

America's Celebrity Culture Explains Why Harry and Meghan's Flight Is Predictable

Harry and Meghan, the Duke and Duchess of Sussex, recently announced that they are “stepping down from their royal duties” and leaving the UK for North America.

Why?

According to one prominent media theory, the problem was racism. Meghan's mother is black and is a descendant of slaves. The small handful of racist comments from a few extremists is what drove her out, this theory suggests.

Such comments were surely, as the British would say, unpleasant. But it doesn't really compare with the kinds of things that normally drive royalty into flight from their country – things like large armies, or castle intrigue, or, I don't know, beheadings.

I'm sorry, but, last I heard, being victimized by racism does not normally involve receiving a castle, servants, a Rolls Royce, and a strict schedule for tea time. So it's hard to pin Harry and Meghan's departure on that excuse. Instead, it seems more likely that life in the castle just wasn't the fairy tale Meghan was expecting it to be.

In America, we look down on royalty because, well, we're Americans and we dissed royalty in the Revolution and we believe in equality.

Expect when we don't.

In the vacuum created by the absence of actual royalty, we

have celebrities. These are people who parade smiling before the cameras, shill for commercial products, say nice things about the Dalai Lama, and advocate for social causes in a way that costs them nothing. They spend the rest of their time attracting attention for their transgressive behavior and going to celebrity events where they accept awards for being famous.

Being American, Markle probably thought life as a British princess would be just like life in America, where you can be a celebrity and not have to live up to any behavioral expectations.

In the world of real royalty you find something completely different. There are actually expectations. Being a royal involves setting your own interests aside and doing things like representing your country and being a role model for your citizens. Note what Meghan and Harry said in the official statement before they announced their new status – without warning to the rest of their family – that they were stepping down from their royal duties.

Duties. This means actual responsibilities that must be attended to. With a stiff upper lip. Like the Queen.

In one sense, the duties of the royals are just not that involved. Harry and Meghan are a prime example that being a royal no longer involves marrying someone you probably don't like in order to ingratiate yourself with the royal family of another country. All you have to do is avoid scandal, show up for charity events, look vaguely British, and periodically cash large checks from the grateful British people. Unless you are the actual king or queen, in which case you have a few occasional diplomatic duties, that's it.

Is this too hard?

It is for someone who is used to the soft glow of the Hollywood spotlight and the adulation that comes from being an

American celebrity who is responsible for nothing except her image.

Sorry, Britain. It's just the way we Americans are.

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