

Classmates

Copyright Infringement, Force, and Coercion

Classmates has been accused of copyright infringement, force, and coercion through practices such as photograph combing, data mining, and the nonconsensual sharing of images that may cause reputational harm to users. The platform is using older photographs of individuals without their consent, publishing these images alongside digitized yearbooks.

According to reporting by Bloomberg Law, Classmates has faced litigation related to its online yearbook practices, including denial of arbitration in a class action lawsuit.

Cowdrey states that, against her will, a photograph from 2007 was used, a calendar photoshoot in which the photographer was later found guilty of a \$25,000 check fraud scheme. The women who participated in these shoots were not paid; instead, they paid for the photographs themselves, which were then submitted to “competitive modeling agencies” across the United States.

At the time, these women were young, approximately 18 to 22 years old, still learning and navigating the world and modeling industry. Many women from this age group in Anchorage experienced similar exploitation by multiple companies. This “cross-network” exploitation extended throughout the Anchorage region, resulting in litigation, fines, and penalties.

Dannielle states she is unaware of how Classmates obtained access to this photograph. Although the original account has long since been deleted, the image remains publicly available.

While she expresses that she once enjoyed her modeling career, she now advocates for women’s safety. Upon recognizing patterns consistent with modern forms of exploitation, she believes that abuse within these industries remains widespread.

Her position is clear:

- Women should never be coerced into providing photographs for profit or other uses.
- Women should never have to pay to participate in such work.
- At a minimum, women should be fairly compensated, and paid well, for their services.

These experiences reveal a profound imbalance between advertisers and those whose images are used. Even more concerning is what she describes as a “double down” of abuse; in one court document, a company allegedly threatened that, if litigation were pursued, it would intensify its targeting of young, college-aged women.

This, she argues, reflects a broader system of exploitation, images are used for the benefit and profit of others, not the women themselves. As these women move forward and establish healthy, more supportive careers, their past images are retained, recirculated, and potentially weaponized against them.

She describes this as a cycle of modern exploitation, what she refers to as “techno-slavery” and “data hoarding,” in which companies, both foreign and domestic, retain and reuse personal data without consent. These practices can undermine careers, reduce individuals to data profiles, and strip away personal agency and dignity.

Her position is that:

- Yearbooks are copyrighted material.
- Photographs of individuals should not be used without their explicit, written consent.
- Personal images should not be treated as freely exploitable assets.

She concludes that the internet has become a battleground, one in which individuals must constantly defend their identity, privacy, and livelihood against misuse and exploitation.

Enough is enough. Stop forced digitization and data exploitation.

There is an urgent need for stronger laws that protect personal imagery and data, and for meaningful enforcement of those laws.