

Is that an Ebola in your pocket, or are you just happy to see me?

We are all slaves to the media. They love crisis, they love to fan the flames of whatever instills the most fear in us, thus creating the panic that they feed upon. It is a vicious cycle. The more we panic, the more they fan, and the more we try to stay informed. To become more afraid.

It sells papers. Or, nowadays, I guess it sells more electrons... or keeps us more tuned to a particular station or clicking away at some website that can then generate more advertising revenue. I really don't know how it works. I just know that I cannot stand the media in any form. Because they are more frequently wrong than right, and often concentrating on the wrong subject.

This month's example: Ebola.

Yes, it is a horrifying disease, and if uncontained and let loose in the Western world, will take many lives. And it won't just be a bunch of black Africans that the world has ignored for centuries and doesn't give a hoot about. It will be some red-blooded Americans! But that is another facet of the story that I will leave for a future rant.

Ebola is bad stuff. Sure, the flu kills about fifty thousand folks a year. And heart disease reigns supreme as the human killer, causing millions of deaths every year. But Ebola is the stuff that the media thrives upon. Pandemic. Panic. Crisis. Juicy headlines.

To be fair, the media is actually correct on a couple of aspects of the Ebola scare. The CDC and medical community botched this whole deal, and their procedures and the actions of a few of the involved personnel are quite suspect. And if it is so difficult to contract the disease, why does every image we see involving the outbreak have folks in moon suits running around all over the place. Maybe it is more serious than our fearless government is letting on...

But let's not go overboard. Let's pray for the victims, shame the responsible parties to handle this outbreak and future health calamities better, and move on. There are potentially more devastating stories developing. And being ignored.

In one of my earlier rants mentioned how the media tends to turn a blind eye to bigger problems because some other things are just too sensational to pass up. Russia invading Ukraine, who cares... a Boeing 777 is missing! Democratic demonstrations being brutally suppressed in Hong Kong, big deal... Ebola is threatening the US!!

In the coming years what is happening in Hong Kong will have a devastating effect on this world. The communist Chinese inadvertently awakened a slumbering dragon when it allowed capitalism to spread from Hong Kong to its coastal cities, and then inland. It was a great idea in the short term, with billions of dollars coming to the rescue of a political system doomed to failure. A good number of billionaires, thousands of millionaires, and the largest, fastest growing 'middle-class' in the world, numbering hundreds of millions, shot up in the last couple of decades. Thank you President Nixon! Unfortunately, they have a pressure cooker of socioeconomic chaos on the stove. It will ultimately boil over, as over a billion Chinese workers that slave for about a dollar a day to fuel that great capitalist machine will start to notice their own plight. And the pro-democracy (really pro-capitalism) residents of Hong Kong, used to a century of British rule, prosperity and autonomy, are pushing back against the Communists, and raising the fire beneath the pot to the flash point.

The rest of the world will soon have a decision to make. Will it sit idly by and watch the Hong Kong dissidents be squashed in a manner that will make Tiananmen Square look like a picnic? Will it simply ignore the suppression of over a billion people, just as it has ignored the rape of Africa for centuries?

Or will it act?

I'm not holding my breath. Most likely, the citizens of this world will be sidetracked by the media, and teased into concentrating on some political blunder, some Kardashian wardrobe malfunction, some airplane crash, some looming pandemic, or some other calamity. And we can continue to stick our heads in the media sand, and ignore the real tragedies just around the corner.

Captain Steve