

OPINION  
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# It's This Man's, Man's, Man's World

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Trump at his victory party Wednesday morning. Mark Peterson for The New York Times



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I can no longer count the number of times I've counted out Donald Trump. Every time, what I thought would stagger him made him stronger.

I assumed that he would have to drop out in 2016 after the “Access Hollywood” tape. I thought he would be driven into exile after he egged on the Jan. 6 insurrectionists hunting down Nancy Pelosi and Mike Pence. I thought his cynical move stacking the Supreme Court with religious fanatics who yanked away women’s reproductive rights would doom his comeback attempt. I thought his deranged, nasty, out-of-control final weeks of campaigning would surely sink him.

But Trump never disappeared in a puff of orange smoke. Every time, he bobbed back up, defying convention and luring voters I thought he had lost, given how he, JD Vance and his rally carny barkers delighted in disparaging so many voting blocs with utter abandon.

We must now fathom the unfathomable: All the misogynistic things, the racist things, the crude things, the undemocratic things he’s said and done don’t negate his appeal to millions of voters. Because he will once again be our president, and he has declared that he has “an unprecedented mandate.” Fasten your seatbelts. It’s going to be a bumpy America.

We have to accept that a lot of Americans want Trump in charge. Even a lot of Republicans who cringe at his words and actions approve of his policies on the economy and the border and his promise to “keep men out of women’s sports.” Seeking Black and Latino votes at a Bronx barbershop, Trump delivered this message: “They take your kid. There are some places, your boy leaves for school, comes back a girl, OK, without parental consent.”

“What is that all about?” he wondered.

His support among Latino men jumped, despite the fact that he was running against a woman of color who could have made history as the first Madam President. He held his own with Black men. “A small but significant slice of Black men have historically been hesitant to support Black women seeking the highest positions of power,” Zolan Kanno-Youngs and Erica Green presciently [wrote](#) in The Times in August.

As Van Jones noted on CNN, there are many disappointed African American women who are trading in a “lot of hope for a lot of hurt.”

James Carville [warned](#) that Democrats needed to stop coming across as the party of preachy women. But then Barack and Michelle Obama tried to woo Black men by scolding them.

“We have every right to demand the men in our lives do better by us,” Michelle Obama said. “Our lives are worth more than their anger and disappointment.”

In the last days of the campaign, as Trump’s language got darker and his insults cruder, as he wore a neon orange safety vest and rode in a garbage truck as a stunt, it felt that he might end up unmanned by women.

This was an epic battle of the sexes. Kamala Harris ended her campaign with Beyoncé, Oprah and Lady Gaga. Trump and Vance went down the rabbit hole of the bro ecosystem and ended with Joe Rogan’s embrace.

Shortly before the polls closed, the Trump adviser Stephen Miller tweeted, “If you know any men who haven’t voted, get them to the polls.”

At a polling center in Charlotte, N.C., a young man [jokingly told](#) CNN’s Brianna Keilar that he had been coerced to come vote for Harris at the last minute by his girlfriend, who was “blowing up” his phone and telling him she would break up with him if he didn’t.

But even the “Lysistrata” tactics did not work.

According to a CNN [exit poll](#), Trump won 54 percent of the male vote, and Harris won 54 percent of the female vote. Her strategists hoped that her percentage with women would overwhelm his advantage with men. But many of the suburban women that Harris thought she could get voted for Trump.

It was striking that Harris couldn’t get the margin with women she needed, given the shocking behavior of the Republicans toward women. It looked as if Trump, Vance and other Republicans were doing everything they could to alienate women, acting more like sexist jerks you run across in bars than pols casting the widest net for possible voters.

In one of his final speeches of the campaign, Vance called Harris “trash.” In his last speech in Grand Rapids, Mich., early Tuesday, Trump called Pelosi “a bad person, evil. She’s an evil, sick, crazy” word that “starts with a b.” Someone in

the crowd shouted “bitch” to help out Trump. He has called Harris “retarded,” “lazy as hell” and “dumb as a rock” and privately labeled her a “bitch.”

Vance’s behavior was mystifying. He is 40 and Yale educated and has a lovely wife who had a high-powered career as a lawyer. But his incendiary words against women over the years echoed through his campaign, suggesting he’d like to shove them into a time machine back to the 1950s. He insulted “childless cat ladies” and agreed with a podcast host who said that postmenopausal women had no purpose but to help raise children.

Bernie Moreno, the Republican who beat Sherrod Brown to flip a Senate seat in Ohio, echoed that insult when he said about older women who were upset at the erosion of reproductive rights: “It’s a little crazy, by the way — especially for women that are, like, past 50. I’m thinking to myself, ‘I don’t think that’s an issue for you.’”

But the 78-year-old Trump had no qualms about running a campaign resonant of a steam room in Rat Pack Vegas. He even entered the arena one night at his Milwaukee convention to the James Brown song “It’s a Man’s, Man’s, Man’s World.”

Those rooting for Kamala hoped that election night would bring Trump a comeuppance on his attempt to drag women into the past.

As Michael Beschloss, the presidential historian, told me, it would have been a wonderful morality play if Trump had been brought down by his misogyny and his contempt for women’s rights.

Trump and Harris offered a contrast in their views on democracy and the rule of law. They also offered a contrast in styles.

On the trail, Trump seemed out of control, and Harris was an exemplar of self-control. But she was so self-controlled that she sometimes came across as opaque and staged.

Many voters complained that they did not have a good feel for who she was or where she wanted to take the country. Her tale of growing up in a neighborhood with folks “who were very proud of their lawn” did not cut it. Her message could be bland and confusing.

When she was asked in a CNN town hall by Anderson Cooper if she had made any mistakes she had learned from, she replied: “I’ve probably worked very hard at making sure that I am well versed on issues, and I think that is very important. It’s a mistake not to be well versed on issues and feel compelled to answer a question.” As David Axelrod, a CNN commentator, noted afterward, “Word salad city.”

Harris pulled together her abbreviated campaign swiftly and improved as a candidate. But she was still guarded and tentative in explaining why she wanted to be president and still lacked answers for where she would take the country. She did not acknowledge the obvious; that the border became a disaster under the administration.

Privately, many Democrats were worried from the beginning, feeling that two governors from swing states would have been stronger candidates.

President Biden deserves a lot of the blame. He was selfish and vain. You know he’s sitting home, polishing his own enemies list and telling Jill that he could have beat Trump and pushing him out of the race was a lot of malarkey.

He hurt his party, his legacy and his country by not saying at the beginning of his term that he would not run for a second term as an octogenarian — in time for all the stars of the party to compete, so Democrats could choose the most potent ticket to protect democracy.

Harris had an awful lot to prove and a short time to prove it. She pulled in a lot of people who were simply thrilled that she wasn’t Trump, but for too many people, that wasn’t enough.

She got onto a good message in the homestretch when she said Trump would come to the White House with an enemies list and she would come with a to-do list. She said she would wake up thinking about Americans, not vengeance.

When Biden was still in the race and Trump survived an assassination attempt in Butler, Pa., the former president seemed to have it in the bag. But when Biden was replaced by Harris, Trump began whining and acting as though he felt he was losing control of the race. That made him lose control of himself.

The last couple weeks were a cascade of craziness, as Trump’s anxious advisers tried to wrangle their unmanageable candidate and deal with the

fallout from the Madison Square Garden fiasco with a comedian calling Puerto Rico “a floating island of garbage” and Rudy Giuliani talking about how “the Palestinians are taught to kill us at 2 years old.”

Trump was surrounded by surrogates like Tucker Carlson, who spoke of being attacked by demons; Robert F. Kennedy Jr., who wants to take fluoride out of the water supply; and Elon Musk, who amplified baseless voting conspiracies.

Trump was making offensive comments at a rapid-fire rate, saying he should never have left office when he lost and that he wouldn’t mind if reporters at his rallies got shot by an assassin going after him. Even some of his allies wondered if he was engaging in self-sabotage. Maybe he didn’t really want to win.

Some who voted for Trump were not afraid he would wreak vengeance. Others want him to, still seeking — as they were in 2016 — a Rottweiler to tear the face off Washington.

Trump did better than he did in 2020, and Harris did worse than Biden did in 2020, possibly in every demographic.

In CNN’s exit polls, 58 percent disapproved of Biden, 43 percent were dissatisfied with the direction of the country, and many voters said they were “angry.”

Joe weighed Kamala down. She never broke with the unpopular president or gave people an inspiring vision of change. As Carville says, the change candidate always has the edge.

For his fans, Trump’s weird humor and wacky comments deflated Democrats’ attempts to say he was a fascist.

In the final analysis, Trump can slide past problems that would be insurmountable for other politicians because he’s Trump — a unique amalgam of con man and showman.

He always seems like a fake tough guy to me, but his audiences love his swagger and his ability to come out a winner, even when he seems to have lost. He bonds with supporters by talking to them in an intimate, spontaneous, confessional way, unlike typical politicians who offer repetitive speech chunks.

Trump does not have many, or any, close friends. But he talks to rallygoers — many of whom rightly feel that Democratic elites have treated them with disdain — as though they were his friends.

He is a billionaire whose life is gilded, yet he is able to make his supporters feel that he is their cheerleader in a world where they are having trouble affording food and housing.

Like Bill Clinton, Trump loves being onstage talking endlessly to people who love him. Many politicians give the impression they can't wait to get away.

Trump's narcissism is fueled by the crowds, who love him just the way he is, warts and all, 34 felony convictions and all.

They think he is fun to be with and says things they have on their minds but don't have the nerve to say. And if he also says some crazy things, well, that's Donald. None of the bad stuff would have happened, they believe, if Trump had been running things.

The healing that Kamala promised is now on hold. The federal cases against Trump are certain to vanish. The vengeance tour begins.

That highest glass ceiling will be shattered, and there will be a Madam President. But not this time.

"Look what happened!" Trump marveled at his West Palm Beach, Fla., victory speech. "Isn't this crazy?"  
Yes, it is.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2024/11/06/opinion/donald-trump-world.html>