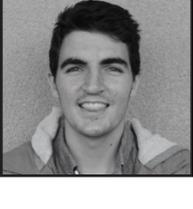


# “Stolen valor” is rude, but it doesn’t warrant harrassment

by Cole Potter  
Web Editor



“I, [name], do solemnly swear that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same...” - United States Uniformed Services Oath of Office

The American military is an organization of loyalty, honor, and patriotism. All of these values manifest themselves in one of the most effective military forces in human history, and I am grateful for the service they provide to protect my safety and the safety of those I love. That being said, I believe the United States military is extremely ineffective in one area of functionality: the manner in which they treat their veterans. And I believe the recent fad of “Stolen Valor” videos is a clear reflection of this broken system.

Stolen Valor videos are a recent viral sensation, wherein an individual (most always male) with a camcorder confronts another individual (also usually male) who is dressed in some manner of American military attire. The videographer, who is almost always a veteran of the United States military, proceeds to berate the uniformed subject, and it is revealed that the man is in fact not a true member of American armed forces. These events remain fairly consistent between videos, but it is what transpires after the suspect has been declared a fraud that bothers me. Reactions range from tirades of cursing and belittlement to physical abuse and endangerment of the impersonator (one “noble hero” chases a man in Army dress into the middle of a busy expressway).

Let it be known that these “imposters” are indeed committing

a federal offense if they boast a falsified military achievement to reap some type of reward. The Stolen Valor Act of 2013, declares that “Whoever, with intent to obtain money, property, or other tangible benefit, fraudulently holds oneself out to be a recipient of a decoration or medal described in subsection (c)(2) or (d) shall be fined under this title, imprisoned not more than one year, or both.” The “decoration(s) or medal(s)” described include the Combat Infantryman’s Badge, Combat Action Badge, Combat Medical Badge, Combat Action Ribbon, and Combat Action Medal. While there are videos which show militarily dressed individuals receiving such “tangible benefits” as a free drink from Starbucks, I have not found one instance where the imitator declares to have a medal of honor and is subsequently showered with cash rewards. Furthermore, if these veterans truly wished to bring the subjects of their videos to justice, they would inform the police rather than independently harass them.

One must ask then, if the creators of these videos are not actually acting out of a desire to defend the law, as they so often claim, what prompts them to record and publish these portrayals of public defamation. I believe the answer reflects an increasingly prevalent sentiment in the United States. While we are happy to glorify the perceived justice of military service, (American Sniper had 2014’s largest domestic gross at 347,383,183 dollars) the American public has become indifferent to the lives of veterans after they return from their service. When a people’s status is largely ignored by the country

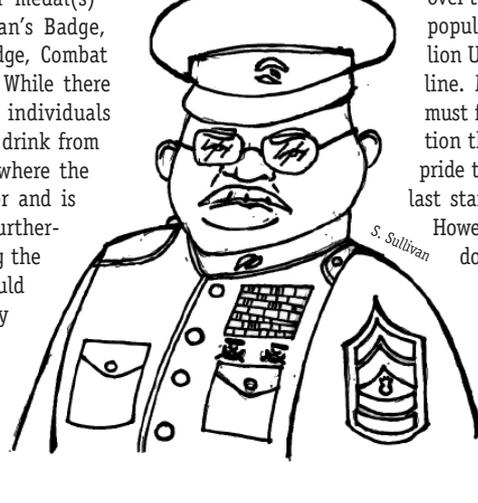
they risked their lives to protect, they understandably become prone to lash out at those who degrade them.

This blame manifests itself in an American public which is unconcerned with the plight of our veterans. Veterans returning home in the twenty first century are met with perhaps the worst conditions experienced by American ex-militarists. In 2013, over twelve percent of the American adult homeless population was veterans, and more than 1.4 million United States veterans live below the poverty line. Many of these neglected men and women must feel some level of frustration with the situation they have been allowed to return to, and the pride they have in their service may be one of the last standards of distinction they can hold on to.

However, this loyalty and patriotic fervor they feel does not excuse the emotional and physical harassment they inflict on the victims of their Stolen Valor videos.

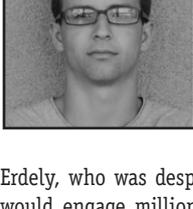
This viral phenomenon is interesting in that it has many more layers than any cat video or ice bucket challenge. I cannot blame the videographers for their ultimately benevolent and ethical actions, nor can I bring myself to blame the

targets of the videos either for their manipulation of an indifferent and untested system. I think I am forced to blame myself and the American public for the lack of regard we have shown for those who fought for our country (whether the cause was worth the fight or not), and I am saddened that I only recognized this issue through such an extreme example.



# UVA rape article exemplifies dangers of false journalism

by Jonathan Friedland  
Editorial Editor



Last July, Sabrina Rubin Erdely, a writer for Rolling Stone, published an erroneous account of a gang rape that, according to the article, occurred at a University of Virginia fraternity house in 2012.

The story featured Jackie, a junior at the university who insisted she was raped at an alcohol-fueled party at exactly 12:52 AM. Erdely, who was desperately searching for a college rape story that would engage millions of Americans on the horrors of college life, decided to proceed with the article without sufficient evidence that the rape actually occurred. The editorial passed all the fact checkers along with the Editors-in-Chief of Rolling Stone, who were all vying for national attention for their magazine and this particular issue.

Just a week after the article’s publication on Nov. 19, 2014, Erdely began doubting Jackie’s story. During an off-the-record phone conversation, Jackie gave Erdely the name of her supposed rapist, but speculated aloud about possible variations regarding the spelling of his last name. In the next few days, Erdely became concerned about the validity of her article and began investigating the supposed

rapist. The writer found that he was not a lifeguard at the pool, nor a member of the Phi Kappa Psi fraternity, and not even a student at the University of Virginia, all of which Jackie reported him to be. Erdely then contacted three of Jackie’s closest friends for interviews, all of whom she failed to interview before publishing the article. The three friends saw Jackie at a park about one mile from the fraternity house at the exact time that Jackie was allegedly raped.

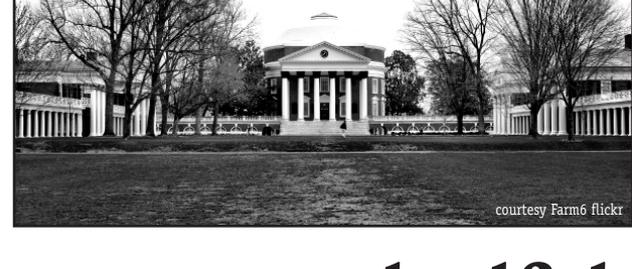
After having her doubts about Jackie’s story confirmed, Erdely called her principal editor on the story, Sean Woods, who, upon hearing of the new evidence, immediately retracted the story on Dec. 4 and called it “the worst day of my professional life.” 2.7 million people read Erdely’s misleading editorial which tarnished the university and its students’ reputations without any sort of legitimate evidence.

Erdely’s article is a palpable example of journalism with an agenda. During her investigation, Erdely could have asked Phi Kappa Psi members if there was a party on the night Jackie recounted. She could have asked for an employment record at the aquatic center and interviewed several employees for indicators about the suspected rapist. And even simpler, she could have interviewed Jackie’s three closest friends before the article was published instead of after. However, Erdely chose not to. She took in information she wanted to hear, evidence that supported Jackie’s side of the story. Erdely willfully neglected the opposing point

of view, picking and choosing testimonials that supported her objective in writing the story, instead of questioning the validity of both sides because of the wide array of evidence.

Journalists should be as objective as a jury in a courtroom, listening to both the prosecutor and the defense team before deciding whether to publish a story. The same way a jury convicts a defendant, media outlets should only proceed with publication if the evidence points to the crime being committed beyond a reasonable doubt.

Publishing a questionable story where evidence points both ways just to stir up controversy does not supercede the dangers of libel and the damaged reputations that come along with it.



courtesy Farm6 flickr

# Legalize euthanasia now

by Charlotte Pla  
Humor Editor



Euthanasia, the painless killing of a patient with a terminal or incurable disease, is frequently confused with assisted suicide, which is strictly defined as a patient injecting themselves with a physician-administered lethal dose. Euthanasia is not suicide by the means of the physician administered poison. And, because of the misconceptions that shadow euthanasia, it is outlawed in the United States.

What the majority of people debating the ethics of euthanasia may be forgetting is that it is a treatment option, not a requirement; euthanasia would not be instituted as an easily accessible treatment either. The qualifications and requirements to become eligible are

extensive and reserved for patients who genuinely feel that they have lost the quality of their lives before their lives of six months or less run out.

Many patients with diseases such as cerebral palsy and dopa responsive dystonia (DYT5) live in a state of constant pain during their last few months. This is the case with multiple diseases that slowly disable aspects of the human body until patients are left paralyzed and unresponsive. This vegetative state can easily be deemed sad and depressing for many families of patients to endure, not to mention extremely expensive. Euthanasia would relieve patients of their pain and families of both the misery and cost of keeping someone who has lost the quality of their life and no longer wishes to live.



courtesy wikicommons

Religious beliefs often seem to conflict with political beliefs in our society; legalizing euthanasia conflicts with the major religious belief that suicide is a sin. Christianity declares that the moments before death are spiritual and should be cherished. But a terminally ill patient who has lost their ability to move, eat, hold their kids, talk to their family, and laugh with their friends are subjected to living out their disease in pain from a wheelchair. They should have a choice of an alternative treatment. A patient should have the ability to decide whether his or her life is worth living, not the government or the religious people of our country.

Assisted suicide, similar to euthanasia, has been legalized in some parts of the country and many patients seeking treatment have relocated to areas of the country that do allow it. Euthanasia is a treatment for terminally ill patients, designed to relieve patients of their pain with their given consent. This treatment could end up saving patients a lot of pain and suffering, as well as the pain and suffering of their families, and should be legalized in the United States.

# Tidal is transparent and selfish

by Sean Clark  
Culture Editor



The newest online music streaming service, Tidal, fronted by Jay Z along with many other superstars, is a selfish business venture that isn’t actually promoting up-and-coming artists. As we all know, music streaming services

such as Spotify are infamous for underpaying musicians. Tidal’s main pitch is that it will pay musicians better, all the while providing higher quality sound and “exclusive” music editorials. However, there’s something unnerving about the biggest names in mainstream music, who are all already millionaires, using this pitch to become even richer.

This business venture is shockingly transparent: the richest people in the music industry are coming together at the expense of underground artists. Even the marketing scheme is noticeably suspicious. Tidal co-owners like Rihanna and Nicki Minaj took to Instagram to promote the “launch” of the service; however, it had

been up and running for a while before the pseudo-launch. All of the co-owners, who are big-name celebrities, even made a corny video where they act like they are making history.

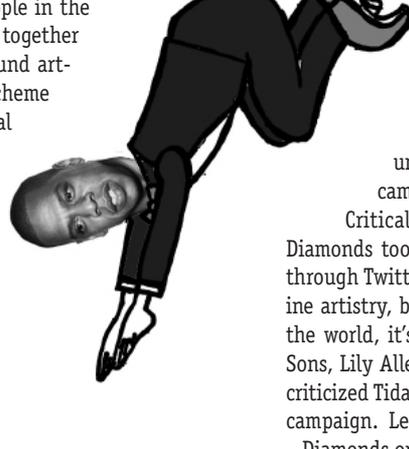
How is Tidal changing history and promoting smaller artists if it’s exactly the same price as Spotify? Tidal keeps on promising to help small artists, but they have yet to clarify how they plan to do this. Tidal cannot claim that they are supporting artistry until they provide evidence and a plan for this strategy.

In Tidal’s promotion video, Madonna says “It’s about putting art back into the forefront.” All I see in the forefront of Tidal music is accomplished musicians looking to make themselves more rich. Tidal invited established musicians to front the company and forgot to incorporate up and

coming artists who don’t have the resources to own a company. If this was really about the music, like Jay Z and Madonna are saying, the mainstream artists who run Tidal would be putting underground artists in front of themselves by including underground musicians in the promotional campaign.

Critically-acclaimed musician Marina and the Diamonds took a stand against the streaming service through Twitter: “With more people, it’d feel like genuine artistry, but with just the biggest game players in the world, it’s like, ‘Hm- I’m not sure.’” Mumford and Sons, Lily Allen, and many other musicians have since criticized Tidal for ignoring underground artists in their campaign. Lesser known artists like Marina and the Diamonds or Mumford and Sons, who are supposed to be benefiting from Tidal, don’t even agree with the business’ morals.

If you really want to support an artist, go buy their album. Cheap streaming services are inherently detrimental to up and coming musicians. Switching over to a musician-owned streaming service doesn’t change that



S. Sullivan