

Versailles on the Potomac

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So there have been police confrontations (and possibly even riots) in Baltimore over the past 12 hours, but apparently CNN didn't feel compelled [to cover them](#).

Instead they kept with covering the White House Correspondents' Dinner where various people, including the President, got to make jokes. Justification for ignoring the major story a mere hour's drive north included:

"You can find a live feed if you actually want to watch what's going on"

though apparently not on CNN, a 24-hour news network to which people (supposedly) turn for exactly that -- live coverage of significant events.

Also offered was this gem:

"People will be informed....They'll find out all of what happened in the streets of Baltimore by this time tomorrow"

I sort of thought that informing people was exactly the role of -- and I repeat myself -- a *twenty-four hour news network*. But hey, maybe I'm old fashioned. And this could easily be spun into a "death of old media" story about how traditional news renders itself irrelevant by ceding the breaking stuff to the Internet., and get off my lawn, and all that. But I want to go a different direction.

This is not just CNN old-media cluelessness. This is a symptom of rot at the core of our democracy. The opinion-shapers and policy-makers of the Republic gathered in that room, and it was shown for all to goggle over. They entertained themselves and rubbed shoulders and celebrated just how accomplished and how connected they are. And they are! All the big names in politics come out and make nice with the so-called journalists tasked with covering them. A big messy live situation? That would ruin the ambience.

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The WHCD has become a festering boil, a signal of the decline of American reporting and the rise of what might be called the journalism-industrial complex. All that matters to the powers that be is a navel-gazing exercise of petty partisan politics and vast egoism. While real people march and protest and *die*, the influence-peddlers of our day can't be bothered to even note it in passing.