

Thank you for allowing ample time for information sharing. It is very likely that your video will be the only one covering this drama that actually includes my perspective, so again, I appreciate you reaching out to collect first hand information. No furry news source has even attempted to do so before now, including Dogpatch, and I've spoken to them before to contribute to other articles, so it wasn't a lack of ability on their part.

I will do my best to answer your questions thoroughly. If you have follow up questions or desire clarification on anything at all, don't hesitate to ask. I am absolutely an open book on the entire history of The Dealers Den up to now. I have enough of a story for you to make a three part docu-series if you really wanted it, explaining the fallout in overwhelming detail. I'll start though, by answering the questions you've sent in regards to the interview.

At Anthrocon 2014, I was invited to be a part of a local Pittsburgh TV news station interview as a background character while reporters asked Uncle Kage and Kuddlepup about the convention and furries in general. Shortly after that interview ended, I was pulled aside to do a radio interview with a reporter for National Public Radio and then another interview for The Pittsburgh Gazette. (Gazette: <https://www.furaffinity.net/view/13969446>) A few months after the event, as a response to the interviews I did at Anthrocon, I was contacted on Facebook by a reporter in my hometown for the Florida Times Union - to conduct a completely new interview about furries, the conventions, as well as the local 'Furry Game Night' that I hosted at my house each week. All of these experiences were positive and uplifting to the community. I am speculating that this last one was found by the Associate Producer of Jesse Watters: Primetime while searching for Florida Furries that might be willing to do an interview with them about the Florida convention coming up.

On Wednesday, May 31st, I was contacted by the Associate Producer, looking for a furry to interview and "Explain their side of things" in their upcoming segment covering the new Florida Bill SB 1438, which restricts 'Adult Live Performances' in front of children under penalty of a fine or even potential jail time for the offenders, causing policy changes to restrict minors at the upcoming convention "Megaplex" in Orlando, Florida, traditionally the most family friendly convention in the furry convention circuit.

Of course they were as friendly as they could be during the initial request for contact and when I brought up my concerns that Furries and the media had a rather checkered past, I was assured that the interview would of course remain positive. The Associate Producer wrote the following:

"Absolutely positive! Jesse never villifies anyone he's just genuinely curious about stories like this and loves to give people a platform to tell their story that might not otherwise get a platform. We are not trying to harm the community at all just interested in it!"

"I promise we are on your side and just want to help share the story. So Jesse never plans his questions ahead of time he does it on the fly but I promise you he is the kindest host on Fox News. He never attacks people he is genuinely interested in unique stories- and this intrigued him. If I thought he was out to get your community I wouldn't have continued this conversation with you I promise- it'll all be positive! And Fun!"

"It's my job to protect our guests and their reputation! I understand your concerns but I truly promise this will be positive for not only you but your community as well. We never want to harm our guests or their reputation."

During the entire dialogue, the producer was very insistent that the interview be conducted 'in fursuit'.

I was still a bit concerned about the potential for backlash, even after the reassurance from the producer – this was Fox News, after all. I decided to reach out to my closest friends, family, and even some professionals I knew that were familiar with media. Additionally, I put a Twitter poll on my profile to see the sentiment of those in my Twitter audience. While the results of the poll had weight on my decision, I do not consider my choices to be purely democratic. I hosted the poll out of curiosity more than direction, and I deliberately left the poll results up after it ended to display that the decision to go on Fox was indeed my own, against the wishes of those that voted, and I am taking full responsibility for the outcome. I would very much like to make it clear that I understood the risks I was taking when I accepted the interview and that I do not regret my decision. This was not decided on a whim.

I have been a part of the furry fandom community for nearly 18 years (since 2006). In that time, I have experienced just about everything there is to really experience. I have been a fursuiter, a vendor, a panelist, an event host, and everything in between. I have worked directly with conventions, created business alliances/partnerships, and have generally been a force for progress in the community, offering a 'nearly-free' platform for almost eight years with the goal of uplifting and promoting small artists/makers, and improving commerce in the fandom overall. For years, I dedicated myself to 'giving back' for all of the wonderful memories and experiences the furry fandom gave me. From my perspective, I was a business leader in the community – and what do business leaders do for their company and the people they serve? They take on challenges and risks that might otherwise be passed up, like a news interview.

I am no stranger to risk and I am not afraid to fail. Some of my greatest successes are preceded by failure. Regardless of what happened during the interview, I was going to learn something through the experience that could only make me a better leader, speaker, etc. At the same time, I was sure that the news would garner attention for The Dealers Den, regardless of if it was mentioned or not, and increase traffic and awareness of our service (which it did). Even bad news is good news in advertising, right?

To say that the content of the 5-minute LIVE interview caught me off-guard would be a gross understatement. I had spent several days preparing for an interview discussing Florida legislation and

was met with, "And why are you dressed up like a raccoon?" preceded by an out of context video of furries getting spanked.

I suppose I deserved that for trusting Fox News to give furries a fair shake.

The three days following the interview were some of the most stressful days of my entire life. I ingested more hate all at once from hundreds to thousands of strangers on the internet than I had ever experienced in my entire life in total. I received the most hate for being a Libertarian, which at the time seemed odd to me because Libertarians believe in Liberty and Freedom as a core value. Only after several months of studying cancel culture did I understand their position. I received hate for accepting the interview against the desire of the Twitter Poll results. I received hate for my honest replies to criticism and I received hate for standing up for myself 1 v 700. There was no way to appease the mob, and worse, the narrative was morphing uncontrollably. Suddenly, the fursuit I wore in the interview was said to be 'stolen' and I was labeled a Nazi, Racist, Homophobic, Transphobic, Bigoted, Alt-Right Zoosadist, none of which are true. The Twitter cancellation of Vitai Slade was in full force for about a week in total before everyone moved on to 'The Fox and his Lilly' drama with Foxglove/Peacewolf and completely forgot about the focused hatred of me.

At this point though, the damage was done, and I was rather distraught, to say the least. The community I loved had turned on me and the Volunteer Administrative team that I had brought on, trained, and worked with for years, turned on me too. The narrative had spun so out of control that not even my Admin team cared to ask questions. They assumed that most of the accusations were true, but even if they weren't, I was a Nazi, Racist, Homophobic, Transphobic, Bigoted, Alt-Right Zoosadist that didn't align with their very left-leaning political positions, so clearly I had to go. There was no investigation, as I trained my Admins to do for every incident that needs to be addressed by the team. Instead, they split off and created their own group to discuss the drama and decide on what action to take.

Ironically, they had zero power to enact any decision they might have come to. I legally owned 100% of The Dealers Den, LLC and had complete control over the Telegram Network which I created/built in February 2016, the website platform which I acquired in January 2018, then revived from near dissolution, and all company resources/accounts. If I desired it, I could have fired every single one of them and started fresh with a new team, or I could have shut it down completely and deleted it all, never to return - but that's not the path I wanted to pursue.

I didn't start The Dealers Den for personal gain. I started it to give back to the community I fell in love with 18 years ago. This project was always meant to be my gift to the furry fandom... a legacy that could hopefully outlast me and provide value for decades to come. After I ingested those three days of pure hate, the passion I had for the furry community just about completely extinguished. I could not continue to give to a group that would treat me with such vitriol after I had given so much of myself to them through my company, so I expedited my succession plan and passed the website and Telegram Network to Pax, as he had worked with me faithfully for seven years as my right hand man. He understood my goals and vision and could realistically keep it running without me atop the foundation we had built to this point.

FurForge came about as a direct result of my cancellation. They bought the same website platform that

The Dealers Den runs on and the entire business model seems to be centered around poaching members from The Dealers Den under the guise of inclusivity, acceptance, and love. A very predatory business model that only works because I've been labeled a Nazi, Racist, Homophobic, Transphobic, Bigoted, Alt-Right Zoosadist.

I left The Dealers Den out of my own volition, but my decision was due to the circumstances I faced. Above all else, I did not want innocent businesses that use and have come to rely on our service to get caught in the crossfire, so in the ashes of my destroyed passion and reputation, and with the interest of these companies in mind, I left. The Dealers Den, ultimately, is an advertising and service company. It cannot function without the community it aims to support and a serious boycott threatens that, especially as new competitors aim to scavenge whatever market share they can from this incident. As I'm sure you know, the furry fandom leans very far left and while I have some left-leaning views, my non-compliance with the entirety of that set of ideals was enough to threaten everything my team and I had built over the years.

In response to the ostracization and shame, I have left not only my company, but the furry fandom as a collective community. The new generation of furries, replacing the old guard, do not have the same values or ideals that were common among furries of ten years ago, and I feel that it has lost its way. I am deeply saddened by this, but there is not much I can do to change it, especially not now. I am hopeful that one day, furries can look back on this incident with a little regret and maybe a bit more understanding. The fandom does not have to be the toxicity it spreads on Twitter.

Thank you for reading my story.

~ Vitai Slade ~ [12/07/23]