

Civil rights group calls for DA Kari Brandenburg to vigorously prosecute vigilantes

written by NARSOL | September 9, 2013

Cambridge MA—Reform Sex Offender Laws Inc. (RSOL) calls on Bernalillo County District Attorney Kari Brandenburg to follow the recommendation of the Albuquerque Police Department and vigorously prosecute Emilio Chavez III and all others responsible for the savage beating of Dylan Maho on September 5th. According to police reports, Mr. Chavez has proudly admitted to administering “street justice” to an accused Peeping Tom.

Brenda Jones, RSOL’s Executive Director, condemned the vicious attack on Mr. Maho that sent him to the hospital barely alive. She noted that vigilantism is on the rise all over America and that the greatest documented increase seems to be directed at citizens listed on sex offender registries. Jones stated, “Sex offender registries are increasingly used as hit lists. Just last week a registered sex offender was beaten to death on the streets of Baltimore. A few weeks prior, a man and his wife were both brutally murdered in their home in South Carolina. Her offense was that she was married to a person listed on the South Carolina sex offender registry.”

Larry Neely with RSOL-NM had this observation: “I am shocked that so many Albuquerque citizens have condoned Mr. Chavez’s actions. Perhaps this is because Albuquerque has some relatively recent history of one of its prominent citizens glorifying vigilantism.” A man named Elton John Richard was sentenced in 2008 to two years in prison after pleading guilty to voluntary manslaughter. Richard justified the killing of an

unarmed person because he had caught a man breaking into his car, and the man had the audacity to run away from the crime scene. After a foot-chase of almost half a mile, Richard fired the fatal shot as the man was attempting to scale a fence with Richard in hot pursuit.

Paul Heh, a now retired Albuquerque police officer, led a successful effort to free Richard from prison. After having served only four months of a two-year prison term, Richard was freed by a state district judge who reduced his sentence to time served. The judge stated that Richard was "no threat to the community." That may quite possibly have been true so long as no one else in the community attempted to break into his car.

"RSOL recognizes that Mr. Maho was alleged to have been engaging in an illegal and disturbing act," Jones said. "The police have indicated that Mr. Maho will be charged with voyeurism, which means he will be held accountable if the charges are proven; however, vigilantism can be neither condoned nor tolerated."

Jones went on to say, "If the allegations against Mr. Chavez are true, his behavior cannot be construed as a lawful effort to apprehend the alleged perpetrator; it was a savage attack that left the victim barely clinging to life. No one disagrees that running the man off of their property would have been protecting his family. Holding him, forcefully if needed, until law enforcement could arrive would have been protecting family."

But the alleged assault and savage beating of Mr. Maho far exceeds protecting one's family from an immediate threat of harm, Jones concludes. "It is street justice and cannot be tolerated in a civilized society. No matter how hard one attempts to justify Mr. Chavez's actions, it is vigilantism, and those who choose to engage in vigilantism must be held accountable for their lawless acts."