

Jake Adelstein
Letter of Resignation*

February 24, 2011

○○○
Head of National Geographic Television
○○○
Washington, DC 20036

Re: Resignation/INSIDE YAKUZA

Dear Mr. ●●●:

After much correspondence from both myself and my attorneys with National Geographic Television, in hopes of professionally resolving serious concerns over the documentary, INSIDE YAKUZA aka GANGLAND TOKYO, and seeing those concerns disregarded, I now feel I have no other choice than to totally resign from any consultancy on the project, return payments, and completely disassociate myself from what, in spite of my genuine efforts, will be a flawed project, and potentially one with serious consequences.

I agreed to take on this project because National Geographic led me to believe that they were interested in making a factual, insightful documentary on how the yakuza have metamorphosed from common thugs into elaborate corporate structures capable of large-scale financial fraud and stock manipulation. I thought it would be informative and useful for the public to know. I also set conditions that the program not be broadcast in Japan (I realize now that in the YouTube age, everything ends up on the net. I'm a Luddite in that sense). Several times abruptly, the direction and focus of the documentary was changed and I have done my best to comply with the barrage of requests, even when it meant scrapping carefully planned appointments.

Therefore, I'm resigning from this project, and returning the money for two very worrisome reasons: firstly, because I haven't been able to verify the factual accuracy within reasonable time periods, and secondly, because NGT has put myself, its Japanese staff, my sources and several volunteer participants in serious danger.

The eventual revelation that NGT doesn't seem actually interested in factual accuracy was very disappointing for me. I had always assumed that the documentary would be of high quality, not

sensationalistic and that attention would be paid to the safety of the individuals involved. I was hired to check this "factual accuracy" of the documentary, and not as NGT later asserted, "the general accuracy" of the program. If "general accuracy" is now the gold standard for journalism, I think I'd like to retire. Seriously. Is that the standard for National Geographic Television or just this documentary? In fact, after pointing out multiple egregious errors in one draft of the program and having those concerns brushed aside, it became clear that rather than a **documentary** NGT wanted to make "a film."

My requests to have all the materials available to verify the factual accuracy were repeatedly denied. It's impossible to verify the facts if one don't have them. Even the request for a final version of the script and a copy of the nearly finished film was turned down.

I am actually glad rather than angry that all my footage was cut from the documentary. At this point in time, that is the least of my concerns. Under Japanese law, if during the course of your work you engage in negligent behavior that results in injury, you can be held criminally responsible and arrested, if charges are filed. The Japanese penal code refers to this as 業務上過失死傷 (gyomujokashitsushicho). I will have to warn everyone involved of the potentially explosive situation since I have no say in whether or not you will air the problematic footage. Additionally, as this has already become an issue that has incited much anger in the tightly knit yakuza community, your official statement concerning the future of this documentary is now irrelevant.

This brings me to the most alarming issue that has arisen: the dangerous neglect and attitude shown by the NGT staff to the highly sensitive matters they are dealing with. I should have known trouble was brewing when I brought to the attention of the director that canceling appointments with the police and other interviews on the spur of the moment, as he had started to become notorious for doing, was a bad idea and alienated people. His response was, "I don't really care if you lose face or not Jake - I'm trying to make a film and I need access to interesting people instead of people you don't know, haven't met and haven't talked to. You really need to start realizing this bullshit Japanese shit has to stop NOW. Access is what you're being paid for - and access is not what we're getting."

From the start of this project, I have sent materials to National Geographic Television warning them of the dangers of reporting on

the yakuza. There have been numerous attacks on journalists and public figures in the past years; in fact, we interviewed two journalists who have been attacked in the course of completing the documentary. If NGT were to watch their own footage they would realize this.

The response of the yakuza to unfavorable coverage is violence and terror. One of the former cops I interviewed on tape for the project, a tape that you should still have, says essentially, "It doesn't matter if a yakuza gives permission for an interview. If they change their mind, you pull the interview. Not to do it would result in people being harmed. Publishing or broadcasting a simple interview is never worth people getting beaten up or killed for."

This may come as a surprise to you but I'm actually also concerned about the safety of the yakuza you interviewed as well, who may not have received permission from their superiors. They may suffer retaliation from their own groups and be forced to atone for their errors in judgment by having to chop off a finger, or beaten, banished from their groups, and in the worst-case scenario, severely beaten or killed. Yakuza are human beings as well and some of them are decent people in their own right. The traditional yakuza are basically unlicensed security service providers. They receive a monthly stipend and in exchange when there is trouble at the shops or bars that pay them protection money, they resolve the problem. Those problems include drunken unruly customers or individuals who won't pay their bar tab, or damage the property of the owners, or assault the employees. I may not approve of their methods but they are not intrinsically evil and in fact, in many cases, they provide better security than commercial firms.

Despite many warnings prior to the arrival of the film crew, when I went home for my daughter's birthday for a few days during filming, the NGT film crew used the sources I had introduced and interviewed two members of a major Tokyo yakuza group on camera. I was not present for the filming so I do not know what promises were made. When the individuals changed their minds and asked for major scrubbing of the footage, the director sent them a reply saying he would not meet their requests. This made them very angry. I wasn't told about any of this and only found out the full details of the problem when [REDACTED]

One of the people I brought on board for the project, resigned over it, stating that the director had no consideration for the safety of the individual's family members in Japan. The incident ruined a good friendship.

I should have demanded a copy and read them from start to finish before agreeing to work for NGT as a consultant. It was a serious error on my part.

Finally, once again please at least correct the glaring factual errors. In your dramatization of the ex-yakuza, now ●●●, quitting his organization you have the logo the Yamaguchi-gumi displayed on the office walls. That is an insult to the Yamaguchi-gumi who was not involved in any way. The dramatization scene in which the journalist is shown hospitalized is also a departure from the facts and must be removed. It is not what happened and thus not factual.

Please inform me where to return the money and I will take care of it as soon as possible. All further contact should be done directly through my lawyers. As an acknowledged expert on the subject matter we were dealing with, I would advise you to inform your own staff of possible problems and dangers. The gang boss you have angered has a long reach. Their group also has members fluent in English capable of doing basic research.

If you find these warnings to be hyperbolic, I suggest you do some research on the fate of journalists/writers/directors who have reported unfavorably on the yakuza in the past, including ●●, ●●, and deceased film director Juzo Itami, just to name a few. The assassination of the Mayor of Nagasaki is also well known.

Finally, I suggest you consult local law enforcement and apprise them of the situation but that is your call.

Please address any questions you may have to my counsel, ●●●.

Sincerely,

Jake Adelstein

Attachments

*Portions of this letter have been redacted or partially altered to protect the confidentiality and safety of those involved.