

# dominate

lincoln douglas

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Joseph Laughon

Patrick Shipsey

Blaire Bayliss

Elena Trueba

edited by Jon Chi Lou

# Contents

Read this First	1
Resolutional Analysis	3
Resolutional Analysis	5
What is Privacy?	11
History of Privacy	15
Pitfalls to Avoid	17
Values	19
Strategy	27
Argument Exposition	29
Affirmative	31
Paparazzi	31
Freedom of Association	33
Journalistic Privacy	35
War on Drugs	37
Negative	39
Privacy is Not Inherently Valuable	39
No Right to Hide	40
Right to Die	41
Segregation	43
PATRIOT Act	45
Cases	47
Affirmative	47
Paparazzi	49
Crazy Libertarian	53
Freedom of Association	59
War on Drugs	65
Journalistic Privacy	69
Negative	75
Justice Neg	75
Right to Die	81
National Security	85
Conclusion	91

# Paparazzi

You're standing in line to check out at the grocery store. You reach for a pack of gum, and what's the first thing you see? A tabloid. Spilling the secrets of the rich and famous has become commonplace within American society; however, I believe that this mindset is one that devalues the dignity of the individual by violating their privacy. It's because I believe in the dignity of the individual that I stand resolved: Privacy is undervalued.

In order to provide clarity in today's round, undervalued is defined as: to have too little regard or esteem for.<sup>1</sup> We'll examine the definition of privacy through the first point of:

## Resolutional Analysis

### *1. Privacy is a Right.*

I define privacy from the Merriam Webster Dictionary as "the freedom from unauthorized intrusion."<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, I define this freedom as an inherent right that all individuals have. Now, a classic interpretation of the rights of the individual (i.e. LD's favorite philosopher, John Locke) would be life, liberty, and property. However, if we have an inherent right to our person and our possessions, it's only logical to say that we have the inherent right to protect and keep our person and our possessions private. Therefore, privacy is an extension of the right to property.

### *2. The Affirmative Burden.*

The resolution asks me as the affirmative to prove that right now, as the present tense implies, the inherent right to privacy is not regarded highly. Since this is, of course, value debate, my burden as the affirmative is to prove this to you in the context of the value that I will choose to uphold – quite simply, if I can prove that privacy is undervalued and that harms my value, then I have met my burden and an affirmative ballot is warranted.

The value that I'm upholding as the most important in today's round is human dignity, which can be defined as "[The state of being] worthy of esteem or respect by virtue of being human."<sup>3</sup> Essentially, human dignity is the respect for the innate worth and value of the individual, simply because they are a human being.

The thesis, or main idea, that I am going to prove to you today is that the privacy of the individual is constantly violated by a cultural mindset which ultimately violates our dignity as people. We see this through the following contentions:

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<sup>1</sup> Princeton University 2012. <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/undervalued>

<sup>2</sup> Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/privacy>

<sup>3</sup> Based on the American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language.

## Contention 1: Privacy is Undervalued.

Privacy is undervalued in many various ways within contemporary society—however, I believe that one of most egregious areas in which it is undervalued is, as we've already established, celebrity or pop culture. We're going to see why this is so important through three subpoints:

### *A. Industry.*

An entire industry exists primarily for the purpose of intruding upon the private lives of famous individuals. Tabloids, magazines, radio programs, television shows—you name it. The people running these publications depend upon discovering secrets and extracting private information about anyone who's in the public eye and putting it on display for the rest of the world. One particular agency known as X17 News was founded in the early 1990's by a photojournalist named Francois Navarre. He initially wanted to focus on actual news, but found gossip news far more lucrative. His company is now one of the largest paparazzi agencies in the world who specifically target exposing the private lives of celebrities. In fact, when pop stars Britney Spears attacked a sports vehicle when she was going through some difficult times in 2007, it was the vehicle of an X17 photographer. As Stephen Huvane, Jennifer Aniston's publicist once said: "All [tabloids] do is distort and damage the dignity of the private lives of actors... I have never represented a client who enjoyed being followed by paparazzi or having fabricated stories about their lives in those magazines."<sup>4</sup> Yet the fact that an entire industry is devoted to invading privacy just shows how the mindset that devaluing the right to privacy is acceptable in our society.

This leads us to:

### *B. Expectation.*

The invasion of celebrities' privacy isn't just encouraged by industry, it's expected. If you become famous, you and the world in which we live in expects your secrets to be revealed and your privacy to be intruded upon. The publicist Cari Ross, who works for celebrities like Jennifer Connelly, says: "People think because you're famous they have the right to know everything about you."<sup>5</sup> In fact, the attention becomes so overwhelming that some celebrities choose to give in only to try to avoid more invasion of privacy in the future. For example, celebrity couple Cox and David Arquette released a photo of their newborn daughter along with this statement: "It is our wish that by making this photo available, we will protect the privacy of our daughter by discouraging the unwanted pursuit by photographers."<sup>6</sup> They knew that the world around them expected to be able to pry into their daughter's privacy, and they tried to preempt it. They had to take that action because the mindset that it's okay to violate privacy if you're famous is so deeply ingrained in our culture that the violation is expected.

Yet perhaps the most important extension of the violation of privacy is seen in:

### *C. Participation.*

It's not just the industry and the paparazzi and the celebrity culture that participate in this. We all do. Every time we purchase one of these magazines, watch this news, read these articles, we're

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.guardian.co.uk/lifeandstyle/2009/jun/24/magazines-media-aniston-jolie-pitt>

<sup>5</sup> [http://www.usatoday.com/life/people/2004-07-06-celeb-privacy\\_x.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/life/people/2004-07-06-celeb-privacy_x.htm)

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

devaluing the privacy of others right along with the rest of our culture. That's why this mindset is so dangerous – it's not just in the world around us. It can be in us, too.

An industry exists to devalue privacy. It's expected, and we all have the potential to participate. The mindset that violating this right to privacy is acceptable is clearly ingrained within our culture. Privacy is undervalued. Let's examine why this is so important to the value of human dignity in:

## Contention 2: Dignity is Destroyed.

It's clear that privacy in regards to famous individuals is undervalued. This is a direct attack on human dignity, as we'll see through the following subpoints:

### *A. Commodification.*

Individuals whose privacy is devalued by this celebrity culture are not viewed as human beings with real lives and real situations and real problems—they're viewed as the next top story. As Janice Min, the editor of the tabloid *Us Weekly* said, "A celebrity is like an elected official. If you're getting paid \$20 million a movie, you have to rely on public goodwill to stay in office. You have to accept the fact that you're a public commodity."<sup>7</sup> That's exactly how these famous people are viewed by tabloids, and in turn by the general public—as public commodities. This is a direct attack on the fundamental truth that every individual has worth simply because they are human.

### *B. Threat.*

Because celebrities are viewed practically as commodities, that opens the door for them to be seen as fair game for virtually any invasion of privacy possible. Celebrity stalking has become a phenomenon, as websites like Gawker Stalker post minute-by-minute celebrity sightings so that their fans can go and find them, wherever they are. This leads to incidents like the 1989 murder of television star Rebecca Schaeffer by a man who had been stalking her for months, invading her privacy by going through her driving records. Yet it's not just various individuals who are guilty of invasion in this manner that threatens celebrities—it's the industry itself. In 2006, Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie were mobbed by photographers in the Western Indian city of Pune, and were only able to escape with the help of bodyguards. In 2005, Lindsay Lohan's Mercedes Benz was hit by a photographer's minivan as Lohan attempted to flee from the paparazzi. Perhaps most famous and tragic is the death of Britain's Princess Diana, who was chased by the paparazzi in a nightmare that ultimately led to her death. The invasion of privacy poses a threat to the individual that strips them of their value and dignity as human beings.

This commodification that leads to an absolutely real threat is terrible, yes, but at its core, it's so terrible because it makes it normal to take away the dignity of the individual and lessens the value of human life and worth. We'll explore this through:

### *C. Normalcy.*

Our society has already established that it is normal to violate the privacy of certain individuals, if they happen to catch the public's eye. This sets a precedent of normalcy, of allowing privacy to be violated and devalued in the name of industry and entertainment. This sets a precedent of

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

destroying the dignity of any individual, all the because the fundamental right to privacy is devalued.

The inherent right of the privacy of the individual is constantly undervalued by the society that we live in. Because I have shown you that privacy is clearly undervalued, and that the result is dehumanization, a direct attack upon my value of human dignity, I believe that I've fulfilled my burden in today's round and that an affirmative ballot is warranted. The next time you walk into a grocery store and glance at a tabloid, I'd challenge you to remember just how important the right to privacy is to each one of us. For it is only by valuing the right to privacy that we can truly value the dignity of the individual.