

The Megan Meier MySpace Suicide: A case study exploring the social aspects of convergent media, citizen journalism, and online anonymity and credibility

By: Jacqueline Vickery

M.A. student, University of Texas at Austin, Dept. of Radio-TV-Film

In his book, *Convergence Culture*, Henry Jenkins explores the changing relationship between media audiences, producers, and content, in what he refers to as convergence media. These changes are not only evidenced by changes in technology, but rather involve social changes as well. As historian Lisa Gitelman says, a medium is not merely a communication technology, but also a set of cultural and social practices enabled by the medium. The internet, as a medium, challenges traditional top-down approaches to traditional news gathering and reporting by affording opportunities for “average citizens” to participate in the journalistic process. Anyone with access to a computer and an internet connection can, in theory, participate in the journalistic process by gathering information, offering an alternative opinion, and engaging in dialog via message boards and blogs. However, a social concept entwined within this practice is the formation of disembodied communities and identities, in which participants can opt to remain anonymous. Such anonymity brings to the surface new questions of credibility, questions which seem to have few, if any, definitive answers as of yet.

I will be examining the Megan Meier MySpace “hoax”¹ as it has been dubbed by the media, as evidence of convergence media, and as an entry point into the unintended consequences of citizen journalism and online anonymity. As I write this, many questions and allegations are still circulating in regards to exactly what events transpired the month leading up to Megan’s suicide, who was involved, and what the legal repercussions (if

¹ I am reluctant to use the word “hoax” to describe an event that resulted in the death of a 13 year-old girl, but since that is how the media most often refers to it, I will stick to that language. But by using this word

any) should be. My goals are not to paint a perfect timeline of the events, to discuss the legality of the offenses, to place blame on the victim, to defend the alleged culprit, or to elicit further sympathy for or aggravation towards any parties involved - although most of these issues will be briefly addressed in order to contextualize my arguments - such is not the overall purpose of this paper. My goal however, is to look at the role blogs and alternative online news sources played in providing information about the case. I will examine the reactions to the blogs/news sites, analyze the disembodied social communities that evolved around these sites, and consider the roles of anonymity and credibility as two key factors in the hoax(es) (one hoax actually birthed another, as will be explained later).

Before analyzing the role of the media, I will briefly relay the story as most commonly told by major professional news outlets. Megan Meier was an overweight, A.D.D. 13 year-old girl battling low self-esteem and depression. She successfully convinced her mother to allow her to have a MySpace account; Megan's mom was reluctant but monitored her daughter's activities and even had the password to Megan's account. In October 2006 Megan was contacted by 16 year-old "Josh Evans" via MySpace. Flattered by his attention, and attracted to the young admirer, Megan's mom agreed she could add "Josh" as a friend, and the two began corresponding on the site. After winning Megan's trust and affection, "Josh" turned on Megan and told her he no longer wanted to be her friend "because of the way she treats her friends". "Josh" and others began to post bulletins on MySpace calling Megan "fat" and a "slut". Upset, Megan called her mom to tell her what was happening, her mom advised her to get off the computer, however Megan did not comply. She then received a message from "Josh"

am in no way intending to make light of a serious situation.

that told her “the world would be a better place without her.” Megan then hung herself in her bedroom closet and died at the hospital the following day.

Six weeks later a neighbor, whose identity has remained anonymous, informed the Meiers that “Josh Evans” was not real, but rather was a fake persona created by a mom of one of Megan’s former friends who lived four houses down from the Meiers. Allegedly this neighbor created the fake profile to monitor what Megan was saying about her own daughter (a former friend of Megan’s). The Meiers were outraged that an adult had been the one to emotionally deceive and abuse their daughter. The friend’s mom knew Megan well, knew she was emotionally unstable and on medication for depression, and yet she still deceived and taunted Megan. In response, the Meiers smashed a fooseball table they’d been keeping in their garage as a favor for the neighbors (a Christmas present for the neighbor’s children). They threw the smashed pieces over the neighbors’ lawn with a sign that read, “Merry Christmas.” These neighbors then filed a police report and are suing the Meiers for the damage. Outraged, the Meiers hold this person responsible for the death of their daughter, but under the advisement of the FBI, were advised not to discuss the case. The FBI spent the next year investigating the family without their knowledge, and it wasn’t until November 10, 2007 that the story surfaced amongst various media sources. Local and national news alike did not disclose the name of the friend’s mom and she continually refused to comment, thus reporters relied heavily on police reports. People immediately started asking for the name of the mom to be disclosed, but news sources were unwilling to identify her (Pokin, 2007).

However, Sarah Wells, an unprofessional blogger in Virginia, was so outraged that she took matters into her own hands. She was able to track down the police reports

(involving the fooseball table incident) and confirm the name with someone in the neighborhood; she successfully identified Lori Drew as the creator of the fake MySpace profile. On November 13, she not only posted Lori Drew's name on her personal blog, *Bluemerle* (hosted by Blogger), but also the specific words "Josh" said to Megan that most-likely prompted her suicide: Everyone in O'Fallon knows how you are. You are a bad person and everybody hates you. Have a shitty rest of your life. The world would be a better place without you (Wells, 2007). This information was enough to fuel a hate campaign of internet vigilantism against the Drew family. Once the name was known, readers and commenters began publishing more information, including the name of Lori's husband, their address, email addresses, cell phone numbers, the name and address of their advertising business and the names of clients who had done business with the Drews - all of which was intended to cause backlash towards the Drews in attempt to gain some sense of justice for Megan's untimely death (Zetter, 2007).

There are (at least) two points of significance to the unfolding of these events: one, it was professional news sources that were forced to respond to civilian journalism (rather than the other way around), and two, the internet community more actively responded to the amateur news sources. To address the first, on her blog Wells admits to finding Lori Drew's name earlier than she was willing to publish it. She had reasons to believe others had also discovered the name through police reports, but she admits that she and others were apprehensive to publish the new-found information. Perhaps her hesitation was in part due to a fear of repercussions - that is, what purpose would it really serve? Surely the neighborhood, the people who were most closely affected, already knew her identity, so why tell the world? Wells alludes to this hesitation on her blog, but

justifies the disclosure of Drew's name because what she [Drew] had done was "outrageous" and she deserved "outrage."

However, perhaps another reason for the reluctance (that Wells did not explicitly identify but I am hypothesizing) was that she was purposely and deliberately upstaging the professional news sources. By releasing Lori Drew's name, Wells was effectively sending the message that the public has the right to decide what information they should be privy to - people were asking professional news sources for Drew's identity to be disclosed but it was Wells who happened to answer their plea. Wells did not just search police records for her own benefit, but rather distributed the otherwise privy information for anyone to read. It was not until three days later, on November 17, that CNN revealed Lori Drew's name, other news sources soon followed suit. Perhaps not so coincidentally this is the same day that the reputable online news source, *The Smoking Gun*, published copies of the official police reports. These served to not only identify Lori Drew, but simultaneously validated Wells' earlier claim, thus further solidifying Wells' online credibility. It would be another three days (November 20) before professional news sources released these same police reports.

Perhaps an unintended consequence of overriding the professional news sources' decision to protect Lori Drew's identity was that it created a gap between those in the know and those who were not. In other words, people who had been following the Megan Meier case online had a greater "collective intelligence" (as Jenkins refers to it) in relation to the case than did non-internet news gatherers. Three days before the "public" knew Lori Drew's name, online communities had already called for active vigilantism against the Drews, including shunning their business in order to run them out of town.

Despite the fact that few people knew who Sarah Wells was or what her credentials (or lack thereof) might be, the online community willingly accepted her identification of Lori Drew without much (or any) contestation. In referencing French theorist Pierre Levy, Jenkins discusses collective intelligence in reference to online fan communities, that is, we cannot all know everything, but together we can know a lot more. Additionally, he discusses shared knowledge as information the group (in this case the thousands of blog readers) accepts as fact, essentially closing the door for further debate about the issue. By pooling their knowledge, online communities such as non-commercialized news sources and other blogs, accepted that Lori Drew was in fact the creator of Josh Evans' MySpace profile, and often provided links to each others' sources. This community did not need affirmation from professional news sources to confirm their knowledge. Therefore the release of this information did not have to solidify what the online communities already knew, but rather served to enlighten the non-internet world by bringing them up-to-date with information others had possessed for three days. In his book, *The Cult of the Amateur*, Andrew Keen claims that, "Citizen journalists simply do not have the resources to bring us reliable news. They lack not only expertise and training, but connections and access to information" (48). And yet Sarah Wells proves Keen completely wrong; non-credentialed, untrained citizens are not only accessing information supposedly unavailable to them, but they are also distributing this information to the public, and perhaps most significantly, the public believes it.

The fact that online readers are responding to citizen journalism brings me to my second point, and that is, online communities appear to be more actively engaging with non-traditional online news sources rather than professional journalism sources (with

relation to this specific case study at least). Websites such as *USA Today*, CNN, and local news websites elicited a few hundred comments at the very most. However, blogs and other non-corporate online news sources elicited thousands of comments, many of which post links to other non-corporate news sites as a way of further disseminating information. The rhetoric circulating within these comment boards is another paper all together. However, suffice it to say that the language and dialog on non-commercial sites greatly differs from that of commercial websites. This is probably in part due to the censorship and user-agreements operating on corporate sites - they cannot allow foul language or discriminating and hateful speech on their site.

Blogs, on the other hand, do not necessarily have these same policies. For the most part, the comments left on corporate sites were much more tame, were supportive of the Meier family (many people were merely offering condolences), and were outraged by the Drews' actions. While the nature of the blogs' comment sections also had similar comments, they also had hateful, vengeful, and derogatory comments. What was most strikingly different though, (other than the presence of curse words) was the presence of debate and conversation. There were comments blaming MySpace and comments defending MySpace, comments blaming Megan's parents and comments defending Megan's parents, comments defending the Drews and comments suggesting the Drews "burn in hell", there were comments defending depression and others blaming depression as a really bad excuse, and on and on it goes. The comment section on various blogs are evidence for the "conversation among ordinary citizens" (51) that citizen journalist, Dan Gillmor, calls for in Keen's book. While Keen dismisses this kind of journalism as petty or insignificant, it is clearly attracting readers and breeding dialog not found on corporate

news sites; and all this is in addition to providing information not made available in professional journalism. In stark contrast to Keen's observation that citizen journalism "trivializes and corrupts serious debate" (54), these blogs appear to be generating a lot of debate. Granted, much of the debate revolves around commenters policing ignorant, misinformed, prejudiced and hateful comments, but the result is nonetheless a debate, which is more than can be found on professional journalism websites.

However, to counter this seemingly optimistic response to citizen journalism, I will now address the blog that began November 18, called *Megan Had It Coming*. In short, the blog's author posted two entries ("Set the record straight" and "Who's really at fault") alleging to be a classmate of Megan Meier's. The author referred to herself as "Kristen" and relayed details of what a "bitch" Megan was, how "psychotic" she was, and how "nobody liked her." Immediately commenters began to question the alleged identity of the blog's author - some people believed it was actually Lori Drew authoring the blog, others believed it was a friend or neighbor of Lori Drew's who had inside information into the scenario, and a third common hypothesis was that "Kristen" was actually Lori Drew's 14-year old daughter Sarah Drew. Those with enough internet savvy saw through the blog immediately and outed it as fake, despite these allegations though, other commenters continued to believe the blog was in some sense "authentic", that is, written by someone who at least knew Megan Meier. The overall tone and nature of the comments (totaling over 2000 individual comments on the first two entries) called for vengeance upon the entire Drew family. One commenter went so far as to "hope the entire family gets raped in hell." What was most shocking was not necessarily the hatred for Lori Drew, but rather the hatred towards her daughter. While certainly her daughter

played a role in the fake MySpace profile, it seems counterintuitive that people would seek to torment and bully a 14 year-old girl in the same way an adult had deceived and bullied a 13 year-old girl, which was the original source of the outrage.

On the third entry (“I am Lori Drew”) the blog’s author claimed to be Lori Drew and wrote a rather convincing entry sharing her side of the story. Even blogger and social networking scholar, danah boyd, started to believe that the entry was too well-written and detailed to be a fake, and began to accept the post as real (boyd, December 5, 2007). The disconnect between “pretending to be a classmate” and then “presenting yourself as the real Lori Drew” was too much of a discrepancy for some to accept, and yet, many did. “Lori Drew’s” compelling confession intended to elicit sympathy resulted in over 3,000 comments before the entry was removed.

It was at this point that the commenters became almost obsessed with identifying the blog’s author. People were hunting down email addresses, IP addresses, identifying similar posts in other blogs, and looking up mailing addresses, all in an attempt to name the author. However, also embedded within this were people who believed that the author was indeed Lori Drew. The comments became so vulgar and hateful, elevating beyond a level of shocking, and into a realm of deplorable. As law professor Daniel Solove of Georgetown says, "The problem is that Internet shaming actually destroys social control and makes things more anarchic, and it becomes very hard to regulate and stop it" (Zetter, 2007). By attempting retribution and seeking to reinstate social order of right and wrong, the internet mob (as they have been referred to), began to mirror and even exaggerate the erroneous acts for which they were so outraged in the first place. The comments were directed at one of three sources: the real Lori Drew, the author of this

perhaps fake blog (who they felt was inciting all this hatred), or towards each other as a way of policing the nature of the comments. However, regardless who the comments were directed towards, the tone was more or less the same - outrage and hatred.

It is at this point that anonymity and the formation of a disembodied community (albeit a rather dysfunctional one) begin to take on characteristics that are not often visible nor tolerated within embodied offline communities. "People don't mind doing (this kind of thing) as long as it doesn't cost them anything, as long as there's very little risk of retribution," says Robert Kurzban, professor of psychology at the University of Pennsylvania (Zetter, 2007). Because comments are decontextualized from embodied peer relations and because they lack any kind of social affirmation, it appears that the cloak of anonymity enables social behaviors not readily acted upon in offline communities. Wells is one of the few bloggers who did not remain anonymous when releasing Lori Drew's name; similarly, she has removed all comments from her blog that call for physical violence toward the Drew family. To what extent other bloggers are censoring comments is unknown, but regardless, the internet mob has gathered and found places to voice anger - primarily on *Megan Had It Coming* (whose comments totaled over 5,300 in the three weeks before it was removed).

During this time other news sites (CNN and Fox News in particular) began to report stories about *Megan Had It Coming*. Some were trying to discover the author's identity, while others were defending Lori Drew; her lawyer eventually made a public statement declaring that Drew had not posted nor commented on *any* online blogs or sources (Taylor, 2007). People began demanding that the site be taken down - be it for slander, libel, or derogatory reasons - people felt that the site was instigating more hatred

and causing pain to the Meier family by dishonoring their dead daughter. The St. Louis police division, Cyber Crimes, began to investigate whether any laws had been broken. On the night of Sunday, December 9, people got their wish; an entry titled “The Final Story” went up and the three previous entries came down. In this final post the author still claimed to be Lori Drew and was begging for people to leave her alone. At the end of the post the author says, “For everyone who doubts who this is, and the truth of what I write, I want you to watch this video very carefully,” and embedded within the post was a link to a You Tube video of “Never Gonna Give You Up” by Rick Astley². The final words on the blog say, “In case this blog gets taken down, I will do my best to continue to fight for my side of the story here,” and there was a link taking readers to a “Megan Had It Coming” Encyclopedia Dramatica entry³.

The blog was a hoax all along. To be “Rickrolled” means to deliberately deceive people on the internet (in order to get a laugh out of it) by redirecting them to the Rick Astley video. Encyclopedia Dramatica functions like Wikipedia, however, its goal is to document dramatic events online - primarily those involving deception and pranks. The community is made up of online trolls known as “lulz” (an evolved take on the plural “lol” meaning laugh out loud). All the trolls (individuals) within the “lulz” community identify themselves as “anonymous” when posting information online - and it is understood that even the members of the community do not know each other’s identities. The “Megan Had It Coming” entry on Encyclopedia Dramatica explains, “While the blog

² “Megan Got Rickrolled”

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LXJBxwTSol4&eurl=http://meganhaditcoming.blogspot.com/>. The video has been viewed over 4,000 times in the past 3 days,. However, it has elicited only 6 comments (or others have been removed). The comments declare this to be “fucking awesome” and an “epic win for an epic troll”. Many video responses are now popping up as well.

³ http://www.encyclopediadramatica.com/Megan_Had_It_Coming

appeared to be a defense of Lori Drew... it actually demonstrated the collective stupidity of thousands of internet users who confuse replying to blogs for having actual intellectual discourse.” Case in point, internet trolls did this for a laugh.

Did *Megan Had It Coming* elicit more anger? Did it capitalize upon the death of a 13 year-old girl? Did it make a mockery of a very serious tragedy? Did it incite an internet mob? Did it fuel the fire, slander the Drews, and lavish more pain upon the Meiers? Yes, yes, and yes, the blog served to do all of these things. However, did it also prove a point? Unfortunately, it did. While the “lulz” claim the commenters mistook the comments as “intellectual discourse”, I think there is a greater issue that surfaces here - and that is the issue of credibility. While there were certainly people who did not believe this blog to be authentic, there were thousands of people who did. In order for citizen journalism (and in turn, convergent media) to successfully operate, a system of checks and balances must be in place to ensure credibility. Jenkins discusses this in relation to fan communities, who, it would seem, have a better grasp of this concept than perhaps communities in more “serious” discussions such as this⁴. Despite attempts to reveal this blog for what it really was, participants appeared to blatantly disregard these accusations and instead chose to blindly accept the blog at face value. In an interview with ABC news days after the Megan Meier suicide, Nancy Willard, executive director of the Center for Safe and Responsible Internet Use says, "When emotionally vulnerable young people get online, they can be very easily manipulated," Such a comment serves to contain the rhetoric of internet safety and deception to childhood. However, as demonstrated by *Megan Had It Coming*, it is not only children who can be “easily manipulated”, but rather

⁴ See Chapter 1 of *Convergence Culture* - “Spoiling *Survivor*: The Anatomy of Knowledge Community“, - for examples.

adults as well.

Internet education needs to expand the conversation to include adults, as well as children. By conceptualizing childhood as a period in which children are viewed as vulnerable victims lacking agency (who must then be sheltered, protected, and educated), a false dichotomy between childhood and adulthood is created. While I am in no way insinuating that children should not be protected and educated, I am arguing that the discourse needs to move beyond these idyllic notions of childhood and begin to recognize their limitations - that is adults and children alike need lessons in internet safety. A good place to start would be education and mechanisms that ensure credibility, even when sources are presented anonymously.

One common critique found on the Megan Meier message boards - particularly the *St. Charles Journal* (the most widely read and cited source for the Megan Meier story) - was the dismissal of cyberbullying as no big deal. Hundreds of commenters came forward to say that they too were lied to, picked on, victims of rumors, had falling outs with friends, had low self-esteem, and were clinically depressed in middle school, and yet, they did not kill themselves. Similarly, many of these same comments implied that Megan was foolish to fall for a fake profile, or to get so emotionally wrapped up with an internet relationship. And yet, *Megan Had It Coming* proves how easy it is for anyone to be deceived by online profiles and to get emotionally involved with the dialog. Regardless how one may interpret the *Megan Had It Coming* comments, one indisputable observation is that it was an emotionally charged space.

If convergent media is indicative of a changing media landscape - one in which consumption and production are blurred - the Megan Meier case stands as evidence for

both the positive and negative consequences of evolving technologies and social practices found in today's media culture. It would be foolish to blame MySpace for Megan's suicide. Earlier generations may have written secret notes and placed them in mailboxes or lockers, but such a fabrication would not be believable amongst today's youth. Bullying, deception, and rumors are nothing new - merely the medium has changed. Likewise it would be foolish to overly praise the positive role blogs played in this case (particularly Sarah Wells'), just as it would be equally as thoughtless to dismiss the role based solely on the negative outcome of *Megan Had It Coming*. Convergent media is more than changes in technology, it includes changes in the social practices functioning within the technology. For the time being, it seems that the social protocols are lagging behind the evolving communication technologies. And until discourses are expanded to include the education of adults, as well as children, anonymity and a lack of credibility will continue to demonstrate the pitfalls, rather than the benefits, of convergent media.

References

“Are the parents who MySpace-talked Megan Meier into killing herself ready to atone,

um...?” Posted on the blog, *Jezebel* on November 15, 2007. Available at:

<http://jezebel.com/gossip/drew-no-blood/are-the-parents-who->

myspace+tormented-megan-meier-into-killing-herself-ready-to-atone-um-323254.php

boyd, D. “Overprotective parenting and bullying: Who is to blame for the suicide

of Megan Meier?” Posted December 5, 2007 on her blog: *apopenia*. Available

online at: <http://www.zephoria.org/thoughts/archives/2007/12/05/>

overprotective.html.

Gitelman, L. (2006). *Always Already New: Media History and the Data of Culture*.

Cambridge: MIT Press.

Gunn, A. “What’s New, Curt and Lori Drew?” Published November 19, 2007 on *USA*

Today. Available online at: <http://blogs.usatoday.com/techspace/2007/11/whats->

new-curt.html.

Jenkins, H. (2006). *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*. New

York: New York University Press.

“Justice for Megan Meier” posted on the blog *Bloggin’ in the Suburbs* available at:

<http://bloggintheburbs.blogspot.com/2007/11/justice-for-megan-meier.html>.

Keen, A. (2007). *The Cult of the Amateur: How Today’s Internet is Killing Our Culture*.

New York: The Doubleday Broadway Publishing Company.

Levy, P. (1997). *Collective Intelligence: Mankind’s Emerging World in Cyberspace*.

Cambridge: Perseus Books.

Maag, C. (2007). "A Hoax Turned Fatal Draws Anger but No Charges". *The New York Times*, published November 28, 2007. Available online at:

http://www.nytimes.com/2007/11/28/us/28hoax.html?_r=1&oref=slogin.

Megan Had It Coming (2007). Blog available at: <http://meganhaditcoming.blogspot.com/>.

"Megan Had It Coming' is a hoax and other news." Posted on the blog *MyCrimeSpace* on December 5, 2007 (note: 4 days prior to the confirmation that it was a hoax).

Available at: <http://www.mycrimespace.com/2007/12/05/megan-had-it-coming-is-a-hoax-and-other-news/>.

"Megan Had it Coming' is a hoax part II." Posted on the blog *MyCrimeSpace* on December 6, 2007. Available at:

<http://www.mycrimespace.com/2007/12/06/megan-had-it-coming-is-a-hoax-part-ii/>.

"Megan Had It Coming' is a hoax part III: hoax confirmed. Posted on *MyCrimeSpace* on December 10. Available at: <http://www.mycrimespace.com/2007/12/10/megan-had-it-coming-is-a-hoax-part-iii-hoax-confirmed/>.

"Megan Meier's tormenters named." Posted on the blog *Myspace Crime* on November 16, 2007. Available at: <http://www.mycrimespace.com/2007/11/16/megan-meiers-tormentors-named/>.

[meiers-tormentors-named/](http://www.mycrimespace.com/2007/11/16/megan-meiers-tormentors-named/).

Megan Meier Vigilantes. Blog available at: <http://www.megansvigilantes.blogspot.com/>.

"Parents: 'Cyberbullying Led to Teen's Suicide.'" ABC News, published

November 19, 2007. Available online at: <http://abcnews.go.com/GMA/Story?id=3882520&page=1>.

Pokin, S. "A real person, a real death." Published in the *St. Charles Journal* on

- November 13, 2007. Available online at: http://stcharlesjournal.stltoday.com/articles/2007/11/24/news/sj2tn20071110-1111stc_pokin_1.ii1.txt.
- “St. Charles County Police Reports.” Posted on *The Smoking Gun* on November 17, 2007 available at: <http://www.thesmokinggun.com/archive/years/2007/1120072megan4.html>.
- “The suicide that proved we are still a nation capable of ‘shock.’” Posted on the blog *Jezebel* on November 28, 2007. Available at: <http://jezebel.com/gossip/rip/the-suicide-that-proved-we-are-still-a-nation-capable-of-shock-327723.php>.
- Taylor, B. “Woman disavows blog on girl’s suicide.” Published in *The Seattle Times* on December 9, 2007. Available online at: http://seattletimes.nwsourc.com/html/nationworld/2004061581_websuicide09.html.
- Wells, S. “What was said to Megan Meier” posted on the blog *Bluemerle* on November 13, 2007. Available at: <http://bluemerle.blogspot.com/2007/11/what-you-said-to-megan-meier.html>.
- Wells, S. “Lori Drew CNN Capture - Police report names Drew.” Posted on the blog *Bluemerle* on November 17, 2007. Available at: <http://bluemerle.blogspot.com/2007/11/lori-drew-cnn-capture-police-report.html>.
- Zetter, K. “Cyberbullying Suicide Stokes the Internet Fury Machine.” *Wired*. Published November, 21, 2007. Available online: http://www.wired.com/politics/onlinerights/news/2007/11/vigilante_justice.