

No More Free Mug Shots

For better *and* for worse, accused felon Donald J. Trump will have to live with a mug shot that features impeccable make up and a hair treatment that absolutely none of his constituents will ever be able to afford. It takes a *team* of cosmeticians to make that look happen.

Most men would be terrified to enter the Fulton County Jail for a felony booking while sporting a full face of makeup and baby-fine hair all swirled and blown out. Way too feminine for most of us, if we had to surrender in that big, scary house late on a Friday afternoon.

Mock bravado? The feigned courage of a man who is promised a quick and painless exit? Or just the assumed confidence that a man of certain ill-gotten means will never spend so much as a single night afraid to roll over in a bunk bed that suddenly feels *far too small*.

In some parallel universe, say, one in which Mr. Trump was only allowed to burn through his first \$400 million, you can almost hear his new cell mate give him the down-low for the evening:

“Oh yeah, that new fish gettin’ passed around tonight, fo’ sho’. Hey, new fish, bet you smell pretty too. Oh, come on back, don’t get in that jet plane. C’mon, get back here, I take you down the easy way.”

Sadly, in the universe that we now find ourselves in, the former president is burning through his *third* \$400 million sack of loot, and shows no sign of ever stopping that hemorrhage. And we know that he won’t see the inside of a prison, no matter how guilty he is of the crimes he is charged with. Of course, he wouldn’t last ten minutes in “gen-pop”: finally, there’s nowhere left to put him.

Now, Donny *could* end up in O.J. Simpson’s old cell, tucked away like some aging bull after the rocks are cut off. Even that, however, is probably too much for the American public. Better to just place him under house arrest in that fading hovel of his down in Florida, as far away from the grave of his ex-wife as we can manage. Put his adult children into some sort of rehab for the overprivileged and ethically bankrupt. Let the cult slowly die off, as they *always* do. If he had any sort of class, or decency, he would quietly accept his plea-bargained fate and try to save whatever dignity he has left, like Richard Nixon.

But, *no*. He seems fully committed to exiting this mortal coil as the single largest flaming asshole to ever stomp on the *terra firma*. Appeal every decision all the way to the Supreme Court. Bellow into every microphone, no matter how contaminated. Shitpost as much as possible about, well, *everything*. Tear down every member of every party. And, of course, simply *demand* that he always gets his way. The angry toddler-in-chief. At least that’s the public face we must contend with until he is forced into the sunset. Heroic? Not so much.



As a cover for the real machinations, however, the shtick makes some sort of sense. A lot of sound and fury that doesn't seem to signal much, while the real story gets buried. The three teardrop tattoos we've added to his Thug Life portrait, above, represent his ongoing efforts to kill off all three branches of our government. After installing his boot-licking toady as the new speaker of the house, there is little hope that our legislative branch will be able to function. They've already lowered the bar so much that merely keeping the lights on has become a major win. Then, after stacking as many benches as he could with the weak-willed, the loyal and the hopelessly compromised, the judicial branch is on the cusp of losing whatever is left of its legitimacy. And the executive branch has not yet recovered from its violation by the fat man with the sharpie. A lot of bodies on the ground – that's why the teardrops are filled in.

As time strips away the last of his pretense, Mr. Trump reveals all of the hate he has left to give. It is his only real asset: an endless cauldron of spit and bile aimed at anyone who does not flatter, or comfort, or help him to enact his vengeance on a world he will never own. To update Tupac, Mr. Trump has shown us how *"The Hate U Give Little Infants Fucks Everyone"* applies really well to the little brown ones. In the cages. Down by the border. Stephen Miller is already promising, through *his* contaminated microphone, more of those little cages as soon as they get back in. Every American will have to pick a side in 2024.

In the meantime, what can we learn from this hideous chapter in our national story? Where do we start to fix the many broken things?

First, make the law count. **Felony indictments must become a formal barrier to any national election.** Or state and local, for that matter. It takes a lot of evidence to get an indictment: if a candidate is cleared, let them run in the next election cycle. The founding fathers took a bet on the fact that their descendants would have more sense than this, and so they didn't feel the need to spell it all out. But here we are.

Second, we must require any candidate for the highest office to pass the same **background check** we demand of any other federal employee or contractor entrusted with access to our secret materials. It's referred to as a Standard Form 86 or "**SF86**" in the industry, and it establishes a pretty thorough background check. Miss Ivanka and Jared would *not* pass it, and for good reason (far too cozy with hostile foreign powers). Nepotism should never fly in the Oval office. **No skills, no background check, no clearance, no entrance.** There's far too much at stake. There is just no good reason to allow a president to arbitrarily bypass and overrule the security apparatus we all rely on to keep this world safe.

Third, we cannot allow anyone to put *that much* lipstick on a pig. Technically, no one is allowed to use their mug shot for any commercial or political purpose: mug shots belong to the agency or office that creates them. The Fulton County Sheriff's Office owns the one up top, the one we've modified a bit. **Enforce the copyright protection for state property.** As soon as Mr. Trump stops using it to raise money that he doesn't really need, I'll take my version of it down. Meantime, we should all agree that **no** indicted person shall be allowed to wear makeup when they get their mugshot, male or female. Hand them an unscented wipe and make them remove everything before we light that flash. No real guarantee, but it could help to restore some measure of basic *honesty* to our criminal justice system.



-- Steven Peterson, 2023