



Written by [Selwyn Duke](#) on July 9, 2009

Too Much Media Action for Jackson

Ever since the notorious entertainer suffered his untimely demise on June 25, the news has inundated us with, seemingly, all Jackson all of the time.

Many are lamenting this fact, such as [David Clemons](#) in the *Walton Tribune*. And critics are right to bemoan this gratuitous coverage. When you think about how the Jackson story overshadows matters of true import — the cap-and-trade bill, nationalized healthcare proposals, and the call for another budget-busting stimulus plan — it's enough to make one lose faith in humanity.



Yet this is nothing new. Back in 200 A.D., the Roman poet Juvenal bemoaned the state of the masses in his poem *Satire X*, writing, "Already long ago, from when we sold our vote to no man, the People have abdicated our duties; for the People who once upon a time handed out military command, high civil office, legions — everything, now restrains itself and anxiously hopes for just two things: bread and circuses."

Bread and circuses — it's a phrase most of us have heard — that is, those of us who pay attention to more than Perez Hilton, *American Idol*, and Michael Jackson (and it's great to know the three of you are reading me). It has become a metaphor for those things that satisfy and distract the child inside the man: small pleasures and frivolous entertainment.

To be precise, Juvenal was referring to how leaders would seek to gain power buying the people off with free wheat and expensive entertainment. Nothing much has changed, of course, except that politicians have found more ways to buy votes than ever before and generally don't waste time with the circuses. After all, we now have a circuses culture, with an endless array of brain-cell degrading entertainment just the click of a remote or a mouse away. Why, even a roundtable discussion with San Fran Nan, Joe Biden, and Barney Frank couldn't compete with that.

Yet, while most Americans drink deeply from the well of the unwell (how else to describe the Betty Ford Center set?), many nevertheless know better, exhibiting that disconnect between the heart and head. Clemons reports on statistics relating to this, telling us, "Jackson died June 25. By week's end, a Pew Research Center for the People and the Press poll showed 64 percent of respondents thought the death got too much media coverage." Okay, that figure should be about 90, I know, but then Clemons tells us of a contradiction, writing, "Some 58 percent said they followed the story either very closely or fairly closely." So, obviously, some of the people who claim the coverage is gratuitous are themselves contributing to the fact that it is so. After all, the media responds to the market.

Of course, if asked, these Americans might say that while they follow the Jackson story, they happen to do so to *just the right degree*. That infernal coverage, though, it's just too dang much!

All joking aside, this may actually be true in certain cases. But there is another factor.

This much reminds me of how many people will complain about the corruptive influence of popular



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culture, of the gratuitous sex and violence in movies and shows, but nevertheless sometimes imbibe this entertainment themselves. And many find this contradiction unfathomable. Yet the answer is summed up in one word:

Temptation.

So many of us are like the ancient sage Confucius, who once said, “It is not that I do not know what to do; it is that I do not do what I know.” Like a few of us, he was wise. But like all of us, he was also weak. It is part of our fallen nature to often desire that which is not good. It’s much like the man who drinks, smokes, or overeats; he knows he is destroying himself, but the siren of sin is sometimes just too alluring.

So it is with our culture. While many citizens are thoroughly imbued with the spirit of the age, others do sense that a multitude of its elements are toxic. And if we can avoid rationalizing away this reality, which people may do in an effort to justify a partial embrace of that bread-and-circuses spirit, we can avoid losing touch with moral reality. And this is at least a first step.

Oh ... but look at the time. You’ll have to excuse me now — my favorite TV show is on.



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