

GirlsDoPorn.com faces trial for allegedly filming 22 women under false pretenses

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Almost two dozen women say they were tricked into appearing in pornographic videos on the prominent porn site GirlsDoPorn. They sued the owner of the site, Michael Pratt, for fraud in 2016. The trial began in mid-August and is expected to run for more than a month.

One of the victims wrapped up her testimony in a San Diego courtroom on Monday.

"If I had known that they were posting it on the Internet, that my name would be attached to it, that it would be in the United States," the woman identified as Jane Doe 15 said in court, according to the Daily Beast. "If I had known that it was more than 30 minutes of filming, if I had known any of that, just any one of those, I wouldn't have done it."

The victims of the alleged scheme were young women aged 18 to 23 who initially responded to online ads for clothed modeling gigs. But no such opportunities materialized. Instead, they were contacted by men who encouraged them to appear in a pornographic video.

Most of the women were reluctant, but they were offered as much as \$5,000 for 30 minutes on camera—an offer that some women found hard to refuse. Women say they were told that the videos would only be distributed on DVDs outside the United States.

The plaintiffs say that this was all lies. The men planned to post the videos directly to the GirlsDoPorn website—as well as uploading shorter clips to free porn sites like Pornhub and YouPorn. After they had traveled to San Diego, the women say they were pressured to sign lengthy contracts before they had time to read them carefully. Women were told they would receive less than the agreed-upon price—in one case, \$3,000 rather than \$5,000—because the men were “disappointed” with their appearance.

A woman says she was paid to lie to other women

To assuage their fears, prospective women were connected with other women to serve as references and reassure them that the videos wouldn't appear online. Some had shot their own videos so recently that they hadn't yet been posted online. But others were women who had never shot their own videos, but they were instead paid to say otherwise.

In a court declaration, one of the women said that Andre Garcia—the male talent in a number of the videos and a central figure in Pratt's operation—“coached me on how to correspond with the prospective women to gain their trust, even if that included telling lies and hiding information.”

She said Garcia encouraged her to “tell the prospective women that I too had previously filmed a video for them, even though I had never done so.” She was also coached “to tell the women that I come from a small town, shot a video for them, that no one has found out, and that the women had nothing to worry

about, and to tell prospective women the videos they filmed would never be released in the United States or on the Internet.”

She said she was paid \$50 to \$200 for each call she took from women, depending on the attractiveness and age of the women.

“This ruined my life”

The women’s videos generally appeared on the GirlsDoPorn site under a pseudonym, but this provided little protection. Inevitably, someone who knew the woman would notice the video and share it. It then circulated rapidly among the woman’s real-life friends and acquaintances.

After this happened to Jane Doe 15, she texted a woman who had helped convince her to do the video.

“Hey, you lied to me, and they lied to me,” she wrote in a text message. “It’s on a website now and my whole town back home knows. This ruined my life.”

This didn’t just lead to embarrassment with friends and family—it could also lead to harassment by strangers, the plaintiffs point out.

“Since being launched in 2009, GirlsDoPorn has grown in popularity and generated a cult-like following of hobbyists/stalkers who obsess over the amateur women featured in the videos,” the plaintiffs wrote in a legal filing. “Dozens of websites, forums, and message boards exist dedicated solely to publishing victims’ real names, hometowns, social media accounts, photographs, and other personal information.”

Indeed, the plaintiffs say Pratt and his associates directly contributed to this stalker-like behavior. In July 2015, personal information about numerous GirlsDoPorn victims was published on a website called pornwikileaks.com, a site that

specializes in publishing personal information about pornographic actresses.

Later the same year, the plaintiffs say, “administrative control of pornwikileaks.com was transferred to a person using the email address mike@bll-media.com—a known email used by Pratt.” Afterwards, “none of the information regarding defendants’ victims was taken down, and in January 2016, advertisements for GirlsDoPorn with hyperlinks began appearing in posts on PornWikileaks.com.” According to the lawsuit, personal information about women appearing in GirlsDoPorn videos was only removed in mid-2016—after women filed their lawsuit.

On Thursday, porn site Bang Bros purchased control of PornWikileaks and shut it down—promising that it would never again host personal information about porn actresses. It’s not clear who Bang Bros paid for the domain or how much money changed hands.

Lawyers for the plaintiffs say they have personally talked to well over 100 women who have complaints similar to the 22 women who filed lawsuits. However, they say many other women are afraid that defendants will do everything they can to embarrass women who come forward—asking intrusive questions about their personal lives, seeking to strip them of anonymity, and even seeking permission to show the women’s pornographic videos in open court. This week, a judge rejected a request by defendants to play one of the women’s GirlsDoPorn videos during the trial.

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