

Allow our children their childhood

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Comment

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IT has been a month since the King of Pop died and the cause of his death is still under a shroud of controversy.

But more of Michael Jackson, who died at the age of 50 on June 25, is coming to light.



No less than his elder sister, La Toya, recently claimed that Michael was the "loneliest man in the world" with no real friends and isolated from his family at the time of his death.

If this is so, it would be yet another piece of powerful evidence implying that wealth and fame are no guarantee of a higher quality of life, at least from the intangible viewpoint.

The King was estimated to be worth hundreds of millions of dollars, if not billions. Despite the wealth, the many bizarre controversies surrounding his life give the impression that he had had to deal with many unpleasant situations.

Even his two high-profile marriages did not last long despite the lavish lifestyles that, under ordinary circumstances, would have cemented the relationships a little longer.

Maybe it was due to "all the craziness" that his first wife alluded to at the time of their separation!

On top of it, Michael was constantly changing his appearance from the early 1980s, as though he was searching for a new look all the time.

In more recent times, he was "paler" than what he was in his younger days. Some attributed this to his efforts at whitening his skin, while others said it was due to some skin sensitivity or disorder that caused the discolouration.

While skin sensitivity may be the case, it did not explain the rather drastic changes to facial structure as his career progressed.

This gave rise to rumours of his "narcissistic side". He was quoted as saying: "I do want to be perfect. I look in the mirror and I just want to change, and be better."

Michael described himself as a "work in progress". He went under the plastic surgeon's knife time and time again, most notably to change the nose, lips and chin.

On a more general note, it was well known that his health was not in the best possible state.

He was reportedly very dependent on painkillers which have been the subject of much speculation linked to his death.

Underlying it all, we often read how "unhappy" Michael was during his childhood.

In 1993, for example, he admitted publicly for the first time in an interview with Oprah Winfrey that he had often cried from loneliness and would sometimes throw up when he saw his father with whom he had a "difficult relationship".

In 2003, his father acknowledged having "whipped" Michael as a child, although undeniably he was also instrumental for his son's success.

More telling is the song Childhood released in 1995. The lyrics provided ample clues to what Michael felt when it started with the question:

Have you seen my Childhood?

Then he continues:

No one understands me

They view it as such strange eccentricities...

Or

It's been my fate to compensate,

for the Childhood I've never known...

And eventually ending up in a plea of sorts:

Before you judge me, try hard to love me.

The painful youth I've had

While this, in no way, negates the fact that Michael is indeed a legend who grew out of a difficult childhood from the days of the Jackson Five to become the King of Pop, and will remain so for a very long time to come, the fact remains that the fame and fortune he acquired at a relatively young age cost him his "childhood".

Perhaps, this is an extreme case of having to rush one's childhood in search for what adults are desirous of: wealth, fame and power.

Still in many ways, Michael is not alone.

We are equally guilty of the same, impatient to see our children grow up to be famous and rich, hence subjecting them to all forms of pressure to perform as little adults, quite unaware that we are robbing them of a very precious part of their life. One that they will miss forever.

Though most will not come close to Michael's stature, anyone can certainly relate to what he had been through when he asked: "Have you seen my Childhood?"

Michael has left us not just a new world of entertainment but, more importantly, the vital message that we should not squander our children's childhood.

For that, we owe much to him. Maybe he has finally found his peaceful resting place, and also the happiness that goes with it.

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