

A petite woman and a dignified man retreat to a sleazy hotel. The man-dressed in military formals pulls her close and smiles nervously. The petite woman, harmless looking, is the single greatest threat to this man's career. The sheets ruffle in the dark. The two embrace and the honorable military man indulges his baser instincts. This man is a leader-a public figure, and he is committing career suicide. The same man who has led numerous operations, gained the respect of so many, and carved out a life for himself is now reduced to a tryst in a motel. He will pay the price for his sins- he will soon be bombarded by camera flashes, shamed by his superiors, and demonized by the public for his personal affairs. Do his personal affairs really affect his job performance?

When a public leader is elected, there is an unwritten criterion along with official platforms of what people really desire in a leader. Voters want strength, decisiveness, fairness, and for their leader to do what is in their best interest. However, the voters also seem to be looking for an infallible figure of morality, a Superman of sorts. Along with a strong career, voters want a strong sense of right and wrong-to live a morally exemplary life; "morally exemplary" of course being defined as a life of no infidelities, a perfect marriage, a functioning family, and a clean past, present and future. But should a public leader really be obligated to live a morally exemplary life? To put it simply, oh hell no. When a leader is elected to office, they are elected to take care of the people's needs, and to give them the most opportunities to thrive as possible. Elected leaders are elected for their professional skill; not their personal decency. A political campaign is not a beauty pageant- nobody cares who gets Ms. or Mr. Congeniality, who had the best childhood best friend, or the easiest life to compare to the Jones'.

There are people who would argue that if a public leader does not live a morally exemplary life, they will be an incompetent leader. Personal affairs do not affect a leader's ability to command his people. In fact, when a leader is demonized for his after work activities, the only party harmed in the end is the public. Unfortunately, many talented leaders have been shamed out of office or fired because the public refuses to separate "business and pleasure." A recent example of an effective leader ousted from his office unjustly is former New York governor Eliot Spitzer. His work in public office as attorney general had boosted his state and even raised the bar for his successors. He was known as a relentless pursuer of fraud, busting large companies such as Merrill Lynch for stealing money from New Yorkers. He had an impressive number of case victories. Eliot Spitzer was momentarily popular- until he bought and had relations with on multiple occasions. While knocking boots with a hooker is never a smart idea, it has never plunged a people into debt or caused the apocalypse. He still managed to run the state as commendably, until of course the media found out. He was forced to resign, leaving a far less effective successor in his place. Spitzer's story is only one of many similar, all with unfortunate endings. Other leaders such as CIA Director Petraeus- resigning after it was revealed he was having an affair with his biographer, have also been shamed out of office though his performance was on par. And let us not forget the toppling of former New Jersey governor McGreevy who reluctantly resigned his position after he was found having an affair with a man. Those who are not mortified by the public reaction to their behavior to the point of leaving, face further humiliation. Bill Clinton, the former president of the United States of America stayed through his term- and was almost impeached by his peers. Clinton was responsible for the lowest unemployment rate in thirty five years. These men- who hold impressive professional records- were and are being judged unfairly. Their work prowess is separate from their personal choices, and with the amount of pressure being put on them to keep the public happy, of course their human side is bound to show.

Others would contend that when one is elected to public office should be held to a higher standard, as a role model. Where is that in the description of a public leader? A public leader's job is to take care of the public-not to mentor it. The voting public has an idealistic image of a good leader in mind that is impossible to achieve. It is simply unfair to expect super human perfection from a human. These leaders are human, after all. They have thoughts, feelings, mistakes, and regret just like everyone else. The only real difference between a leader and his people is his job title. Imagine being followed by media vultures every hour of every day. Imagine every single breath you take, or word you say or object is being watched by people waiting for you to fail. Imagine a work load fit for multiple men piled across your desk, every piece of paper as urgent as the last, and the public pressuring you into a decision. Imagine going to work every day with protestors outside your door cursing your name, your family, and at times threatening you with injury for making a decision they did not agree with. To these leaders, that is just another day at the office. The demanding nature of a leader's job can be extremely stressful. No matter what a leader does there will always be a group of opponents waiting for you to fall. Barack Obama, the current president faces this every day. The mainly republican cast in the play of congress is extremely difficult to pass legislation through. All of the good Obama wants to do, all the improvements he wants to make are put on hold. His own public, the citizens of the nation, criticize his work for being too "wishy washy" or too "slow to act." Yet every day he bravely confronts opposition with his head held high against the overpowering weight of his work. This amount of dedication is extreme to ask anyone to undertake. But piling on "moral" responsibility is asking one to give up their rights to be human. Humans make mistakes. The amount of power or responsibility does not change that fact. Mistakes make humans human, not incompetent or immoral. Though unfortunately, today's media fueled society is sending quite a different message.

Some people may claim that media really does not affect how we see leaders and their actions. These same people are most likely Amish or blissfully ignorant to the world around them. In the modern

age of technology, it seems impossible to go one day without hearing the latest news as it happens. Media has always tried to outdo itself to get attention. Whether it is colonial American newspapers divulging case information about "suspected witches" in Salem, or even the news of the 1800's when yellow journalism (sensational journalism) first appeared, the media has always embellished the current events of the day to attract attention. Many of these scandals and moral slip ups by public leaders are not only documented, but exaggerated. This dramatizing of the world, along with today's widespread availability of information creates a deadly mix for anyone in the public eye. Paparazzi relentlessly follow these public leaders and document their every move. They wait like predators hoping for one drop of blood to fall from their prey to start frenzy. Often times, the media will take something insignificant, like a celebrity gaining weight, and inflate it to make a headline stating "LOCAL STAR PREGNANT?" Even public leaders beaten to office fall victim to the media's lies, such as the Enquirer, a rag magazine stating Governor Romney sent "death threats" to president Obama the day after the election. These blatant lies still sell copies. The media is meant to entertain, especially when these leaders play a losing game with the public eye. The media demonizes them for a mistake, but just as quickly accuse them of a lie if they really were a leader of true morals. Regardless of whether or not a person lives a moral life, it is nobody's business but their own. In fact, how many people live a double life without interruption? Every day they live two lives and go years without anyone finding out. If the media did not invade public leaders' privacy, would we even know their personal life? Would it even matter?

The role of a leader in society is to rule the public with their best interest. How well they can execute their job is based on their skill, their intelligence, and their dedication. Yet too many people continue to critique a leader on their moral decrees. This is an unfortunate and unfair judgment of a leader. The mark of a great leader is the happiness and prosperity of his people. Not how many drinks he has after work, not how many women he sleeps with, not even the mistakes he's made as a teenager

can accurately define a leader. A public leader should not be obliged to lead a morally exemplary life. A public leader should be obliged to perform their job well to serve the public, protect the public, and give it the opportunities to prosper and move forward generation after generation.