

Forging Elite Fitness, Forging the Nation: CrossFit and Christian Nationalism

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In recent years, scholars and cultural commentators have noted how online wellness and fitness forums have served as an entry point for political radicalization, especially among young men. While many scholars of white Christian nationalism focus their attention on online communities or leaders of the Religious Right, this paper argues that white Christian nationalism is nurtured in seemingly benign spaces like the gym. Using the fitness brand CrossFit as a primary example, this paper shows how the company's goal of "forging elite fitness" becomes enmeshed with the political project of "the nation." CrossFit, a functional fitness regimen and global brand, is known for its hardcore workouts and its zealous consumer base. As a company and culture, it has also become known for its patriotism and militarism, offering fitness training for military personnel and honoring deceased combatants in "Hero Workouts." These commitments have made CrossFit a popular fitness methodology and locus of community for many evangelical Christians who integrate their Christian faith and conservative values with their exercise routine. By examining how Christian nationalism circulates in CrossFit gyms, this paper joins theorists of the body who analyze the correlation between individual treatments of the body as a reflection of the broader body politic to learn about how Christian nationalism, as an ideology, becomes embodied.