

# Do the Paparazzi Have Too Much Freedom?

Celebrity photographers go to great lengths to get shots of the biggest stars. Some think they go too far.



**Rihanna outside**  
a London restaurant in  
February 2012

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**YES** I used to like looking at photos of famous people. But then I became a celebrity bodyguard, and I got to see how the paparazzi really work. Rules rarely matter; it's all about money. They dream of getting the next big shot, and some will do anything to get it.

What most people don't understand is that the paparazzi basically stalk the biggest stars to get their photos. Some sit in cars at the end of a celebrity's driveway 24/7, waiting for them to leave, and then follow them to photograph their every move—just in case something happens that makes the photo worth a lot of money. Maybe the star they're following is

going to see a new boyfriend no one knows about yet! And if they can get a photo of the celebrity *kissing* the new boyfriend, that's big, big money—maybe \$1 million big.

Then there are the car chases. Sometimes five cars full of paparazzi will chase after a celebrity. And to make sure they don't lose their target, they'll often speed, run stop signs and traffic lights, and even drive on the wrong side of the road. This reckless

driving is dangerous and potentially deadly for everyone near them. In January, a photographer who had been chasing Justin Bieber's white Ferrari on a Los Angeles highway was hit by a car and killed. Princess Diana was killed in 1997 after her driver crashed at high speed trying to elude paparazzi in Paris.

We'll never do away with the paparazzi or the pictures they take, but we can and should have laws to prevent them from stalking celebrities and putting the public's safety at risk. •

**—SEAN BURKE**

**The Paparazzi Reform Initiative**

**NO** The First Amendment protects freedom of the press. Of course, the Founding Fathers couldn't have imagined the paparazzi—photojournalists who make a living pursuing and taking candid pictures of celebrities. But that doesn't mean First Amendment protections don't apply to paparazzi.

The paparazzi—named for an Italian word that originally meant the buzzing of a mosquito—are the target of a 2010 California law designed to restrict their activity. That law and another being considered by Hawaii are mistakes.

Press freedom for paparazzi is part of the price we pay for aggressive and independent news-gathering in America. Paparazzi are journalists. They sell pictures of people in the public eye. And though it may be inconvenient to be followed by photographers, celebrities benefit enormously from the publicity.

The paparazzi don't have the right to break the law. The Constitution protects everyone's right to take a picture of anything or anyone in public, but you can't break into someone's home to get your shot. The biggest problem with laws meant to rein in paparazzi is that they impose restrictions that can also be used to silence noncelebrity reporters following "hard" news.

Sometimes reporters—paparazzi included—act badly while doing their jobs. But as long as they're not acting illegally, their bad behavior is a tradeoff for the benefits we receive from their services—holding politicians to account, uncovering corporate wrongdoing, even snapping glossy pictures of Miley Cyrus at a movie premiere. A free country isn't always a polite country, but that bargain is worthwhile. •

**—GABE ROTTMAN**

**American Civil Liberties Union**

**Press freedom for paparazzi is the price we pay for aggressive and independent news-gathering.**

**We should pass laws to protect the public and prevent paparazzi from stalking stars.**