

60 Minutes Story on Police Misuse of Facial Recognition Software is Worth Watching

May 19, 2021 - Most Americans already know that they are being watched nearly all of the time. That's largely because of the technology that most of us choose to carry with us on a daily basis. As smart phones have become ubiquitous, the technology they use has become more intrusive; tracking where we go, what we do online and even who we come in contact with. But smart phones aren't the only threat to privacy. There are both government and commercial systems which you don't carry with you, that are tracking your movements. And as a recent story from 60 Minutes points out, the results these systems produce can be devastating to anyone who is misidentified by them.

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For years now, there have been systems that track license plates on cars. If you choose to drive across the country, there is a pretty good chance that law enforcement and some commercial operations will be able to reconstruct that trip on a map. But now, with even more powerful computing and networking systems available, facial recognition software is being used to track our movements too. And because state governments are aiding in building these tracking systems, there is a pretty good chance that your face is already a part of their database.

According to the report, if you have a driver's license of a state issued ID card, your picture has probably been placed in a facial recognition database. At present, there is no way for people to opt out of these databases and very few laws governing their use. And because the algorithms used to review the pictures included in them are not infallible, some people have found themselves being arrested or investigated simply because they look something like another person captured on film while committing a crime.

For anyone concerned about personal privacy, the report is well worth watching. You can find a copy of it here.
by Jim Malmberg

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