

THE UNITED STATES HAS NEVER WON A GOLD MEDAL
A SUPPLEMENTAL ESSAY TO "BEAM OF LIGHT" ON THE US FASCIST STATE'S
UTILIZATION OF YOUNG GIRLS IN ITS IMPERIALIST AGENDA
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In the summer of 1984, Olympic viewers witnessed a critical Cold War battle, wrought with drama and intrigue. This battle saw newly defected US women's gymnastics team coach and Texas rancher, Béla Károlyi, battle his former communist self, using the bodies of young girls. That summer, as a soon to be defected Nadia Comăneci, Károlyi's former project and the first female gymnast to be awarded a perfect score sat watching in the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum, her former coach's new protégée, Mary Lou Retton, won the women's all around gold medal, her limber and muscular body a vessel for the imperialist agenda of the United States and the personal agenda of her patriarchal coach.

Young girls are shapeless and hopeful, innocent, and determined. In the cis-hetero capitalist, white supremacist Christian ableist patriarchy of the United States, young girls function as an empty vessel. Rarely seen as complex and thoughtful sentient creatures, young girls are benign as long as they serve as a vehicle for all of white supremacist Capitalist patriarchy's projections. Young girls like pink. They are mothers in training, coddling baby dolls, until they can become a vessel for the personification of these industrial complexes: the unborn baby. Young girls are dumb. Young girls are unaware of the state of the world. Young girls are all heterosexual, but are also all asexual. Young girls can be taught what you like. Young girls are sweet and like to please. Young girls are safe.

My niece is now 6 years old, but at her 2nd birthday party, as she sat in a newly gifted sandbox, her hair a mess as she delighted in the textures surrounding her, she became very anxious and then rageful as I continued to snap photos of her. This culminated in her throwing sand at me and the camera. Her rage was justified because I was violating her consent. The oldest child of millennial parents, she had been photographed constantly and this one time, she just wanted some privacy. When she was 3 and a half, I bought her a children's camera. Her ability to return the gaze immediately improved her confidence because an image of herself was suddenly something she had control over.

We do not allow children to own their bodies. We constantly violate their consent. In a 1986 interview featuring Béla Károlyi. in cowboy gear, riding unruly horses, Karolyi claims that one of the reasons he chose to leave Romania was because the Romanian government "wanted to take something from the honest work of the kids and my personal honest work and say because we are a communist country with a strong communist mentality, that's why our kids are so great." He then goes on to say that Ronald Reagan's claim that Mary Lou Retton's gold medal was a result of his presidency was also untrue. But...it was true...because the United States has always been a fascist country with an imperialist agenda, using public relations and media glamorization to embed US fascism with the kind of soothing confidence that only a feel good story of a young American girl and her liberated and thriving communist defector coach could provide.

When the CIA sent US Abstract Expressionists on a "good will" tour throughout Europe, it was in response to Soviet and communist PR tours that sent athletes (surrogates for warriors) throughout Europe. Athletes willing to sacrifice their body and their autonomy for the great

communist project. Martyrs of the people. The United States followed up with a response meant to ultimately obscure the US fascist state by appealing to Europe's intellectuals and ruling bourgeoisie. Western Europe has long fought imperialist wars with the bodies of the proletariat and the kidnapped. Philosophies of triumph, relating to the body, would have little impact on the Hegelian aristocracy of European society. As evidenced in Europe's World's Fairs, Europe now negotiated power through the imperialist collecting of rarified objects. Purely abstracted rarified objects - the kind Hitler and Stalin hated - won the interest of the European elite, but the presentation of Abstract Expressionists as some version of dissenters and/or seditionaries won their allegiance. After all, protest is often a pressure valve, securing a regime through the illusion of dissent. It was no more evident that the US had won the propaganda Cold War long before the physical Cold War was over, when sixty-six countries, including the US, Canada, West Germany, and Japan, boycotted the 1980 Moscow Olympics over the USSR's 1979 invasion of Afghanistan. Several countries in the global South also boycotted the games under the US's "urging".

I doubt the ongoing US occupation of Swain's Island, Wake Island, Guam, American Samoa, The US Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, Iraq, Afghanistan, etc., will keep any of the world's nations away from the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics. That this periphery of empire exists seemingly without criticism comes as no surprise when the core territory of the United States' is a ragged quilt of hundreds of occupied Native American nations, whose narrative of ongoing genocide is matched in popular entertainment only by the contributions of the United States' former slaves.

When Adorno criticizes popular¹ music as functioning ultimately as standardized commercial rhetoric, rendering even a heartfelt rendition of "Joe Hill" as superficial, his logic fails to recognize his position within patriarchal white supremacy. Power cannot be empowered by publicly dissenting, but it can maintain a mythology of difference that refocuses those without power to sacrifice another social class in order to identify with the elite. What he fails to see is the politicized body as a vehicle for power negotiations. The US is an expert at negotiating power through young (often white, but of color when convenient or appropriate) female bodies. Actresses and singers, socialites, models, and fictional and/or mythic heroines all champion the myth of the free West through charm, innocence, camp, and ultimately a paradox of power negotiated through a completely subservient body.

In 1873, the United States Supreme Court, in the *Modoc Indian Prisoners* opinion, created the legal permission for white colonists to murder indigenous people with impunity². Within the narrative of Western US expansion, indigenous peoples were considered *homo sacre*, or "sacred man" (a relic from Roman law), who, excluded from the political body and social contract, could be killed to make room for the "master race"³. In *Against the Fascist Creep*, Alexander Reid Ross notes that fascism is "mythopoetic"⁴. Fascism not only creates new myths to justify its power structures, it also needs to create an entire mythic reality, crafting paradigms that shape world views and allegiances. The project of European expansion, and

¹ Scruton, R., *The Uses of Pessimism: and the Danger of False Hope* (Oxford University Press, 2010), 89.

² Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, *An Indigenous People's History of the United States* (Beacon Press, 2014), 224.

³ See Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacre: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford University Press, 1998).

⁴ Alexander Reid Ross, *Against the Fascist Creep*, (AK Press, 2017) 6.

eventual US expansion through the theology of *Manifest Destiny*, enhanced through eugenicist policy, meets the mythopoetic criteria, but it is the way the US continues to negotiate the status of indigenous peoples, people of color, cis and trans women and nonbinary people, members of the LGBTQIA community, and immigrants that has historically met the conditions for a fascist state. According to Roger Griffin, in *The Nature of Fascism*, “the Mythic core” [of fascism] is “a populist form of palingenetic ultranationalism.”⁵ Reid Ross goes on to say: “that means that fascism is an ideology that draws on old, ancient, and even arcane myths of racial, cultural, ethnic, and national origins to develop a plan for the ‘new man.’” One thing Reid Ross notes is that all understandings of fascism include “‘producerism’, which augments working-class militancy against the ‘owner class’ by focusing instead on the difference between ‘parasites (typically Jews, speculators, technocrats, and immigrants) and the productive workers and elites of the nation.’”⁶

Societies see themselves as literal bodies. The gymnast is competing at the highest level of Nationalism, proving to the nation with her gold medal, that she, the hard worker, can work herself into the elite class. The weakest, most delicate, most fragile body, the little girl, has the power to bring the nation state to victory through literal strength. Her glamour, poise, and grace continually securing the intimidating mythopoetry of effortless domination. And her coach plays into the authority of mythic reality, stretching the body's limits and making the impossible possible.

The United States is incapable of negotiating power through honorable means. The United States buys coaches and governments. It destroys athletes and economies. It destroys women and children. Its athletes destroy women and children. The United States has never won a gold medal because there has never been a modern Olympics. There has never been a fair and regulated contest. These bodies - these young bodies - break under the advancement of whiteness and these bodies have never earned enough gold to pay reparations to the bodies broken by the United States; the bodies that have built and continue to build the United States. The United States has never existed. It has never been a healthy body, which is why it steals bodies. You have existed and I have existed, but this thing... this thing has never existed and it has never won a gold medal.

⁵A. James Gregor, “Roger Griffin, Social Science, ‘Fascism,’ and the ‘Extremes Right,’” in Roger Griffin, Werner Loh, and Andreas Umland, eds., *Fascism Past and Present, West and East: An International Debate on Concepts and Cases in the Comparative Study of the Extreme Right* (Stuttgart: ibidem Press, 2006), 115-22.

⁶ Alexander Reid Ross, *Against the Fascist Creep*, (AK Press, 2017) 6.

TO SACRIFICE THIS BODY IS TO BE GREAT

ANYTHING FOR THE NATION STATE

