

The Madeleine Foundation

Asking the questions about what really happened to Madeleine McCann

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Mr Clarence Mitchell
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Dear Mr Mitchell

re: New video produced by Jon Corner using images of Madeleine McCann with eye shadow and jewellery - now on YouTube

We write to express our concern about the images of Madeleine used by you, the McCanns and Jon Corner in the video message which was widely trailed in today's newspapers and has already attracted several hundred views on YouTube. We understand that you as the McCanns' chief public relations adviser must have approved the production and distribution of this video. Indeed, you are quoted in one of today's newspapers as follows:

"McCann family spokesman Clarence Mitchell said: 'The video is designed to remind people that the search for Madeleine is ongoing. Just because she's not in the headlines every day doesn't mean nothing is being done. Kate and Gerry are still devoting a large part of their daily lives to the search'.

The fact that your clients the McCanns explicitly approved the distribution of this video is clear from the following report of SKY News:

"Parents of Madeleine McCann, who went missing three years ago, have released a new video and photo of their missing daughter to mark the third anniversary of the girl's disappearance".

The concern we have and that is being expressed by thousands of others is the use of clearly-posed photographs of a three-year-old wearing make-up, such as eye shadow, a necklace and lipstick.

You and your clients the McCanns have from the day Madeleine was reported missing claimed explicitly and on many occasions that Madeleine must have been abducted by a paedophile, or paedophiles, often described by you and your clients as 'predatory', 'evil', or 'a monster'. Yet the images of Madeleine that you have allowed to be used in your campaign are of a child looking much older than her actual years - the very kinds of images that often appeal to paedophiles. Even former police detective, now leading criminologist and child protection expert Mark Williams-Thomas, who has often spoken with strong sympathy and understanding for your clients, has today commented adversely on the McCann Team's use of these images of Madeleine on 'Twitter'. He said, in five separate messages earlier today:

- 1) "On the eve of Madeleine's disappearance I agree with the release of a new photo but question the appropriateness of the photo chosen"
- 2) "Have not yet seen the new Madeleine video but the photograph is so inappropriate & damaging on so many levels - ill advised again"
- 3) "Am trying to find out now who gave advise [sic] to use the make up photo - so damaging - as I know what it will become"
- 4) Jon Corner may be able to answer your question on who advised the McCanns to release THAT picture. He's friends with Esther McVey"
- 5) "No response yet re who advised of the use of recent photo of Madeleine - as soon as I get a response will let you know".

There has also been questioning of the following statement in one of today's newspapers:

"Kate and Gerry McCann have released a new picture of their daughter Madeleine as they prepare to commemorate tomorrow's third anniversary of her disappearance. The photo shows her when she was three **after a raid on the dressing-up box** - she has a pink bow in her hair and a gold bead necklace and is wearing blue eyeshadow".

The statement that the photograph shows her 'after a raid on the dressing-up box' implies that Madeleine made herself up but is open to serious question for at least the following reasons:

- a) it is doubtful if Madeleine could have put on the necklace herself without adult help
- b) similarly, the eyeshadow looks neatly put on in certain places around the eye, whereas a three-year-old attempting to put on eyeshadow would have probably made a mess of it

- c) Madeleine appears to have no eyelashes. Photographic experts who have analysed the picture suggest that colour has been digitally added on, hiding their eyelashes
- d) Madeleine's eyebrows look quite different from other photos, possibly covered with some form of make-up
- e) There appear to be two obvious brush tool traces above the eye on the right of the photo.

Thus, whatever the truth about the circumstances under which this picture was taken, there are very good grounds for believing that an adult has applied the make-up and also of course been there to take the photograph. Taken together with two of the other images of Madeleine shown in the film, it is perhaps not surprising that, for example, on sites like 'Twitter', 'Facebook' and other forums, comments like the following have been made:

"The picture of Madeleine reminds me of JonBenét Ramsey's beauty pageant photos, that kind of images could entice sexual predators".

"If CEOP endorse this type of public relations for a supposed missing child, then their role in child protection has to be questioned!"

"The latest photo the McCanns have released makes for very uncomfortable viewing. Alongside the Gaspars' statements, something is very wrong here".

The context here includes the ever-increasing sexualisation of young children, highlighted recently when a high street store, Primark, had to withdraw the marketing of padded bikini tops to 7-year-olds, following a storm of protest from parents. The dressing up of young children to look adult has been condemned by most child welfare organisations and with good reason. For example, a recent Home Office commissioned report stated: "The evidence gathered in the review suggests a clear link between consumption of sexualised images, a tendency to view women as objects and the acceptance of aggressive attitudes and behaviour as the norm".

The circumstances in which that photograph of Madeleine was taken may have been wholly innocent, but as many people have been saying today, its use by your clients the McCanns in their attempts to locate a missing child possibly abducted by paedophiles is surely inappropriate. ***We would therefore ask you and your clients to remove the video from circulation and from YouTube.***

Your clients obviously still want the whole world to look for Madeleine and not forget about Madeleine. The problem is that we do not know where to look nor who to look for. For example, fourteen different artists' impressions have been published in British newspapers of

people whom the McCanns claim are either the suspected abductor or 'persons of interest'. Twelve of these are men and two are women.

As for where to look, the advice given by the McCanns' private investigators suggests that despite using the services of many of them for nearly three years, there is not a single piece of useful information that you can give to the public which would enable us to know where to begin to look. Despite millions of pounds being spent on Metodo 3, Control Risks Group, Red Defence, Oakley International, senior ex-Metropolitan Police detectives, senior ex-MI5 security staff and now the team of ex-Detective Inspector Dave Edgar and ex-Detective Sergeant Arthur Cowley, we have not a jot of information on where to look.

Mr Edgar told newspapers last year that he was 'convinced' (his word) that Madeleine was being held 'in a prison lair within 10 miles of Praia da Luz in the lawless hills around'. Subsequently you and Mr Edgar told a press conference that a conversation at 2.00am (which had been kept secret for two-and-a-half years) between a British banker who had been drinking round the bars of Barcelona and a woman looking like Victoria Beckham and with an Australian accent was 'a strong lead' and as a result a nationwide alert was put out in Australia. Prior to that, in December 2007, Mr Francisco Marco, the boss of the first major detective agency used by your clients, Metodo 3, told the British media that he 'knew Madeleine was alive', that 'his men are closing in on where she is being kept' and that 'Madeleine will be home by Christmas'.

It would surely be much more helpful to the public to give out the best description of the abductor that the McCanns' various detective agencies have, between them, been able to compile, so we know who to look for, and to give the public as much information as you are able to about what really happened to her. You have often been quoted in the newspapers as saying: "Our investigations are confidential...we cannot disclose the information our investigators have" etc. But this gives the public no help at all in knowing where to look for Madeleine.

I trust you will pass these comments on to your clients. At the same time we are raising with Mr Gamble of the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP) and other organisations concerned with the welfare of children whether they approve of appeals for a missing child being made using images of that child in a pose for the cameras and with a considerable degree of adult make-up.

Yours sincerely

Tony Bennett, Secretary