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OTHER VIEWS



Will Vragovic/The Tampa Bay Times
President Barack Obama and Cuban President Raul Castro take their seats before a baseball game between the Tampa Bay Rays and the Cuban national team in Havana, Cuba.

A baseball game to remember

No good deed goes unpunished. Especially if you are an elected leader.

On last Friday's "PBS NewsHour," columnist Mark Shields criticized "the optics" of President Obama's presence at a Havana baseball game, which occurred on the heels of the Brussels airport terrorist incident. Shields said it would have been better if Obama had not been wearing sunglasses.

The game pitted the Tampa Rays against the Cuban national team. It was the final act of Obama's three-day groundbreaking visit to Havana. He had also met privately with Cuban President Raul Castro, held a joint press conference with Castro, met privately with dissidents and spoken to the Cuban people.

Unlike Shields, David Brooks said there's no good reason for not going to a baseball game. He added that presidents can do more than one thing at a time, and that telephones are always available.

While the Tampa-Cuba game was not close (Tampa 4, Cuba 1), it was freighted with emotion. This was baseball diplomacy. American baseball royalty came for the occasion. Derek Jeter was in the audience. So was Jackie Robinson's widow, Rachel (as a minor leaguer, Robinson played on the same ballfield). The legendary Cuban-American pitcher Luis Tiant threw out one of the two pitches that preceded the game.

When the Rays scored the first run, Obama reached over to shake Castro's hand. Late in the game, Tiant approached the presidential box and shook Castro's



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hand. That was an exceptionally meaningful gesture from a man who defected from Cuba years ago.

No player had a more emotional experience than Rays outfielder Dayron Varona, who fled Cuba in 2013 and was reunited with his family upon the team's arrival. Varona received a cool reception from the Cuban audience during pregame team introductions. So when he headed to home plate for his lead-off batting assignment, his teammates piled out of the dugout to clap for him.

Major League Baseball was one of the corporate players who joined Obama's mission. MLB made a significant investment in reconditioning the Havana ballfield. Tons of clay remade the infield. It was applied

by hand, because there is no mechanized farm or landscape equipment in Cuba. The field was also resodded.

Among the ideas MLB has floated is a Cuban minor league team, as well as baseball academies, similar to what has produced the wealth of MLB stars from the Dominican Republic.

The joint press conference of Obama and Castro was something to behold. Like the baseball game that would follow, this was an emotional event.

While Castro had agreed to take one question, he eventually took three. And dictators don't do press conferences. One of the three questions was about political prisoners, and it was asked by an American newsman of Cuban descent.

Steve Forrester is publisher of *The Daily Astorian*, sister paper of the *East Oregonian*.

America's baseball royalty came for the ice-breaking game.

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OTHER VIEWS

The sexual politics of 2016

In the middle of the Civil War a colonel named Robert McAllister from the 11th Regiment of New Jersey tried to improve the moral fiber of his men. A Presbyterian railroad contractor in private life, he lobbied and preached against profanity, drinking, prostitution and gambling. Some of the line officers in the regiment, from less genteel backgrounds, rebelled.

They formed an organization called the Independent Order of Trumps. In sort of a mischievous, laddie way, the Trumps championed boozing and whoring, cursing and card-playing.

In her book "The Gentlemen and the Roughs," Lorian Foote notes that this wasn't just a battle over pleasure. It was a contest between two different ideals of masculinity. McAllister's was based on gentlemanly chivalry and self-restraint. Trumpian masculinity was based on physical domination and sexual conquest.

"Perceptions of manliness were deeply intertwined with perceptions of social status," Foote writes.

And so it is today.

These days we're living through another great redefinition of masculinity. Today, both men and women are called upon to live up to the traditional ideals of both genders. So the ideal man, at least in polite society, gracefully achieves a series of balances. He is steady and strong, but also verbal and vulnerable. He is emotionally open and willing to cry, but also restrained and resilient. He is physical and also intellectual.

Today's ideal man honors the women in his life in whatever they want to do. He treats them with respect in the workplace and romance in the bedroom. He is successful in the competitive world of the marketplace but enthusiastic in the kitchen and gentle during kids' bath time.

This new masculine ideal is an unalloyed improvement on all the earlier masculine ideals. It's a great achievement of our culture. But it is demanding and involves reconciling a difficult series of tensions. And it has sparked a bad-boy protest movement and counterculture, currently led by a group we might once again call the Independent Order of Trumps.

Donald Trump's presidential campaign is a revolution in manners, a rejection of the civility codes of the educated class.

As part of this, he rejects the new and balanced masculine/feminine ideal that has emerged over the past generation. Trump embraces a masculine identity — old in some ways, new in others — built upon unvarnished misogyny.

Trump's misogyny is not the historical moralistic misogyny. Traditional misogyny blames women for the lustful, licentious and



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powerful urges that men sometimes feel in their presence. In this misogyny, women are the powerful, disgusting corrupters — the vixens, sirens and monsters. This gynophobic misogyny demands that women be surrounded with taboos and purgation rituals, along with severe restrictions on behavior and dress.

Trump's misogyny, on the other hand, has a commercial flavor. The central arena of life is male competition. Women are objects men use to win

points in that competition. The purpose of a woman's body is to reflect status on a man. One way to emasculate a rival man is to insult or conquer his woman.

Writing for *Slate*, Frank Foer has one of the best (and most disgusting) compilations of Donald Trump's history with women. Most of the episodes are pure dominance display.

For example, A.J. Benza was a writer who confessed that his girlfriend had left him for

Trump. Trump called into a radio show he was appearing on to brag.

"I've been successful with your girlfriend, I'll tell you that," Trump said. "While you were getting onto the plane to go to California thinking she was your girlfriend, she was some place that you wouldn't have been very happy with."

When the commentator Tucker Carlson criticized him, Trump left voice mail bragging about how much more sex he gets. He told an interviewer that you have to treat women like dirt.

It's not quite right to say that Trump is a throwback to midcentury sexism. At least in those days negative behavior toward women and family members was restrained by the chivalry code. Political candidates didn't go attacking their rivals' wives based on their looks. Trump's objectification is uncontrolled. It's pure ego competition with a pornogrified flavor.

In this way, Trump represents the spread of something brutal. He takes economic anxiety and turns it into sexual hostility. He effectively tells men: You may be struggling, but at least you're better than women, Mexicans and Muslims.

I've grappled with understanding how much to blame Trump's supporters for his rise. Many of them are victims of economic dislocation, and it is hard to fault them for seeking a change, of course, even if it is simplistic and ignorant.

But in the realm of cultural politics, Trump voters do need to be held to account. They are participating in a descent into darkness. They are supporting a degrading wrong. This is the world your daughters are going to grow up in.

David Brooks became a *New York Times* Op-Ed columnist in 2003.

How potholes are filled...



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OTHER VIEWS

A more presidential Donald Trump visits the capital

The Trump campaign did something last Monday evening that other campaigns do all the time but that the Republican front-runner has never, ever done. It sent out an email with the prepared text of Trump's speech to AIPAC, the pro-Israel group meeting in Washington.

Prepared text? Anyone who has ever watched a Trump speech knows he doesn't do prepared texts. But there Trump was, on the floor of the Verizon Center in downtown Washington, looking from side to side as he read his speech from a teleprompter.

Yes, Trump ad-libbed a lot. But as he glanced at the prompter's glass panels, he was delivering a speech just like the politicians he has mocked over the course of the campaign.

And doing a really good job of it. John Kasich addressed AIPAC half an hour before Trump, and he also read from a prepared text, too, but it was on a piece of paper on the podium and Kasich started off wearing glasses and looking down a lot. Trump was clearly reading at

times, but his delivery was as smooth and polished as the best politicians.

Which worried some Trump critics. Yair Rosenberg, at *Tablet*, found Trump's performance downright alarming. "What was so disturbing about the speech was that it demonstrated that Trump can comport himself like

a traditional politician — and do so very well," Rosenberg wrote. "Reading a political address off a teleprompter for the first time, Trump jettisoned his race-baiting and incitement for boilerplate bromides on Israel, Iran, and the Middle East. Drawing on his years of television experience, he came across like any other talking head, adeptly delivering his text without a single serious stumble. In other words, it was Trump's first presidential campaign speech that sounded remotely presidential."

Also disturbing to Trump's critics was the reaction of the AIPAC crowd. Going into the event — it was huge, perhaps 18,000 people filling the arena — there was talk of protests, of rabbis turning their backs and

"It was Trump's first campaign speech that sounded remotely presidential."

— Yair Rosenberg, *Tablet*

walking out. And yes, there was some of that. But it's fair to say that overall, Trump's reception at AIPAC was friendly. You know how an enthusiastic crowd can fill an arena with roars? There was never that. But the applause for Trump grew from polite at the beginning to more-than-just-polite at the end.

It was a presidential day for Trump. He did an extended, on-the-record interview with the *Washington Post* editorial board. He had a get-to-know-you lunch with a few lawmakers, arranged by Trump endorser Sen. Jeff Sessions. He held a press conference. And he addressed AIPAC.

You know how Trump often expresses amazement that he's doing all the political stuff that candidates do? "I can't believe I'm a politician, can you believe

this?" Trump said last year on Fox. "I'm a politician, all my life I've disrespected politicians now I have to say I guess I'm a politician."

In Washington on Monday, Trump was a politician. And he was good at it.

That doesn't mean Trump was an ordinary politician. How many presidential candidates can hold a press conference at the Washington landmark they are now transforming into a luxury hotel? That's what Trump did at the Old Post Office, gathering the press in a dusty worksite that will be the atrium of the newest Trump International Hotel. Trump finished the event by leading reporters around the construction site, with more than a few shaking their heads at Trump's ability to add an element of showmanship to everything he does. Why were

they following him around the stacks of sheetrock? Because no other candidate does that sort of thing.

At some of the lowest moments of the campaign, when he has said some outrageous thing or when his rallies are targeted by waves of protesters, Trump has often said he can become more "presidential" any time he likes. It hasn't been appropriate, Trump has explained, because he is still fighting off rivals in the bare-knuckle battle for the Republican nomination. But in the future, Trump promised, look for President Trump to emerge.

Last Monday, Trump gave the public a glimpse of what he was talking about.

Byron York is chief political correspondent for *The Washington Examiner*.

LETTERS POLICY

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