

I Fought the Law and, Maybe, I Won

I fought the law and the law won. I fought the law and the law won. With a catchy refrain and memorable musical score, the Clash's record hit is still sung today. The song boasts of "Robbin' people with a six-gun" because "I needed money 'cause I had none." In which case, he was caught by the law. While robbing people at gunpoint is a rather straightforward offense, modern day crimes are not so cut and dry. In the rapidly evolving landscape of technology, the intersection with the legal system brings forth a myriad of challenges for individuals charged with a crime. The multifaceted threats posed by technological advancements, the implications on privacy, civil liberties, cybercrime, social dynamics, and access to justice are becoming modern day issues that even modern-day music can't harmonize.

To say that the surge in technology has reshaped the evidentiary landscape within the legal system is understatement. The ubiquity of smartphones, social media platforms, and digital communication channels has given rise to an era where a substantial amount of personal information is both shared and stored online. For individuals charged with a crime, this digital footprint becomes a potential goldmine for law enforcement agencies and a potential landmine for those convicted of crimes. Digital evidence, ranging from text messages and social media posts to location data such as Life 360 or Find My iPhone, has proven invaluable in criminal investigations. Individuals, sometimes unknowingly, have implicated themselves by simply using their electronic devices. Although a big win for police department and district attorneys, this paradigm shift in evidentiary practices raises significant concerns about privacy. The dichotomy between the need for law enforcement to access pertinent information and the preservation of individuals' privacy rights is becoming increasingly pronounced. Both the subjectivity and objectivity of the legal system is challenged as the digital world continues to evolve and blurs the

lines between public and private spheres. As the world is just being introduced to the power of artificial intelligence, the legal system will need to change once again. Proving reality from fiction will become an even larger concern for both the legal and court systems.

Together with the rise of technological advancement is the proliferation of surveillance technologies, which have become an integral component of modern security infrastructure. From facial recognition systems to unseemingly harmful doorbell cameras, constant surveillance has extended its reach into public and private spaces alike. Once thought of a dystopian society of likes of George Orwell's *1984*, modern society has embraced everyday lives being on camera: cameras in schools, cameras in the grocery store, cameras on doorbells and backyards. For individuals charged with a crime, this heightened level of scrutiny raises fundamental questions about civil liberties and the right to a fair trial. Surveillance technologies, while presumably serving the purpose of enhancing security, create a potential imbalance in the legal scales. The constant watchful eye of these technologies may infringe upon the presumption of innocence and the right to privacy. The objective lens through which the legal system must view evidence is clouded by the subjective implications of surveillance technologies, challenging the delicate equilibrium between security and individual rights.

Being caught by a camera committing a crime or being tracked by a location device is one thing but cybercrimes is somewhat uncharted territory. As technology advances, so does the spectrum of criminal activities within the digital realm. Cybercrimes, encompassing activities from hacking to identity theft, present a unique set of challenges for individuals charged with such offenses. The complexities of digital investigations and the intangibility of cybercrimes pose considerable threats to the accused. Additionally, the nature of cybercrimes introduces an element of ambiguity into legal proceedings. Establishing guilt or innocence becomes a complex

task in the face of sophisticated digital manipulations. The impartial pursuit of justice is hindered by the challenges posed by the intangible and rapidly evolving nature of cybercrime, emphasizing the need for legal frameworks to adapt in tandem with technological advancements, rather than an afterthought.

Social Media: A Double-Edged Sword

Other threats to those convicted of a crime, lie not with identification but with a equality – a fair trail and a fair chance. The rise of social media platforms has transformed the dynamics of public discourse and information dissemination. For individuals charged with a crime, the impact of social media on public opinion becomes pivotal in legal proceedings. These platforms, while providing avenues for information dissemination and community support, can also be instrumental in shaping prejudicial narratives. In the world of social media, justice faces a notable obstacle – the influence of public opinion. The instantaneous nature of information dissemination on platforms such as Tic Toc and Facebook can lead to the rapid spread of misinformation. The unbiased assessment of evidence within the legal system becomes a war the court of public opinion, introducing an additional layer of complexity to the proceedings.

Additionally, not all individuals charged with a crime possess the same level of technological literacy necessary to navigate the complexities of digital evidence and cyber-related charges. This discrepancy introduces a systemic challenge to the principle of equal access to justice.

The pursuit of justice demands a level playing field, yet the disparity in technological literacy creates a divide. Bridging this gap requires not only legal adaptations but also concerted efforts to ensure that individuals, regardless of their technological background, have the capacity to meaningfully participate in legal proceedings.

In the face of technological advancements, individuals charged with a crime find themselves navigating a convoluted maze without clear pathways. From privacy implications to social media's influence on public opinion, technological advancements plague the current legal system. A fine balance between protecting the safety of citizens while also maintaining the basic principles of privacy, civil liberties, and equal access to justice is what is needed in our digitized world. And, although some may fight the law and the law wins, it might just be that *I fought the law* and, maybe, I won.