Trump’s booing at the World Series makes Democrats and the media nervous

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Donald Trump was loudly booed Sunday when he was introduced to the crowd during the fifth game of the World Series between the Washington Nationals and the Houston Astros at Nationals Park in Washington, D.C.

Video footage shows many in the crowd of 41,000 standing up and jeering the president. According to the *Washington Post*, the noise level hit “almost 100 decibels. Chants of ’Lock him up’ and ‘Impeach Trump’ then broke out.” Signs and a banner calling for his impeachment were later displayed.

Determining how much of a cross-section of the American population the Washington crowd represented is a futile—and unnecessary—endeavor. Trump received only 4 percent of the vote in the District of Columbia in 2016, but no doubt many of the attendees reside in suburbs and outlying districts.

In any event, there is nothing astonishing about Trump’s reception on Sunday**.** The current president, due to his criminality, brutality and fascistic ravings and policies, is one of the most widely despised political leaders in American history. Generally, Trump, like most authoritarian or would-be authoritarian figures, strongly prefers to appear only in thoroughly vetted or politically secured venues. ABC News White House correspondent Karen Travers pointed out on Twitter that this was the first DC sports event for Trump and “a rare public appearance for him at a place in DC that is a) not the White House b) not a federal building c) not owned by him.” After this mortifying experience, the president is not likely to show his face again in an unvetted public place any time soon.

In the end, however, like many other unprecedented or startling events occurring in the US at present, the World Series incident was not truly or simply “about Trump.” In fact, virtually the entire American political, media and corporate establishment is wildly unpopular. The grotesque social inequality, mass destruction of decent jobs and pensions, calamitous results of health care and education for profit, decades of neocolonial war and bleak prospects for tens of millions of young people have combined to undermine belief and confidence in the capitalist system and its political front men.

It was this latter element, the pervasive popular disaffection and the danger it signifies, that caught the attention of and seriously troubled certain politicians and commentators in the wake of the jeering and heckling in Washington. For such individuals, the sight of large numbers of people on their feet training their anger directly at the top political official in the country clearly conjured up scenes of mass action that frightened them. In other words, although Sunday night’s event was not an act of “open rebellion” by any stretch of the imagination, the “overreaction” to it by the more politically sensitive was a correct anticipation of what they know must be coming.

The Democratic Party has been carrying out a hysterical, filthy, right-wing campaign against Trump, claiming that Russian “interference” in the 2016 election propelled him into the White House, arguing that his policies in the Middle East endanger America’s “national security” and enlisting the CIA and sections of the Pentagon to help oust him from office. All of this has been aimed at preempting a genuinely popular movement against Trump, a movement that would inevitably raise social issues and social demands, including the burning questions of immigration, jobs, democratic rights and war.

The Democrats’ impeachment effort has had the most carefully circumscribed and fraudulent aims because nothing terrifies them more than the prospect of a movement breaking away from their control, a social tidal wave from which they themselves would not escape. In Sunday night’s incident they saw the potential of their worst nightmare coming true.

The first time a US president was jeered at a World Series game is worth recalling. It happened to Republican Herbert Hoover, in the midst of the Great Depression, when he showed up in Philadelphia at Game 3 of the 1931 World Series between the Philadelphia Athletics and the St. Louis Cardinals.

Writing in the *New York World-Telegram*, Joe Williams described the scene: “Someone boos. Or it may be a whole section which surrenders to this spontaneous, angry impulse. In any event, the boos rise from the stands and break with unmistakable vehemence around your ears. They grow in volume and pretty soon it seems almost everybody in the park is booing.

“They are booing the President of the United States...

“This must be the first time a President ever has been booed in public, and at a ball game of all places. There is something about a ball game that is supposed to make everybody kin and it’s a high honor to sit in on a ball game where the President becomes a fan, just as you and I.”

The event was correctly seen to have a certain symbolism, occurring during the championship series of “America’s national pastime.” Later, it was viewed as a portent of vast popular discontent.

This is what perturbs the Democratic and media critics of Trump’s hecklers.

The general approach of these elements was to chastise the DC crowd for their lack of “civility,” for the “disrespect” they showed the office of the presidency, etc.

Right-wing Democratic Senator Chris Coons of Delaware, the “business-friendly” state that is home to more than one million corporations, including hundreds of thousands of shell companies set up to avoid taxes, offered one of the most noxious responses.

Speaking to CNN anchor John Berman October 28, Coons commented, “I’m enough of a sort of traditionalist about our institutions that even at a time when there is a lot that our president does that I find disturbing, offensive, unconventional, I have a hard time with the idea of a—of a crowd on a globally televised sporting event chanting ‘lock him up’ about our president. I, frankly, think the office of the president deserves respect even when the actions of our president, at times, don’t.

Coons went on, “It reminds me of things that happen in countries where rule of law is unknown or unestablished and, you know, sort of whipping up public furor on both sides, I don’t think is constructive or helpful. …

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That's why I think those of us in the Senate need to approach the impeachment process seriously in a measured and responsible way because our very institutions—our Constitution is at risk by these sorts of—the passions that have been unleashed by the politics of the moment."

Responding to his many critics, Coons published an op-ed piece in the *Washington Post* ("'Lock him up'? We're better than that") the following day. He expanded on his themes, again insisting that all opposition to Trump had to be mobilized behind the Congressional Democrats' impeachment initiative, which has been organized around questions of foreign policy and American imperialist interests.

The Delaware Senator claimed that "in the United States, we don't simply lock up politicians we disagree with, and we shouldn't chant about wanting to either. If a president does commit a crime—particularly 'high crimes and misdemeanors'—the Constitution provides us with a specific process to follow, which the House is now appropriately exploring with its impeachment inquiry.

"As citizens, we can—and should—oppose the president's bad policies, words and behavior at every turn with all the passion we can muster. But in doing so, we shouldn't copy his style and his tactics, which are designed with one outcome in mind: division."

Coons worried out loud about the damage that might be done to "the institution of the presidency" and urged "everyone to remember—especially now—the difference between one president and the presidency. We're free to criticize the former but should be careful to protect the latter."

One of the motives for the impeachment drive is the conviction of Trump's opponents that his lawlessness and recklessness are further discrediting, destabilizing and undermining the institutions that have underpinned bourgeois society in America for, in Coons' words, "nearly 250 years."

Michael Cohen, writing in the *Boston Globe*, noted that "the whole episode has given me a palpable feeling of apprehension about the increasingly dark place to which are politics have moved—and where they are still headed. … It's hard to see any path forward that doesn't lead to more enmity and greater, more intense division."

The Week 's Damon Linker wrote, "We are a single country, a single nation, a single people. This people is deeply, rancorously, polarizingly divided at the present moment. How we might diminish our divisions and the hostility we feel for each other is an extremely important, and exceedingly difficult, question to answer." Bloomberg opinion columnist Jonathan Bernstein argued that those chanting for Trump to be locked up were guilty of "spreading lawlessness" because "calling for your political opponents to be jailed without due process is an authoritarian strategy, even when liberals do it."

A contributing writer at *The Atlantic*, Peter Wehner, observed that "it's perhaps worth recognizing that this wasn't a one-off, an isolated occurrence. It was a fairly innocent manifestation of a worrisome trend. We're caught in a downward spiral of antipathy and enmity. Trump is the individual most responsible for this ugly state of affairs. But those of us who oppose him shouldn't act in ways that unnecessarily create more hostility, more friction, and less understanding. We need to find ways to calm our passions rather than to inflame them. We need to find ways to create more temperate zones."

CNN's Chris Cillizza asserted that "even if giving Trump a taste of his own medicine not only makes you feel better but is also the only way to beat him, there are consequences to accepting and internalizing the lowered standards he has pushed into our public sphere." Steven Petrow in *USA Today* headlined his comment, "Don't follow the president's lead: Chanting 'lock him up' isn't OK," and argued, "What I am strongly suggesting is: Don't play dirty ball like Donald Trump."

This nonsense was echoed by Jennifer Weiner in the *New York Times*: "If we've got to smear and slime and meme and mock our way to victory, who will we be after we've won? When does a necessary evil become just evil?"

What upsets all these people, in the final analysis, is the thought of masses of people taking matters into their hands, outside the established channels, including the "authoritative" media outlets.

On *Morning Joe*, NBC's morning news and talk show, hosts Joe Scarborough and Mika Brzezinski (daughter of the late imperialist strategist Zbigniew Brzezinski) angrily tut-tutted about the hostile reception to Trump. Scarborough absurdly repeated several times that the booing of the president was "un-American," while his sidekick described it as "startling and sad" and "sickening." Scarborough went on, "We are Americans, and we do not do that. We do not want the world hearing us chant—'Lock him up!'—to this president or any president." As events unfold and popular opposition finds its voice and footing, Scarborough and others are likely to find many other opportunities for registering shock at what Americans will "do."

The shock and surprise of the media in the face of Trump's public humiliation is one expression of the vast social and moral gulf in the US. These people, Democrats or Republicans, are doing very well for themselves and cannot imagine popular outrage under the present conditions.

The specter of social upheaval is haunting the American ruling elite and its hangers-on. A few comments beneath articles on the World Series booing pointed in this direction. One read, "Frankly Trump is lucky that we live in a country with no experience constructing guillotines." Another wrote: "Trump is fortunate he's guarded. Otherwise, the populace may have reenacted the French Revolution."

Indeed, images of the storming of the Bastille, the invasion of the Tuileries palace and the operation of the guillotine must keep America's more thoughtful rulers up at night. And rightly so.

French writer Alphonse de Lamartine described the popular hostility to the French royal family in June 1791, after their attempt to escape the grasp of the great revolution failed and they were returned to Paris. "The crowd," Lamartine wrote, continually increased as Louis XVI "passed along, and all the concentrated passions of the city, of the Assembly, of the press, and the clubs, raged with redoubled intensity amongst this population of the environs of Paris. Their passions were written on their faces, though their very violence kept them in check. Indignation and contempt seemed to stifle anger itself, and their insults were only muttered in low, sullen tones. The populace wore a sinister, but not a furious aspect: a thousand eyes glanced death at the royal carnages, but no voice uttered the word.

"This cold-blooded hate did not escape the notice of the king. … From time to time the more violent of the mob broke through the line, pushed aside the horses, and reaching the very door of the carriage, clambered up the steps. These men, in whom no trace of pity was visible, stared in silence upon the king, the queen, and the dauphin, seeming to meditate the very worst of crimes, and to gorge their hatred upon the humiliation of royalty. A few charges of the gendarmerie would then reestablish order for a short time, and thus the cortege proceeded, amid the clashing of sabres and the cries of the men trampled under the feet of the horses."

Such is the fate of decadent and reactionary ruling classes and rulers.

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