

Is royalty over?

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At the age of 65, Andrew Mountbatten-Windsor has lost it all - every royal title, and every symbol of inherited privilege. Two weeks ago, we were told that this was impossible. But it's happened, and the myth that some are born superior has fallen apart.

This video explores what that means for Britain. Because when a prince can become a commoner, the hierarchy that defines our whole society begins to crumble. The monarchy's claim to natural privilege has always been the cultural face of economic inequality and the idea that wealth, status, and deference are deserved.

Now, that illusion is gone. What happens when the royal mystique collapses? What does that mean for justice, equality, and a new politics of care?

And watch to the end for a discussion of philosopher John Rawls' "difference principle" — and why true justice begins when we stop pretending anyone is born superior.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PZUutyoNhAc?si=xnBm6a2e8jVJHkzK>

This is the audio version:

https://www.podbean.com/player-v2/?i=rs97x-19ad3d0-pb&from=pb6admin&share=1&download=1&rtl=0&fonts=Arial&skin=f6f6f6&font-color=auto&logo_link=episode_page&btn-skin=c73a3a

This is the transcript:

At the age of 65, Andrew Mountbatten-Windsor has just become a commoner. He's been stripped of all his royal titles. The person formerly known as Prince Andrew is no longer a Prince, an earl, a lord, a Knight of the Garter, a member of the Royal Victorian Order, whatever that is, and anything else that proved that he was once royal. It's all gone.

But two weeks ago, we were told that this was impossible. We were told that 'Prince' was his title as a consequence of birthright. But even that claim has now fallen apart. Public consent has stripped Andrew of his titles, and with that stripping of his roles away from this person who has been discredited in the public eye, the royal myth has died, and that matters.

It matters because the monarchy has always claimed that its privilege is natural. By implication, they say that some people, like them, are born superior and others like us must defer. But when a Prince loses all his titles and becomes a commoner, that illusion collapses. Privilege, it turns out, is just made up. And it always has been - that's my point. It's always been an artificial construct designed to extract value from the rest of us.

This is about political economy after all, and in that context, the monarchy is just the tip of the iceberg. Britain's hierarchy runs on deference and not competence. We are required in this country to accept that inequality is inbuilt into our system of governance. The honour system, titles and orders of Empire, all feed into this game. They all make unearned power look respectable, and they encourage everyone else to stay in their place.

Now, though, if a Prince can be stripped of his privileges, anyone can. What we now know is that titles, wealth, and status are not permanent. They do depend on public consent. There is a relationship of power, and the public holds some of that power. The people who are now claiming superiority can, in fact, lose it overnight. Without our consent, they cannot be superior. This changes everything about how power is understood in this country.

The Royal family's USP - its reason for being - was the sale of mystique, to appear untouchable, but that mystique has died. It did when it was used as a shield for wrongdoing. And for a decade, the royal family have let Andrew Windsor-Mountbatten, or whatever he is now called, hide behind titles, to pretend that he was somehow different when he was accused of wrongdoing, and serious wrongdoing at that.

Now, the shield has been stripped away. The royals have been revealed as ordinary people with ordinary names that begin with the title, Mr., Mrs, Miss, Ms, or whatever. Monarchy now looks less like heritage and very much more like a hierarchy of power.

The significance is that the monarchy reflects that wider structure of British privilege. That privilege has always said, " Wealth deserves protection, and power means

immunity."

It's always said that, "Inequality is natural and deference is duty."

But if even royalty can fall, none of these assumptions holds true. The hierarchy of power at this moment looks decidedly vulnerable. And the challenge now is to decide whether that claim of superiority made by the royals is one that can still be supported elsewhere.

They've used it to justify rent extraction, to provide them with inherited privilege, to allow unaccountability, and a right to rule, and, of course, low taxation for the wealthy. The monarchy has been the cultural face of that oppressive system, and others have also gained, of course. And now, as the monarchy's legitimacy fails, the economic myths of power are crumbling too. If Andrew Mountbatten-Windsor is just a commoner, so is everyone else. And that means no more excuses for wealth without responsibility, power without accountability and injustice defended by tradition. Commoners, after all, deserve justice too.

The political meaning is clear. The eugenics myth is shattered. It's not true. We are all in the same boat. There is no difference between us. And power no longer means immunity. And wealth should not buy a lighter tax bill. Prejudice is not justified by custom. Strip away the titles, and equality becomes visible. And in that case, there's space for new thinking. When myths die, truth can grow.

And what I would suggest is that what the philosopher John Rawls has to say here really matters. He argued that true justice begins behind a veil of ignorance because we must imagine what a just system looks like without knowing what our position is within the social order. And from that perspective, he argued, and I think rightly, that rational people would always design systems that protect the least advantaged first, because you never know whether you might be one of those least advantaged people.

Rawls called this the difference principle. Inequality is only justifiable if it benefits those with the least. But of course, the monarchy has always represented the opposite idea. The idea that privilege is justified by birth. Its collapse invites us to create a new moral foundation for our society to show that we care before we worry about hierarchy, and that we put need before entitlement and equality before deference.

This is the basis for a new politics of care. We now see that nothing is immutable, not even royal birthright. In just two weeks, Andrew went from being a Prince by birth with nobody being able to touch his entitlement to the title, to being plain, Mr. If a Prince could lose his privilege because he's lost the game of power with us, the people, so can the powerful elsewhere.

The veil of deference is lifting. The day of the commoner has come and that knowledge matters. We can now build justice, after all, it's time to do it.

But do you think we could do that? Do you think that the fall of Andrew Mountbatten-Windsor is significant? Do you think that this heralds the end of royalty? Do you think that this changes the priorities within society? Do you think that we can build a politics of care?

Let us know. There's a poll down below.

Poll

[poll id="241"]

Taking further action

If you want to write a letter to your MP on the issues raised in this blog post, there is a ChatGPT prompt to assist you in doing so, with full instructions, [here](#).

One word of warning, though: please ensure you have the correct MP. ChatGPT can get it wrong.

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