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## Opinion: Spain should build a sexual assault statue, just like Sarasota



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Sarasota Herald-Tribune

Published 4:02 a.m. ET Aug. 26, 2023

Apparently, the guy who runs women's soccer in Spain got a little carried away last week after his team won the World Cup.

Luis Rubiales, president of the Spanish Football Federation, forcibly kissed player Jennifer Hermoso on the lips during the medal ceremony. She said she "didn't like" the kiss and "wasn't expecting it." Condemnation was immediate and strong, especially in Spain.

So here's my question: What's everyone so offended by?

No one's ever been to Sarasota before?

In Sarasota, we honor unwanted kisses with 29-foot-tall statues on the Bayfront. You didn't know?

We don't call this type of behavior "repugnant" like those hoity-toity people in Spain. We don't investigate the perpetrator for "violating the rules of decent conduct," like FIFA, the world governing body of soccer.

We don't promise to fight "sexual harassment or abuse, machismo and sexism" like Spain's soccer union. We don't call for "urgent action" like Amnesty International. We don't reject flimsy apologies like the acting prime minister of the country did. We don't give up our spot on the men's national team until things change either, like one player in Spain. The team's better off anyway. Who needs losers like that?

Nope, in Sarasota we stand in front of our tacky homage to an assault and snap selfies.

Instead of wasting all this time whining, these dolts in Spain should take Sarasota's lead, fire up the blowtorches and start building a World Cup Kiss statue.

Do we really have to show them how to do it? It's like they have no clue how to celebrate these things. They actually think it is wrong for a man to kiss a woman against her will. Can you imagine? It is almost laughable.

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Of course, Greta Friedman didn't think what happened to her was particularly amusing, but what do we care in Sarasota?

Friedman was the dental assistant who happened to be leaving work on her lunch break in Times Square on Aug. 14, 1945, the day World War II ended.

A drunken sailor named George Mendonsa was in a bar with his fiancé when he heard the news. He walked outside and began kissing every woman he could see. Friedman was one of those women. A photographer snapped their picture, and it wound up on the cover of Life magazine and became one of the most iconic images of the century.

"It wasn't my choice to be kissed," Friedman was once quoted as saying. "The guy just came over and grabbed. I felt he was holding me tight. It was not a romantic event. He took the action. I was just a bystander."

She also said, "I didn't see him coming. The next thing I knew I was in this vice grip."

Over the last several years, I have written about how I think the "Unconditional Surrender" statue depicts an assault. And that's because it does. I've always said if a man walked out of a bar at midnight on New Year's and kissed the first woman he saw, he would likely be in jail. He'd probably have to list his correct weight too.

I always receive emails with two common defenses: That times were different in 1945, and the kiss was celebratory in nature.

Indeed, the times were different, but it doesn't say much if the same behavior is still happening. All that means is people haven't evolved. It's also interesting to note that the two kisses happened 78 years apart, on nearly the exact same date.

As for the celebration argument, that no longer holds water. Granted, winning a World War is bigger than winning a World Cup (though in some countries it's close), but this was a

"celebration" kiss too. There is no difference.

Oh, except for this:

In Spain, assaults are reviled.

In Sarasota, they are revered.

So c'mon down for a selfie.

And smile in front of our statue.