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ARTICLE

When Movie Research Leads to Contract or Copyright Claims

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This article addresses the potential outcomes if creators of movies and television programs based on real people and events conduct interviews of those involved without first establishing the conditions under which the interview will take place, including any issues of compensation and rights ownership. Because such storytellers have a First Amendment right to tell stories about real people and events without compensating those involved, interviewees may develop creative arguments to justify their after-the-fact demands for payment. The article highlights "The Hurt Locker" case as one example of this, and the more recent case involving "The Good Lie" provides an even more concerning example because both contract and copyright rights are asserted.

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