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Joshua Bessex/The Daily Astorian

Larry Kaplan, from Essex, Conn., plays a song on guitar during FisherPoets at the Astoria Event Center on Friday.

Telling 'fish tales' grounded in truth

FisherPoets is a cultural icon

Approaching its 20th anniversary, FisherPoets Gathering has netted more fans and momentum with each passing year. Strongly woven from coastal experiences and emotions, it is a "fish tale" grounded in truth.

Though it has been compared with cowboy poetry events that enjoy popularity in the interior West, FisherPoets has a liveliness associated with commercial fishing's present and future, not just its past. Certainly, there is an element of nostalgia in celebrating the glory days of North Pacific fishing, but FisherPoets is also very much about keeping fishing alive.

The fishing community owes gratitude to the organizers and supporters of this valuable Lower Columbia event. Fishermen and women are too proud and tough to admit it, but it's got to feel good being singled out as cultural icons in the Pacific Northwest. This feeling of appreciation translates into everything from better prices for American-produced seafood to height-

ened congressional awareness of harvest and habitat issues.

"I love that the coastal and fishing heritage is so embraced," one attendee said. At least when it comes to Astoria and surrounding communities, she was right — we loving fishing. However, we all know that actual support for fishing is spotty in the state capitals of the West Coast — the Columbia mainstem gillnet ban is a prime example of a former governor and fishery managers claiming to support fishing while actively sabotaging actual fishermen.

In incremental and subtle ways, FisherPoets may be one of the most effective tools that exists to convey an understanding of the gratifications and dangers of the fishing life, and of the very real threats the industry faces.

Thank you, Dirk Rohne

Dirk Rohne's intention to retire as a Clatsop County commissioner is a reminder of how much has changed in eight years.

Rohne joined the commission in 2008, just as the Richard Lee era was fading. Lee and his colleagues had tried to make liquefied natural gas welcome in Clatsop County. Rohne ran as an anti-LNG candidate, and he defeated a pro-LNG candidate in the Knappa-Brownsmead district.

Rohne's victory was one of three ballot-box outcomes that tells us this county's electorate is disposed against the concept of an LNG terminal on the Columbia River. Once seated on the commission, Rohne's colleagues treated him very badly. He was a lone voice. But he would soon be joined by allies such as Scott Lee.

In addition to two terms as a county commissioner, Rohne has served six years on the Clatsop Community College Board of Directors. Carrying

the county and college board jobs concurrently was an enormous commitment for anyone, but especially for a dairy farmer with a young family.

Announcing his retirement, Rohne told Kyle Spurr that with a balanced budget and a new manager hired, he felt good about the county. There is something to that. Certainly the county is a more stable government than it was when successful recalls occurred during Rohne's first term. The subsequent Scott Somers administration was no less contentious.

In a county of our population size, finding good candidates to serve on our county's many city councils, school boards, special districts, Port and community college can be difficult.

County government always will face new challenges. So will Clatsop College. Through that, honest leadership is essential. We are fortunate to have a leader as knowledgeable and experienced as Dirk Rohne.

That Coke can is back on display

By MAUREEN DOWD
New York Times News Service

HOLLYWOOD, Calif. — They were dramas that drilled into the most sensitive parts of the national psyche, searing and dividing us with lurid sexual images and racial grievances as old as the nation.

They both started out as narratives about the mistreatment of women but were swiftly twisted into parables about the mistreatment of black men.

Anita Hill went to the Senate in 1991 to testify about creepy sexual overtures by her former boss, Clarence Thomas, but Thomas made it to the Supreme Court by cowering the Democratic senators who were supposed to protect Hill. Thomas claimed that he, not she, was the victim. The senators were stunned and silenced when Thomas accused them of a "high-tech lynching."

Four years later, O.J. Simpson's lawyers got him acquitted on charges of murdering the ex-wife he battered, Nicole, by turning it into what *The New Yorker's* Jeffrey Toobin called "a civil rights melodrama." The lawyers argued the football and movie star was framed by a racist LA detective, which made O.J., not Nicole, the victim — another high-tech lynching.

I wrote about both these explosive cases and, like the rest of the country, was disturbed and mesmerized. Still, I was surprised to see the two '90s scandals turned into TV dramas over two decades later. Ryan Murphy's "American Crime Story" series on FX, with Cuba Gooding Jr. as O.J., kicked off this month with a 10-parter on his trial for the murder of Nicole and Ronald Goldman. And in mid-April, HBO will premiere "Confirmation," a dramatization of the Hill-Thomas hearings starring the appealing actors Kerry Washington and Wendell Pierce, mining old news clips as it debuts in the midst of a new slamdown over the Supreme Court — this time with no nominee but still with Joe

Black mothers who lost children to violence and the next night had to defend herself when a black activist confronted her about her use of the word "super-predator" back in 1996. Bernie Sanders featured Garner's daughter in an ad as well as Spike Lee, who proclaimed that "the system is rigged" and people have been "sold the okie-doke." Meanwhile, Donald Trump at his rallies rails about how "our police are being abused."

Older feminists scolded young women for not supporting Hillary and taking for granted the post-Anita Hill struggle for gender equality. Hill can take some credit for the fact that colleges and workplaces — including the film set at the start of making "Confirmation" — now offer sexual harassment orientations. But

Things have changed but they haven't changed.

Biden in a kerfuffle.

Neither show definitively paints the accused as guilty or provides new answers. "It wasn't about trying to litigate who was telling the truth, because at the time it was clearly unknowable and people have strong opinions about it to this day," Rick Famuyiwa, the director, told me.

Yet reliving those horrible, maddening events reveals how resonant our race and gender problems are, despite a black president and a Democratic woman running to succeed him. Things have changed but they haven't changed. The country still roils with gender and racial tensions. Black Lives Matter and #OscarsSoWhite reflect the jarring dissonance in how blacks and whites see society.

Even Marcia Clark, the prosecutor who was outmaneuvered when O.J.'s legal team played the race card, wrote Thursday in *Vox* that the recent police shootings caught on camera had "given me a deeper understanding of why the African-American jurors viewed the Simpson case so differently than I did."

You need only look at the presidential campaign to see the same emotional battle lines drawn: Hillary appeared at a Baptist church in Columbia, South Carolina, Tuesday with five

black mothers who lost children to violence and the next night had to defend herself when a black activist confronted her about her use of the word "super-predator" back in 1996. Bernie Sanders featured Garner's daughter in an ad as well as Spike Lee, who proclaimed that "the system is rigged" and people have been "sold the okie-doke." Meanwhile, Donald Trump at his rallies rails about how "our police are being abused."

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Maureen Dowd

women still have a long way to go. Things have changed but they haven't changed.

Courtney Vance, who skillfully plays the late Johnnie Cochran in the FX show, recalled how he was in Toronto making a TV movie with Tony Goldwyn when O.J. was acquitted.

"When the verdict came down, I screamed 'Yes!' and he screamed 'No!' and then we looked at each other in horror," Vance told *The Hollywood Reporter*. "And we began the dialogue — the entire country began the dialogue. Everybody went to their corners, and it kept coming up again, the same issue. Ferguson, what went down in Chicago, shooting that teen 16 times. It's crazy. Absolutely crazy."

Just as the 2014 documentary on Hill, "Anita," made both the smearing Republican senators and sheepish Democratic senators look bad, so does "Confirmation." It was a time when the men's club of Congress viewed sexual harassment as *droit du seigneur*, just a perk that came along with having ice delivered to your office.

Treat Williams plays Teddy Kennedy, as Dave Barry once wrote, with a bag over his head, shackled by his own transgressions and unwilling to roar on Hill's behalf.

In an uncanny impersonation of Biden, who led the committee, Greg Kinnear captures Biden's irresolution in dealing with Republicans who were determined to win at all costs — even if it meant destroying Hill's reputation. Jennifer Hudson steals the show as Angela Wright, Thomas' former employee at the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, which, ironically, was charged with investigating sexual harassment claims. She went to D.C. to testify to Thomas' predatory ways but was never called by Biden, who seemed more worried for the dignity of the Senate and his own reputation than putting a liar on the Supreme Court for life.

Simpson and Thomas have both been silenced. O.J. is in prison in Nevada for armed robbery and kidnapping, and Thomas is locked in his own muteness. But the rest of us are still arguing, stuck in a din of mistrust and discord.

If Donald Trump changed genders

By FRANK BRUNI
New York Times News Service

Imagine, for a moment, the presidential candidacy of a rich, brash real estate magnate and reality TV star named Donna Trump.

Quizzically coifed and stubbornly sun-kissed, she's on her third marriage. There's clear evidence that infidelity factored into the demise of the first, and among her children is one conceived when The Donna wasn't married to the other parent.

Her sexual appetites have been prodigious, at least according to her frequent claims and vulgar cant. And she has a tendency — disturbing on its own, even more so in someone who aspires to civic leadership — to talk about men as sirloins and rump roasts of disparate succulence. She denigrates those who displease her on cosmetic grounds:

So-and-so used to be a 9 but, with that male-pattern baldness and desperate comb-over, is down to a 6. So-and-so thinks he's covering up that paunch with baggy suits, but we all know better.

How well do you think The Donna would do in the polls? How far into the race would she survive?

The 2016 quest for the White House has included ample exegeses on gender and plenty of talk about double standards, but most if not all of those have pertained to Hillary Clinton. Is a raised, emphatic voice heard as something more gratifying when it emanates from a woman? Is toughness perceived as something more pernicious when the hide and stride are female?

But for an even more obvious, indisputable example of unequal treatment, look to Donald Trump. A woman with his personal life, public comportment and potty mouth wouldn't last a nanosecond in a political campaign — or, for that matter, in a boardroom. Her name on a line of scarves wouldn't be the selling point that his on a line of ties is.

The moral judgments — in particular the sexual ones — that we make about men and women are utterly and unjustly dissimilar. This primary season, and the back stories swirling around it, have illustrated that anew.

Bill Clinton's sexual behavior before and during his presidency surged back into the conversation, and I was struck again by the fact that a woman dogged by as many accusations of philandering as he was would never have won the White House.

And a woman who behaved as he did in the White House wouldn't now be seen as someone who could lend a positive jolt to her spouse's presidential campaign with frequent appearances on the

trail. She'd be tucked away in an attic somewhere, damaged goods forevermore.

I'm not arguing for greater chastity in men. I'm arguing for a fairer and more forgiving attitude toward women.

I'm noting, as I have before, what the journalist Peggy Orenstein explores so forthrightly and explains so well in her timely new book, *Girls & Sex*, to be published next month.

"A sexually active girl is a 'slut,' while a similar boy is a 'player,'" Orenstein writes, acknowledging this as a timeless dichotomy. "Now, though, girls who abstain from sex, once thought of as the 'good girls,' are shamed as well, labeled 'virgins' (which is not a good thing) or 'prudes.'"

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A young woman is supposed to be some sexual Goldilocks, finding a "just right" between frisky and frigid. A young man simply has fun.

The Trump campaign's success doesn't say anything good about our progress toward gender equality, not merely because he gets away with things that a woman never would but because he thrives in spite of overtly sexist language and remarks that routinely objectify women.

These have been duly noted in many compendiums, including an especially clever one by Andrew Kaczynski and Nathan McDermott in *BuzzFeed* last week. They listened to hours of audio from Trump's appearances on Howard Stern's radio show over the years, and they unearthed such gems as his boast — just months after Princess Diana's death — that he probably could have slept with her; his ratings of the attractiveness of the cast of "Desperate Housewives" on a scale of 1 to 10; his assertion that he probably couldn't work up an erection for Madonna; and his decla-



Frank Bruni

ration, after he purchased the Miss USA pageant, that he wanted the "bathing suits to be smaller and the heels to be higher."

More somber examinations of Trump and sexism, however, have been crowded out by reflections on his diatribes against, say, Mexicans and Muslims. Commentators have wrung their hands to rawness over how a Trump

presidency might inflame tensions on racial and religious fronts and what an intolerant portrait of America it would project to the world.

But what about the way a Trump presidency would make the women of this country feel? Or how Trump's sexual braggadocio would diminish the dignity of the office and the country?

Female voters have not flocked to him in the same percentages as male voters, according to exit polls from the caucuses and primaries thus far. And national surveys suggest that the Republican Party could be looking at an especially ruinous gender gap if Trump is its nominee.

In a hypothetical matchup of Clinton versus Trump, she'd get 54 percent of women to his 35 percent, with the rest going elsewhere or sitting on the fence, according to a Fox News poll from less than two weeks ago. That 19-point advantage for the Democrat would be greater than the one that Barack Obama got in his 2012 race against Mitt Romney (11 points) or his 2008 contest against John McCain (13 points).

And we can presume that the gap isn't solely about Clinton's appeal. After all, she lost the women's vote to Bernie Sanders in New Hampshire by 11 points.

To be fair to Trump, there are moments when he has exhibited something more than just a drooling interest in the opposite sex. At last week's Republican debate, he defended Planned Parenthood (something) against his rivals' blanket vilification of it by noting that "millions and millions of women — cervical cancer, breast cancer — are helped by Planned Parenthood." (He nonetheless said he'd cut off any federal funds to it.)

But such bright spots of sensitivity are eclipsed by the creepy stuff, like his repeated references to his daughter Ivanka as someone who, in a different situation, he might wed.

"What a beauty, that one," he told Paul Solotaroff, who profiled him for *Rolling Stone*, last year. "If I weren't happily married and, ya know, her father ..."

Now put those words in The Donna's mouth instead. "What a hunk, that one," she says of one of her sons. "If I weren't happily married and, ya know, his mother ..."

We'd never hear the end of it. And yet we haven't seen the end of Trump.