

Mugshots: Setting the Record Straight

Written by Australian Business

NEW YORK, NY, November 08, 2013 **/24-7PressRelease/** -- Mugshots posted on the Internet by private publishers like Mugshots.com have been the subject of numerous articles, news stories and blogs because the media focuses on a small number of unsolicited unpublished requests we occasionally review because the arrested party wants to make their public arrest record less readily accessible. The publication of such mugshots is almost always portrayed in a negative light because the stories focus exclusively on a couple of quasi-sympathetic cases, and those experiences are used to demonize the publication of all mugshots. The news media is guilty of intentionally distorting the public debate by focusing solely on the relatively few cases involving situations where it is hard not to empathize with the arrestees.

An example is the news coverage devoted to a victim of domestic abuse who was arrested along with her abusive partner because police on scene could not determine who the aggressor was. After a brief investigation, authorities determined that she was acting in self-defense, and no charges were filed. However, her mugshot now appears on the Internet. It is disingenuous and misleading to use her as representative of the entire debate as news media persistently does in their one-sided coverage. That is not journalism; it is naked partisanship masquerading as news coverage. The indisputable reality is that the foregoing example represents an extreme outlier among the many thousands of people arrested every day in America. For every similarly sympathetic arrestee, there are literally thousands of individuals arrested for very serious crimes.

Granted, some of them are truly innocent, and others will never be convicted despite their actual guilt. Having that mugshot and arrest record for beating the tar out of someone readily accessible on Mugshots.com before you interact with or date the arrested partner, even if charges were dropped due to non-cooperation, could save your life. Believe it or not, many people arrested are, indeed, actually guilty of the serious crimes for which they were arrested but get convicted for misdemeanors and other lesser sentences under plea deals. What gets lost in the media's crusade to highlight the plight of those falsely arrested and other sympathetic arrestees are the tens of thousands of individuals arrested for and actually guilty of serious crimes who also have their mugshots posted on the Internet, and that is clearly beneficial to the general public. Yet, the media has used extreme outlier cases of the relatively rare sympathetic arrestees to frame the entire mugshot publication debate, and they have done so effectively. But that is not an appropriate role for the media, which is supposed to provide balanced and dispassionate coverage of issues. By that journalistic standard, the media have failed miserably in their coverage of this debate.

In addition, critics, which clearly also includes the media, never mention how a long-lost father was reunited with his pastor son because of his publicly released and privately published mugshot was seen by the son. They never mention how a public official in Tennessee with a penchant for exposing himself was caught and the release of his mugshot prompted additional victims to come forward, getting him off the streets. They fail to mention how people casually

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perusing Mugshots.com have come across their assailants because they were arrested on an unrelated crime and now can be prosecuted for the unsolved crime. They neglect to mention that millions of people who use online dating websites routinely search a person's name as a precaution before getting involved with that person. Unfortunately, after Google's algorithm modification, almost none of those searches will result in any hint of a criminal history despite the fact that many individuals searched have one.

Anyone approaching this subject in good faith must recognize a simple fact: there is rarely any acknowledgment anywhere in the media's coverage about the good that access to a comprehensive mugshots database like Mugshots.com does every day for the public or the simple fact that Mugshots.com also provides news and other public interest updates. Despite the vocal protestations of a tiny minority of sympathetic arrestees and their supporters, the publication of mugshots by private publishers benefits many millions of Americans who simply do not have a vested interest in being as vociferous in their support of access to mugshots as the vocal minority do in concealing theirs from the public. Unfortunately for the general public, the news media and Google have put the interests of the few ahead of the many at the expense of the latter's safety and ability to be meaningfully informed.