



Hilton Double Standard – Celeb vs. Non-Celeb?

Fame Complicates Hilton Case -- but Did it Help or Hurt the Hotel Heiress?

By **LINDSAY HAMILTON**

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It might be hard to find anyone who was awake and breathing near a television set this past week who didn't know at least something about Paris Hilton's on-again, off-again, on-again incarceration, or have an opinion about what happened.

From the fans and protestors who stood outside the courtroom, to the candidates on the presidential campaign trail, people were debating the case and what it means.

Democratic presidential candidate John Edwards, N.C., told reporters it pointed out the difference between class in America.

"I still believe, without regard to Paris Hilton, that we have two Americas," Edwards said.

Late night talk show host Jay Leno joked Hilton left jail with the one license plate she managed to finish, reading "DBL STNDRD."

Justice, or Celebrity Justice?

The question over double standards for celebrities in trouble is still being hotly debated as Hilton's ordeal unfolds.

Sheriff Lee Baca, who let Hilton leave jail for house arrest, is being accused of playing nice with celebrities, while Judge Michael T. Sauer, who sent Hilton back, is said to be making an example of the heiress.

Village Voice gossip columnist Michael Musto said that when celebrities like Hilton face jail time, it magnifies their sense of privilege and people assume they are going to get better treatment than "mere mortals."

Elayne Rapping, a professor who studies pop culture, said Hilton has indeed managed to get away with a lot "because she can afford very expensive lawyers, and our society is increasingly permissive."

"If you are a celebrity, you can pretty much get away with anything and get off really easily," Rapping said. "It's a very very sick thing that most women of their age cannot do what they do and get away with it. ... There's such a double standard."

Gossip website TMZ reports Hilton, who is now confined to a mental health facility in Los Angeles, is "despondent" and "teetering on the brink" after her re-incarceration. Yet, even these sad details won't

turn the public off to the starlet in the slammer.

"We love examining how their punishment coincides with their wealth and fame," Musto said.

Jumpsuit Orange -- The New Black?

Hilton might not be the only Hollywood princess to serve a sentence this summer. Her heiress buddy Nicole Richie is also due in court and could face up to a year behind bars over DUI and drug charges. And currently rehabbing Lindsay Lohan is likely to face charges after an accident led police allegedly to discover narcotics in her car.

"It seems like they haven't earned their stripes as a celebrity bad girl unless they've done jail or rehab or both," said Musto, who also speculated that most trouble equals more success as far as Hilton is concerned.

Rapping is concerned about the signal these jailbird divas will send to other young women.

"If the average young woman made sex videos about themselves, it would be porn, but these young women get away with it," Rapping said. "They are so admired and imitated, it may very well be that going to jail may become a badge of honor."

Los Angeles Psychiatrist David Paster says most adolescents who pay attention to celebrity behavior are likely to focus less on the fact that a celebrity is going to jail, and more on how they are handling their ordeal.

He advises celebrities who want to make a positive impact "to cooperate with the system, take your punishment, have it over with and go on with your life from there."

Perhaps it's good advice, but is Paris listening?

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