

THINGS WE DO, PEOPLE WE MEET – REFLECTIONS IN BRIEF

Indecent photos on the Internet (1) -- In Perspective

Between January and February this year, there has been widespread online circulation of indecent photos, allegedly portraying entertainment artists. The media latched onto the story, giving it highly visible and leading coverage day after day complete with numerous photos, graphics and descriptive texts. As a result, the story has become the talk of the town.

The extensive discussions in the community have led us to reflect upon the controversy:

It is grossly demeaning to display indecent photos and to treat the human body as an object.

Repeatedly publishing the photos in question has caused deep harm of an enduring nature to those concerned, and has seriously undermined the respect due from society as a whole towards every individual. Although the behavior depicted in the photos may be controversial, the individuals who appear in those photos have their own inherent dignity, just as everyone else does. If intimate photos of individuals taken in private are published, not only is this probably illegal, but the value of the human dignity is degraded.

Personal privacy should be respected, irrespective of gender or profession.

Everyone needs and is entitled to his or her private space. Photos taken in private should not be circulated or downloaded. This incident in question has a range of implications, but one thing is for sure, the public's curiosity or the right of the public to information should not override the individual's right to privacy in these circumstances.

In a civilized society, mutual respect between individuals, including respect between the genders, is a vital pre-requisite for social harmony.

Throughout our history, our cultural and basic values have emphasised that we should put oneself in others' shoes, and we should treat one another with respect and courtesy. Only then, can we build a society where everyone can

live in peace and harmony. Hong Kong needs to be more accommodating, and a little less cynical. We need to teach our younger generations to respect one another, to give one another encouragement and support. Only then will Hong Kong be able to look forward to a better and more harmonious tomorrow.

In perspective :

Private photos of celebrities have been widely distributed and published without the relevant parties' consent, bringing harm not only to the persons involved, but to society at large.

Extensive coverage of this matter by some media is an unfortunate example of objectification of the human body for commercial gain at the expense of pain and suffering of the affected parties. Increasing circulation and profits appear to be the objective.

When professionalism in honest and fair reporting is traded for commercial profits, it signals the abandonment of social responsibility and values, which form the basis of the community's support for freedom of the press and freedom of expression. At issue is the professional dignity of the media industry and its role as a pillar of society.

It is incumbent upon our community as a whole to properly address the issues of gender dignity and privacy protection in earnest so that we may move forward to a healthier and more caring (some might say, more human) society.