

Who Owns Your Image?

Jon Burras

In the world of the indigenous tribesman, an image is no different than a real person. A statue, figurine or painting holds the same level of importance as the actual person. An image is said to hold the soul of an individual.

In fact, taking a picture of an indigenous person is equated with stealing one's soul. The image is sacred, not to be casually stolen and removed. "Capturing" an image is the same as enslaving someone or running off with their soul. In much of the world, a person's image is sacred and honored.

That is not the case in the modern high-tech world. A person's image is seen as free for the taking. Personal images are randomly bought and sold as commonly as slaves were bought and sold many decades before. There is often no consideration as to the value of one's image. Just as in the bounty of slave trading, a popular image can be sold and will bring a hefty reward.

In this modern era, members of the "*paparazzi*" hunt down and capture the images of celebrities. Actors, politicians, sports stars and many others are stalked and pursued like a wild life safari chasing down weakened prey. Helpless to do much about it, these celebrities try to out wit or out race these greedy members of the media who have no shame in stealing the image of the celebrity and then selling that image to the highest bidder. Once the image is sold it is then transformed into whatever story or narrative the media outlet chooses.

One's image might be transformed into something positive. A celebrity might be uplifted and his image of participating in charity work will bring a positive spotlight to his fan appeal. The narrative of the image might also be quite negative. A stalking media member might catch a celebrity in a bathing suit at the beach while the celebrity is on vacation. Now the celebrity's body is being scrutinized by how fit or out of shape she might be. The "best dressed" and the "worst dressed" are also popular narratives. Jail house mug shots are released to the media through the *Freedom of Information Act*. Here the media is able to publicly scorn a celebrity who has done something wrong.

What is wrong with this picture? Why does a blood-sucking member of the media have the right to take anyone's image and create his own story around that image, whether positive or negative? We can thank the *United States Supreme Court* for that. A ruling by the *Supreme Court* has indicted that the law of the land is that the *First Amendment of the Constitution* guarantees the right of "*free speech*." Within this interpretation, anyone is allowed to steal someone else's

image and profit from it. *Free speech* has come to mean using an electronic device (like a camera) to steal someone else's image.

Do you imagine that the framers of the *Constitution* had this ridiculous intention in mind? These early colonials would never stoop so low as to grant permission for stalking and hijacking of personal narratives. Why is it that once a *Supreme Court* ruling comes down it now becomes the "law of the land"—forever? At a time when cameras, the internet and gossip magazines did not exist, why would you think these early revolutionaries would allow such behavior?

Apparently, the current *Supreme Court* justices live far away from soul connection and natural intent? Are these black-robed justices not chosen for their abundance of book learning and academia and not so much for their natural intelligence? Might it not serve the country better if these justices were sent out into nature to participate in a fire walk, vision quest and attend a few sweat lodges? One errant decision like this has opened up a whole plethora of image stealing industries.

Celebrities are not the only ones whose images are stolen and misguided narratives applied. Anyone with a camera or cell phone now can walk off with the image of another. Your so called "friends" on your social media pages are doing the same thing to you. If you are enjoying yourself at a party someone might snap a picture of you and post it on their social media page. One alcoholic drink in your hand might make you look like an alcoholic. An arm around another person might appear that you are having an affair. You quickly take a hit of a marijuana joint and that picture gets posted. Now you are known as the "druggie." How quick are "gossip whores" to snap a picture of someone in a compromised position? You have no say in the matter as this is completely legal. Your soul has been stolen by people who call themselves your "friends."

A recent revelation occurred that brought to light a disturbing trend. The "*user agreement*" for the social media company *Facebook* was changed and the fine print now indicates that you do not own the content on your own *Facebook* page. *Facebook* has the right to use any pictures or content in their own marketing. In other words, *Facebook* can steal an image that you have posted on your page and send it to another person as a way of advertising a product. Nothing is sacred when you participate in social media. Social media can be seen as just another sophisticated *paparazzi* scheme where images are bought and sold to the highest bidder.

Governments are increasingly stealing your image as well. We are told that this is an effort to fight crime but the reality is that it is more of *Big Brother* watching over you. Drones are now spying on you as they fly high in the sky. From traffic cameras to cameras on sidewalks, your image is being scanned by *facial recognition software* and stored like a finger print. Your image is now being used like a social security number or dental records. The United States

government can now track you in any public place as this intricate software now allows them to follow you wherever you go.

It is not just the government who is tracking you and stealing your image but so are private corporations. When you enter a mall for instance, your image might be recorded and saved in a database. Your image is now being synced up with your credit card records and your buying choices. The mall is like a living machine and now knows who you are. Personalized advertisements might pop up on the mall billboards that are designed just for you based on your past purchases. The mall is tracking you wherever you are walking and continues to change the billboards in front of you to entice you to buy more of your favorite products. While this might sound futuristic, it is happening now.

Your image is being stolen on a daily basis. Your soul is being ripped away from you without your knowing and without your permission. It is only getting worse, not better.

Here are a few words of wisdom to live by. You do not own the image of another. Always ask to take a picture of someone before clicking the shutter. Someone is giving you their image to keep safe and sacred. Never post a picture of another on your social media page without their permission. You do not have the right to tell their story for them. You do not have permission to display their weaknesses and faults to the world. Stop participating in a culture that places little value on personal soul image. Do not watch gossip driven television shows and stop buying magazines that are gossip infused and based on *paparazzi* stolen images of celebrities.

When you live in accordance with the laws of nature you honor the soul connection and the image of others. You do not have the right to use someone else's image without their permission. This is called respect. What kind of world do you wish to live in?

JonBurras.com