

Only In America: An Indiscreet Selfie Can Put A Kid In Prison

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Global Research, February 29, 2016

[Institute for Political Economy](#) 29 February
2016

Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [Police State & Civil Rights](#)

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Did you know that if you are an American under 18 years old and you use your cell phone to send a nude "selfie" of yourself to a friend, you can be convicted of manufacturing and distributing "child pornography" and sent to prison? In case you are too old to be in the loop, a "selfie" is a photo that one makes of oneself.

This is how expansively prosecutors, whose main purpose in life is to ruin as many people as possible, interpret laws passed to protect children from sexual exploitation.

Sexting—the exchange of nude photographs—is now a big thing among the 14-17 year old set, especially among females. They have transitioned from children to women and find the extraordinary change in their bodies an interesting phenomenon. Under the expansive interpretation of child pornography laws, for an under 18-year old to even possess a nude photo of herself or himself is a violation of the law. Thanks to the illegal, unconstitutional surveillance of every communication of every American sanctioned by the US government and the corrupt Supreme Court that serves the government and not the Constitution, a naked photo sent by an under-18 year-old can be intercepted and the sender prosecuted for possessing, manufacturing, and distributing child pornography.

Teenagers can have their life ruined by the government "protecting" them.

In the state of New Mexico, awareness that kids faced the prospect of being ruined by sending explicit images of themselves to one another got the attention of New Mexico state senator George Munoz, a Democrat, and Steven Robert Allen of the American Civil Liberties Union. They got a bill passed that exempts consensual photograph sharing from prosecution. However the Republican Governor Susana Martinez and the state attorney general, Hector Balderas, oppose the new law.

When I was in high school, the female age of sexual consent was 14 years old, regardless of the age of her sexual partner. Today to engage in consensual sex with a 14 year-old male or female is a felony. In some states if both sexual partners are underaged, it is a misdemeanor.

I don't know when the age of consent was raised from 14 to 18 and whether it progressed upward in stages or happened all at once. I suspect it was the product of conservatives who objected to welfare payments to unmarried black female teenagers for whom liberals made it possible to escape parental control via childbirth and possession of an apartment of their

own. I think that US Senator Patrick Moynihan's study published in the 1960s is correct that liberal welfare destroyed the black family. In the 1950s black families were as stable as white families.

People are born into their time. As they grow and mature they have no awareness of what it was like living in previous times. Whatever they are born into is their normal. If their society has descended from liberty into tyranny, they don't know it. They never experienced liberty.

In my lifetime I have experienced an enormous intrusion into personal life by the state. If the laws of today had applied to the generation during the 1950s practically the entire generation would have been imprisoned. As children were routinely spanked, today an act of "child abuse," an entire generation would have grown up in Child Protective Custody while their parents rotted in prison.

Moreover, in the 1950s people controlled their lives in ways that they are no longer permitted to do. Cars didn't beep. Construction sites didn't beep. Quiet was normal, not a luxury. Cars with manual transmissions would start without having to push in the clutch pedal. Fights between boys were normal, and no police were called. The Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) provided parental input into the school system. Teachers and parents handled the problems that now become jail records. There was the occasional bully with a badge, but overall police were courteous and helpful to the public. People did not fear the police as every sensible person does today. Regulated natural monopolies gave good service at low prices. Children could be out of sight all day without danger or parental concern for children's safety or concern that the parents would be investigated for child neglect.

Communities had neighborhood schools. You went to school with your own class. In the South you were segregated by economic class. Parents and teachers cooperated in producing educated students aware of citizenship responsibilities, which included holding public officials accountable, not worshipping at their feet.

It was a different world, and a better one.

Today's culture is totally different. Today childhood hardly exists. It has been compressed into a few years. At an early age females are enculturated into projecting a sexual persona. Makeup comes at an early age. Girls dress provocatively. They are constantly exposed to sexual images. They see the attention that scantily attired women and porn stars receive. They learn that this is the way to get attention. They sexually mature at an earlier age today than in the 1950s. Yet the age of sexual consent has been raised to 18. This is an absurdity. The stupidity of legislators discredits democracy and paves the way for the emerging dictatorship.

I used to believe in progress, in improvements in society and its care, as that is what I initially experienced. But change set in. What I see now is re-enservment of the bulk of the population. Reforms during the 1930s that made capitalism functional have been repealed.

The opposition to re-enservment is weak. In place of revolutionary leaders and thoughts, there is acceptance of domination by the state. It is called Patriotism. And Patriotism means support of the oppressive government. Anyone who chooses the Constitution over the government is an unpatriotic anti-American, an incipient domestic extremist if not a terrorist.

The best way to get beat up or murdered by the police is to assert your constitutional rights. Like prosecutors and the executive branch, the last thing police want to hear is that there are limits on their power. Thus the objection of the New Mexico governor and attorney general to the legislation that protects teenagers from expansive interpretation of child pornography laws.

Dr. Paul Craig Roberts was Assistant Secretary of the Treasury for Economic Policy and associate editor of the Wall Street Journal. He was columnist for Business Week, Scripps Howard News Service, and Creators Syndicate. He has had many university appointments. His internet columns have attracted a worldwide following. Roberts' latest books are [The Failure of Laissez Faire Capitalism and Economic Dissolution of the West](#), [How America Was Lost](#), and [The Neoconservative Threat to World Order](#).

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