

POLITICS BASEBALL DONALD TRUMP

The Red Sox Should Not Visit the White House

Red Sox values are not Trump values.

By Peter Dreier and Kelly Candaele

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Red Sox players celebrate after defeating the Dodgers in game five of the World Series. (Robert Hanashiro / USA TODAY Sports)

When President Donald Trump invites the Red Sox to the White House to celebrate their World Series victory, they should say “no thanks.” They should stand up to, not next to, the president.

It all comes down to the message that the Red Sox franchise wants to send. Red Sox values are not Trump values: In 2016, only 14 percent of Boston voters, and 33 percent of Massachusetts voters, supported Trump. Boston bleeds Red Sox red, not Trump orange.

Do the Red Sox want to allow Trump—whose presidency is rooted in appeals to racism, sexism, and immigrant bashing—to bask in the glow of their victory?

Does it really make sense for the Red Sox—who this year had nine players from five different countries (Hector Velázquez from Mexico, Eduardo Rodríguez, William Cuevas, and Sandy León from Venezuela, Xander Bogaerts from Aruba, Eduardo Núñez and Rafael Devers from the Dominican Republic, and Tzu Wei-Lin from Taiwan) as well as four African Americans (David Price, Mookie Betts, Jackie Bradley Jr., and Brandon Phillips), two American-born Latinos (J.D. Martinez and Christian Vázquez), and one Jew (Ian Kinsler) on their 40-man roster—to ask those players to ignore Trump’s divisive comments and policies that degrade immigrants, people of color, and Jews?

In September, Red Sox manager Alex Cora, who is from Puerto Rico, blasted Trump’s comments questioning the death toll from the Hurricane Maria and turning it into a political issue. “To be tweeting about 3,000 people... it’s actually disrespectful for my country,” Cora said. “We see it that way. I know he probably doesn’t feel that way.”

Last year, Houston Astro players Carlos Beltrán and Carlos Correa, both natives of Puerto Rico, skipped the team’s visit to the White House to celebrate their World Series victory to express their discontent with Trump’s recovery efforts after

the hurricane devastated the territory. It is hard to imagine Cora and fellow Puerto Rican Vázquez willingly standing next to Trump, who seemingly didn't even realize that Puerto Ricans were US citizens, and used the disaster as a photo op by pitching paper towels to desperate islanders.

Cora isn't the only member of the Red Sox who has taken issue with Trump. During the 2016 presidential campaign, Red Sox slugger David Ortiz—a native of the Dominican Republic who became a US citizen in 2008 and is now a Fox Sports analyst—attacked Trump's hostile comments about immigrants.

“When you speak like that about us, it's a slap in the face. And to hear somebody make those kinds of comments, it hits you. And not just Latin people but immigrants,” Ortiz told USA Today. “I'm talking about people who come from Africa, from Asia, other places. All those people come here with one goal, to realize the American dream, and you have to include them in our group.”

Do the Red Sox really want to ask Velázquez, from Sonora, Mexico, to celebrate the team's World Series victory by standing next to a man who viciously separated children from their parents when they were detained for entering the United States illegally? Do they really want to make him stand next to the president who wants to build a wall between the two countries to keep out “bad” Mexicans but allowing “good” Mexicans—especially if they can throw or hit a baseball—to cross the border?

Should the Red Sox insist that World Series MVP Steve Pearce—who proudly held his young daughter on his knee while discussing how much baseball has meant to him—

stand next to the president and smile, knowing full well that Trump has consistently demeaned women and believes you can assault them with impunity if you are a “star” or up for a seat on the Supreme Court? What would Amy Waryas, the Red Sox director of human resources, say if one of the organization’s employees treated women the way Donald Trump has?

Were he to entice the Red Sox to a White House ceremony, Trump would no doubt use the occasion to make the team’s well-deserved victory about himself, as if he had been on the mound or in the batter’s box.

Last year, Trump withdrew his White House invitation to the NBA champion Golden State Warriors after players criticized him. This year, after the Warriors’ Steph Curry and the Cavaliers’ LeBron James said they wouldn’t go to the White House if they won the championship, Trump didn’t even bother extending an invitation to the victorious Warriors. Likewise, in June, after most of the NFL Super Bowl champion Philadelphia Eagles announced that they were skipping the White House victory celebration in protest, Trump proclaimed that they were no longer invited.

In the wake of former San Francisco 49ers quarterback Colin Kaepernick’s kneeling during the national anthem to protest racism, Trump has taken every opportunity to malign the mostly African-American players who have joined the protest. Last year during a political rally in Alabama, Trump goaded the crowd by asking them, “Wouldn’t you love to see one of these NFL owners, when somebody disrespects our flag, to say, ‘Get that son of a bitch

off the field right now?” Trump even called for the deportation of any player who refused to stand for the anthem. They “shouldn’t be in this country,” he declared.

While some millionaire ballplayers may appreciate Trump’s tax-cut gift for the wealthy, those same players might take offense at how the president has sought to deny professional athletes their First Amendment rights and used them to fuel racial resentment.

Last season, Bruce Maxwell, the Oakland Athletics’ African-American rookie catcher and the son of an Army veteran, became the first major-league player to kneel for the national anthem, before a game against the visiting Texas Rangers. Outfielder Mark Canha, who is white, stood behind Maxwell and placed his right hand on his teammate’s shoulder.

The Red Sox were the last Major League team to have an African American on their roster (Pumpsie Green in 1959), but in his 1966 Hall of Fame induction speech, Ted Williams (the greatest Red Sox player in history and the son of a Mexican-American mother) advocated for the inclusion of players from the Negro Leagues in the Hall of Fame.

Today’s Red Sox clearly understand that bigotry has no place on the baseball diamond, clubhouse, or broadcast booth. That’s why they did not invite former Red Sox pitcher Curt Schilling to attend the ceremony at Fenway Park last Wednesday to honor some of the stars of team’s 2004 World Series victory, its first in 86 years. Over the years, Schilling—an avid Trump supporter and now a news commentator for the right-wing *Breitbart News*—has triggered controversy for defending South Carolina’s flying of the Confederate flag,

criticizing transgender people, comparing Muslims to Nazis, and saying that Hillary Clinton “should be buried under a jail.”

Instead of visiting the White House, the Red Sox should start a new baseball tradition and follow the example of hockey’s Stanley Cup. Give the World Series trophy to each player for a week and allow them to take it to their home town—in whatever country they are from—to inspire young male and female athletes.

In June, Hall of Fame slugger Hank Aaron expressed his support for athletes who speak out on social and political issues. Asked if he would visit the White House today if he were part of a championship-winning team, he said, “There’s nobody there I want to see.”

The Red Sox should follow Aaron’s lead. **N**

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