

FORUM

EDITORIAL

Final Four, eclipse, home opener: It'll be four days to relish.

The mojo is with us, or so all of Cleveland hopes. As of this writing, the forecast for 3:15 p.m. Monday, the moment of maximum totality for our once-in-a-lifetime total solar eclipse smack-dab above often-cloudy Cleveland, is for partly sunny and in the high 50s. Sweet, but fingers crossed. Just remember the eclipse glasses and to allow plenty of time to get to your destination in light of street closings and other safety measures. Cleveland and Cuyahoga County are treating the day as a public holiday.

City Hall gives this timeline above Cleveland: Eclipse starts at 1:59 p.m. Totality begins at 3:13 p.m. Maximum totality is at 3:15 p.m. Totality ends at 3:17 p.m. The eclipse will be over by 4:28 p.m.

Conveniently, the Guardians have scheduled their sold-out home opener against the Chicago White Sox at 5:10 p.m. at Progressive Field. Impressively, it's the team's 31st consecutive home-opener sellout.

But there's an even more important historical context for this eclipse.

The last time Cleveland was beneath a total solar eclipse was on June 16, 1806, nearly 218 years ago, when it was a settlement with maybe two dozen settlers and "founder" Moses Cleaveland was already back in Connecticut. That comes courtesy of historian John J. Grabowski and the Western Reserve Historical Society. Grabowski notes no contemporaneous eclipse accounts from Cleveland settlers but writes that early newspapers later quoted others speaking of "the confusion of animals, both domestic and wild to the event, all acting as if it were an early evening."

For local Indigenous peoples, Grabowski reports, the 1806 eclipse was "something deeply spiritual" and also deeply significant, coming as it did not long after the 1805 treaty that "stripped the Native Americans of their claims to almost all of Northwestern Ohio." That in turn had led to tribal leadership struggles — in one of which the eclipse may have played a key part.

According to Grabowski, some historians suspect that the literate and multilingual Shawnee leader Tecumseh and his younger brother Tenskwatawa "had access to an almanac that predicted the eclipse." So, when "Tenskwatawa predicted an unworldly event to his community and, when it came to pass exactly on the date he predicted, his authority and that of Tecumseh were unquestionable."

So, on Monday, maybe while you're stuck in traffic or being jostled by a crowd viewing the eclipse, it's worth a thought to these early peoples and how they processed the phenomenon in 1806. Not to mention, the remarkable fact that there were already almanacs then that predicted it with apparent exactitude.

What if it's overcast? Never fear. You'll still have experienced it. It will turn dark as evening, no matter what.

In the meantime, three days of Final Four women's basketball hoopla await, with lots of fun activities today ahead of tonight's two semifinal games at Rocket Mortgage FieldHouse — the first at 7 p.m., between North Carolina State and South Carolina, and the second at 9:30 p.m., or 30 minutes after the first semifinal ends, between the University of Connecticut and Iowa, where the key attraction will be Iowa point guard Caitlin Clark, the NCAA Division I's all-time leading scorer.

Before that is a free "Tourney Town," with games, food, souvenirs and panels on women in sports and other topics that runs from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. today and Saturday at the Huntington Convention Center, and from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Sunday. A free party on Gateway Plaza will unfold today from 3 to 7 p.m., Saturday from noon to 4 p.m. and from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Sunday. It will have a "pep-rally" vibe with photo ops, music, food and more, cleveland.com's Marc Bona reports.

Sunday, lots more free events precede the women's national championship game at 3 p.m., including a free kids' bounce parade at 11 a.m. and separate "red carpet" arrivals at RocketMortgage FieldHouse for the two finalist teams, at about 1:15 p.m. and 1:25 p.m.

Saturday includes free open practice sessions at RocketMortgage FieldHouse (gates open at 1 p.m. and advance ticket registration is required. Go to: rocketmortgagefieldhouse.com/events/detail/ncaa-240406). And an invitation-only "All-Star Game" for the top women's college players who didn't make it to the Final Four — the first such game since 2006 — begins Saturday at 3:30 p.m. at the Wolstein Center. Tickets are \$15, available at womenscollegeallstar.com/tickets.

It's guaranteed to be four days in Cleveland to remember. So, enjoy it all, be careful and stay safe.

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COMMENTARY FROM THE COMMUNITY

How history shaped Haiti's crisis, and what U.S. must do for its future

Roland V. Anglin

Amid the breathtaking landscapes of Haiti lies a nation steeped in a history of resilience and struggle. To understand Haiti's present challenges, one must look to its tumultuous history.

Haiti, once known as Saint-Domingue, was a French colony infamous for its brutal exploitation of African slaves in the lucrative sugar and coffee industries. The Haitian Revolution of 1791-1804 stands as a beacon of hope and resistance, as enslaved Africans, led by Toussaint Louverture and later Jean-Jacques Dessalines and Henry Christophe, rose up against their oppressors to establish the first independent Black republic in the Western Hemisphere.

The legacy of colonialism and slavery cast a long shadow over Haiti's future development. Haiti struggled to establish a stable government and economy as the fledgling nation faced economic isolation from the international community and was forced to pay exorbitant reparations to France for lost property (i.e., enslaved people). Political instability, dictatorships and foreign interventions (including several by the United States) further exacerbated the nation's challenges, leaving scars that still linger today.

Economic woes, made worse by natural disasters and the COVID-19 pandemic, have plunged Haitians into poverty, with high unemployment rates, rampant inflation and increasing cases of cholera.

Tragically, Haiti has descended into a gangster state with criminal gangs (armed with guns flowing from the drug trade) running the country.

In light of the present challenges, the international community must engage in an honest conversation about Haiti's future. It is not enough to offer temporary aid or humanitarian assistance: Genuine support to rebuild communities and a nation should be the goal. This includes promoting leadership development, grassroots initiatives for economic empowerment and sustainable development.

Haiti, just 800 miles away from the U.S. coast, needs our continued attention. Yes, the United State is facing many tests, and it would be natural to limit our involvement in yet another fray. The fact is, we are facing an economic, social and environmental meltdown that is sure to reach our shores.

The United States and the international community must consider the following:

Promote effective governance and institution-building: Focus should be placed on leadership support and development, at all levels of Haitian civil society, including Haitians in the diaspora.

Strengthen security and rule of law: Rebuilding the Haitian National Police to combat gang violence is criti-



A police officer monitors a street in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, on March 22 after a night of gang violence.

Clarens Siffroy, AFP via Getty Images

cal. Along with that, the United States must curb the flow of arms from our shores that support the gangs and the drug trade.

Support economic stability and job creation: Economic assistance must focus on both immediate relief and long-term sustainable development. This must involve direct aid, debt relief, and investment in infrastructure. Haitians need assistance to engage in a national conversation about their economy, which has not worked for the majority of the population in decades — if not centuries. Starting from scratch is not what is proposed, but rather the use of existing assets to develop a sustainable, inclusive economy.

Invest in health, education, and social services: Building a resilient public health system is essential, especially in the aftermath of natural disasters, to prevent the spread of diseases. Education and social services need rethinking to improve literacy, reduce gender disparities and support vulnerable populations.

Again, the investment and support recommended here can only work if a functioning state is in place. We must engage the Haitian people and the diaspora alongside the surrounding Caribbean nations and the international community in an effort to assist this nation, long suffering, but rich in potential.

Anglin is a professor in Cleveland State University's Levin College of Public Affairs and Education. The opinions and assertions in this essay are his own and not reflective of his place of work.

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COMMENTARY FROM THE COMMUNITY

Trump taking his cues from P.T. Barnum

Cliff Anthony

In between campaigning and appearing in courts, presumptive Republican nominee Donald Trump found time to launch two products: Trump "gold" sneakers (\$399) on Feb. 17 and Make America Pray Again Bible, a.k.a. the Trump Bible, (\$59.99) on March 26.

What's next? Trump cream for toenail fungus? Give it to the 45th president for his ingenuity. He has a remarkable knack for unabashedly hawking anything to make a buck — a modern-day P. T. Barnum, whose famous line was "There's a sucker born every minute."

Barnum, a marketing genius in the early 1800s, recruited the tallest and shortest humans and used fakery to generate public interest in his exhibits. A major attraction in Barnum's show in 1835 was Joice Heth, who was said to be our first President George Washington's nursemaid, which would have made her 161 years old. It triggered a debate about her age and more ticket sales.

"In the 1840s, another Barnum exhibit that generated controversy and much media coverage was the Fejee Mermaid, a stuffed creature that was half monkey and half fish," according to the book "Public Relations Strategies and Tactics" by Dennis Wilcox, Glen Cameron and Bryan Reber.

Trump appears to have taken a chapter from Barnum's playbook. The real-estate billionaire's incessant bombardment of lies that the 2020 election was rigged in favor of Joe Biden has won supporters, helping him clinch the Republican nomination. Even before his challenger, Nikki Haley, suspended her campaign on March 6, leading publications ran stories about Trump's possible vice-presidential candidates along with their bios and photos. He also managed to get anointed by certain news outlets as the 2024 front-runner for the White House. Barnum would have been envious of such free publicity and crowning by the media.

Trump is not the only former president who has shown an entrepreneurial spirit.

George W. Bush had invested in the Texas Rangers. His father, George W.H. Bush, founded Oil Development Corp., Jimmy Carter ran a peanut farm, Harry Truman started a men's clothing store, Franklin Roosevelt opened the Institute of Rehabilitation, and Abraham Lincoln invented a device to lift riverboats stuck in sand.

Washington ran a distillery and grist mill. Launched in 1798, the George Washington Distillery and Gristmill in Alexandria, Virginia, is still in operation, though as a museum and tourist attraction.

But none of them sold shoes, Bibles or perfumes. Perfumes? Yes. For \$8.37 plus taxes and shipping, you can purchase a bottle of Donald Trump Fragrances.

His foray into the liquor business, Trump Vodka, started in 2005, suffered a hangover and passed out in 2011. Trump's other ventures faced a similar fate.

Trump Air crash-landed in 1992 after four years in the sky. Trump Magazine, which debuted in 2007, folded after a year. It had nothing to do with the Internet, online aggregators, or hedge-fund managers who would buy newspapers, dismantle them, and sell their buildings located on prime locations.

The real estate tycoon also tried his culinary skills by peddling Trump Steaks in 2007. After five years, the steak business was snuffed out.

He also tried his hand at education. Trump University received an "F" grade from its students and closed in 2012 after five years. His mortgage company also soon folded.

His travel booking site, GoTrump.Com, went offline in 2007 after one year. Several Trump casinos and hotels ended in bankruptcy.

Today, Trump, like Barnum, doesn't hesitate to sell anything to create controversies and make headlines.

Don't be surprised if gambling sites create a new category: Trump's next product.

Any bettors?

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