

sitting. It means checking every name, every date, and all statistics, to make sure they are correct. It means making sure that things aren't lost in translation. It involves time and research. Especially when I will be working with materials I have never seen before and after all the issues raised in the previous emails.

In Japan, they are quite touchy about factual accuracy in reporting. The Japanese people are very sensitive to issues of falsification by the media. In Japan a common media scandal is the exposure of "*yarase*" (やらせ). It literally means, "to make someone do it". The general definition of *yarase* is one of a staged performance presented in documentary style. Every time it is exposed in Japan, it becomes a national scandal. There is a high probability that the video will start showing up in Japan on *YouTube* and when it does, if *National Geographic Television* is accused of *yarase* it will certainly become a local story and not in a good way. As many things in Japan, once it appears in the local media, the foreign press is likely to pick up the story as well.

Please see the appendix from the book *Secrets, Sex and Spectacle: The Rules of Scandal in Japan and The United States* by Mark D. West (*University of Chicago Press*, 2007). It is an excellent guide to a thorny issue. I don't want to suffer reputational damage nor do I want National Geographic or National Geographic in Japan to suffer reputational damage by airing anything that smacks of *yarase* or is actually false. I know you feel the same way.

Unreasonable Demands

One meeting and a few hours are not enough time to check the factual accuracy of materials that were assembled over months. To even ask that is insulting and shows a general contempt for your audience, the fact-checking process, and myself. I'm not asking for extra money to do this; I'm just doing my job. I don't think you mean to be contemptuous of the fact-checking process. I'm assuming that you just don't have a journalistic background or you're under a lot of pressure from management to get this done quickly

rather than accurately.

Timeline

It will take at least three meetings. The first will be to see the program after at which point I will begin checking the factual accuracy. There will be another meeting to address any mistakes or factual inaccuracies, of which I'm hoping there are very few, and a final meeting to make sure that what has been wrong has been corrected. **Do you want an inaccurate and/or false program broadcast on your channel? Is there a pressing time concern that makes that necessary? Please let me know and I will take that into consideration and will try to speed up work but cannot sacrifice accuracy for speed.**

What Is At Stake

At stake are the lives of the people who appear in the documentary and the reputation of all parties concerned, including myself, National Geographic Group, National Geographic Channel Japan and National Geographic Japan. As I know you are aware, and should be aware, the Japanese mafia is not above expressing their displeasure with the media or those cooperating with them by use of physical violence and/or intimidation or destruction of property.

What I Need From You To Do My Job

Please provide me with *a) a full and complete transcript of the program b) the full audio of each interview with Japanese speakers and other speakers on the program so I can be sure the subtitle or dubbing accurately represents what they said. c) complete transcriptions of all of the interviews to go with the audio to aid verification d) the contact information for all interviewees who made the final cut of the program so that I can verify identity and*

whether the interview was "staged" e) the materials used to "re-create" yakuza life by the director, and finally a working copy of the video because I do not have a photographic memory and one viewing will not suffice. If you have any other materials you feel will be useful in verification, they would be appreciate it. I'll need to reference all this while working in Japan. I don't need a high-quality copy of the video. It will take time to do this. Please give me the materials so I can do my job and get it done as quickly as possible.

If you cannot provide those materials, please explain why and please tell me what you can provide. I'll need to know what I'm working with in advance.

This letter is also being forwarded to your offices in Japan since they asked me to keep them updated on the progress of the documentary and any potential problems, which I promised I would do. I'm sure that's not a problem since you have nothing to hide from them, of course.

Please have your standards and practices people contact my lawyer Mr. ██████████ and tell them when you have the materials prepared and would like to meet. I would suggest we meet at ██████████ in ██████████ because I would like him to be present so that he can make our position clear as to timelines and fact checking. I'm leaving for Japan on February 7th. I will be there until February 24th. Of course, as much as possible, I'm willing to work with you on setting up the first meeting but will need to work in conjunction with Mr. ██████████'s schedule as well.

Sincerely,


Jake Adelstein

PS. Mr. ██████████ will be happy to speak with you at any time. His number is ██████████.

Secrets, Sex and Spectacle: The Rules of Scandal in Japan and The United States by Mark D. West (University of Chicago Press, 2007). Relevant excerpt below. Pages 29-30

Media scandals tend to fall into one of three categories: "yarase" (or made-up news), false accusations, and questionable tactics.

Every five years, NHK polls between 2,500 and 3,500 people regarding their views on the media. In 1985 NHK asked respondents whether they thought mass media generally reported the truth. Thirty-seven percent said "I think so," 43 percent said "I don't think so," and 17 percent said it was hard to determine. In each successive survey, confidence has fallen; by 2000 only 29 percent said they thought the media generally reported the truth; 54 percent said they did not think so.

The doubters, it seems, have good reason. In a famous 1960 case, a cameraman at the national high school baseball tournament missed the big hit-so he had the players fake it later, and he pretended that he had caught the action the first time. In 1989 an Asahi Shimbun photographer set out to shoot a news story about how divers were defacing coral in Okinawa. He couldn't find any defaced coral, so he defaced it himself and photographed it. In 1993 NHK broadcast a documentary series about Nepal that included fascinating scenes of altitude sickness (the crew faked it) and an avalanche (they used dynamite to create it). In 2003 a Flash magazine story forced NTV to admit that it had staged part of its news show *News Plus 1* by using the old fisherman's trick: they bought lobsters at the fish market and pretended that they had caught them. In 2005 Fuji TV admitted that at least three segments of the *Wake-Up Investigation Team (mezamashi chosaikai)* corner of its popular morning show *Wake-Up TV (mezamashi terebi)* had been

staged; in one segment, for instance, the team reported that a baseball fan was hit with a ball after receiving a good-luck charm from his wife. The charm was from the program's director.

Of course, making up news is not a uniquely Japanese phenomenon. In the United States, Jayson Blair of the *New York Times*, Janet Cooke of the *Washington Post*, Patricia Smith of the *Boston Globe*, and Stephen Glass of the *New Republic* all succumbed to similar charges. And weekly magazines in the United States seem to doctor photos here and there, including-egad!-the *Star's* changing the color of Demi Moore's dress from brown to white to imply impending nuptials (would *Us Weekly* do such a thing? "Never," their spokesperson responded). As a result, surveys in the United States yield results similar to those of the Japanese media trust surveys: 37 percent strongly agree, and an additional 24 percent mildly agree, that the "Falsifying or making up of stories in the American news media is a widespread problem."