

EXHIBIT L



Fact Checking Is Dead: Mainstream Media Goes Nuts Repeating Debunked Claims By The Fake 'Inventor Of Email'

from the *is-this-really-so-hard?* dept

Email
by Mike Masnick
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I had honestly hoped that yesterday's story about the Huffington Post finally **retracting** its series of totally bogus articles (mostly written by Shiva Ayyadurai or his colleagues and friends, but a few by its actual "journalists"), pretending to argue that V.A. Shiva Ayyadurai had "invented email," would be the end of this story. Ayyadurai has built up quite a reputation around this false claim, even though it's been debunked over and over and over again.

Ayyadurai keeps coming back, often moving the goalposts and changing his definitions, but still ultimately **flat out lying** in pretending to have "invented" email. To be clear, he did no such thing. Email was in wide use at the time he supposedly wrote his software. Ayyadurai, however, has cleverly used misleading (to downright false) claims to make what appears on its face to be a credible story, fooling a number of gullible reporters. The crux of his argument revolves around the copyright registration he obtained for a software program in 1982 called EMAIL. But, as we've explained over and over again, a copyright is just for a specific expression (i.e., that specific program), and not for "inventing" anything. The most obvious parallel would be Microsoft, which holds a copyright on "Windows" -- the operating system -- but did not "invent" the idea of a graphical user interface involving "windows."

And yet, yesterday morning, everyone began flooding me with new stories about Ayyadurai, written by clueless entertainment reporters, all because Ayyadurai apparently got married to actress Fran Drescher. The "dating Fran Drescher" story has been making the rounds for a while now, and it was so random and unrelated that we'd ignored it in previous posts, even though one part of the HuffPo series was HuffPo Live **talking to Ayyadurai** about Drescher, in what was an incredibly awkward exchange (note: despite pulling most of the other articles about Ayyadurai, HuffPo left this one up). In the video (which has been taken down), Ayyadurai made this incredibly awkward "introduction" to Fran, in which he repeatedly highlights that he's just hanging out "in Malibu with Fran," and then says for emphasis "with Fran Drescher, who I'm dating." That leads Fran to jump into view, and the HuffPo live "reporter" Caroline Modarressy-Tehrani starts absolutely **gushing** over Fran. It was weird, but since it wasn't directly related to whole lie about "inventing email," we hadn't mentioned it.

However, thanks to the "wedding," now it appears that tons of mainstream press reports are writing about the wedding and repeating the totally debunked claim about Ayyadurai "inventing" email. This has resulted in many people wondering if the whole HuffPo series was deliberately ramped up prior to the "wedding" to get the mainstream press to roll with the bogus claim. It's entirely possible, but considering that Ayyadurai has been trying to make this lie stick for years, it may just be a convenient coincidence. Either way, the mainstream press apparently is unable to do any fact checking and is repeating bogus claims as facts. Let's highlight a few:

- **People Magazine**, written by "reporter" **Gabrielle Olya**, not only falsely claims Ayyadurai invented email, but says he "holds the patent for creating email." This is all kinds of wrong. He doesn't "hold the patent for creating email." He didn't create email, and he only got a copyright (not a patent) on a program called EMAIL long after email had been created. The People Magazine piece links to the bogus, now retracted, HuffPo story.
- **E-Online** "reporter" **Mike Vulpo** falsely calls Ayyadurai "the inventor of email" and also links to the bogus, now retracted HuffPo story. Even more bizarrely, Vulpo links to the now debunked Washington Post articles from a few years ago (which have a huge correction apologizing for the misreporting on Ayyadurai) saying "reports say he holds the copyright to the computer program known as 'email.'" Others say he indeed came up with the term "email" when he was in high school in the late 1970s. Pretty impressive, right? I love the hedges "reports say" and "others say" while ignoring the fact that his claims to have "invented" email are debunked. And while this is slightly more accurate in noting that he

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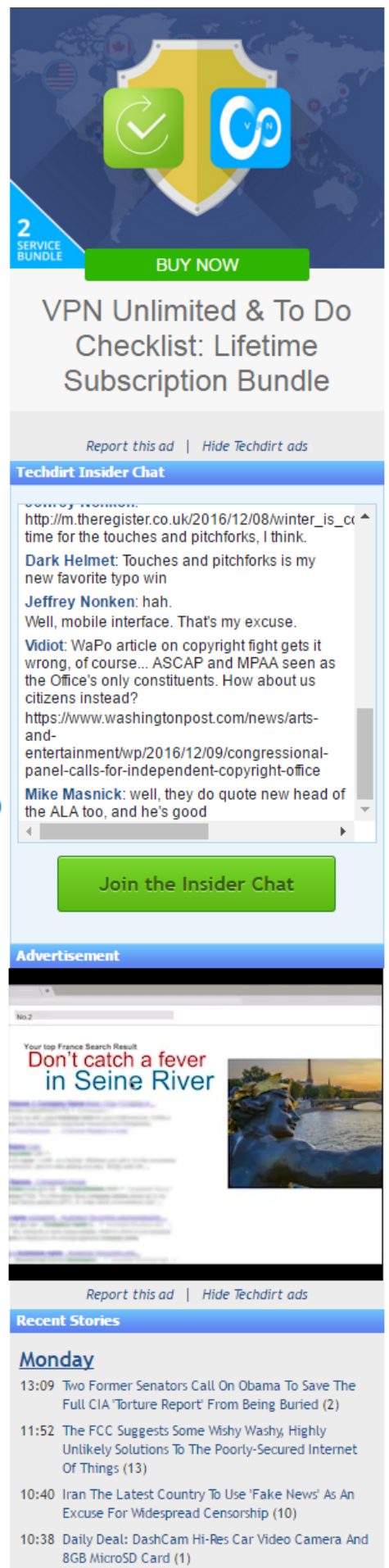
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- **ABC News / Good Morning America** "reporter" **Michael Rothman** falsely claims that Ayyadurai is the "inventor of email" and makes it even more stupid by saying that Ayyadurai is "widely credited with having invented email." This is not even remotely true. He is only credited with that by himself and a tiny group of friends. Rothman also doesn't appear to understand even the basics of copyright by saying that Ayyadurai is "the first person to hold a copyright for 'EMAIL.'" Again, all he did was write a program called EMAIL, long after email had been invented. It also claims that Ayyadurai "currently teaches at MIT." A search of MIT's staff directory does not actually return Ayyadurai as a current staff member.
- **CBS News** expands their reputation for skipping over any fact checking by saying Ayyadurai "holds the patent for inventing email." Again, basically everything in that statement is wrong. He doesn't have a patent for inventing email. He got a copyright (very different) on a program called EMAIL. And he didn't invent email. At least CBS News is smart enough not to put a byline on this bogus reporting, but it also quotes the Huffington Post.
- **UPI** has an article that doesn't mention Ayyadurai's false claims in the text of the article, but does falsely call him "email creator" in the headline (which may not have been written by the reporter who wrote the article).
- **The Daily Mail** is somewhat famous for its lack of reporting skills and fact checking -- and the publication lives down to its reputation in an article by Chelsea White, which again repeats the myth that Ayyadurai invented email. And while it claims there's "controversy" over the claim (there isn't: everyone except him and his friends know he didn't invent email) it repeats the bogus claim that he has a patent on email: "Dr. Ayyadurai - who owns the patent to email and is often credited as the inventor of the electronic mail system amid some controversy." It also links to the Huffington Post.
- **US Magazine** "reporter" **Madeline Boardman** more or less repeats verbatim what others are saying about Ayyadurai being "the inventor" of email and that he is "widely credited" as such.
- **Headline and Global News** "reporter" Dina Exil repeatedly calls Ayyadurai the inventor of email and also claims he "is known for being the first person to invent email," except none of that is true. He's known for pretending that.
- **Popcrush** "reporter" **Michelle McGahan** calls Ayyadurai "the inventor of email" and also falsely claims he "owns the patent for email."

Now, considering that this just some random celebrity gossip, it's not that surprising that these "entertainment reporters" didn't bother to do any sort of fact checking. Why would they? And it's tough to fault them for going for the easy layup on the typical "famous person weds" story. But the problem here is that Ayyadurai has been focused on using any and all press mentions as "evidence" in his bogus campaign to declare himself the inventor of email, and now he has a number of other sources to cite, even though they're all totally wrong.

It is worth noting that not everyone fell for the spin. The **LA Times** and **San Francisco Chronicle** both focused mainly on Drescher and more or less ignored Ayyadurai's bogus claims (though, the LA Times does say he's at MIT, which again, does not list him as a current staff member).

The only publications I can find that really called out the bogus claims were Mashable, which noted that Drescher has married someone who "likes to claim he invented email" and Gawker, which noted that if Fran Drescher had actually read its previous articles about Ayyadurai, she **might not have married him**. What's funny is that in writing our series about the Huffington Post's bogus stories, some of our commenters insisted that this was actually proof as to why these "new media" players weren't trustworthy compared to traditional vetted media. And yet, above we have "trusted" media like ABC and CBS repeating totally false claims, while new media players like Mashable and Gawker are debunking them.



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Vidiot: WaPo article on copyright fight gets it wrong, of course... ASCAP and MPAA seen as the Office's only constituents. How about us citizens instead?

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/arts-and-entertainment/wp/2016/12/09/congressional-panel-calls-for-independent-copyright-office>

Mike Masnick: well, they do quote new head of the ALA too, and he's good

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Anyway, I'd like to think this story is now over, but somehow I get the feeling that Ayyadurai will continue to press his bogus claims again and again and again.

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