

Letters on “Hypocrisy and right-wing politics fuel furor over Super Bowl episode”

11 February 2004

Below we post a selection of recent letters on David Walsh's February 5 article, "Hypocrisy and right-wing politics fuel furor over Super Bowl episode".

Just to thank you for the article putting the “breast incident” in proper proportion.

In a nation where a president tells us all to go shopping after the horrific loss of 3,000 civilians, where our personal freedoms are being stripped away by a misnamed Patriot Act, where we have legislation by corporation, and government by stealth, the baring of a 37-year-old breast seems insignificant.

That the level of “entertainment” on television has deteriorated to spectacle is no surprise. After all, didn't Rome provide gladiators to distract the people?

Sincerely,

DR

8 February 2004

Yeah, David Walsh, you got it right that there is a lot of hypocrisy in the fretting over the Janet Jackson incident during the Super Bowl halftime show while overlooking the war-mongering, sex-driven, mindless atmosphere that permeates this annual tribute to Americana. It is as if the game doesn't matter anymore (and a decent game it was, too). There is plenty to point out regarding the other offensiveness of the halftime and pre-game shows, the sexual content at the fringes of the game, the crassness of the commercials, and the money sloshing around. Much of this can be said for most of the pro football season. (And I would recommend a movie, *North Dallas 40* with Nick Nolte, one of the few Hollywood versions of the game to even touch on some of these issues.)

BUT you got it wrong by identifying all of the reaction to the half-time show to right-wing politics, as if progressives cannot be concerned about the vacuous sex and violence that is shot through major American entertainment sources such as network and cable television, video games, and major motion pictures. Take a look at the recently posted commentary by Rev. Jim Wallis of Sojourners, a progressive Christian-based community, approaching the issue from the left-wing perspective.

And I can say, as a committed progressive and a dedicated flower child, that this trend in sex hype and violence in these media outlets disturbs me greatly. The past 10 years have seen a quantum leap in this content, in both volume and frequency and intensity, in nearly all major media. Try watching what MTV serves up to kids, including morally bankrupt programs like “Dismissed” to see what I mean, or most of the music videos

being purveyed today. Even Britney Spears has gone virtually naked in her latest one.

It is incorrect to suggest that progressives cannot be concerned about these things, and that issues of sex and violence in media are the exclusive territory of repressed right-wing prudes. Images of sex and violence mixed together and delivered to 8- and 10-year-old minds through every conceivable media outlet day after day can't be good in the long run, regardless of one's political perspective.

So let's keep the handwringing over Janet Jackson and the halftime show in perspective, to be sure. But let's get to the deeper issues without concern for political labeling.

CM

6 February 2004

After reading many commentaries on the “Super Bowl episode” in the American press, one can better appreciate the clarity and insight offered by David Walsh's analysis. But what struck me the most was the statistic that before American children finish elementary school they will have witnessed 8,000 murders and 100,000 acts of violence on television. It's no small wonder why the morals of many Americans are topsy-turvy.

This hypocritical brouhaha reminds me of Arthur C. Clarke wondering what an intelligent alien would think of a culture that incessantly depicts horrible ways of destroying life but censors the very act of creating it. He went on to comment that it would certainly deem that culture to be mortally sick. Of course, I am not advocating porn on the front page of the morning newspaper, but neither was he.

What happened at the Super Bowl was merely tasteless and stupid. But to describe the extent of the damage done to America and its relationship with the rest of the world by the Bush administration's narrow neoconservative worldview requires stronger language than what is journalistically acceptable.

To further restrict the media because of this incident is as absurd as shooting the messenger because you don't like the message. But in America, shootings happen all the time. We see it over and over again on television to the extent that it has become a form of saturation therapy. We no longer blink when it happens. That is what is obscene.

HW

Chicago

6 February 2004

Greetings,

I'm responding to the article David Walsh wrote about the Super

Bowl and the halftime show.

I think you are missing the point about why the outrage truly occurred. It wasn't because of what Janet Jackson and Justin Timberlake did, but when they chose to do it.

It's one thing to do it at 10 p.m. on an MTV awards show that usually has outlandish performances to begin with, and is expected; therefore, parents with integrity and morals wouldn't even have allowed their children under 18 to watch the show.

But to do it at 8:30 p.m., and at halftime of a game we all know had many children under 18 watching.

The NFL and not CBS is to blame. They knew full well what MTV and its station stands for and sells, and that's sex and more sex. There is nothing wrong with this, because it should be left to us to decide what we want to watch. However, they chose to perform in a way that was proper for a late-night Las Vegas show and not the halftime of the Super Bowl.

I also took offense to your slamming the Christian faith as if it is always somehow stoning someone to death for certain sins. You know this is blown way out of proportion.

The reason why sex sells so well in the United States is because we are immature towards sexuality and we make certain aspects of our anatomy taboo. I lived in Norway for three months. Nude beaches, breast-feeding mothers, and movies that showed men's penises didn't alarm anyone.

In the United States, our entertainment industry feeds off of this immaturity, and sells at a dangerous level the exploitation of sex to the point it distorts the beauty of sexuality into something that is to be sold as a product rather than something that is achieved through bonding between people.

We are fast losing our moral compass, and to write an article that supports the very commercial you support from MoveOn.org is a classic example. I watched those ads from their actual web site, and it shows no integrity in that they prostitute children to make a political point. Good choice by CBS not to stoop so low as to advertise such garbage.

I do agree with you that the placards of the American flag and the Man on the Moon skit were out of place. One more thing, you blasted the "right-wing" for its complaints about the Reagan series. Well, it seems that political correctness bounces both ways.

What was started by the liberal left is now infecting us all. Something we oppose, and we just bitch and moan until it is censored. Although certain things, through common sense, must be censored.

Sincerely,

JM

6 February 2004

Dear editor,

I was astounded by the massive outpouring of rage and invective precipitated by the (probably accidental) baring of Janet Jackson's breast.

This, in a society, where war—involving the dropping of massive quantities of explosives onto defenseless civilians, the wanton slaughter of poorly equipped soldiers, and the generally brutal and degrading treatment of captives—is routinely aired on prime time television, for all, including children, to see.

No moral outrage from the self-appointed guardians of public

morality here. Instead, gloating over the death and destruction inflicted by the Pentagon war-machine; chat-show guests casually discussing the pros and cons of torture; the execution of juveniles and the mentally ill; and a president who relishes using the word "kill."

A very diseased state of affairs, indeed.

Regards,

EG

5 February 2004

Hasn't the truth dawned yet? The episode was premeditated. The result is that the Grammy Awards will be on a five-minute delay. But the real target will be the Academy Awards, where left-wingers might criticize the Stalinesque Bush administration. Delay that show and edit it for political comment.

M

6 February 2004

David Walsh's article is spot on.

Janet Jackson's breast-baring violated a prime directive of the sexually driven advertising industry.

That is, the "Methodology of the Tease." Sexuality is to be used only in the context of providing stimulation that is then to be immediately directed towards the purchase of consumer goods. And "the tease," just like the sublimation of real human desire into consumerist fixations, never satisfies in the long term. Keeps you coming back for more and more and more.

The worst that can be said for Ms. Jackson's actions is that they were artless and mundane—like most of the rest of what passes for popular entertainment these days and which is endlessly promoted in the commercial media marketplace.

The unctuous hypocrisy spouted by the Christo-Fascist-Media execs and self-appointed enforcers of public morality in response to the breast-baring side-show Stupor-Bowl incident is summed up in the unconsciously self-mocking statement by CBS chief Leslie Moonves as quoted in your article. And said, I might add, entirely without a hint of irony: "...we are looking into this matter and will do everything we can to get to the bottom of it."

Oh Lord, these folks are seriously irony-deprived

SZ

Albuquerque, New Mexico

6 February 2004



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