

Gossip and drama: a royal curse

Remember once hearing that if life is like a football game: your friends are the people that you go to the game with, and your family are the drunk people sitting behind you that spill beer down your back.

Every family's dynamic is unique and dysfunctional in its own way. Now, what if that same level of dysfunction was projected on an international scale? What if audiences around the world were made aware of every time your dad left the toilet seat up or every time your sibling stormed up to their room to pout? Well, you wouldn't just be dysfunctional; you'd be the House of Windsor.



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Ever since (and preceding) Elizabeth II's coronation as Queen of England in 1953, the British royal family (the House of Windsor) has been a constant in popular culture and the media. Even in spite of new trends and mediums of communication, gossip, drama and scandal surrounding the family has made headlines for decades.

It's pretty widely understood that monarchies are a highly outdated form of government by modern standards; if you don't agree, then you clearly need to cram a few more bomb pops and Budweisers down your throat until you see the red, white and blue light.

The title of "Queen of England" may have certain connotations in our heads, but according to the royal family's official website, the Queen and the rest of the family don't possess any true political power and serve more of a ceremonial and formal role in government.

That seems a little silly, sure, but, in all fairness, the U.S. does have its fair share of non-sensical traditions that serve no purpose, such as the presidential turkey pardoning, the White House Easter egg roll and the Office of the Vice President.

The royal family does, however, serve another purpose altogether: they are the stars of their very own 24/7 reality show. Now, the Windsors' worldwide notoriety isn't exactly a secret. In my experience, there are two firm camps when it comes to the royal family: the people who follow news and gossip surrounding the family religiously and then the productive half of society.

Speaking personally, while I like to think I belong in the second group, I did, in fact, sit indifferently through all six seasons (and one cash-grabby movie) of "Downton Abbey" and groaned miserably through roughly half of "The Crown."

Given this experience, I've picked up several things. For one, children of the royal family are essentially bound into becoming celebrities themselves for the rest of their lives. Even though it might be every little girl's dream to grow up and become a princess, I would have to guess that the job loses its luster a few egregious tabloid covers in.

Former royals Prince Harry and Meghan Markle both shared accounts of their worsened mental health as a part of their time with the royal family in their highly anticipated interview with Oprah Winfrey

MEDIA INFLUENCE ON THE ROYALS



THAT'S THE TEA: News and gossip of the British royals still surrounds U.S. culture, even today. However, this constant coverage of the family can be incredibly harmful to the royals, innocuous as it may seem. (Illustration by Kevin Lynch)

earlier this year. This included their mental health depreciating to the point of suicidal thoughts in the case of Meghan, according to Insider. When she spoke to others in the family, Meghan said that she was told to keep quiet and not seek professional help out of a fear of hurting the family's image.

And keep quiet she did, until the couple decided to leave the royal family in early 2020 to focus on their health and raising their children.

Now, I'm not arguing that Queen Elizabeth and the rest of the family are to blame for this treatment of the couple — not by a long shot. In fact, I would argue that the rest of the family is just as victimized as Harry and Meghan.

The true cause of the problem, as in most scenarios, is obnoxious British people. In this case, the root of the problem lies with those who

write for the endless drove of tabloids that flood British and American newsstands.

According to CBS, the royal family essentially relies on the media to make them look good and justify their existence (which is paid for partially by taxpayer money), and that's why they, in turn, give news outlets access to the drama and intrigue in order to build their public appearance. Each year, the Queen gets a Sovereign Grant equal to 25% of the profits the Crown's estate makes that year; the grant was roughly \$107 million in 2019, according to Insider.

And you can bet the farm that being a routine topic of every daytime talk show on the planet is a surefire way to increase said profits. In addition to single-handedly monopolizing the cover of "People," the royals also provide the lifeblood for sleazy magazines and tabloids as well.

If you need further proof of the sleaze, look no further than the Daily Mail. According to CNN, the paper ran the headline "KATE MADE ME CRY" just hours after Harry and Meghan's tell-all interview while also displaying a banner on its website that read "I WANTED TO KILL MYSELF."

Not to mention, while I was researching on CNN's website, a highly specific pop-up blocked my screen asking if I wanted to subscribe for "weekly updates on the Windsors." If CNN of all publications is banking on covering the royals, you had better bet that there are a thousand tabloids that pray fervently each night for some major royal scandal to arise so that they can keep the lights on.

According to the Tyndall Report, a site that tracks the nightly news coverage of the major news networks, the British royals were reported on for a total of 867 minutes in the last decade. For perspective, that's more than Iraq, North Korea, Israel-Palestine and gun control all received.

In all truth, much of my opinion about the royals comes from this distasteful coverage; I am genuinely baffled by the idea of people reading a tabloid and decrying Meghan's worsened mental health while being completely unaware the very magazine they're holding is the very source of the problem.

If magazines and newspapers are actually upset about the situation and want Meghan, Harry and the rest of the royals to be free from the constant scrutiny, then why are they still plastered on front page after front page? The answer, of course, is that coverage of the royals brings in money, and like the saying goes, you can't make an omelette without cracking a few Brits.

It's not politics, it's not human interest and it sure isn't relevant, but the drama that the royals stir up brings in readers, viewers and subscribers, and, hey, everyone else is already covering it, right? Hell, even I'm writing about it at the end of the day. And you're reading about it right now.

Of course, there are actual issues

worthy of coverage surrounding the royals, such as the alleged racism described in Harry and Meghan's interview or Prince Andrews' alleged sexual assault of a minor. The thing is, the majority of this coverage is simply meant to provoke its readers and stir up drama rather than actually call out the people involved and enact change.

While it was certainly anticlimactic to write all of this just for it to lead to "royal family equals bad," the real problem doesn't lie with any one person or group. The entire system of the royal family perpetuates a culture of suffering in silence while simultaneously putting the royals' lives on display for the drama-hungry public to consume.

In many ways, the royals are fascinating; they're a snapshot of the romantic spirit from the bygone days of kings and queens which has captured the imagination and attention of people around the world. But at what expense? The media has essentially forced the Windsor family to act for a living; whenever they deviate from their roles, they're blasted on the front page for all to see.

Obviously, this isn't a problem with a clear solution, but at the very least, society needs to take an honest look at the way people follow modern-day celebrities. We might think that we would never lead our favorite celeb to thoughts of suicide, but how well do we really know that person?

The royals may be antiquated, but they're still people, people trying their best to survive in a life where their every action is liable to be reported on and misconstrued.

The royals may not be my favorite people in the world, but they deserve better than to live life simply in order for the media to cover them. It would be nice if the royal family was a relic of the past, but until then, it seems like the ordinary people may just have more sovereignty than their "rulers."



1992
DUCHESS OF YORK SARAH FERGUSON IS FORCED OUT OF THE FAMILY DUE TO NEGATIVE MEDIA COVERAGE



1997
PRINCESS DIANA IS KILLED IN A CAR CRASH WHILE BEING HOUNDED BY THE PAPARAZZI



2020
PRINCE HARRY AND MEGHAN EXIT THE ROYAL FAMILY DUE TO THE STRAIN ON THEIR MENTAL HEALTH

