

Analysis of “Targeted”

Targeted is an investigative journalism article released by the Tampa Bay Times. It was written by Kathleen McGrory and Neil Bedi and is about Pasco County Sheriff Chris Nocco and his highly criticized intelligence program. This program “generates lists of people it considers likely to break the law, based on arrest histories, unspecified intelligence and arbitrary decisions by police analysts.” This program has been extremely controversial because of its questionable methods of what some Pasco county residents are calling “stalking” and warns of its unjust profiling.

Before finding this article, I had not heard of the Tampa Bay Times, and thus have no gauge on its bias. The Tampa Bay Times has been around since 1884 newspaper to accompany its website tampabay.com. This publication has had many Pulitzer prize winner over the time since its founding.

Along with the two writers of this article, a photographer is also credited with providing all the pictures of some of the impacted families. To me, this could add to the publication’s credibility because it shows that these journalists went the extra mile and met with the people who have been directly affected by the program in question. I do not think a non-credible website or newspaper would go through all the hassle of meeting, questioning, and mostly staging a photoshoot to then publish a bogus story.

Though I do not have enough information to state the publication as a whole’s bias, I do suspect that one of the authors of this article has a slight left lean. The authors occasionally paint the officers as the villain, terrorizing helpless civilians. That may be because the public opinion on police officers has shifted greatly over the last few months and the authors might be trying to

appeal to an audience who may be more critical of law enforcement than the average American is or would have been 5 months ago. I would much rather say that the officers are acting as extra nosy parole officers. This is not to say that what they are doing is at all justified, but I would say that the authors are overreacting on this one.

Some of the sources the authors cite are police reports and press releases. These are good primary source documents that are usually the best places to get information from. This is also good to use because a writer can use direct quotes from the sheriff himself or the officer filing the reports. To go along with this, the authors also questioned members of the public who have been affected the most. The authors ask these people and their family about their encounters with police that might suspect that some of the police reports may be fraudulent. This is the only sort of counterpoint the article presents, police report vs. eyewitness.

I will conclude this by deciding whether this article is successful in arguing the idea that Sheriff Nocco's program is unjust and has led to the harassment of Pasco County citizens as well as numerous fines for minor infractions.