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STYLE

Why Making Fun of President Trump's Style Is a Win for Women

BY LEAH BOURNE

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Trump, pictured in 2011, hasn't given up on too-long ties since becoming President.
ANDREW H. WALKER/GETTY

Nancy Reagan was criticized for her splashy, expensive designer clothing, Jackie Kennedy was revered for her style—seemingly ahead of her other accomplishments—and Hillary Clinton was endlessly mocked for her rainbow array of pantsuits, never mind the fact she'd been a senator and secretary of state.

It's always been society's job to obsess over the way women look—that much we know—but while it's one thing to comment on what entertainers wear on the red carpet, fixating on the physical appearance of females in politics is a trickier issue, even if the explanation is as simple as women's clothes matter more.

Which is why there's one thing women can take solace in as far as Donald Trump is concerned: how often the President, in just a few short weeks, has been aggressively derided for his clothes, his skin, his hair, and his body.

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To say critiques of the 70-year-old POTUS' style have been brutal isn't overstating the case, potentially indicating that we're close to reaching a specific gender-equality tipping point: No president in history has gotten as much flak for his top-to-bottom appearance as President Trump, and that's not a bad thing. If women of power are to be judged on their looks, why do men get a free pass? According to fashion experts, they shouldn't.

"Men have escaped the criticism, and it's high time they came under the microscope as well," said style guru and longtime *Project Runway* mentor Tim Gunn. "Elected officials need to get with the semiotics of fashion, because the clothes we wear send a message about how we're perceived, and they have constituents they're serving."





NEW YORK, NY - MARCH 26: Donald Trump arrives for the "Late Show with David Letterman" at Ed Sullivan Theater on March 26, 2013 in New York City. (Photo by Donna Ward/Getty Images)

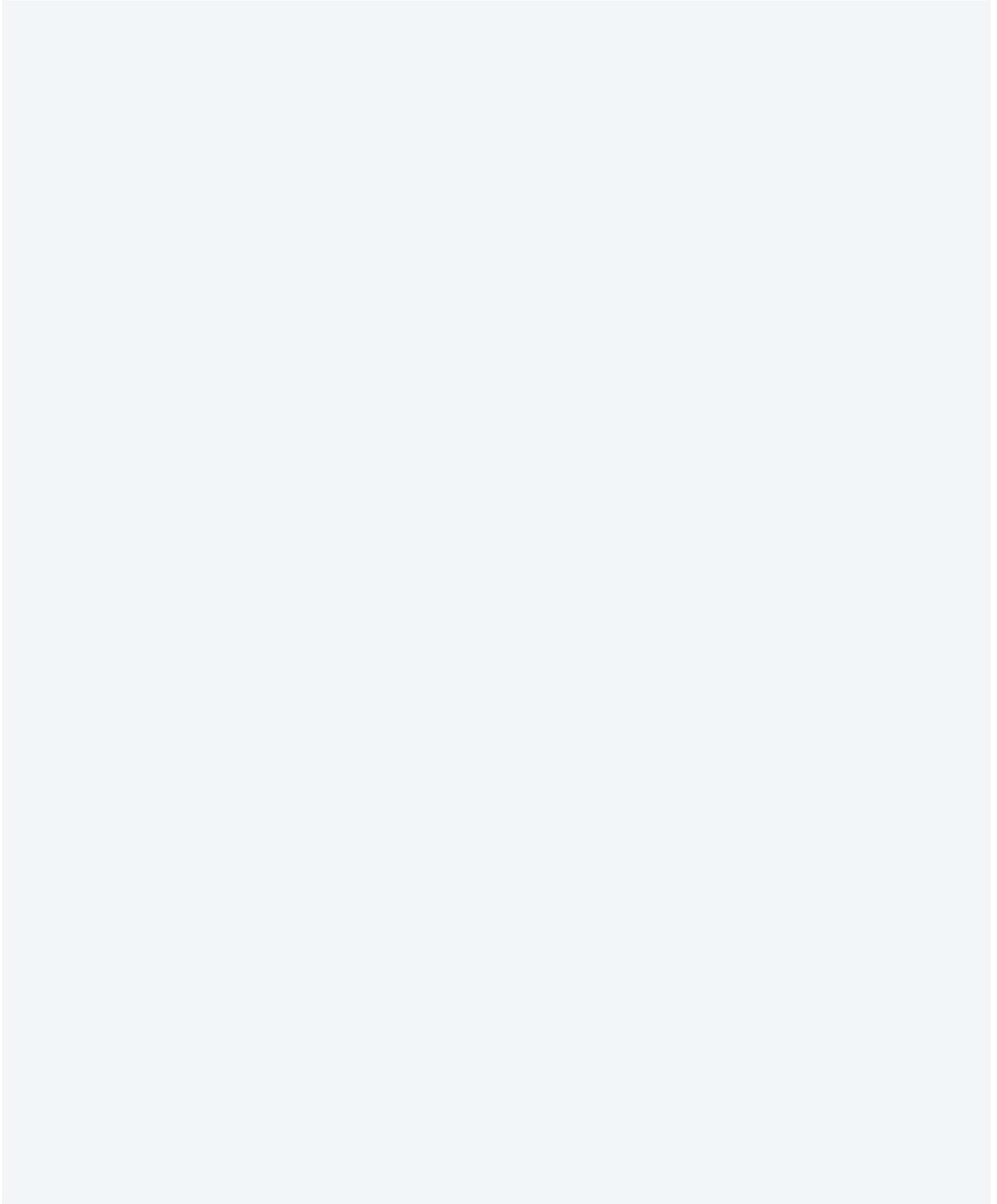
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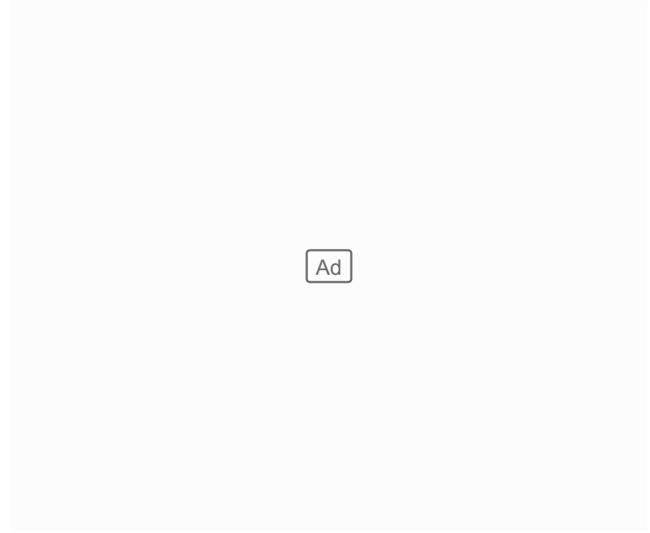

That the fashion-based negativity is happening to Mr. Trump is particularly telling: First Lady Melania Trump is a former model, and First Daughter Ivanka has her own fashion line. Logic would dictate an intense, laserlike focus around what these two tall, fit, attractive women are wearing, but instead the interest is around the President's outdated personal style (that hair, those ill-fitting suits, the ties that are too long and held down by actual tape).

Lauren A. Rothman, a Washington, D.C.–based stylist and the author of *Style Bible: What to Wear to Work*, says Trump's approach to style hasn't gone unnoticed for a reason. “As we know from celebrity coverage, faux pas are what catch the eye of the public,” she said. “In the past you had politicians in the exact same uniform of a dark oversize suit, making the exact same style mistakes. [In the last election] Mitt Romney was the one who stood out because he’s the only one looking slick and well-dressed, and that’s what people notice.”





ANDREW H. WALKER/GETTY

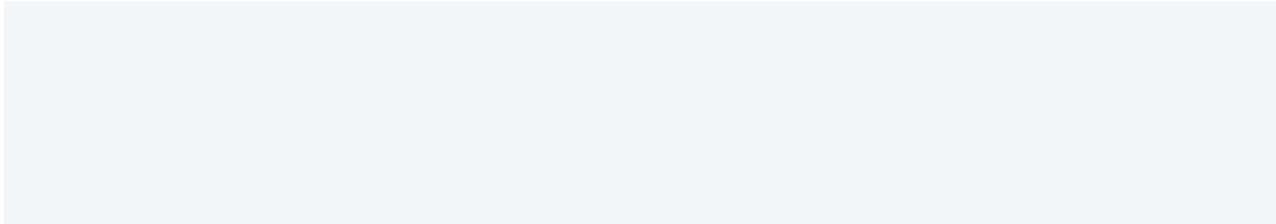


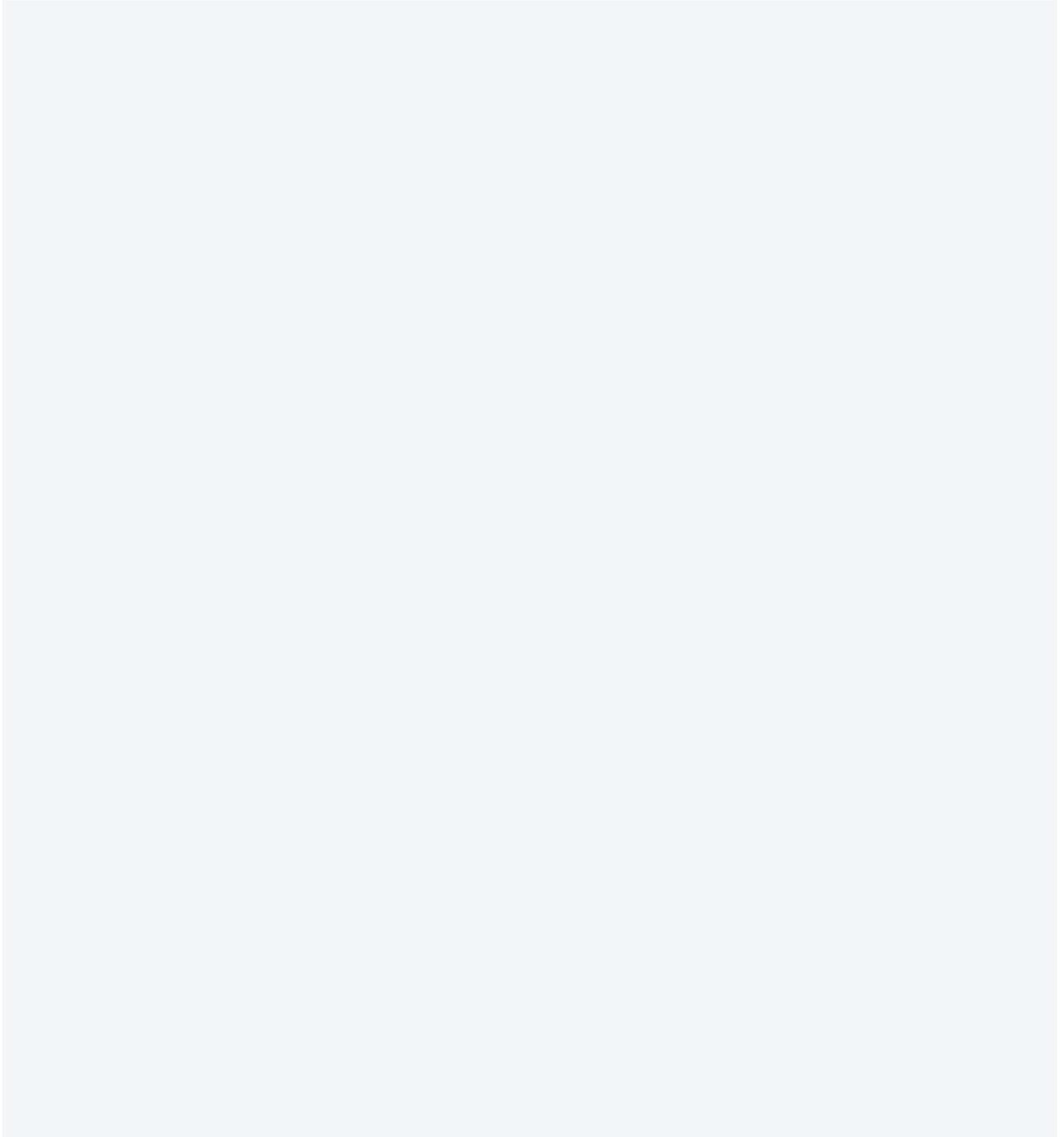
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According to Rothman, the President's apparent choice to not look like a politician straight out of central casting is right in line with the platform on which he ran—and won. "It's hard to miss that colored tie that hangs four-inches too long or that he's taping [it] when he could very well use a tie clip. He's sending the message that he's going to walk to his own beat and do what he wants to do."

To be sure, a focus on men's fashion in general is a trend that's been growing in recent years—remember President Obama's "mom jeans" moment? A particularly "uncool" wardrobe choice that was lost on no one.

"If you look at something like *Women's Wear Daily*, they now regularly rate men," Valerie Steele, the director and chief curator of The Museum at the Fashion Institute of Technology, says. "I think people are looking at men's clothes now more than they have for a long time."





US President Donald Trump steps off Air Force One on February 6, 2017 upon arrival at Andrews Air Force Base in Maryland. / AFP / MANDEL NGAN (Photo credit should read MANDEL NGAN/AFP/Getty Images)
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Still, the judgment President Trump is facing for his clothing choices certainly hasn't been the gentle ribbing Obama got for his off-duty denim. Men's magazine GQ took down the President's style and provided him an acerbic virtual makeover in a piece entitled "If Trump Can't Act Like a President, He Could at Least Dress Like One."

According to GQ: "From his comically large red tie to his JNCO-capacity baggy pants to his unbearably bad haircut, the President's wardrobe could use a few easy fixes from GQ's style editors."

Other recent headlines include: "This Is Still Embarrassing, Donald Trump" from Esquire, referring to his taping together his ties; "What Is Up With Trump's Ill-Fitting Suits" from Jezebel; and "Why Donald Trump's Suits Look Cheap" from Business Insider.

Dogged Trump supporters will predictably counter the media's take on the President's style with comments like "This is politics, not Fashion Week!" or "We voted for his brain, not his fancy suits," but conservative site The Daily Wire had no problem posting a story which stated "Hillary Breaks Out the Ugliest Outfit in Human History," while Republican

Senator Lindsey Graham mocked former House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi's physical appearance during a 2015 fundraiser, quipping that she'd had "all the surgeries."

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US President Donald Trump speaks on the phone with Australia's Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull, alongside Chief Strategist Steve Bannon (R) and National Security Advisor Michael Flynn, from the Oval Office of the White House on January 28, 2017, in Washington, DC. / AFP

/ Mandel Ngan (Photo credit should read MANDEL NGAN/AFP/Getty Images)

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And Trump isn't the only man in the White House facing trial by fashion. Steve Bannon has endured his fair share of the heat, with Vox writer Matthew Yglesias taking to [Twitter](#) to call out the chief strategist's "I don't care" fashion sense, writing: "Would it kill Bannon to dress like an adult in the Oval Office?" thanks to his uniform of baggy, wrinkled khakis and ratty sport jacket.

So, to you, President Trump (and every other man in the White House): We aren't going to let you off the hook for wearing clothes that, for some reason, don't fit you. If Hillary Clinton were president right now, she'd be maligned left and right for her outfit choices, so—in a backward kind of way—this is one step toward equality we can cling to during the current administration.

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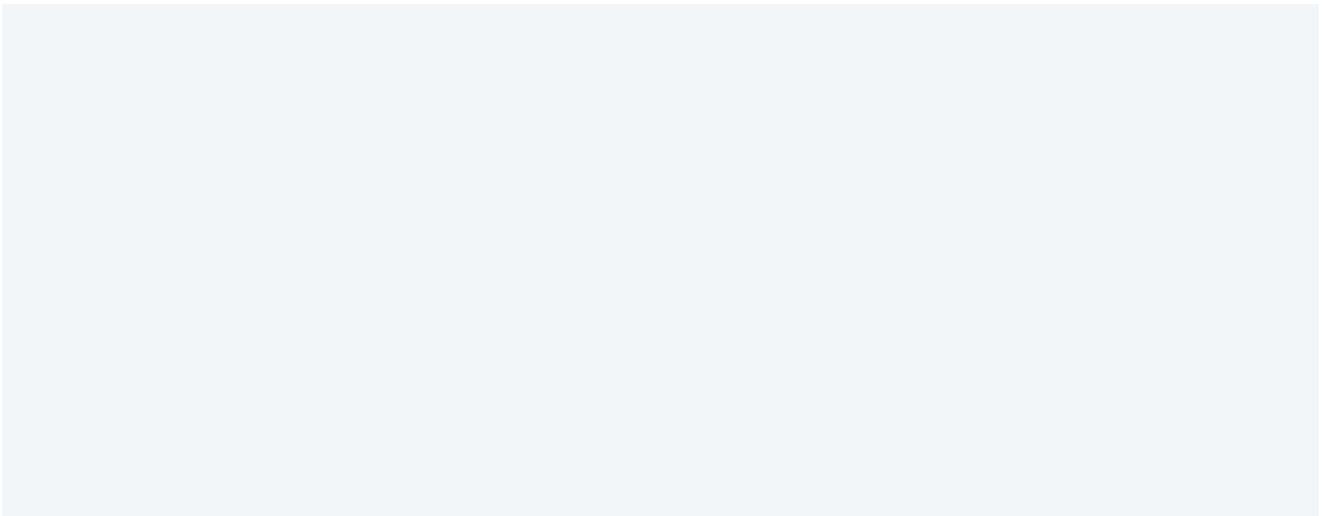
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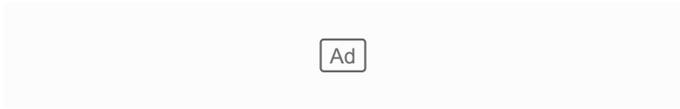
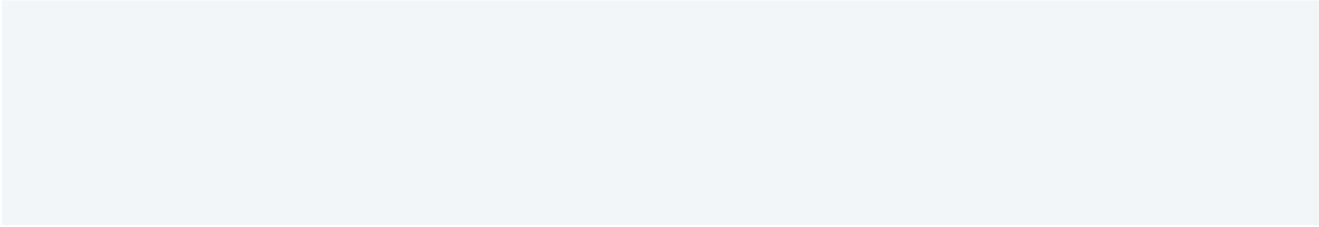
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