



Putting it all together

Adam Hoogenakker

January 19, 2017

In the summer of 2015, I mentioned a website the Baxter Police Department used to place an ad as part of a sex trafficking sting. That site's adult ad space has recently been censored, after the webpage has come under scrutiny in the courts.

According to reports, the Senate's Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations charged the website has created a marketplace that makes sex trafficking easier. In response to the allegations, the website has closed its adult section.

In preparation for writing this column, I recalled the one I wrote back in 2015, only to find, to my dismay, the website has a hyperlink to it because that's how the digital world works now. Type an address in a story and put it online, and presto, you've got a link to a page you probably don't want to promote.

I'm certainly not promoting the website. But I did visit the page. And I did click on a link under one of their adult ads (on my personal computer, mind you).

What I got was the following message: "CENSORED. The government has unconstitutionally censored this content (then follows a link, which I did not click, that reads "What happened? find out"). Another line reads, "Protect internet free speech" (which is followed by links to Center for Democracy and Technology, Electronic Frontier Foundation, and Cato Institute). Another line reads, "Use your social media to support #FREESPEECH #BACKPAGE. The final line reads, "Donate to Children of the Night, an organization dedicated to rescuing children from prostitution."

Part of my argument in my 2015 column was about the ease of access to ads and websites which promote sex, sex trafficking and adultery. Getting rid of such sites is only the start to ridding our society of these acts, whether they're legal or illegal in nature. Yes, sex is part of human nature, but taking advantage of people to fulfill that need is wrong on many levels.

I hope this censorship by the website's owners doesn't last for the short term. It should be permanently censored. It would be a small step in the direction to get rid of sex trafficking. The existence of such a site only enables those looking for a lifestyle that does a lot more harm than good.

In fact, I can't think of anything good about it. The website can still serve the public through other ads. It should shut down its adult section permanently, and others should follow suit.