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It may be a good time to remember Bob Hope. Hope was one of the first comedians to use political humor. His monologues were filled with gentle ribbing of presidents and other politicians. He probably leaned Republican, but his humor was respectful, and everybody was able to have a good laugh. It was a time when people seemed to be able to make fun of themselves and others without being offended.

What happened at the White House Correspondents' Dinner of April 28 was nothing like Bob Hope. The language and raunchy allusions were way over the line. Many of the other jokes were quite funny, but the routine was designed for a late-night comedy club or HBO special, not for a nationally televised event for journalists and politicians.

The attacks on the president were harsh, but to be expected. There has been much controversy over the remarks directed at the press secretary, Sarah Huckabee Sanders. Frankly, I wasn't sure what those comments were meant to convey, but what made it most awkward and inappropriate was that Sanders was sitting at the head table just a couple of chairs away from the speaker.

Defenders of the event note that the comedian was just doing her job, and she gave them exactly what they should have expected. I agree. Michelle Wolf, the comedian, performed as she does in other venues. Clearly, the press corps hoped to continue an event that had worked well in the past. Yet, in our current political climate, it just doesn't work.

It has also been noted that those who were so offended by Wolf's jokes and insults do not seem nearly as offended by the constant insults and demeaning of every person the president has criticized since he has been on the public stage. This point is also valid. However, with all the division and partisanship we are faced with today, the idea of stooping to the level of the president seems most unwise.

Donald Trump's absence tilted the playing field. Normally, the comedian is followed by the president, who has the opportunity to counter the jokes and insults delivered by the comedian. There is a certain parity to the event that was lacking with the president not there.

In his defense, the president was wise not to go. It is not a friendly venue for him. Think back to the Al Smith Dinner, prior to the election, where comity did not prevail. Trump demonstrated his inability to tell a joke or to take a joke.

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It is unfortunate that our public discourse has descended to the point where we can't get together and laugh about ourselves and enjoy an evening of bantering together. We take ourselves too seriously and the hostilities on all sides have made the idea of almost any humor difficult.

We need to get back to the era of Bob Hope. When I was a junior high school counselor, I saw many fights start in the hallway when one student accidentally bumped into another. Our politics is now at that level. One cannot have a thoughtful discussion with someone with whom we disagree. Bad faith is presumed, and the level of hostility rises.

I don't know how we get back to a sane level of interacting with each other. It is unlikely to happen with this presidency. We are waiting to find someone who can bring us all together again.

In the meantime, we cannot afford to have another White House dinner like the one we had last weekend, so I have a few recommendations:

No more dinners for now. If there are to be more dinners, then no more comedians or attempts at humor. Consider a serious dinner with speakers prepared to discuss important issues in a bipartisan way. Speakers like a Colin Powell or David Gergen might be considered. Focus on the work of journalists, especially those working in harm's way to try to bring real, fact-based news to the American people.