

Will Smith's aggravated assault controversy

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Many people know the chosen celebrity as the 'Fresh Prince of Bel-Air.' The celebrity chosen for this assignment is Will Smith. He is a well-known actor, rap artist, and film and television producer. Before the news about the arrest came out, many people were not even aware of his hidden assault since it was back then in 1989 when Will was in his twenties, ready to smash everything in his way. Smith was blamed for hiding his assault due to the mugshot incident, which left the other person almost blind. A brutal beat down led Smith behind bars. Days after Smith won his first Grammy Award, this incident occurred in the year 1989 in his hometown, Philadelphia.

Records carried by the officials show that Smith indulged in an argument. The argument was with the promoter of the record, William Hendricks. In this situation, Smith's bodyguard was also named. The bodyguard at that time was Charles "Charlie Mack" Alston. After getting into an argument, Smith asked his bodyguard to attack Henderson. After this incident, Henderson was almost left blind as he suffered a severe injury near the left eye orbital. The injury was so severe that he had to get six stitches near his eye, which is termed as the most sensitive area for all such exposures.

At that time, Smith was twenty years old. This is the time of life when anger is one of the hardest things to control. However, after the incident passed, Smith had to go to jail under the accusations of aggravated assault, recklessly endangering another person, simple assault, and criminal conspiracy. All these charges were later dismissed by the officials. Smith has to spend an entire night in the cell of the West Philadelphia police. However, evidence has been found that people were waking him up all night to get his autograph. Smith was able to maintain his innocence completely in front of the audience. After the hidden assault came in front of everyone, Smith was interviewed in the year 2005, in which he insisted on the fact that there was no problem or fault caused by him. He mentioned that one of his friends was found beating Hendricks, and he was there by his side. People took the notion that he was the one killing the person. At the end of his interview, he clearly mentioned that this is his part of the story and he will always be sticking to the side of this (BETIKUI, 2012).

Often, it is observed that the relation of controversies with the actor of any other famous celebrity makes him lose his place in the eyes of the people. However, this wasn't clearly the case with Smith. Although his hidden assault and secret crime came out in front of the people after the passage of time, people were only curious about the assault. There were no signs of Smith losing his long-earned respect and fan following. In general cases, the kind of punishment given to a person depends on the injury the victim has faced. In the case of Smith's incident, the injury was major, and major injuries led to the sentencing of months. Will, in 1989, suffered from one night in the jail. It would not be wrong to say that the punishment did not fit the crime at that time. Since the crime was figured out by the official at that time, hence actions according to the crime should have been taken. There is so much to be found out in this case since the information shown publicly is not enough for the

punishment to be decided. With the information present at this time, the punishment was not suitable with the severe kind of beat down for Hendricks.

The social paradigm of Symbolic Interactionism applies to the actor Will Smith. This paradigm highlights the symbols observed in the day to day life. Often, people are keen to associate the symbols of daily life with some meaningful things or give them names that are meaningful and give the person the ability to interact with keen observation. George H. Mead (1863–1931) introduced this perspective to American sociology in the 1920s. This interaction has given the perspective of the people to give meanings to the symbols and add words that are subject to that meaning. In this case, verbal conversations also play their part since, according to the research, verbal communications are pre-dominant words that can be used afterward for attaching meaning to the symbols. The subjective interpretation of the words is what makes the symbols more evident. The words ‘sender’ and ‘receiver’ have special meanings in this theory since, in both cases, the retrieval of the words is significant. To add meaning to this theory, another perspective can be added. Words should not be considered lifeless things or subjects; however, they hold significant importance in adding meaning to the subjects and things operating in our lives. Hence, it can be said that the symbolic interaction gives serious thoughts to the people, who ponder it to determine the meaning of the things that haven’t been signified. This meaning can be added to the words and actions of the person. This can be beneficial for the other person.

In this scenario, Will Smith follows the social paradigm of Symbolic Interactionism. This has been observed through a number of movies which he has done. Often, there are many celebrities, especially actors, who choose the medium of movies and films to tell about their thinking. They move on with the thought that social media has a great influence on the thoughts of human beings. By using social media platforms and strong stories, such actors deliver thoughts that force people to infer meaning from the stories. There are many things, including movies and raps, that have added a symbol to many of the unnamed things in the lives of the people. In the society where Smith lives, adding symbols is a common practice. People add symbols to all the wedding vows, practices, and other reforms that are connected to them. Interpreting communications with a broad mind and looking at the bigger picture is the belief of the actor in his lifestyle.

To sum up, Will Smith was found to be a part of one of the assaults in the year 1989. This controversy was found out with Hendricks, who suffered from a severe beat down by Smith. Although Smith gave the statement that he wasn’t the one beating him, he had to remain in jail for one night. In general, if any other person had done this, he would have suffered from the sentencing for a longer period of time. This punishment could have taken any shape if the general public had been involved. In the case of Smith, the punishment was not justified enough and needed more attention. Besides all the controversies, this did not let the actor lose his confidence and place among the people. The social paradigm of Symbolic Interactionism is well suited to Will Smith, who believes that words add meanings to symbols. He has used the medium of his films to convey this paradigm as well.

Reference:

BETIKUI, F. (2012). *Pictured: Youthful Will Smith in 80s mugshot after arrest in connection with vicious attack which almost left man blind. Mail Online*. Retrieved 17 March 2018, from <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/tvshowbiz/article-2216135/Will-Smith-1989-mugshot-connection-attack-left-man-blind.html>