g/local conversations, and the role of academic work in
13
14 illuminating, mapping, and challenging them is paramount.
15

16
17 By underscoring race, we aim to highlight the ways in which leisure practices incorporate
18
19 various axes, categories, and mediums to invigorate and substantiate racial classifications –
20
21 including those that work outside the western lexicon of race and intelligibility. In the process of
22
23 foregrounding race, we aim to highlight how it gains traction through the interjection of class,
24
25 gender, sexuality, religion, and multiple politics of location. Beyond the high-profile example from
26
27 professional sport we discussed to begin this conversation, the role and significance of broader,
28
29 grassroots forms of *leisure* in resisting (or indeed reinforcing) contemporary forms of populism,
30
31 authoritarianism, and ethno-nationalism is arguably not yet fully explored and understood
32
33 analytically. This is perhaps surprising, given the myriad other forms of resistance we have
34
35 witnessed over the last couple of years, popular cultural or otherwise (Boone *et al*, 2018; Thangaraj
36
37 2015; Thangaraj *et al*, 2016). As Diana Parry and colleagues articulate, “leisure is a context where
38
39 people can create changes that may bring about a more socially just world, and the research we
40
41 conduct brings visibility to these efforts” (Parry *et al*, 2013, p.83). For us, emphasizing notions of
42
43 resistance, racial and non-racial, in this special issue is of utmost importance – *intellectually* and
44
45 *politically*. As Susan Shaw (2006: 533) articulates:
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3 The idea of leisure as resistance raises questions about the political nature of leisure, and
4
5 particularly about human agency, power, and social and cultural change. In this sense,
6
7 resistance is not a neutral term that can be easily added to or dropped from the analysis of
8
9 leisure at will (as in “add resistance and stir”). Rather, it forces researchers to address not
10
11 only theoretical questions about paradigmatic assumptions, but also political questions
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13 about the purpose and role of social research, about social action, and about praxis.
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20 With this in mind, the questions, challenges and opportunities addressed in this collection expand,
21
22 rather than restrict, the connection between leisure and national populism while making sure not
23
24 to center the West as the only site of knowledge production. In the process, readers will uncover
25
26 the various ways through which the authors challenge not only leisure in the Global North but also
27
28 western epistemologies.
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33 **Overview of the papers**

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36 The papers in this special issue address leisure in a multitude of ways. Ali Greey (2018) focuses
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38 on white supremacist tendencies within the supposedly liberal tradition of LGBT Pride events
39
40 through a consideration of both queer and mainstream media responses to a BlackLivesMatter
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42 protest at 2016’s Pride Toronto march. Despite having been designated an “Honoured Group” by
43
44 Pride Toronto in 2016, members of BLM-Toronto were categorized as criminal, “terrorist,”
45
46 aggressive outsiders for holding a non-violent sit-in at the Pride parade, where they demanded
47
48 more resources for black queer and trans people, and the dis-inclusion of police officers in the
49
50 parade. Using Queer of Color Critique (Ferguson, 2004; Johnson, 2003; Manalansan, 2003; Reddy,
51
52 2011), Greey exposes the racist politics of exclusion, especially of queers of color, that structure
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3 the event in concept as well as outcome. In the process, Greey carefully underlines the nefarious
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5
6 homonationalist and homonormative politics that govern the leisure spaces of gay parades, while
7
8 importantly accounting for racial politics within the LGBTQI community.

9
10 When “alternative facts” become commonsensical and taken-for-granted realms of
11
12 “truth”, spaces of leisure offer the venue to shore up or challenge neoconservative ideologies.
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14
15 As Gabby Yearwood (2018) illustrates in his analysis of the University of Texas-Austin game
16
17 song and corresponding rituals, institutional narratives transform myths into socio-historical facts
18
19 that gain the power of “truth” through the force of tradition. Such acts, as also shown in the
20
21
22 work on collegiate and professional mascots in the U.S. sporting landscape (Guiliano, 2015;
23
24 King, 2016; Spindel, 2006), validate the performance of tradition while suppressing forms of
25
26 protest. Through the voices of African American players, fans, cheerleaders, and other sport
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28
29 participants, Yearwood provides a critically important intervention into how white supremacist
30
31 anti-black rhetoric is transformed and differently coded to foreground university tradition and
32
33 state pride.

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38 Brian Kumm and Corey Johnson focus upon a different leisure space altogether: the domestic
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40 and informal leisure space of “the next-door neighbour’s lawn”. Using a post-qualitative
41
42 enquiry, they offer a narrative that “plays” with the lived affects of neoliberal populism in the
43
44
45 U.S. In framing this often taken-for-granted realm of leisure, they make visible (and audible)
46
47 how patterns of everyday life (Duneier, 2000), street-level rhythms, sounds, smells, spaces,
48
49 politics and racial scripts (Anderson, 2000) offer the opportunity to decipher and resist
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51
52 manifestations of national populist politics. Through the trickster character Phillip, and a
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54 musical interlude, they alert the reader to the experiential level of embodying and evoking social
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3 change. The authors provide a compelling narrative, arguing how close attention to lived racial
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5
6 (and intersectional) affects, of themselves and the matters around them (where the human is just
7
8 one form), everyday flows of power can be more consciously re-played in different and
9
10 subversive ways. Their invitation to play is part of a broader disciplinary and political dialogue
11
12 to generate ways of knowing which, crucially, challenge the everyday racial sediments of
13
14
15 national populist politics in/through the context of leisure.

16
17 Similarly addressing localized spaces of leisure, Verena Lenneis and Sine Agergaard
18
19 (2018) focus upon community action as a means to challenge municipal control and policy-
20
21 making. Their post-colonial feminist interrogation reveals how both white Danish and Muslim
22
23 citizens' access to women-only public swimming sessions is limited by municipal policies about
24
25 the antithetical relationship between religious modesty and Danish liberalism (across both left-
26
27 wing and right-wing party positionings). Their analysis, during this time of the “global war on
28
29 terror” (Rana, 2011), provides critical interventions for understanding the local, national, and
30
31 global context of Muslim bodies and Muslim aesthetics (Abu-Lughod, 2013). Their analysis
32
33 makes vivid how different women's leisure is limited by critically exposing the ethno-nationalist
34
35 populism embedded within official records of municipal policy-making processes.
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38
39 Veena Mani and Mathangi Krishnamurthy (2018) write on football and space (Sen, 2015)
40
41 in the South Indian state of Kerala, where grassroots organizing challenged the city corporation's
42
43 and state government's aim to replace the football pitch with a slaughterhouse. While the
44
45 fundamentalist Hindu national government (headed by the Bharatiya Janata Party) in India has
46
47 pushed for neoliberal policies coded through the language of regaining Hindu rights, the protest
48
49 by football fans shows a vibrant space of “active citizenry” to resist top-down dictates during a
50
51 time of increased Hindu, upper-class, and upper-caste fundamentalism (Kamath, forthcoming). As
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3 Mani and Krishnamurthy show, critical analysis of national populism must account for g/local
4
5 challenges and forms of protest. The non-essentialist character of leisure and national populism
6
7 also requires that we expand upon how we conceptualize protest.
8

9
10 Heather Sykes and Manal Hamzeh (2018) intervene against accounts of leisure that
11
12 naturalize the nation and nation-state by foregrounding indigeneity and histories of settler-
13
14 colonialism, and locate the colonial epistemologies within the western academy that further silence
15
16 native, First Nation, and indigenous truths, histories, and claims to land. They adopt four different
17
18 ways of theorizing anti-colonialism and decolonialization, offering a critique of how the
19
20 construction of leisure and mega-sporting events involves various types of forgetting and amnesia.
21
22 By doing so, they offer a method of researching leisure using a decolonial, anti-essentialist
23
24 framework (Smith, 2002) that attends to longer histories, contemporary populist formations in
25
26 sport, and struggles for identity. In the process, while situating the importance of anti-colonial
27
28 perspectives to provide important critique to settler-colonialism, they foreground the importance
29
30 of the land and redistributing it back to native communities as the important work of
31
32 decolonialization.
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39 The article by Rodrigo Tramutolo Navarro, Daniella Tschöke and Simone Rechia (2018)
40
41 provides a timely consideration of the relationship between urbanization, public space and leisure.
42
43 Using a case study of the implementation of the Praça de Bolso do Ciclista in the city of Curitiba,
44
45 Brazil, this paper reveals how the construction of even a small leisure space can challenge the
46
47 hegemony of neoliberal planning practices and dominant discourses about uses of, and rights to,
48
49 the city. Notably, Navarro and colleagues highlight the role of two cycling groups in the process
50
51 of creating this space, the CicloIguaçu – Association of Cyclists of Alto Iguaçu, and Bicicletaria
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53 Cultural. Using a range of qualitative methods – including documents and reports, observations,
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3 visual records and interviews – to trace the participatory process through which the Praça de Bolso
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6 do Ciclista was planned and implemented, this article illuminates how collective power can lead
7
8 to the transformation of social space in the city. In doing so, it reminds us the subversive potential
9
10 of leisure practices and participants in resisting contemporary globalised neoliberal urban politics
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12 (Harvey, 2006; Soja, 2010).
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17 **Re-Imagining National Populist Projects**

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19 At the time of completing this introduction to our special issue, in September 2018, Colin
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21
22 Kaepernick was selected by sports apparel manufacturers, Nike, as one of its icons for the 30th
23
24 anniversary celebrations of its ‘Just Do it’ campaign (Carrington and Boykoff, 2018). When even
25
26 the man who has become a g/local figurehead for confronting the long history of racism in the US
27
28
29 is “bedfellows” with a transnational, corporate, capitalist and patriarchal sports manufacturer
30
31 known for the exploitation of workers from the Global South, the following question emerges:
32
33 how as individuals, communities and citizens can we resist and fight the seeming ubiquity of
34
35 neoliberal and racialised forces of control and power? While Kaepernick and Nike’s relationship
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37
38 does bring about greater awareness of BlackLivesMatter and the rights of athletes, this is a complex
39
40 situation. At this time, the cultural critique and politics of Stuart Hall (and others) seem to be more
41
42 poignant than ever before (Carrington, 2018). In proposing a vision for society after neoliberal
43
44
45 (national populist) political times, Hall *et al* (2015) argue that this will not necessarily be achieved
46
47 by a single means (or by one elite individual/sportsperson); rather, it will take forms of action that
48
49 address the multiple, social and economic complexities of “common-sense” populism as expressed
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52 across different g/local sites, spaces of leisure, work, culture and everyday life, by various
53
54 institutions and agents. Breaking the omnipresent forceful lock of radical right/mainstream ethno-

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3 nationalist politics calls for – in the words of Deleuze and Guattari (1987) – “a thousand plateaus”;
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5
6 an infinite number of spaces and places “within which a society’s future can be imagined, fought
7
8 over, and determined” (Hall *et al* 2015, p.219). In adding our voices to this mission through the
9
10 context of leisure, and those of the contributing authors – through our united, separate and diverse
11
12 academic activisms, scholarship and community work – we too seek to challenge, struggle for, and
13
14 overturn contemporary fruitions of commonsense “values” of “the people” to advocate for a
15
16 philosophy of “deep democracy” (*ibid.*); that is, arguing for a society based on shared notions of
17
18 fairness and economic redistribution as well as historical, racial, intersectional, political
19
20 recognition and representation (see also Fraser, 2008). The papers that we present participate in
21
22 that project by naming the national populist movements in various sites while offering us, through
23
24 such critique, a space to organize, struggle, and reimagine leisure as spaces for justice, equality,
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26
27 and equity.
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39
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41
42 issue. It has been such a thrill for Stan, Aarti, Dan, and Erica working as a guest editorial team of
43
44 four scholars with such different theoretical, methodological, and historical backgrounds. The
45
46 chance to work with the authors of the papers in this special issue and see the interventions they
47
48 are making was such a pleasure. LaLa Zannell (2018) and Urooj Shahzadi (2018), authors of the
49
50 collection’s Foreword and Afterword, respectively, are models of ethical, engaged leadership and
51
52 we are grateful for their work. We want to offer thanks to many individuals who helped us
53
54
55 formulate, review, organize, and make sense of the special issue.
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