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First Look

'Making a Murderer' blurs line between justice and entertainment (+video)

After recent release of the popular Netflix documentary miniseries, 'Making a Murderer,' viewers are calling for the president to pardon Steven Avery.

By **Lonnie Shekhtman**, Staff | JANUARY 4, 2016


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Kirk Wagner/The Post-Crescent/AP | [View Caption](#)

Nearly 180,000 people have signed an [online petition](#) calling on the president to pardon Steven Avery, a 53-year-old outcast whom many believe was wrongfully convicted of the murder of a freelance photographer.

The petition's author, Michael Seyedian from Arvada, Colo., was inspired to act after watching a Netflix documentary about Mr. Avery's case called "Making a Murderer." It depicts a young, poor, uneducated man who was released in 2003 from 18 years in prison for a wrongful rape conviction only to be sentenced to life in prison a couple of years later for the death of Teresa Halbach, a freelance photographer who visited the Avery family salvage yard to take photos of cars on Halloween and was never seen alive again.



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"After viewing it, I am outraged with the injustices which have been allowed to compound and left unchecked in the case of Steven Avery of Manitowoc County in Wisconsin, U.S.A.," wrote Mr. Seyedian in the petition.

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"Avery's unconstitutional mistreatment at the hands of corrupt local law enforcement is completely unacceptable and is an abomination of due process," he wrote.

But the special prosecutor in Avery's case, Ken Kratz, says the documentary, which condensed hundreds of hours of footage into 10 one-hour episodes, omits the overwhelming amount of physical evidence that links Avery to the homicide. Mr. Kratz said the filmmakers, Laura Ricciardi and Moira Demos, did not give him an opportunity to tell his side of the story.

"Anytime you edit 18 months' worth of information and only include the statements or pieces that support your particular conclusion, that conclusion should be reached," Kratz said.

Since the release of the documentary in December, Kratz has been the target of dozens of threats and insults from people who are passionate about the injustice depicted in the series.

"Suggestions that I shouldn't even be walking around were offered ... and really lots of really troubling pieces of correspondence," Kratz said.

A resurgence of true-crime dramas has opened up several long-forgotten cases to the court of public opinion. First, with the first season of the wildly popular podcast "Serial," which through a series of highly entertaining and suspenseful episodes in 2014 questioned the murder conviction of Adnan Syed for death of his ex-girlfriend Hae Min Lee in 1999.

Last year brought the HBO documentary miniseries "The Jinx," about wealthy eccentric Robert Durst who was linked to two killings and the mysterious disappearance of his wife. And in December, came "Making a Murderer."

The publicity around the Serial podcast motivated the Baltimore City Circuit Judge Martin Welch in November to grant a hearing on additional evidence that was presented in the podcast, which possibly could lead to a new trial of Mr. Syed.



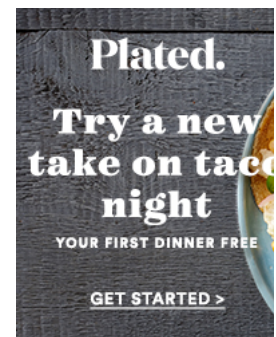
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Mr. Durst, the star of *The Jinx*, was arrested on the eve of the show’s finale, which linked him to three killings.

What will happen to Mr. Avery’s remains to be seen, though as the Washington Post points out, [a pardon is not legally possible](#), as presidential pardons apply only for [federal criminal convictions](#).

This report uses material from Reuters.

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