

Blog of helios

Linux is to computing what freedom is to mankind...and then there's Microsoft

Friday, December 12, 2008

 Character-Assasinations-Ain't-Us



It never was my intention to attack anyone personally....

My sights were set on correcting some obvious misconceptions. It was a focused attack on ignorance but with some unsolicited commentary on a particular group.

Whether by proxy or focused intent, it appears that is what has happened, however.

A particular teacher within the Austin Independent School District now sucks.

The consensus began building about 24 hours ago when I published a blog strongly chastising a teacher who emailed me. She made, what I considered to be, some amazingly ignorant statements, statements that I felt attacked the very core reason for my existence. It made me much angrier than it should have.

I'm human, so sue me.

No wait, scratch that last line...don't sue me. It is being discussed.

Her tone didn't help her case much. She insinuated that I may had done something illegal. We

build/refurbish computers for kids who are financially disadvantaged. We also build and present computers to kids of high achievement. To even hint that I am involved in anything that approaches breaking the law is not only silly, it evokes emotion better left un-evoked. I've worked for years to bring the level of success, however limited, we have now. The last thing I need is to lose it all for something silly.

So instead of crafting a measured, count-for-count personal response, I chose to share her obvious ignorance with members of the Linux Community. It was meant to illustrate the maddening ignorance and bias a Linux Advocate faces in a Microsoft Windows world. It was also meant to digitally spank the hand of the offender. It was a good direction to go I thought.

Things pretty much turned to fecal flakes from there.

Look, I write this little back-water blog to document what we do at the HeliOS Project and to advocate Linux in general. One of our main focuses is to see to it that Linux begins gaining a foothold in the computing public's awareness. And no, my goal isn't to convince you to switch to Linux.

That's my desire.

My goal is to make you aware that you have a choice in how you operate your computers. And yes, a bias exists on the Linux side of the ledger.

Ya think? People don't realize they are prisoners in their own computers when they use Microsoft Windows. If they ever read the EULA, they'd understand quickly.

So boasting a stunning readership in the dozens, I go about my business writing about things that happen in our day to day operations. Every now and then, something or someone does or says something that I believe needs attention.

Holy Crap!

Well, we got attention. When I published a part of the email this Teacher sent me, it experienced something known as "The Slashdot Effect." Slashdot is a website devoted to the tech/internet world and is read by hundreds of thousands an hour.

Yeah...hundreds of thousands an hour. My article scolding this teacher ended up on the front page of Slashdot.

For whatever reason, this story took on a life of its own. By 10:30 AM, I had to turn my cell phone off. People were getting my number from my business website and calling me with their comments and reactions.

Not all of them were particularly on my side.

I received calls from South Africa, The Netherlands, Croatia, The Land Down Under and Russia.

It's the one from New Zealand that bothered me the most.

The caller identified himself and then further identified himself as an editor for a well known magazine published in the UK. He was extremely to-the-point with his call.

He would donate \$1000.00 immediately to The HeliOS Project if I would give him the name of the Teacher I blogged about.

I hung up the phone.

"This is madness." I thought to myself. What is the big friggin' deal here? This is a non-story.

And my phone buzzed again but it wasn't with the incoming call ring...it was a text message being received. I cued the caller ID and it returned as "unavailable".

I pushed "read message" and waited for the text to appear on my screen.

"Can I call you?"

I pulled the truck over into a parking lot and answered:

"I guess. Who r u?"

The inactivity was so long that I started the truck and began to put it into gear and re-enter traffic when the buzz came again. I pushed the read button.

"Karen".

It was my turn to hesitate. Finally, I toggled Reply and typed in one character.

"k"

She didn't call right away. It took her about 15 minutes to finally call me. When she did she didn't say anything for the first 15 seconds. When she finally did speak, it was obvious she was crying.

"Why did you throw me to the wolves like that?"

I didn't even have to think of the reply.

"I didn't throw you to the wolves Karen, I threw ignorance to the wolves. Let me ask you something. If I had not emailed you a link to my blog, would you have even known about this?"

Again she hesitated. "What do you mean?"

"I mean that if you didn't know I had written that blog, would you have known about all these comments? Has anyone called you or bothered you about this? Have your co-workers mentioned it?"

"Well...no."

"Then the wolves didn't touch you Karen. If I had included your last name or email address, then yes, you could ask me that question but as it stands, you are just a nameless school teacher that evoked a public response from me."

She didn't say anything for several seconds. When she did, it was a quiet and simple:

"Thank you".

Yeah...thank you. Like I deserve that. Let me share a couple things with you here. **First off, I want to sincerely apologize for some things I did say**, things that were way off base and even if they were situationally true, they didn't add anything of value to the conversation.

I want to apologize to all the hard-working and honest NEA members. My statements were based on an isolated but nasty experience two years ago, and, while I developed a nasty dislike for the people in that situation, it was both unfair and short-sighted to say the things I did. The teachers that we entrust our kids with on a daily basis do us a service that is under-appreciated, under-paid and over-criticized. My mini tirade didn't add anything of value to the situation and only served to inflame an already volatile area of debate. You have my sincere apology for slapping you all with such a wide brush.

Karen isn't alone in her ignorance. I have sat in a PhD's office...a PhD that happened to be a principal of a school. She told me that according to her "tech staff", it was illegal to remove Microsoft Windows from their school computers. So who is ignorant here? The "tech staffer" afraid of losing his MCSE position or the Dr. of Education that didn't bother to check into such a statement. Ignorance isn't the sole possession of this particular school teacher.

Karen and I have talked on the phone now for a couple of hours, here and there. We've come to understand each other more and had she said some of the things in her email that she said during our phone conversations...this black ink on white digital paper probably wouldn't exist.

And neither would over 2000 comments that were less than kind on one end of it and absolutely brutal on the other.

The student did get his Linux disks back after the class. The lad was being disruptive, but that wasn't mentioned. Neither was the obvious fact that when she saw a gaggle of giggling 8th grade boys gathered around a laptop, the last thing she expected to see on that screen was a spinning cube.

She didn't know what was on those disks he was handing out. It could have been porn, viral .exe's...any number of things for all she knew. When she heard that an adult had given him some of the disks to hand out, her spidey-senses started tingling. Coupled with the fact that she truly was ignorant of honest-to-goodness Free Software, and you have some fairly impressive conclusion-jumping.

In a couple of ways, I am guilty of it too.

Karen seems to be a good teacher, and as she stated to me today, she has learned more about the tech world in a few days than she's learned in five years.

That's because she's trapped in a world of Windows. Most people are.

I have contacted the technology department of AISD and have discovered it has a rich technology environment that uses open source software in all aspects of instruction, operation, and administration. The District has over 36,000 desktop and laptop computers. While about 24,000 of those computers run some version of Windows, AISD is anything but a Windows shop. Their current standard teacher/student image includes both Open Office and Firefox on all Windows computers, and recently has added Open Office to the Apple OS image. Other open source software on both images include audacity and lame, and other free software such as Google Earth, iTunes, Adobe and many plug-ins. They also are members of the world community grid; their 36,000 computers are providing many hours of spare processing time (during the work day) to organizations trying to solve major world problems such as energy, cancer, and AIDS. Additionally, they are running more than 100 Linux servers. Other Open Source and Free Software AISD uses include:

apache for web servers

samba for file sharing

nagios for server monitoring

mySQL and postgresSQL for some databases

sendmail for email services

ISC DHCP and bind for DHCP services

moodle for course management
tomcat and jboss for web based applications
perl and php to build in-house applications

As an Austin citizen I am proud to see that AISD is a solid supporter of the open source community and is not blindly following a Microsoft centric architecture. In fact because they are reasonably agnostic they make an overt attempt to find applications that are multi-platform and save money. Also, it is not unreasonable that an organization with approximately 6,000 teachers representing a cross section of America with many different teaching specialties, that there will be some individuals that are not totally aware of current technology trends.

Now to the meat of the matter. Many, many of you have pushed for the identification of this teacher.

I cannot or will not relinquish that. Read the comments from slashdot alone or the hundreds on my blog to understand why!

There isn't any amount of money I will accept to throw a human being into that cement mixer.

The fact that I did it to a profession is bad enough.

All Righty Then

blather and mumbling provided by Blog of helios at [7:29 AM](#)

308 comments:

Steve G said...

Thank you for this post. While I was as outraged as anyone about the ignorance exhibited by Karen in the email snippet you posted before, I was absolutely horrified by some of the comments posted here and on slashdot. It did **not** make me proud to be a member of the open source community.

[12/12/08 8:03 AM](#)

Xetheriel said...

Good on you! I held back my comments on this topic for just this reason... my "There must be more to this story" meter rang off the charts, and while my initial impulse was to post something nasty, my experience has taught me to think about things twice

before I say them.I'm glad to see that there was more misunderstanding and less ignorance than was originally presented.X

[12/12/08 8:18 AM](#)

Anonymous said...

I posted no comments about this, but... she gives the kid a hard time, writes you an email instead of inviting you to clarify the issue, threatens with legal action, doesn't take 30 minutes to check anything for herself, and when it backfires she cries foul??I don't expect anyone to be aware of FOSS or tech stuff in general, but this isn't just about software, it is about a very wrong attitude for someone who is (to quote her) "someone looked up by children"... sorry, but no pity from me for these kind of attitudes.Lizard.

[12/12/08 8:43 AM](#)

[vegiVamp](#) said...

Yep, you're human. And a good one, too, methinks, for both realising you can be wrong, *and* publicly admitting it.This part of the story probably won't appear on /. though :-)

[12/12/08 8:44 AM](#)

[Fadumpt](#) said...

This post has been removed by the author.

[12/12/08 8:48 AM](#)

gagy said...

Thank you for the follow-up.I am happy it turns out that way.It is amazing what a bit of communication can do.Please continue your good work.

[12/12/08 8:49 AM](#)

[Fadumpt](#) said...

Thank you for this. I hope that even a few of the people that commented on this with hate and their own ignorance can learn from it and try to spread Linux in a positive way. No one wants to be apart of(Join) anything where it's members would hurt those who oppose their cause or just flat out don't know what it is about.Along the lines of what VegiVamp said...it's going to be interesting to see if this post gets 1/4 of the attention that the orginally received. Public apologies and admittance of being wrong doesn't sell :)

[12/12/08 8:51 AM](#)

[Daddy-O](#) said...

Thank you, Ken for this post. I originally saw red when I saw Karen's letter and was ready to have fire and brimstone showered on her, but reading your post this morning made me stop and think. In one of the comments on your original post, someone said something to the effect of "it's better to convert and enemy than to beat one." That was definitely the case here, and I'm encouraged to see how you handled this, and makes me look sheepishly at myself in how I was ready to throw this lady under the bus.

[12/12/08 9:21 AM](#)

Anonymous said...

Heya,I found this story on slash dot and I've been checking regularly to read the conclusion. Good on you man, for not revealing her name and apologizing when you thought you did something wrong. It's a thin line of decent people on the net, which makes the time I spend here justifiable.

[12/12/08 9:45 AM](#)

Anonymous said...

I am a Windows user but this humility and effort to right a wrong make me want to give LINUX another shot. Why won't "the other company" admit a failure with their latest OS?

[12/12/08 9:47 AM](#)

[sugardave](#) said...

Uh.....no. While I didn't read every comment from yesterday, those that I did read weren't that "horrible." In fact, given the situations (even with ALL the facts as I now understand them) I really didn't see much out of line. What I saw was a few people trying to stick up for such an obvious retard. "Teaching is hard!" While this MAY be true (I doubt it, being an educator myself) the point was summed up nicely by Lizard/Anonymous/#3. Karen pulled the trigger first with some threats and deserved any problems (hardly any, it seems) that she received because of it. I seriously doubt the need for you to apologize for your actions. Did she do the same? Somehow, I doubt it. It sounds more like a shifting of blame to make herself look like an innocent victim. I'm probably still going to make some "Karen Sucks" signs and post them around the various middle schools....and there's not a damn thing any of you can do about it. I received a callback from the "Public Liaison" of AISD and got the same kind of information about how they're not a Windows shop, the kid was disruptive, etc....BUT, he also admitted that the teacher was WAY off base and should have kept her ignorant mouth shut. I made sure to let him know that my tax dollars (I live in Austin) are not supposed to be going to pay some one to spout their religious beliefs on operating systems/FOSS to children.

[12/12/08 10:04 AM](#)

Anonymous said...

As the others I appreciate the follow up. And for making sure ppl read the follow up I'd suggest a direkt link and mention of this follow up in your original post. Further more, even though I am happy that Karen had already learned a lot more about software, proving that she's not unworthy of her job. I'd wish she had also learned something more about communication, especially for being a teacher. Society has at the moment a serious problem with ppl reacting the way she wrote her first email (I am hoping that you did not leave out any softening words on your quoting of her email). It would be sad to see kids not being thought about making informed conclusions. It would be nice if in school they'd be thought about opening a conversation. Even if they think somebody has done something wrong. And then in this conversation try to understand what happened in the wrongdoer's eyes. Of course I am right now not entirely following these guidelines since I did not contact Karen about this. I hope this won't backfire on me ;)

[12/12/08 10:11 AM](#)

[Michael](#) said...

Thank you. This shows class. I will make an effort to post this to slashdot as well.

[12/12/08 10:13 AM](#)

Zak said...

I'm really glad to see a follow-up here. Comments like the one signed "Lizard" demonstrate that you did the right thing by preserving Karen's anonymity. You're right to be angry that a teacher is so misinformed, but ignorance is only partly the fault of the ignorant. If we, the free/open-source community want people to be aware of us, it's our job to make them aware. I believe this pair of blog posts has done that for at least one teacher.

[12/12/08 10:18 AM](#)

Anonymous said...

Ken, I am very glad you posted this "apology". And to those who still want to "blame" Karen for her rash email: *"Never let your sense of morals prevent you from doing what is right"* (Asimov) I feel the same holds for moral outrage. The only thing to do now is to find out how "we" can make up with the harassed teacher(s). Winter

[12/12/08 10:32 AM](#)

[Charles](#) said...

You have nothing to apologize for.

[12/12/08 10:38 AM](#)

Anonymous said...

It is rather confusing to talk about "Free" (libre) or "Open Source" or however you wish to describe software under permissive licenses and then in the next sentence talk about "free" software and refer to software that does not have a monetary cost.

Unsurprisingly, you did not mention any of the "free" (gratis) software that is offered by Microsoft as you have some kind of complex against them (as many people do for some reason).

[12/12/08 10:41 AM](#)

[brad dunbar](#) said...

Its pretty amazing how a real voice can humanize a persona so quickly. I wonder how this would've gone down if she had called you instead of emailing? I suspect very differently.

[12/12/08 10:49 AM](#)

[PsycheDiver](#) said...

Sir, I salute your conviction and purity. You are a true humanitarian.

[12/12/08 10:50 AM](#)

[Fordi](#) said...

"I was absolutely horrified by some of the comments posted here and on slashdot." You should have seen some of the ones on Digg. I don't understand it: you have an apparent outrage caused by temporary ignorance. I get that - but it's been reported on, and dealt with, by an obviously intelligent agent. There's no need to attack the individual at this point. The demands for contact information are the most ludicrous, though - sure, he'll release the contact info, and thus switch the conversation from one between a teacher and learner to one between a learner and a thousand thousand rabid fanboys. That would be the pinnacle of brilliance. Meanwhile, the hate speech is unwarranted - when someone appears to be so stupid that it's hard to believe they can dress themselves, it's very likely that they are merely not well-exposed to the field you're so self-important about. The word "ignorant" doesn't even really apply, as it implies that something has been ignored. Which is kinda what Linux's PR problem is: the users. Oh, sure, we love our shiny OS - but we can't even stop fighting over whether KDE is better than Gnome or vice versa. Forgive a Windows user for being completely unaware of something she's had no exposure to (and, as a result, reacting as Karen had)? Not something the community appears to be capable of as a first response. At best, our response *should* have been an expression of sympathy for the student, a light chuckle about the shelteredness of the teacher, and a mandate that she be given a quick-and-dirty

education in the ways of OSS (which, by-the-by, she was).The "stab her in the face" sorts of responses? Completely uncalled for, and almost certainly one of the sources of Linux's bad rap.The punk little script kids should be ashamed.

[12/12/08 10:51 AM](#)

[sugardave](#) said...

Anonymous said...*It is rather confusing to talk about "Free" (libre) or "Open Source" or however you wish to describe software under permissive licenses and then in the next sentence talk about "free" software and refer to software that does not have a monetary cost. Unsurprisingly, you did not mention any of the "free" (gratis) software that is offered by Microsoft as you have some kind of complex against them (as many people do for some reason).Oh, please enlighten us, Shill! Which OS is is that Microsoft gives out for free? Which applications? I mean real applications, not the "free" ones that come with their OS.*

[12/12/08 10:54 AM](#)

[sugardave](#) said...

Fordi said...*Forgive a Windows user for being completely unaware of something she's had no exposure to (and, as a result, reacting as Karen had)? Not something the community appears to be capable of as a first response.I guess you didn't read her e-mail where she admitted to "experimenting with Linux" in college. Your point fails. SHe is ignorant, dangerous, and a liar.*

[12/12/08 10:57 AM](#)

[JohnMc](#) said...

As Charles said, you don't need to apologize. You did the charitable thing by not posting the teachers name.As to the teacher, On our blog we lambasted her. Not for her beliefs but for her ignorance. If one is not knowledgeable on a subject then 'better to remain silent, than speak and remove all doubt' as Twain would say. But the biggest part of the blame it probably the IT dept. They are probably taking the expedient of using FUD, to tell all staffers that only windows certified software is 'legal'. That is from the perspective of what is permitted. Apply a generous helping of 'he said, pass it on' in the teachers lounge and you get the email you got. But the biggest crime is that the school district is not using MORE FOSS. As a taxpayer in the state every effort should be made to eliminate costs. Including the schools. To do less than that is theft.

[12/12/08 10:57 AM](#)

Anonymous said...

Ken, you are no hero. Big deal you didn't publish "Karen's" last name-- you made sure she saw what you posted, and the vile comments that followed. Do you think it would

have been better for the entire Internet to get on her case without telling her? Hey, that's classy too!The apology is nice, though still rather self-aggrandizing. Please, think before you post-- that is Lesson #1 of the Internet.signed, sort of still a fan

[12/12/08 10:59 AM](#)

Ray said...

I always tell my students (when things like this come up) that the true measure of a person as someone of quality is the ability to step up and say "I was wrong." Your initial response was completely understandable and you had no way of knowing your blog--I have a really minor blog too with a strong emphasis on free software to use WITH Windows--would get Slashdotted! (My server would probably crash...) Anyway, I say good on you for proving yourself to be a person of quality. Congratulations and keep up with the good work. Oh yeah--I'll be dropping a buck or two with the HeliOS Project, as every other well-wisher writing here should step up and do as well!

[12/12/08 11:00 AM](#)

Anonymous said...

@Zak">>Comments like the one signed "Lizard" demonstrate that you did the right thing by preserving Karen's anonymity. "Don't get me wrong, even if I had her name, phone and address I would do her no harm, my issue is not with her but with the people who believe children don't deserve to be listened and are unable to think for themselves. I am sure Ken's son tried to explain what was it all about and he went ignored. I don't like that, even less when teachers do it.My issue is not with Karen, but with a system where children are thought not to think for themselves but to just follow the rest of the pack.Regards.Lizard.

[12/12/08 11:05 AM](#)

Anonymous said...

Thanks for the follow-up. I'm relieved to know that 1) there was indeed more to the story (like someone else said, I had this nagging feeling we weren't hearing both sides), and 2) everyone involved managed to come to good terms even when the original incident got pretty far out of hand.Good for you. Good for her. And yay for happy resolutions in a combative world.

[12/12/08 11:07 AM](#)

Anonymous said...

umm... she still deserves to be stabbed in the face... MY reason:the people who immediately jump to THEIR OWN CONCLUSIONS deserve to be pummeled in the face. She did not just take it away, and say she would give it back after she does research... she automatically used her judgement as LAW and condemned the OS that

the student had to death... a figure of speech. If she was king 400 years ago, the equivalent is... she just has him beheaded. THAT IS WHY I THINK THE RUDE COMMENTS ARE NOT OVER THE TOP, and that she deserves each and every one of them. WHEN PEOPLE START TO THINK BEFORE THEY DO THINGS, AND NOT THINK ALONG THE LINES OF WHAT THEY WANT IT TO BE, THAT IS WHEN BULLSHIT LIKE THIS WONT HAPPEN. THE TEACHER IS A MORON and JUST PLAIN FULL OF HERSELF, NOT JUST IGNORANT.

[12/12/08 11:08 AM](#)

[mnuez](#) said...

I'm sorry that she's sad and I wish that we lived in a better world where we never hurt each other but the fact remains that she was ready to prosecute you. Again, I wish we were all saints and weren't run by a plutocracy that insists that we all attempt to outcompete each other. There are enough men and women to go around for none of us to have to be Alphas and technology has made it such that there's enough food to go around without needing to fight for resources. But we live in a wicked world where our baser instincts are encouraged and where are better instincts are only spoken of half-heartedly and in the context of "what it can do for you". That being the case, I certainly wish that you, I and John and Jane Smith were kinder, but that not being the case - you have nothing to apologize for. She was willing to destroy your life and in that dog eat dog environment there's no reason for anyone to demand that you be the better dog. mnuez

[12/12/08 11:13 AM](#)

[yoursfromabove](#) said...

I congratulate you for not acting immature when she contacted you, and finding a way to come to terms with what happened in a fashion that was agreeable by both sides. Kudos man, Kudos.

[12/12/08 11:15 AM](#)

Anonymous said...

I'm sorry I'm not blinded by utter fanboyism, but jesus christ that is one of the worst apologies I've seen. You still insult the NEA, you still say people are shackled into slavery by microsoft, the exchange with Karen only makes you sound like a horrible dick. Your a good guy, I'm not going to argue that what you do is evil, but if you toned down your approach i'd be much at ease to read this. Teachers have a hard enough job, and yeah any teacher is going to be weary about something that a child report he got from a strange adult that he has no relation with.

[12/12/08 11:21 AM](#)

[Chad](#) said...

Well, I have to give you credit on more than one level. Thanks for the update!

[12/12/08 11:23 AM](#)

Anonymous said...

Epic Win, Helios project! It can be hard, as you stated in your previous mail to the teacher, to fight the good fight. More people should spread the word about OSS and Linux as concientiously as you do.

[12/12/08 11:25 AM](#)

[Tungsai](#) said...

I still find it hard to believe this person actually exists.

[12/12/08 11:33 AM](#)

Anonymous said...

I didn't see much wrong with your original post to be perfectly honest when I first read it. Though now I see you're are wise in your ways. It really isn't Karens fault that she had no idea about FOSS, she should ahve been made aware of its existence by it having been channeled down from the very top.National Government should make it a requirement to implement FOSS in schools. It's not the teachers job to work out how to spend the budget. Karen should have learned about its existence, when it suddenly appeared in her classroom - legally. Let's hope that at some point it will become a reality.

[12/12/08 11:34 AM](#)

[robert](#) said...

See there is one problem. When she wrote the original email her accusations were unjustified. What she should have done as a responsible adult teaching children was to talk to his parents, consult and Admin, research for herself, then come to the conclusion that she didn't know what she was talking about. Am I wrong to think that these steps were better to take then to email you give little or lacking detail then threaten you with legal action and accusations? While I respect the fact that she is a teacher this ignorance alone justifies to an extent the response it got. I do commend you on the apology but I'd rather see one from her. (names aren't necessary just a post here would do)

[12/12/08 11:58 AM](#)

Leonidas said...

Madness? This is SSSPPAARRRTTTTTAAAA!

[12/12/08 11:59 AM](#)

Anonymous said...

Thank you for giving the other side of the story.KC

[12/12/08 12:00 PM](#)

Petréa Mitchell said...

Thank you for posting that update. This is hardly the first time I've seen a non-computer person make an honest mistake and become the target of vicious hatred from techies (usually Linux fans, unfortunately). But it's the first time I've seen this kind of resolution. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

[12/12/08 12:03 PM](#)

[escape goat](#) said...

The important thing, really, is the conversation that you had with Karen. It sounds like the incident may ultimately prove to be really worthwhile, both in terms of open source consciousness in your region's school system, and in terms of your own ability to communicate with people who are I.T. naive. The concerns she had about the disk distribution seem obvious and natural, in hindsight, but they didn't occur to me at all when I read your original post. It seems to me that a school should always have at least a few linux machines available, simply because the more serious computer students absolutely need to learn C and become familiar with *NIX systems. The confusion about the legality of Windows removal is concerning. You should review the relevant agreement. Is it possible that Microsoft was involved in providing or subsidizing some or all of the school machines? A clearly written letter providing legal guidance would be helpful to your cause, if it could be established that there would be no grounds for *launching* a civil suit (that it would not ultimately succeed in court is insufficient comfort). Just some thoughts.

[12/12/08 12:04 PM](#)

[W.P. Wentzell](#) said...

Bravo. I am glad to see the denouement has transpired. I presume everyone has learned a small lesson from this incident, myself included. My hats off to both parties, and long live FOSS.

[12/12/08 12:07 PM](#)

[Tungsai](#) said...

I still don't believe this Karen person actually exists. I think it's all a publicity stunt.

[12/12/08 12:08 PM](#)

[Tom | Errant](#) said...

Good man! I read some of the comments on it and was sickened that the FOSS community is tarnished by them. I think your current post is an excellent reminder to the *nix community that idiot evangelists like that do not deserve to be part of such an awesome global project! Perhaps once we have finished educating the anti-FOSS establishment we can turn to the internal ignorance and purge it. Or even better let's do that first. And if by some miracle Karen reads these comments - respect for being able to be educated and have your mind changed!

[12/12/08 12:09 PM](#)

[Vineet](#) said...

"other free software such as Google Earth, iTunes, Adobe and many plug-ins." wait ... what? I see you're using the lower-case "free software" here, but still. This is unclear and misleading at best, in the midst of a storm brought about by ignorance about Free Software.

[12/12/08 12:11 PM](#)

[Ian Darwin](#) said...

Thank you! In particular, thank you for being a civil person and not disclosing Karen's real identity. For those who are trying to pry it out, I say (and you can quote me on this): Get a life!

[12/12/08 12:13 PM](#)

[FelixTheCat](#) said...

@TungsaiYes, yes, I think we got your point the first time. Hate to break it to you, but she does exist, this whole issue did transpire as stated, and the blog is still there as it's meant - to inform folks about his Linux advocacy and about the charity work. Bye now! :)

[12/12/08 12:14 PM](#)

[FelixTheCat](#) said...

@VineetIt looks like your point was taken and the blog edited.

[12/12/08 12:19 PM](#)

[Fadumt](#) said...

For anyone looking for an apology from Karen: she has nothing to prove or apologize

for to any of us. That is between her and him and it is their prerogative to post further details.

[12/12/08 12:19 PM](#)

Anonymous said...

Even if Karen was every bit as evil and malicious as many posters imagine, yelling or verbally abusing her or others is not going to help the situation. The only beneficial response is to be a testament of how important Linux is to you. Post about what you can't do in windows, how necessary learning Linux has been for your career, and how it's paramount to our nation's success to encourage students' interest in engineering. Teachers try their best but sadly most lack the computer skills to keep up with their students and it's a continual frustration. They're teachers because they're "people"-persons and have a divergent set of skills than us tech-savvy engineers. So, instead of being angry at them (they're embattled enough, trust me) improve the situation - help out. Volunteer to teach an after school computer class, get involved at your local high school, do something to make a difference in the lives of young engineers around you.

[12/12/08 12:31 PM](#)

Ken Jennings said...

"Karen" isn't due any apology. Ken S. isn't the one who went off half-cocked ranting about the legality of what had occurred. I agree with an earlier anonymous post, "...she gives the kid a hard time, writes you an email instead of inviting you to clarify the issue, threatens with legal action, doesn't take 30 minutes to check anything for herself, and when it backfires she cries foul?" If anyone is due an apology it would be Ken and the kid that Karen tried to make feel like criminals. She tries to absolve herself by explaining she was concerned about kids playing with porn. But, when she learned that obviously wasn't the case instead of ASKING Ken what was going on, she still went off the deep end ACCUSING Ken of illegal activities. And now she is upset to hear many other people question her sanity, intelligence, integrity, etc? I'm encouraged she says she will try to learn more. I hope this is true.

[12/12/08 12:33 PM](#)

[Kim](#) said...

I agree with Lizard (12/12/08 8:43 AM comment). After reading many of the comments I went back and re-read Karen's original e-mail and it's obvious that she is a small-minded, myopic tyrant and this really isn't an "IT" issue. She should not be around children as she probably regularly abuses her position of authority over them. It's a shame that public schools have to pay teachers so little that they are obliged to hire, and fight to retain, people like her. It's ruining our schools. The upside is that we all got to learn good things about the AISD IT department.

[12/12/08 12:37 PM](#)

[JMC](#) said...

Is there a reason why my reply to your original post was omitted? I said nothing inflammatory or offensive.

[12/12/08 12:43 PM](#)

Anonymous said...

Just FYI, Google Earth, iTunes, and Adobe software is not "Free Software", as their source is not available for modification; they are merely freeware.

[12/12/08 12:49 PM](#)

[sugardave](#) said...

Anonymous said...*Ken, you are no hero. Big deal you didn't publish "Karen's" last name-- you made sure she saw what you posted, and the vile comments that followed. Do you think it would have been better for the entire Internet to get on her case without telling her? Hey, that's classy too!The apology is nice, though still rather self-aggrandizing. Please, think before you post-- that is Lesson #1 of the Internet.signed, sort of still a fananother* Anonymous said...*I'm sorry I'm not blinded by utter fanboyism, but jesus christ that is one of the worst apologies I've seen. You still insult the NEA, you still say people are shackled into slavery by microsoft, the exchange with Karen only makes you sound like a horrible dick. Your a good guy, I'm not going to argue that what you do is evil, but if you toned down your approach i'd be much at ease to read this. Teachers have a hard enough job, and yeah any teacher is going to be weary about something that a child report he got from a strange adult that he has no relation with.I'm pretty sure I didn't read anywhere where Ken was intimating that he was some kind of hero. How did he make sure she saw what he posted...did he call her up and say "hey, you might want to see this"? Talk about thinking before you post....that's classy!Let's see...the part about being shackled wasn't in the apology, it was in the very justified response to the stupid teacher. But, hey, don't let facts get in your way! How does getting tired (weary) have anything to do with her lies, deceit, and threat of litigation?Now...WHERE is Karen's apology? As a vaunted educator of the highest esteem who is able to pass judgement on anything under the sun, I'm sure she can see that in this case, it is far better to "apologize" than to continue playing the innocent victim who was "thrown to the wolves"....not only a teacher, but a flaming drama queen, as well!*

[12/12/08 12:53 PM](#)

Matthew said...

Great post. It takes a big person to apologize, especially in the open. It sounds like both

sides were at fault. You're doing the right thing for keeping her information private.

[12/12/08 12:57 PM](#)

[T.Muntz](#) said...

This post has been removed by the author.

[12/12/08 1:00 PM](#)

Anonymous said...

I applaud your reflection and honesty. Not everyone who is correct can view the total scope of their stance and the opposition. Your willingness to take responsibility for being human has given me pause. I have given correct but harsh criticism to those who have attacked my beliefs. Your experience has helped me to think more and react less. Thank You. Terry

[12/12/08 1:02 PM](#)

Anonymous said...

I'm glad you published the follow up, but I really don't think you did anything wrong in your original post. The problem is that teachers tend to forget how much authority and influence they have over children (at least until the kids get into high school). Even a kid that seems pretty hardened can feel brutalized by a teacher. I think the reason we respond so viscerally to reports like this is because most of us had at least one really awful teacher during our time in "mindless conformity camp" a.k.a. school. I know that personally I went into the school system as a bright, curious child who loved learning and science, who by the time I got out of high school absolutely hated school, never wanted to step foot in a university because my entire time in school was horrible, and really never amounted to anything in life (I am in my late 50's now). I blame 50% of my horrible school experience on the teachers, 25% on the fact that I had undiagnosed ADD (or possibly even Asperger's Syndrome, but they had no idea what those were in the small town where I lived) and about 25% on the other students who (especially in Junior High) made school a living hell for me. I can't even bring myself to go to a school reunion because I hated my time in school so much. And yet whenever I took intelligence tests I typically scored in the 98th-99th percentile (this either says something about how inaccurate those tests were or how badly the school system screwed me up, I'm not sure which). Were it just me, I'd think that maybe it was more my own conditions, but I hear the same types of stories all the time, and especially from bright students. This is why I had such a gut reaction to this story - in this situation the kid was obviously better educated on the subject than the teacher. I got the sense that the kid is both bright AND to some degree influential among his peers, which for some reason is a combination that some teachers see as threatening. Better to dumb the kid down and make him conform to all the petty rules of the typical classroom than actually help him develop his talents and gifts. When I was in

Kindergarten I had a teacher that chastised me, in front of the entire class, for painting on a hand-drawn mural that was supposed to be a class project. My crime? I used a color that the teacher had mixed to represent the color of sand (we lived near a beach) to paint a girl's face. To me, that color looked an awful lot like a human skin tone, but to hear the teacher tell it I had ruined the entire mural (after she calmed down she "fixed" it by painting something akin to long hair over what I had done, so it was the back of a girl's head). Guess how much I enjoyed ANYTHING to do with art after that. I knew a woman who hated to read. It's not that she had problems reading, she just hated doing it. When I asked why, she finally admitted that her fifth grade teacher had driven any love of reading right out of her. Apparently she didn't hold her book in just the way the teacher wanted it so her hand was slapped with a ruler, again in front of the entire class. Of course, back when I was in school the teachers refused to let left-handed kids use their left hand to write (then were quick to mark them down for bad "penmanship"). Now in the instant case, we have another teacher who saw nothing wrong with humiliating a student in front of his peers. I'm not saying this teacher should be burned at the stake or anything, but teachers need to stop and think that these are human beings they are dealing with, not dogs or cattle. And at that age, when you humiliate a kid in front of his peers, the hurt can go very deep and last a very long time. And then the TEACHER thought that SHE had been thrown to the wolves? I beg her pardon, but who is the adult and who is the child? Suck it up, lady, you did something very wrong and if you were a halfway decent human being you would apologize to the kid in front of all the kids who were present during the original event. And if you are so emotional that you can't take constructive criticism, maybe you shouldn't be in the teaching profession, because the very last thing we need are teachers who think they are always right and above correction or criticism. When I had kids in school, I taught them that the teachers were not always right, but that didn't mean that they could disrespect the teacher. I always told them if there was any sort of conflict to have the school call me, and that I would not be upset because I got a call from their school unless they had clearly done something wrong. On a couple of occasions one or another of my kids did tell their teacher (or in one case, an assistant principal) to call their dad and in both cases it probably averted a pretty nasty situation. But the "word of wisdom" I left them with - and I'm sorry if this offends anyone, but after my experiences in school I felt it necessary - was that teachers were generally not the people who graduated at the top of their class in college, and that if they were very smart and talented people they'd probably be doing something in the private sector that paid a whole lot better than teaching - UNLESS they were that rare and talented individual that loves teaching so much (and is so good at it) that they'd probably do it for free if no one would pay them. I realize that probably put a more mercenary spin on things than I wanted to impart, but I felt it necessary to teach my kids that teachers are only human, they do make mistakes, and in particular that they should not define the child's image of themselves or wreck their self-esteem. In effect I was trying to inoculate my kids against what happened to me, and to other bright people I've known. Anyway, I wonder how many of the really strong reactions on this

topic came about in part because this incident stirred memories of perfectly awful teachers we've had in days gone by. Any parent who thinks that a teacher (or the school system in general) really messed them up does not want to see the same thing happen to their children. I wish I could say that things have gotten better than when I was a child, but I honestly wonder if that's the case, especially when I read of incidents like this one. I think even bad teachers can learn to be better, but they have to WANT to be better. One final note - when I was young my dad did moving (as in moving household items and furniture from one house to another) for a living. He didn't discriminate against anyone, except one group. If he found out that a potential customer was a teacher, he'd try any excuse he could think of to get out of the job and send it to a competitor. The reason? Because back in 1950's America, almost nobody would try to sue if he accidentally scratched a leg on a sofa or put a small ding in a refrigerator (usually while going up or down steps, or coming through a too-narrow doorway) - EXCEPT for teachers, who seemed to go out of their way to find some reason to sue or to force him to file an insurance claim, even in cases where he had flat out told them ahead of time that he probably couldn't move an item to where they wanted it without causing some damage (think old houses, narrow stairways and you may have some idea what he was up against). I never knew that until I was in high school, but when I thought about it, it made sense - teachers in those days (and in the town where I lived) always seemed to have a need to prove they were right and everyone else was wrong. As I say, I sure hope things have changed since then.

[12/12/08 1:04 PM](#)

Anonymous said...

She made a mistake. You made a mistake. The real travesty would have been if neither one of you owned up to it and tried to correct the situation. As it is, it looks like you both have tried to resolve the issue and find common ground, and I applaud you for that. More importantly, you realized (very quickly, from this post) that there were things more important than identifying the teacher in question so that others could bother her. I still dislike what she said, but nobody deserves to be thrown under a bus for making an honest (even if ignorant) mistake. Kudos for keeping her ID private, especially in light of the financial incentives offered to you to divulge it. People make mistakes; treating them like people after they do is what makes us special.

[12/12/08 1:06 PM](#)

[Consumer007](#) said...

Very nice post showing you are a decent human being and very compassionate toward someone. A great illustration of how it's real easy to hate third parties near your kids without meeting them first, it's more challenging yet rewarding to meet those you oppose and try to find common ground. Now then, HOWEVER: I am thrilled your post and this situation hit the public fan, especially in Texas. To me, an IT support professional and a consumer activist, this is really the perfect story to get in the public

discussion. This is the pristine example of the mental corporate-consumer prison think people are locked into this country today, but thankfully starting to escape it. I am THRILLED to start seeing linux pc's on sale cheaply and flying off the shelves into consumers' hands and homes. Microsoft is EXTREMELY and RIGHTFULLY hated and this story depicts WHY. This woman unwittingly became a public image of the overpaid, incompetent corporate bully going WAAAYYY too far and bullying our kids. Microsoft likes to have these nice enlightened little ads about our kids and their futures, but they laugh all the way to the bank that they have the unfair mega-monopoly on computer networks and computers themselves. MS is target number one for cyber criminals, and this is why. They want to control everything, they want no competition, and they want consumers and businesses to have no choices. Their systems are a joke, unsafe, unreliable and they make a ton of extorted money for the privilege. Today is the time when the giants are falling. Detroit big 3 and yes MS needs to fall too. That is scary to many, when our lives are full of or supported by crumbling dysfunctional corporate entities. But those entities, no matter what marketing lies they spew, are opposed to that constructive and needed innovative spirit that originally built their beginnings. While Google has it's problems, props to Google for NOT acting out of that kind of thinking, and offering competitions like Google 10x100 or whatever it was, giving millions to new innovators. And further props to you and Ubuntu and other linux folks and communities who constantly challenge MicroSHAFT for trying to control our world stupidly and unfairly and continually ask - how better, cheaper and faster and safer can we make things, damn it? I am glad this woman got slammed - it's good for her. She shouldn't be a teacher of anyone or anything thinking that way, and not respecting differences, efficiency, and creative thinking. She should be a fricking prison warden, and she is not the change we need for our kids. Scott, IT professionalDenver, Co.

[12/12/08 1:17 PM](#)

Kamil / Ireland said...

I found this story on /.My reaction was exactly the same as most people - shaken with teachers ignorance and attitude.I'm very pleased that situation turned out like it did. Everybody makes mistakes but only brave people have the courage to admit them in public. Good news is -everybody learned something and there are no hard feelings on both sides. :)Best wishes to you and Karen!P.S. Is Karen having an education course on Linux? That would be grand.

[12/12/08 1:25 PM](#)

[Consumer007](#) said...

A further thought, just an analogy to show how ridiculous this woman's actions are. There would have been a similar outrage if this woman tore Pepsi cans out of students' hands and screamed ONLY COKE IS ALLOWED HERE IN OUR SCHOOL VENDING

CONTRACT! COKE ONLY, DO YOU UNDERSTAND?!?!?! I'LL ARREST ANY PEPSI DRINKERS AND YOUR PARENTS IF I SEE THAT AGAIN!!!! COKE IS THE APPROVED CHRISTIAN TEXAN DRINK! Coca Cola would have cried all the way to the bank, and PEPSI would have had a field day with ads, and a press frenzy. MS just adds the dynamic of the hated bully goliath everyone wants some David to take down. The fact it's Texas just adds to the mix, fair or not. I've lived there, and unfortunately for the decent smart people down there, there are many more who are not, who also happen to lead churches and classrooms. To be fair to Texas, yes, other states that way as well to a smaller degree.

[12/12/08 1:27 PM](#)

Anonymous said...

In the end you showed strength, compassion, and leadership - we can all learn from your experiences

[12/12/08 1:31 PM](#)

[_|_](#) said...

Google Earth, iTunes, and Adobe may be free software, but they aren't Free Software...<http://www.gnu.org/philosophy/free-sw.html>

[12/12/08 1:32 PM](#)

[David Hembrow](#) said...

Linux and other Free software are all about making life better. The behaviour towards this teacher from some correspondents seems to have been anything but. I'm very glad you've started making some sensible progress on the issue.

[12/12/08 1:32 PM](#)

Anonymous said...

Ken, You are a better man than I. While I would not have made any identifying information public, I would not let her off the hook either. On backstory only, my initial reaction was that the student may have been disruptive, that she didn't know what was on the discs and it could be potentially dangerous, but once the discs' contents were identified, her actions were those of the mindless millions who preach conformity. I hope that in your further discussions, you point out to her that Microsoft Windows "runs on virtually every computer" because of illegal business practices, for which Microsoft has been convicted. Then ask her, why she would blindly promote criminal activity? Of course you would be answering your own question, but hopefully, she is blind no more. $2+2$ will always equal 4, but Microsoft Windows "runs on virtually every computer" only until the mindset of people like her changes.

[12/12/08 1:37 PM](#)

[IGnadius T Fooobar](#) said...

Sounds like there are about 24,000 computers in that organization which require an upgrade to the Linux of their choice. (Ok, any Linux except Novell, because that's a Microsoft product too.)

[12/12/08 1:39 PM](#)

[sugardave](#) said...

David Hembrow said...*Linux and other Free software are all about making life better. The behaviour towards this teacher from some correspondents seems to have been anything but. I'm very glad you've started making some sensible progress on the issue.*What is it that the correspondents have done to the teacher? To her, specifically and personally? Nothing, that's right.

[12/12/08 1:39 PM](#)

[AdamW](#) said...

"Other open source software on both images include audacity and lame"Lame? Er? Do they have a patent license for that?"

[12/12/08 1:42 PM](#)

[Family Jorgensen](#) said...

Ken, you are a class act. Very well handled. Keep up the inspiring work- Thomas

[12/12/08 1:43 PM](#)

Anonymous said...

Oh, please enlighten us, Shill! Which OS is it that Microsoft gives out for free? Which applications? I mean real applications, not the "free" ones that come with their OS.I think the moron means Wordpad (just barely a word processor, but enough to keep you from buying WordPerfect), Notepad (the text editor that couldn't), or maybe the PowerToys for XP (that add functionality, if you know where to find it). Of course, the schmuck could be talking about the latest Vista torrents.

[12/12/08 1:45 PM](#)

Anonymous said...

Bravo, sir.Human by nature.Humane by choice.

[12/12/08 1:45 PM](#)

Anonymous said...

Hi KenFormer AISD student here.I am happy to see that this occurred in a middle school, and that kinds are getting such an early start. Not everything is bad in AISD, they at least get credit for trying - though you have to keep in mind that "3rd party technology" is not a core curriculum focus.Not all is bad though - in the late 90's I was a Linux and Apple system administrator at LBJ High School in East Austin, where we had a lab of 25 Linux/Win dual boot machines donated by Dell, 4 Linux servers, and a total network of 250+ computers that were maintained by a student organization (STAC). I find it hard to believe at times that I was a sys admin at 16...regretably, the face of the organization has changed and the students don't so much 'run' the network as attend to it - I believe a faculty member is the only one managing "root" these days.But for at least a time in the 90's there was an AISD school that was the first to be networked (single dial up modem followed by a T1 donated by John Burns, former CEO of fundsxpress) and first in the nation (1994?) to have a fully student run windows/linux/mac os network with 6 computer labs.So - it's not all bad.Thank you for respecting the privacy of the teacher while managing to enlighten her to the wide world of technology.

[12/12/08 1:47 PM](#)

[Tom | Errant](#) said...

> "What is it that the correspondents have done to the teacher? To her, specifically and personally? Nothing, that's right."well uh.. threatened her Which is more than she did to you lot. Ken had a right to be outraged - all we have is the right to show shock at such a system and sympathise (and try to educate). Threats put you well below here (and M\$) level....OMG MicroSoft is evil whin whine whine. Instead of threatening people and complaining about being "treated badly" take Ken's example and get the hell out there and spread Linux to people! Fight fair - because that is what our community is about.It saddens me to see such pathetic people trying to be a part of our great FOSS community. et out. Stay out and spread your Vitriol elsewhere!(see how did you all like it ;))

[12/12/08 1:47 PM](#)

[heather](#) said...

Heather said ...As a teacher, I would just like to say that I have only learned about open source in the last year. I learned about open source because a very close friend is a techie. He works tirelessly to let everyone who has ears that open source is the way to go. My first exposure is when I started using Firefox instead of Explorer. My friend suggested I use it instead of Explorer because it was really so slow. My point is this. Many teachers (75% of which really truly care for kids and have their best interests at heart)have no clue of Linux and open source software. After, reading this blog, I plan to make it a point to bring it up at lunch and other time when I am socializing with colleagues in the hopes that something like this NEVER HAPPENS AGAIN.Lastly,

thank you for not "throwing poor Karen in the cement mixer".

[12/12/08 1:47 PM](#)

[mrguard](#) said...

You know it took alot for you to make this post, as well as Karen for contacting you about it.I kudos to you both.. Sometimes it takes open and honest communication to settle things, as well as bring misconceptions to light.It is a good teacher to be concerned about what happens in our classrooms and Karen should be thanked for that.I wish that everyone can take a bigger step in helping our local school districts in any way that can be helped.

[12/12/08 1:49 PM](#)

Anonymous said...

"My goal is to make you aware that you have a choice in how you operate your computers."Attacks like this do not make me want to be around the open source community. You got your OS fanboi's in a fury unleashing them upon this woman and others, sure hope it was worth it. I'll stay away from you guys, hate to see what other shenanigans open sources would pull.

[12/12/08 1:51 PM](#)

[Tom | Errant](#) said...

@the anon on about free M\$ software.. they could be on about all sorts of tools!Visual studio (a big boys toy I doubt you've heard of it) is free. As is the pretty good Live messenger (some people like it) and I definitely recommend Windows Live Writer which currently is about the only decent desktop blogging tool.....I'm not saying M\$ are freeware evangaists but I do wonder if we spent less time attacking them and playign their game and more time focusing on the flaws in Linux that need fixing to help bring it to the mainstream.DO something for the community. Then, like Ken, you can feel put upon. Till then shut the frick up! Your giving us a bads name.An ppl c'mon... why are we hiding behind Anon postings :(to the others I apologise: but the rot in our communities is gettign to me big tim :*(

[12/12/08 1:53 PM](#)

[realityhole \(A.K.A Bahamut\)](#) said...

I for one, am one of the people who came to look at this from the slashdotting, however, I also noticed this, for the same reason. I felt annoyed about how this teacher seemed completely ignorant of any free software, but now, reading this, I understand how many people actually have the same sort of ideas. Despite myself being a complete windows fanatic, I do give credit to the merits of Linux, and especially the open source community. So seeing this sparked just a little anger. But with your timely reply, to

your original comments, I feel as though you have made up for yourself. You apologised, certainly in a way that seems genuine, and it would be saddening to see you get into ANY kind of trouble with the law over this, as it's not much worse than any personal disputes a person could have their lives. Good on you!

[12/12/08 1:54 PM](#)

[Tom | Errant](#) said...

@ the other Anon. We're not all like that. Honest! I know Ubuntu claims to be the face of the Linux community and the quality of the forum leaves a lot to be desired (ahem). Look up the Slax lot, or Fedora or.. there are loads! There are good people out there that will discuss this all level headedly :)

[12/12/08 1:55 PM](#)

Anonymous said...

Me thinks someone got threatened with a lawsuit so he back peddled to save himself. Just like Adam Savage a few months back with the Rfid chips. WEAK!

[12/12/08 1:55 PM](#)

[j4m3z](#) said...

Just another example of how religion is dangerous. Yes, some of you worship at the alter of Linux while others worship through the Windows. It's the extremists among these groups that gives the moderates among them a bad name. There's nothing wrong with using Windows. Nor is there anything wrong with using Linux. Just as one could say that there's nothing wrong with not believing in God and there's nothing wrong with worshipping One, extremists in both camps would prefer to kill than accept such a premise. I think EVERYONE should just calm the F down. Ignorant, reactionary teacher vs. cult-like techno snobs is never a good mix.

[12/12/08 1:58 PM](#)

[Cong](#) said...

Ken, I'm so glad to see this. I used to feel disappointed with your letter to Karen in your former post, but as soon as I see this, I think things are turning out towards a direction that's good for both sides. As I've said in a comment to your former post, Linux needs friends. It's good to know you are spreading a message of friendship. I've been holding that OSS is about bringing people together rather than separating us from each other. I know this is not just a vision from seeing contributors like you getting the actual job done -- reaching to people. Thank you, Ken.

[12/12/08 1:59 PM](#)

[EK](#) said...

Sorry, Ken, I wouldn't agree with you on your apologies... You've did nothing to feel sorry about. Besides, she's just a liar... :(

[12/12/08 2:02 PM](#)

[panvamp](#) said...

I've worked for an IT company for about 15 years and one thing that I can say with some certainty is that most of the IT professionals are completely out of touch with the IT world. MOST of them could care less about the modern computing world. Heck, half of them hate computers in general! I cannot tell you how many folks are just here for the paycheck, and don't care one little bit about what is really going on in technology. This teacher, to me, sounds just like one of my co-workers. I have a very difficult time accepting that someone who is responsible for teaching technology to students has no concept of open source software. Nice person or no, I think it is VERY appropriate to question her competence when it comes to Linux and Open Source Software. Ignorance should be no excuse when it comes to IT pro's. If she is stuck in a Windows world, it is her fault that she does not take in active interest in the computing community. Its not as if she was looking at source code being compiled that could have been anything. I mean even most of my brain-dead coworkers know Linux as "that free operating system". Nobody who works in any part of the industry has any excuse for not knowing that! And I agree with sugardave's post. She said that she "experimented with Linux" in college. That is clearly a false statement, probably so she wouldn't look stupid. But to me it only enhances her ignorance. There are just some people not cut out for computer industry work, nice person or not. I'm sorry her feelings were hurt, I really am, but ignorant is ignorant, and the last group of people who I want ignorant about technology are the teachers teaching it.

[12/12/08 2:07 PM](#)

[Doogs](#) said...

I'm very glad to see this response. I'm now donating to HeliOS, both because I approve in the cause, and because of the maturity shown in this blog entry. Bravo to you on both accounts.

[12/12/08 2:09 PM](#)

[Proteus71](#) said...

Thanks for the post. If I had been in your shoes, I think I would have fired off the same blog. Uber-thanks for keeping Karen as anonymous as possible. That was gentlemanly of you.

[12/12/08 2:10 PM](#)

Anonymous said...

Good post Ken. I followed your story from slashdot and I have to say I am impressed by your attitude as much as I am deceived by many comments. Admitting our own wrongs is always an honorable attitude.

[12/12/08 2:13 PM](#)

[AFroNaut](#) said...

"To err is human. To forgive, divine." This was a teaching moment for both you and Karen. After some fits and starts, you let it do what teaching moments should: which is to bring greater understanding about your work, yourselves, and each other. I'm hoping now that you both can share this teaching moment with Karen's students so they too learn from it. On the technical lessons about Linux, operating systems in general, and the concept of Open Source versus closed source (MS or otherwise). Even more important though, and not to sound terribly corny but there's a tremendous life lesson for here about communication, understanding, and cooperation. And really, isn't that what Open Source is all about??? (cue the harp, release the doves)

[12/12/08 2:13 PM](#)

[Tom | Errant](#) said...

Ken. Embarrassingly for a self-proclaimed "profficient internet user" I seem unable to dig out contact information for you!! crazy. Can you drop me a line over at tom [splat] errant [dot] me [dot] uk. I feel I have to put moeny where my mouth is and look into setting up a similar scheme here in the UK if I can. I'd love to here about your experiences, thoughts and advice if you have the time! Appreciated.

[12/12/08 2:14 PM](#)

[technoshaun](#) said...

Hey Ken long time no talk to. The only thing I was upset about was her threat to pursue you legally before she bothered to check the facts. I also give you kudos for not giving her name out. I know you would never do that but it shows that integrity prevails. Ignorance of Linux is one thing. However, threats are another. I was extremely surprised how well you kept the initial response as civil as you did. Though I do agree you did just cross the line here and there you made good points. Mistakes were made by both sides on this matter. Karen over reacted to what Aaron was doing and in turn you over reacted to the email she sent you. As far as being slashdotted, well in a way I believe that was both a good and bad thing. Good because it brought to light that we Linux Advocates must educate, not attack (which sadly was the biggest type of response) and that we as a community need to be as a whole a lot less critical. I also believe it brought a faster resolution to this whole situation. Bad because it shows that militant attitudes, such that permeates in the F/OSS community do little to further our

cause of educating the people that there is a choice. I currently fight an Anti-Linux type attitude with my current employers, they would much rather I used Windows to perform my work for them. They know I use Linux exclusively now and other than a few glitches in setting up to do my work (Mostly getting my PPTP VPN setup in Ubuntu) I have performed as well as, if not better than my windows counterparts. Mostly because I have way fewer issues about running all the multiple services needed for the job. My fellow telecommuting workers have to restart their systems. I have not once had to do that. (I had to reboot my DSL modem once but that was because of my VOIP phone for work having issues talking to the controller board after my work had a power failure where the controller board is located.) The point is even though we have to find unique solutions being Linux users, they are none the less there. Your blog post ultimately, in the end, did more good for both sides than damage. Your twitter posts also show that. Karen saw our ugly side of the Linux community, now its time to show her our good side.

[12/12/08 2:17 PM](#)

[Christian](#) said...

Lizard I hope that you are castrated so as to not pass you ignorant ass genes on to this world.

[12/12/08 2:17 PM](#)

[Pamala](#) said...

Although I think she was right to take the discs because as you said you don't know for sure what's on them, I think what really was wrong was her email to you. Some simple research can tell you everything you need to know about what the discs where and she obviously decided to shoot off and email first and research later (as she said in her email). I think she can take this as a lesson to do it the other way around in the future.

[12/12/08 2:18 PM](#)

[Neo](#) said...

I think the Linux/FSF movement has a real public relations problem, and I point to many of the comments that have been left on this blog since this whole schoolteacher thing started as examples. It mirrors the experience my girlfriend had when trying out Ubuntu to see if it would be a viable alternative to Vista on her home computer. When presented with someone who knows nothing of the ideals that accompany "Free as in libre" software, the majority response is to attack/flame, rather than explain. "She's obviously retarded, she's obviously in the pay of an organization that is in Microsoft's pocket, we need to find out who this person is so we can denounce this person, loudly, in public, to demonstrate how much you know versus how little he or she does"... that's the tone of many of the comments. You (the royal you) don't seem to be interested in educating people about Free/Open Source - you're interested in sword-point

conversion. Non tech-workers don't always know (or even care) about things like EULAs and software patents; they are frequently not interested in the 'almost-works-as-well-as' alternative to their preferred choice. Most of these people have tasks to accomplish, for business or pleasure, have learned how to use one particular software package or platform to work with, and leave it at that. The ideology behind the software doesn't matter to them - the software is a tool to be used, and that's the beginning and the end of it. You (again, the royal you) are never going to convert people at the point of a sword, and flaming them with personal attacks is never going to win their hearts. Now, about my girl - some of her friends had been on her to switch from Vista to Linux. Long story short, the promises of being able to move to Linux seamlessly and have it do everything that Vista did for her didn't pan out so well. She tried Ubuntu (8.04), since it was what most of her friends were using, and the results were less than stellar. Ubuntu would only support her new ATI video card with the use of a 'restricted' driver - she installed the driver, and then was pestered for the next few bootups as Ubuntu continually reminded her that she was using "non-free" software. She wasn't pleased to find out that any time she had a question about how Linux worked or how to install or remove software packages she was told to "google it, n00b". She had some good experiences on Ubuntu's IRC channel, and a few bad ones. When she was trying to find out why Ubuntu's "branded" Firefox broke compatibility with her site at MS' small business portal, while the same version of Firefox downloaded directly from Mozilla for either Linux or Windows worked fine, she was advised to "get rid of that **** - why did you sign up for that anyway?" The same answer repeatedly came up when she was struggling to get her iPod Touch to work under Linux. No support, just flames because she was such a n00b that she didn't check to make sure that the hardware she bought for her computer could be used, with her computer, or because she thought that paying for software was fine, as long as it delivered the functionality she was looking for. She finally got fed up with trying to find people to help her out instead of flame her, and went back to Vista - her interest in free software for all intents and purposes dead. There is much more to all of this, but I'm going to end a rather long story before it becomes even longer. I would just like to remind you folks that people will form conclusions from the attitudes of the community - my girlfriend is quick to dismiss many of her friends' opinions about computer-related issues now, because of the disregard shown for her computing needs by members of your community. No doubt she's not alone. While your rants may feed your need to vent your spleen and empower your ego, people are quick to judge, and will think your movement is filled with unthinking supporters who cannot accommodate any other world view. If that's not your goal, I suggest changing the way you respond to people's ignorance of your ideological viewpoints.

[12/12/08 2:19 PM](#)

Lusifer said...

What happened on here and /. just goes to prove that the Internet is just populated by

a sea of A-Holes. Most of the comments were said under the anonymity of the Internet. If those very people were in a room having this discussion I guarantee most of them would not utter a word for fear of retribution. The Internet makes even the meek strong in some cases. Sad but true..

[12/12/08 2:30 PM](#)

[Christopher Vigliotti](#) said...

How long before someone posts a "Leave Karen Alone" video on YouTube?

[12/12/08 2:41 PM](#)

Anonymous said...

Lusifer, congratulations. You have just described the Greater Internet Fuckwad Theory. Don't know what that is? OMG, STFU, GOOG IT, NEWB!

[12/12/08 2:42 PM](#)

Cougar941 said...

Christian... I hope you go die in a fire.. long live Lizard!

[12/12/08 2:44 PM](#)

Anonymous said...

First of all, I think she deserves an apology from the community instead of Ken. No amount of sheer ignorance truly -deserves- a "stab in the face". Correction? Perhaps. Loss of career? Perhaps, if she refused to correct her ignorance, which she did not. Physical harm over words in an email? Grow up people. Second, I would like to add my voice to the chorus: I would like to see her apology. Her initial email was more brutal than Ken's. Ken didn't threaten lawsuit, now did he? Third, the very lengthy "anonymous" post is dreadfully accurate. I refer to french as "not a language", partially in jest, because my french teacher questioned my sexuality in front of my entire class. In a town of 500 people, my class includes every person my age within traveling distance. (I'm proud to say I was directly responsible for her dismissal from our school, though her career was not ended.)

[12/12/08 2:44 PM](#)

[Shadus](#) said...

I think you've done the right thing in general. The geek community as a whole is very incendiary when you step on toes. The teachers reaction was inappropriate and misinformed, but so was the reaction most people gave her back.

[12/12/08 2:45 PM](#)

Poison [BLX] said...

I don't fully agree that she's not to blame for her own actions in even sending the message she did. I don't care that she was so ignorant of FOSS, and I also don't care that she reacted to the student as she did in the classroom, as she has to maintain some level of control in her classroom or it will become impossible for her to teach. What I do care about is the fact that she sent that message without doing any research, and in my opinion that is simply unforgivable for a person entrusted with the teaching of children. As for many of the comments against her, too many of those are as bad or worse than her own words that caused them. Those I *would* agree with, though, are those along the lines of "Ignorance isn't stupidity, but clinging to ignorance is." Her initial reaction, based on what I would expect my dad (a teacher) to do in the situation was **correct**, and the teacher in that situation should then hold onto the disks until the conference with the student outside of class. The problem enters when the student explains himself and points out the HeliOS project (or equivalent) and the teacher doesn't even try to do any real research before resorting to a threatening tone. Fanboyism (which I'll be the first to admit that I'm not immune to) is easily as bad for the community as most corporate prodding with DRM and the like. It represents ignorance from the opposite side of the very same coin. Poison [BLX]

[12/12/08 2:47 PM](#)

Anonymous said...

Don't think Helios' comments were all that bad. People should be really scared by the fact that there are Middle and higher grade teachers out there who still don;t know what Open Source is and just how much there students would benefit from it.

[12/12/08 2:50 PM](#)

Anonymous said...

Dear Blogger, Throw that bitch under the bus. Don't reward ignorance, punish it. Stop sticking up for failing public education which promotes stupidity and produces sheeple.-
Pissed

[12/12/08 2:55 PM](#)

Anonymous said...

While I'm glad you posted a 'sort of apology' for everyone, It is my opinion that the damage has already been done. the teacher jumped to (wrong) conclusions. You jumped to your conclusions too, and fired off a retort. the community (both OSS and windows) jumped to their conclusions, and posted comments and remarks. People need to understand that ignorance is in no short supply, among all facets of life. These specific exchanges happen **daily** in the various OS (as in operating system) communities daily. It's appalling to me, that this drew so much attention just because

it's a teacher. I don't understand how or why a teacher is supposed to be less ignorant than the masses. Sure, they should be proficient in their specialty, but if their courseware doesn't include linux, to "jump to the conclusion that the teacher is a drone, idiot, moron, or somehow is deserving of some kind of physical reprimand. It is my opinion that you ken, were just as ignorant of her situation as she was of yours, and deserve no more (or less) chastizing than karen recieved. And frankly, some of the comments on the digg and slashdot replies flat out turned my stomache. Those reactions epitomize all that is wrong with OSS as far as ever being taken seriously on a commercial or even respectable level. It's not very often that I feel ashamed to be a part of a community that I value, but the last day or so, I am indeed deeply ashamed.

[12/12/08 3:00 PM](#)

[kavaliro](#) said...

You missed the point. Your "assassination" of the profession was right on target. Teachers are brainwashed into thinking they are all-powerful. I'm a FOSS advocate myself, but I don't see that as the main issue. The issue is that, upon seeing these kids actually interested in *learning about something*, her teacher brain immediately screamed, "Danger! Actual education is occurring! Stop this activity immediately!" Most teachers I have spoken to have this mentality to some degree, it's the rule and not the exception. Her initial attitude toward this situation was to chastise you (an adult!) and condescendingly say, "I guess that will *show you!* Face the wrath of a *Teacher!*" Furthermore, she did it without consulting the Mystical Box of Knowledge (the computer and internet) and **checking her facts**. This is not Salem, and this is not 1692! Yet she started herself a self-righteous little witch hunt, didn't she? And had you not written your blog post, you would have gotten stonewalled by AISD in trying to correct this situation, believe it. The problem is that she felt like she had the power to put you in your place because teachers do such things **without consequences** all the time. Our public school system is a national disaster, and that's the main reason why. I'm guessing that you got a call from the NEA, and caved when they threatened to sue. Why? Oh, you were just a *little* over the top, but the gist of your post was correct. Don't apologize. I'm thrilled that this happened, not just because you can guarantee this nonsense will happen less in public schools throughout America because of your blog post, but because it takes one teacher off her self-rightous high horse and holds her accountable for her actions. She will *think* before she acts from now on, and she got that lesson pretty cheap if you ask me. @Lusifer: I didn't post anonymously. I'm saying it right out loud. But I'm not worried about retribution. My kids are receiving a proper education--they are home schooled, and will have opportunities that public school children will never have. I care too much about my children to put them in public school. That *would* be throwing them to the wolves. [0x54D1D809](#)

[12/12/08 3:03 PM](#)

[snarlydwarf](#) said...

While it is still good that you two have understood each other, I am saddened at her initial reaction: our society is far too litigious and overreactive as it is. The real apology should go to the student involved. Apologize for being overprotective and not understanding his enthusiasm. Turn it around to, "okay, Billy, if what you have to share with the class matters this much, it is time for you to get some time to show everyone in the class what you have." Let him give the whole class a demo of what he has, and helping them understand it. This, of course, will also help his own esteem, presentation skills, and make him focus his thoughts... excellent skills for a student to pick up. That will redeem the teacher in the eyes of the students as well, who no doubt have had some of their confidence shaken. ("If she doesn't understand this really is free, what else does she not get.") And, of course, it will show them that backing down when wrong, and yielding to those with knowledge is always the right thing to do. A brave teacher is not afraid to admit when wrong, and will garner more respect by doing so.

[12/12/08 3:07 PM](#)

Anonymous said...

You say: *Other open source software on both images include audacity and lame, and other Free Software such as Google Earth, iTunes, Adobe and many plug-ins.* These programs are not Free Software. The fact they are free to use doesn't make them Free Software. Free Software is governed by a GPL-like license.

[12/12/08 3:08 PM](#)

Howard said...

Thank you & "Karen" for the follow up & for taking the time to understand each other. Teaching & fighting to keep our freedoms are hard & difficult. However I am extremely saddened by the comments made by the FOSS community. What we are doing is right. We do not need to be vindictive against people who do not yet understand why we believe in this freedom. Being vindictive is the best way to drive people back to the "safety" of the big corporations.

[12/12/08 3:09 PM](#)

[Fred Blotnic](#) said...

Glad to hear it got worked out peacefully, I was displeased to see all the posters looking to find this teacher. Educating the teacher on your end that what you were doing was legal and that there was a whole world out there besides linux. I do feel that while some comments about the teaching establishment were harsh, the comment about this teacher not being up to date on linux were correct. It might be that a bond of friendship develops between you and this teacher and she might become a promoter of linux as well.

[12/12/08 3:17 PM](#)

Anonymous said...

The real question is: Is she single?

[12/12/08 3:20 PM](#)

Anonymous said...

I am glad that you realized that you were just being a dick. but this is the kinda assbattery dickheadishness that comes out of the religious fever that can be seen in the linux community. Its this kinda lame attitude that has people blowing themselves up in other countries. (i was the guy who said linux isnt helping to cure malaria btw).

[12/12/08 3:25 PM](#)

Anonymous said...

Have people learned anything from this?That's good then, it's now time to move on.Communication is good, and getting both side of a story is also good.It doesn't matter who Karen is, but it does matter what the 'Karens' of the world think.There is a difference between stupid and ignorant - the stupid can be forgiven for their choices, but the ignorant should be given the chance to be educated, if they want to remain ignorant then they can be called stupid, :-)People are free to make their own opinions, just as you are, but please make sure that their decisions are informed ones, not ignorant ones.All for now - I'm on my second glass of Port, so I had better stop :-))tfn

[12/12/08 3:25 PM](#)

Anonymous said...

To those who say that "Karen" needs to apologize to Helios:I'm guessing she already has. She sent him that threatening email to him *privately*, so she doesn't have a moral obligation to apologize to him *publicly*.Now, as to her behaviour: she was way off base. I must agree with the folks who say that she should've done some investigation before publicly embarrassing that boy and taking his property. She could've asked him for one of the disks and had a look herself.Fortunately, she seems to be waking up, and that's good. But Ken, you don't need to apologize for anything here. I believe your initial response was correct, proper, appropriate, and even somewhat diplomatic. *YOU DIDN'T OUT THIS TEACHER.* It was merely an anonymous example of a really bad mindset that exists in too many teachers out there. That mindset is, "children must be yelled at by default and deemed guilty by default."Remember folks: IT WAS ANONYMOUS. This teacher was never ID'd. So Ken did nothing wrong here.--SYG

[12/12/08 3:29 PM](#)

[Usage May Vary](#) said...

congrats for jumping to an enormous userbase :) I suspect HeliOS will get a lot more support now. I share multiple viewpoints, I am someone who tends to be a moderate unless your only option is black and white. Everyone has their manner of opinion. The truth of the matter is, you still had to break her ignorance to "jailbreak" her. This is something we deal with in modern society so much that I sincerely hope you do not have remorse for that aspect. The lashing out, sure. Oh, and I'd suggest removing Karen's name unless that's a pseudonym. The apology for being kinda harsh, sure, understandable. However, where would you be if you had written it "less hostile" and it had received slashdot coverage? Can't say the response would be *that* different. Meanwhile, on the other side of the situation its understandable to get frustrated on dealing with obtuse people. Some people have a box they live in mentally, and they do not want to leave it. How do you deal with those? If you let it go and did not give the warranted response, would she have learned? I would guess it is beyond unlikely. There's a difference between convincing people that a bad thing is good (propaganda) and convincing people that a good thing is good. At the end of the day though, on a large scale it commonly takes the same tactic to achieve both, sadly. Think of this like the debate in psychology about the person who breaks a window by accident, may or may not get punished for it by some, and may or may not get thanked for it by others who now have a new job (repairing a window). That same morally gray area. Meanwhile, I would still find the teacher's response reprehensible. She had a bad day and brought it on you, and the lack of emotional control represents it too. Although you lost your control as a response, you were not the aggressor. So you have that side to the issue too. In the end, bravo for having a newsworthy blog at this point :)

[12/12/08 3:42 PM](#)

[daniel](#) said...

Well said, sir. Well done. You've managed to keep your head when those about you were losing theirs.

[12/12/08 3:43 PM](#)

[SeeChao](#) said...

Awww... I has a tear :(Thank you for posting this follow up, it was heartwarming to read.

[12/12/08 3:51 PM](#)

[Amenditman](#) said...

Ken, THANK YOU! For your sense of honor and what's right. All you who have left comments that were brutal, learn from his example. This used to be a nice place before you left your garbage here. Blessings Amenditman

[12/12/08 3:58 PM](#)

Anonymous said...

Lol "Experimented with Linux in College" like experimenting with drugs, sexuality...
LOL

[12/12/08 3:59 PM](#)

Anonymous said...

Thanks for posting a follow-up. I figured that we had not heard the whole thing. Both you and the teacher said things that might have been better left unsaid. One of the big dangers of the Internet is that it is so easy to hit that send or submit button without rereading at a later, calmer time. Thanks for not releasing her contact info as well. People are sometimes unpredictable and after reading some of the comments, I would not have wanted any of them to also say or do things that they might regret in the heat of the moment.

[12/12/08 4:05 PM](#)

Anonymous said...

Awesome, this article is up on Slashdot.

[12/12/08 4:06 PM](#)

Anonymous said...

Let this be a lesson to all of us.

[12/12/08 4:17 PM](#)

[Harold Fowler](#) said...

Excellent pics dude. Well done!jesswww.anonymize.us.tc

[12/12/08 4:19 PM](#)

Alex Kloss said...

Hello, there!While I appreciate the lesson Karen learnt for everyone outside of the OSS world, I value the lesson even more that the OSS community can learn: most people don't know or care. What we can do is not to condemn them, but to communicate.I bow in admiration for your sincerity and integrity.Greetings from germany, Alex

[12/12/08 4:20 PM](#)

Anonymous said...

it's quite possible it was illegal to remove MS from the computers - if MS had donated them with that stipulation.

[12/12/08 4:21 PM](#)

[rathgild](#) said...

You did the right thing not identifying her. Yes she was ignorant (but aren't we all in some areas?), but it is clear from the follow up that she is not stupid and has learned something about the current state of technology. We don't know what her specialism is and so it is unfair to expect her to be completely up to date on a topic that is clearly not her field. Kudos to you for your attitude and for taking the flack that the world wants to send to her. Also kudos to her for being prepared to admit she was wrong and to learn the truth.

[12/12/08 4:25 PM](#)

[Chiefmonkey](#) said...

Excellent post, and as I suspected - there was much more to this story. I congratulate you on not only a well worded follow-up, but for being a human being and treating Karen as a human being. I can only hope that the internet crowd follows your lead in good judgment and fairness.Bravo!!Chief

[12/12/08 4:25 PM](#)

[FelixTheCat](#) said...

@Anon:These programs are not Free Software. The fact they are free to use doesn't make them Free Software. Free Software is governed by a GPL-like license.Dang! Picky, picky, picky! ;) That particular sentence has been edited since you posted. I think it was originally edited in response to someone else complaining "free software" *should* be capitalized, but the wrong one was. Enjoy!

[12/12/08 4:28 PM](#)

Anonymous said...

What a wonderful post. So human. Thank you.

[12/12/08 4:36 PM](#)

Marian said...

@Chirstian - 12/12/08 2:17 PMAnd your "enlightening" post is supposed to be coming for an educated mind?... p-l-ease...

[12/12/08 4:39 PM](#)

[snark](#) said...

I call bullshit on this little morality play. Never happened. The dialogue is stilted and ugly, the circumstances are just too perfect, and for GOD'S SAKE QUIT PATTING

YOURSELF ON THE BACK. It's a lovely little story, but you took it too far. This and the retarded child for whom you selflessly donated a PC put it over the top. I'm sure your next story will be about how you saved a litter of helpless kittens from a burning building using only the power of open-source software and your mighty hero's heart.

[12/12/08 4:45 PM](#)

[hobbitt](#) said...

Let me thank you for Helios. My husband envisioned such a thing many years ago in Austin. Although he did something like it, not like you. Any disruption in class gives teachers authority. Anything that "disrupts the education process" can give a teacher authority to act. Teachers confiscate many things in schools. Also part of it is tech related, students try to download porn, bootleg music. I has a students with admin privildges on their computer (don't ask the school officials were idiots) who would load limewire the minute my back was turned. Also remember that email has no emotion, the email from the teacher could have been better done in a "please explain to me..." style. Do not read negative emotion into any email from a stranger, he may think it is in a joking tone, you may read it as sarcastic.

[12/12/08 4:58 PM](#)

[FelixTheCat](#) said...

@snarkPenguin Pete, is that you??? hahahaha!

[12/12/08 5:00 PM](#)

Anonymous said...

The very best thing that could happen for FOSS and Linux would be if many of the posters of comments to this post (and the original post) were to go die in fires. These posters do naught for the community except give it a bad name by spouting off loudly and ignorantly at every opportunity. If what I have said makes you want to spout off then I'd advise you of the great fun that can be had playing with gasoline and matches.

[12/12/08 5:03 PM](#)

Anonymous said...

I have completely agree with Fordi's comments. You have an oppotunity to share Linux to a person who is unaware of it... what do you do... you brand her 'ignorant', and rally up the troops to character assassinate her. You know, if you want others out there try what Linux has to offer, you might want to stop branding them "the ignorant".

[12/12/08 5:12 PM](#)

[tyggna](#) said...

I was outraged at her ignorance as well, but right after I read your post--My first thought was to commend your wisdom in not posting her name or any personally identifiable information about her. It might help to remember that the OSS community, on average, has had very bad experiences with much of the public education world. Attitudes range from passive to downright hostile (a quick skim through the hackers manifesto illustrates a very common viewpoint toward public education). You did not slander her character nor career, you merely gave a lot of people another reason to justify their hate. That being said, Karen was in the wrong on this issue, and your anger was justified--but I think it goes without saying that anger is rarely productive. Still, her hasty anger and inappropriate way of dealing with a contentious situation is enough to doubt her competency in dealing with and educating children. Slashdot is an open-news forum, and you are free to post articles on it at any time. If Karen wants to try and redeem herself before "the wolves," a short essay on what she will do to help promote open source in the classroom could be posted on your blog, and then slashdotted. Otherwise--she'll be found, and likely will still be hearing about this for months to come. It's the nature of these tech junkies to find information.

[12/12/08 5:19 PM](#)

Anonymous said...

Wow, so she's a stupid b*tch AND she has a thin skin? Glad my kids go to private school.

[12/12/08 5:36 PM](#)

[anjilslaire](#) said...

Thanks for giving us the follow up on this situation, and good on you for ultimately handling it the way you did. I'm linking you to my blog to keep up on your posts going forward.

[12/12/08 5:38 PM](#)

[Harshad](#) said...

Thanks for this post, the previous post had me pretty angry too as I have been at the receiving end of the ignorance many times when in college. But as it turns out, her suspicion about what was being handed out was not baseless. Guess that one detail would had diffused everything on first contact. I think its best to realize we all are humans and we all make mistakes. I'm hoping this whole drama serves as a reminder for us, the Free Software Community, to be more understanding of the ignorance of those who haven't seen the other kind of software contract. They don't know any better. I respect your sensibility. Peace! P.S. I'll make sure I give this post some reddit love :-)

[12/12/08 6:03 PM](#)

[Consumer007](#) said...

Another widely seen link to this story which you may want to add to your collection (watched by millions of consumers tech and non tech alike:
<http://consumerist.com/5108356/teacher-confiscates-linux-discs-chides-charitable-computer-group-no-software-is-free#c9432023>

[12/12/08 6:05 PM](#)

[Allan Nelson](#) said...

Thanks for both the posts. I think your project is commendable and your support of Linux is great. I'm also very happy to see the humanity and mercy in your second post.

[12/12/08 6:06 PM](#)

Anonymous said...

I am glad it turned out like this. Now, I am pretty glad I didn't post the original story in the (more aggressive) context as it was originally intended - it's that battle between "someone being wrong on the internet" and "this is not complete story". [My comment is here.](#)

[12/12/08 6:27 PM](#)

Anonymous said...

He would donate \$1000.00 immediately to The HeliOS Project if I would give him the name of the Teacher I blogged about. I hung up the phone. "This is madness." "No, this is Sparta !!

[12/12/08 6:38 PM](#)

[raj](#) said...

Although I fully understand your apologies, I don't think Karen was innocent here. You write: "Karen seems to be a good teacher" and at the same time: "She didn't know what was on those disks he was handing out. [...] When she heard that an adult had given him some of the disks to hand out, her spidey-senses started tingling." So, she was NOT a good teacher. A good teacher would first check if he/she doesn't know something, and then judge. First ask questions, then shoot ;). She did it the reverse way. Actually, you behaved in the same way too, but this fact does not cancel the guilt on her side.

[12/12/08 6:44 PM](#)

Anonymous said...

This post has been removed by a blog administrator.

[12/12/08 7:14 PM](#)

[Orchid64](#) said...

She shoots first and asks questions later, and you're the one apologizing. She was wrong when she took the discs from the kid. She was wrong when she wrote you that letter and accused you of doing something illegal. She jumped on her high horse and told you she was going to impale you on her lance if that was in her power and you're the one apologizing to her. This is part of what is wrong with the world.

[12/12/08 7:41 PM](#)

[weasel5i2](#) said...

Everyone should keep in mind that Karen was DOING HER JOB. She has responsibilities set forth on her by the very district which employs her, and it is her job to try and keep everyone happy. It is certainly NOT justifiable to be abusive towards her simply because she did what she thought was the right thing. However, it IS important that she be educated properly (and from the looks of this posting, she has!). So people, please quit flaming her, don't you think she's dealt with enough crap already? Regards, Weasel5i2

[12/12/08 7:45 PM](#)

Ken Jennings said...

Karen was DOING HER JOB by threatening legal action and taking disks from kiddies?!? Sorry, she's not the school board's gestapo agent. This whole thing makes me thankful that I submit to a high-stress, soul-crushing IT job, so I can make enough to pay to send my daughter to private school.

[12/12/08 7:51 PM](#)

Anonymous said...

This post has been removed by a blog administrator.

[12/12/08 7:59 PM](#)

[Adrian](#) said...

you did will, sir. i am still chalking this up as a victory for FOSS, though ;)

[12/12/08 8:03 PM](#)

Anonymous said...

"...misunderstandings and neglect create more confusion in this world than trickery and malice. At any rate, the last two are certainly much less frequent." - Goethe's The Sorrows of Young Werther (1774) As a seasoned CSR in the tech sector, I could not help but think "Wow, both of these parties haven't a clue". I deal with equally ignorant and

angry individuals on a daily basis regarding technology (I have had individuals accuse me of fraud because the rack they bought won't plug into a 110V, and actually engage legal counsel). When dealing with an accusation, making assumptions as to the cause or motive for the accusation only adds fuel to a fire. Throwing back accusations based upon assumptions will quickly get you into nuclear war, when simply asking for clarification can resolve the matter the majority of the time. I applaud both parties in this case for "catching a clue" and actually opening a discourse. But if you deal with the general public, you must expect the lowest common denominator. Pointing fingers wins no followers.

[12/12/08 8:10 PM](#)

[Crouse](#) said...

I must admit, my gut instinct was the same as yours the first time, but it looks like you handled things in a very good way. Ashamed to say, probably better than I would have. I will think twice now before letting my knee-jerk reactions kick in now. Good job. ;)

[12/12/08 8:12 PM](#)

Anonymous said...

*People don't realize they are prisoners in their own computers when they use Microsoft Windows. If they ever read the EULA, they'd understand quickly*I ust read the EULA. Apparenty I can no longer push the star button.What, I can. I can do everything I could before.So what does that sentence actually mean?I know: nothing :)

[12/12/08 8:30 PM](#)

[Mark Miller](#) said...

I thought the teacher's e-mail to you was extreme and ignorant, but I could see one of her points. She was concerned that if students learned Linux and didn't learn Windows that it would be a disservice to them. I used to hold a similar view. I think students should learn Windows for vocational reasons. Most high school students either do not go on to college, or if they do they don't complete a degree. So being familiar with Windows is important for finding work, because I think employers are going to expect it. On the other hand they should see other platforms besides Windows. Linux is important in an educational context, and in the real world. I have a Windows computer and a Macbook (which I got just recently). I was educated on Unix in college many years ago. I used it for a total of about 7 years, both in school and in the work world. Now I'm back into it with OS X. While other people were getting viruses and malware on their Windows PCs I've remained safe on Windows, largely because of what I learned on Unix. Most Windows users for example don't understand the concept of system privileges and network security systems, and how they provide protection, even though Windows offers them (though third party firewalls are better). Since I learned about system privileges on Unix I was able to apply that knowledge to Windows so I

wouldn't have to spend a lot of money on antivirus/antimalware software and services. Unix/Linux makes one a more educated and aware computer user no matter what one ends up using.

[12/12/08 8:31 PM](#)

Anonymous said...

I was wondering where I could buy one of the "I tried Linux in collage" t-shirts. :0)

[12/12/08 8:37 PM](#)

[sugardave](#) said...

weasel5i2 said...Everyone should keep in mind that Karen was DOING HER JOB. She has responsibilities set forth on her by the very district which employs her, and it is her job to try and keep everyone happy.It is certainly NOT justifiable to be abusive towards her simply because she did what she thought was the right thing. However, it IS important that she be educated properly (and from the looks of this posting, she has!).So people, please quit flaming her, don't you think she's dealt with enough crap already? Hmm, so let me see if I understand this. It's the job of teachers to send e-mails to people and threaten to pursue legal action against them while claiming to be an expert on the existence of free software? Yeah, I don't think so.It is entirely justifiable to point out what a flaming idiot she is. Is that abuse? I don't think so. Only bleeding heart, namb-pamby people would think so.And exactly WHAT has she had to deal with? Nobody other than Ken and her students knows who she is or where she works. The only thing she's had to "deal with" are the e-mail she wrote, the e-mail response she received, and a phone call to ask why she is now being thrown "to the wolves." Seriously, I deal with more problems than that in about 2 hours of work each day. Again, she has not apologized at all. All she did was justify and rationalize her idiotic behavior as being "the right thing to do" when it clearly was not.The right thing to do would have been to confiscate the discs (IF there was a disruption going on), keep her bon-bon eating trap shut, and return the discs at the end of the class/day/week/month/semester/whatever.

[12/12/08 8:46 PM](#)

Anonymous said...

I was originally angered by Karens comments (although not to the extent of some of the remarks), then after reading the reply and thinking logically I find myself siding with her. Whilst yes she was ignorant of Linux, IMO she acted in the spirit of protecting children. I wouldnt want any teacher to properly investigate first, Id rather they jumped straight in, just to be on the safe side, as the safety of our children is the most important thing.Karen, I believe you did the right thing now that the whole story has been explained.

[12/12/08 8:47 PM](#)

Arker said...

Well, I disagree, she **should** thank you. The appalling ignorant arrogance of the woman, however good her heart, cried out for it. And as she says, the results have been good - she has learned more in a few days than in her entire life previous to this, and as a teacher, an authority figure to our children, this is a VERY good thing. On top of that, the NEA very much deserves opprobrium. Nothing you said was half as bad as the response you would get from my father, a man who has been a (forced) NEA member for many decades, a lifelong educator who still teaches classes today, approaching 70 years old. The NEA is a plague on education, always has been, and exactly the sort of corruptible and corrupted organisation that should never be allowed anywhere near school children, or teachers. The teacher got a crash course she was desperately in need of, the children will benefit from this, and since you did protect her identity I can see no real harm resulting, only good. So thanks, both for the original post and this follow up. You've done a lot of good, both for "karen" and her students.

[12/12/08 9:01 PM](#)

Anonymous said...

"The student did get his Linux disks back after the class. The lad was being disruptive, but that wasn't mentioned. Neither was the obvious fact that when she saw a gaggle of giggling 8th grade boys gathered around a laptop, the last thing she expected to see on that screen was a spinning cube. She didn't know what was on those disks he was handing out. It could have been porn, viral .exe's...any number of things for all she knew. When she heard that an adult had given him some of the disks to hand out, her spidey-senses started tingling. Coupled with the fact that she truly was ignorant of honest-to-goodness Free Software, and you have some fairly impressive conclusion-jumping." Gimme a break! if she was so concerned with a "porno" disk or "viral .exe's" (on his own laptop?), she would have mentioned that up front in the first email, she's just trying to cover her hinder-parts by coming up with a bunch of non-"what-if's" after the fact. And for some reason, you want to continue to refer to her as ignorant of FOSS, yet she mentioned in the first email that she had studied some Linux (we don't know how much) in college, so obviously, she would have at the very least known by then that it was a free operating system and that it was NOT illegal when she threatened to bring legal action against you. She stole the kid's CD's without even finding out what was on those disks (you only have her word (from a follow-up phone conversation, that she returned them). Her actions should be held in contempt, not given any kudos or commendations. I think you were just mollified by her turning on the eye-faucets, (she may use the same tactics to get out of traffic tickets for all we know), and she has won another battle with a simple sob-story. I.E. YOU made the apology, not her, when her original email was blatantly an attack and in the

wrong. If she had called to apologize and admit that she was wrong, I'd feel different, but I feel she deserved every "bad comment" that she got. If you'll notice, the first words out of her mouth were "why did YOU throw ME under the bus?" (YOU are persecuting poor, little ol' ME), its a psychological red-herring to transfer the blame from her to you. It's typical these days to "blame the other guy" if you get caught up in your lies and innuendoes, instead of taking responsibility for your actions and accepting the consequences, and she chooses *NOT* to take that responsibility. This is what she is teaching her students, "don't take responsibility, find someone else to place the blame on?" I do, however want to commend you for taking the high road re. not revealing her name, school, etc. which would be better dealt with internally between the teacher, parents of all the students involved and school admins. 'Karen' in my estimation, is a fake, a fraud and a Windows fanboy and YOU've been had!

[12/12/08 9:16 PM](#)

[swiftnetcomputers](#) said...

The initial letter from Karen was most definitely atagonistic. The threat of legal action, before having the details is what made me think she is not a good teacher. I am jumping to this conclusion because I feel a teacher should know something about technology. I don't think teachers should be at the IT pro's level, but they should understand that not all students run Windows, or MS Office or IE. They should know that there are alternatives. They should know this because they have a direct influence on our children and technology is the future. If they say MS Windows is the only software that is good, then they are potentially 'dumbing down' our children. Teachers are generally viewed as being more educated than their students. If they are teaching ignorance tou our children then we all lose.

[12/12/08 9:19 PM](#)

Anonymous said...

To the poster above who says he read the EULA and saw nothing bad...You either didn't read it wellOrYou thoroughly enjoy public spankings.<http://www.securityfocus.com/columnists/420>

[12/12/08 9:44 PM](#)

Anonymous said...

Maybe there is an opportunity here for both of ya

[12/12/08 9:55 PM](#)

Anonymous said...

To the poster above who says he read the EULA and saw nothing bad...You either didn't read it wellOrYou thoroughly enjoy public spankings.Ooor..... he's one of

Karen's pupils?...

[12/12/08 10:14 PM](#)

[Jacob Roecker](#) said...

So this is good closure for those of us still reading. There's only one unanswered story here: What exactly was your son's perspective? - Jacob

[12/12/08 10:22 PM](#)

Anonymous said...

An ppl c'mon... why are we hiding behind Anon postings : (probably becuz sum of us don't have nor want a blog account ;-), also 'experimenting in college' might mean she took a short course in it, it's a pretty lame way out to say 'i experimented' just like 'i tried mj, but i didn't inhale' or 'i didn't have sex with that woman' she would still have enough knowlege to know what the gpl is and what free software is if she is college educated and 'experimented' with it.

[12/12/08 10:44 PM](#)

Anonymous said...

some of the hackers and phreakers of the 90s are now teachers. and you better believe we're teaching our students how2internet. don't paint us all with the same brush.

[12/13/08 12:05 AM](#)

[Fadumt](#) said...

the best part of all of this is that while people go back and forth in these comments...ken will be installing Linux on Karen's computer later on today. We aren't such a bad group after you get over the fundamentalists.

[12/13/08 12:35 AM](#)

Anonymous said...

As a former student that was punished frequently for being smarter than my teachers, I am offended by your yield. This "teacher" punished a student. The crime was non-existent. Her ignorance, as a college educated woman, is inexcusable. Please stop feeling pity for those that corrupt the minds of our youth with their short sighted views.

[12/13/08 12:41 AM](#)

Anonymous said...

Speaking as a full-time Linux user for 14 years, may I make four points? 1. Since Ken received a threat, he was entitled to post the threat publicly and in its entirety --

including the E-mail headers, which would have identified "Karen" conclusively. However, he was nice enough not to do so. If other people are saying unkind things about a person who threatened Ken, and whose identity Ken tried to protect, Ken is both legally and morally in the clear (despite the fact that he was threatened with a lawsuit -- the other side would lose badly).² I agree with the people who point out that the issue isn't the teacher's ignorance. Anybody can be ignorant about something. I'm ignorant about a lot of things. So are you. It's the fact that she chose to make an unjustified threat. As it turns out, it appears that "Karen" is actually a nice person. Additionally, she had the right to take the disks involved temporarily. However, those aren't the issues either. She made the decision to threaten Ken without checking the facts. That decision, the decision to attack, is what matters. On a related note, Ken's response wasn't an attack. It was heated, but it was actually mild compared to what other people might have written.³ This incident has been resolved amicably, or it's on the way to being resolved amicably. However, based on what I've seen in related discussions elsewhere, this kind of thing isn't unusual. Remember the City of Tuttle, Oklahoma CentOS Linux fiasco? That was an extreme example (and quite funny -- Google it for the details), but lesser incidents are fairly common. Discussions should move away from "Karen" and towards productive ways to address these situations.⁴ There's a site which has the stated goals of addressing this kind of thing in a positive manner. I'd like to suggest that stories similar to the "Karen" and CentOS incidents, combined with constructive discussion, be directed to the site [freesoftwareforkaren dot com](http://freesoftwareforkaren.com). There's an associated blog, and the site includes a link to the blog.

[12/13/08 12:50 AM](#)

[Matt E.](#) said...

One the one hand.. I can say you were pretty harsh, but on the other.. she threatened to have you ARRESTED! This wasn't a idle threat, this was a teacher (a member of a PROFESSIONAL GROUP, like lawyers, doctors and engineers) who was threatening comprehensive legal action against you. Even though you KNOW you were doing nothing wrong, this was a Teacher who was threatening you with criminal legal action. While ignorance is shocking at schools, it is common place in police departments. You could have easily been writing your blog after you posted bail, or worse, be writing it from a prison computer waiting to be arranged and your case to be thrown out. Police LISTEN to teachers. She holds a position of authority over both your child, and yourself. All this being said, I applaud your compassion. I am sure that because your child was being disruptive you have modified your tone. However, she is honestly VERY lucky to still have a teaching position (at least in Canada she would have been fired for making non-valid threats of criminal legal action to a parent.. apparently US teachers pretty much have to sleep with a student to get fired). I am glad you are educating her. Please let her know that such threats from a professional without grounds are usually reason for ejection from that professional body. (Jack Thompson anyone???)

[12/13/08 1:01 AM](#)

Anonymous said...

What you did was fantastic.

[12/13/08 1:55 AM](#)

[AAM](#) said...

seems like the two most important people have learnt from the interaction. good to see!give us a heads up in 2 months about her linux experience. you probably should start with those disks being handed around and show her how to make sure that there is no porn or viruses there!

[12/13/08 1:56 AM](#)

[Dominic](#) said...

Where does the Windows hate come from? I've used SUSE, Ubuntu, various incarnations of the Mac OS and most of the Windows versions. I like Windows, sue me. I don't feel that I'm, "trapped in the world of Windows." I use Firefox, iTunes, Open Office, Gimp, etc. You like Linux, I get it, but you should appreciate the fact that some people actually LIKE Windows. And before the haters begin, I do not now, nor have I ever worked for Microsoft.

[12/13/08 2:04 AM](#)

[sugardave](#) said...

Dominic said... Where does the Windows hate come from? I've used SUSE, Ubuntu, various incarnations of the Mac OS and most of the Windows versions. I like Windows, sue me. I don't feel that I'm, "trapped in the world of Windows." I use Firefox, iTunes, Open Office, Gimp, etc. You like Linux, I get it, but you should appreciate the fact that some people actually LIKE Windows. And before the haters begin, I do not now, nor have I ever worked for Microsoft. There is a HUGE difference between liking Windows and claiming that exposing anything other than Windows to children is doing them a disservice. Do you not see that?

[12/13/08 2:23 AM](#)

Anonymous said...

Your foresight and empathy make me happy that you were the one who was dealing with this. Given the rabid mass (of which I am seemingly a part of) who read your blog, allowing the teacher to be identified would have been to unleash a torrent of abuse on another human being (notice how people have started seeking you out).Disproportionately punishing people is a good way to encourage people to dismiss your argument entirely. If you are the one consciously having stem back the tide (lest it

vent it wrath on someone else) then it forces the rest of us to take a second look at what you are saying.

[12/13/08 2:45 AM](#)

[Consumer007](#) said...

Well Dominic, if you want to enjoy something made as the result of illegal activities, stealing trade secrets, and without one thought to your safety online, or that you should have choices, knock yourself out. Those of us who are enlightened and can look around without our heads in the sand can enjoy and also realize the risk of doing so exclusive to anything else, which means being locked in. In your case, I'm glad you have had multiple experiences on multiple platforms, but one would think that would give you the same wisdom. No, I don't think you work for them, I think what you have is a naive belief there is nothing wrong with Microsoft, just makes you sound unaware.

[12/13/08 3:14 AM](#)

[Wretched Excess](#) said...

I fell into the middle of this whole thing via my friend who pointed me to the Austin linux group, we are both involved with KCLUG (Kansas City, MO) and when I joined the forum there I was a bit confused until I got a link to a post regarding the noise on BoingBoing. After weaving my way through all of the thunderous noise, I would have to say that you have done a fine job in your handling of something that was originally simple and local! Amazing what can happen when the world is watching, eh?

[12/13/08 3:22 AM](#)

Tantillum said...

Yep, you're human. :) It's amazing the power of a single blogger isn't it? It's pretty frightening. "With power comes great responsibility." You definitely got to her, though. It's both a good and bad thing. One, you got her attention. Two, it's hopefully taught her a lesson. But, Thirdly, it could have done her some serious damage had your anger made you give in, and give out her full name. It's a good thing you didn't. You're a good man, Ken.

[12/13/08 3:47 AM](#)

Anonymous said...

How about some kind of proof that any of this actually happened? This whole drama thing has a certain phoniness to it. The email would have to have been from a mental patient for this to be true. Hopefully I'm wrong, but I find the whole thing hard to believe. On the other hand, if I'm right, an even bigger story would be a non-profit making up tells of woe to advance their cause.

[12/13/08 4:21 AM](#)

Anonymous said...

An eye for an eye makes the whole world blind.

[12/13/08 4:28 AM](#)

[SFTV troy](#) said...

This teacher is the "can dish it out but can't take it" type. She threatened to sue the Helios guy for distributing free Linux software, and the Helios guy published her post publicly, and then suddenly she starts crying. My dad is like that. Last Thanksgiving he started yelling at my mom, telling her she was a "stupid woman" who didn't know how to cook, and on and on and on. But he forgot that I was in the next room. So then *I* stepped in and told him to stop it. He immediately started crying. This Karen teacher reminds me of my dad. A person who like to attack others ("I'll sue you Helios") but can not handle it when the victim stands-up to defend themselves. I have no respect for those types of people.

[12/13/08 5:43 AM](#)

[Juan](#) said...

well i have been reading the blog from the beginning and I would love to give my comment on this 1. the teacher did over react before she even did research on this case 2. the email that has been sent to her were decent enough for her allegations. But the knowledge regarding Linux is lacking in south Africa as well when I speak about Linux here to someone they ask me what does this application do then I reply "its not an application its a operating system" and then they can believe it. Even if there is kids in school that's using Linux I consider them very clever and can a very promising future, to be able to use Linux you got be clever its not like windows just read the screen and push buttons its all about using your brain to get what you want and any ways where can you customise windows as you want it. Linux is more stable then what windows will ever be and Linux is more powerful then windows. Windows limits you form getting things done but with Linux you can do anything with it and program it according to your needs.

[12/13/08 5:55 AM](#)

[Tel](#) said...

Freedom is difficult, you have to stand back while people make decisions in their own mind. They might not make the same decisions that you would have made. Free Software inherits all of the good and bad of freedom in general. On the whole, there's more good than bad. People can learn if you give them a chance, they might still disagree but at least they can disagree in a decent and respectful manner... which is the best anyone can hope for.

[12/13/08 6:33 AM](#)

Anonymous said...

former teacher. current linux user.formerly thought you were an idiot for the way you initially responded to the teacher.currently think youre not such an idiot for the way youve handled yourself since.

[12/13/08 7:57 AM](#)

[raj](#) said...

To "Anonymous" above, talking about Ken being or not an idiot: and don't you think this teacher was an idiot, from the way how she reacted?

[12/13/08 8:31 AM](#)

Anonymous said...

I'm glad she's finally give a fair shake. Wanting to protect 8th Graders is understandable, most think they're adult and mature enough to handle things, until they get out into the real world.

[12/13/08 9:16 AM](#)

damaged justice said...

"Wanting to protect 8th Graders is understandable, most think they're adult and mature enough to handle things, until they get out into the real world."And that attitude is precisely why pubescent teenagers a hundred years ago were captaining ships and starting their own businesses, and today you have forty-year olds still living with their mothers who don't even know how to balance a checkbook.

[12/13/08 9:29 AM](#)

Anonymous said...

Anonymous @ 2:45pm --The teacher has been identified in comments elsewhere and has been thrown to the *chans.Everything else aside, he was unwise to give her first name. /b/tards live for dropping people's dox.

[12/13/08 9:30 AM](#)

Anonymous said...

Let me know when I can buy the latest game off the shelf and install it on Linux. Until then I'll be happily "trapped" in Windows."Linux can do anything Windows can! Free yourself!" Blah blah.I have tried 3 different distros. None can do what I do on my Windows box. Still don't see how she magically managed to contact you about it. Was

your name on the discs?I'm calling shens.

[12/13/08 9:44 AM](#)

[Mark Story](#) said...

Good on you for resisting the temptation to really throw her to the wolves. I was upset by the rabid and irrational responses from the original post. I'm glad to hear that there was infact more to the story and that both sides were jumping the gun a bit.

[12/13/08 10:06 AM](#)

[jazzyjeph](#) said...

There's no need to apologise for covering this.PS.**Anonymous who has tried 3 distro's** if you are having trouble doing something new don't just give up and blame what you are using but ask and search for help. If you would like to tell me which games you are trying to run i'll see if I can help you.

[12/13/08 10:48 AM](#)

[Aoede](#) said...

To the various anonymii (or anonymous sockpuppets):Your OT fixation on sexual intercourse is obviously a symptom of something far more serious. I'm sure there are some good shrinks in your area.Good God, is this how Linux people treat women?

[12/13/08 11:27 AM](#)

Anonymous said...

@damaged justice...why pubescent teenagers a hundred years ago were captaining ships and starting their own businesses, and today you have forty-year olds still living with their mothers who don't even know how to balance a checkbook.A nice dialectic trick: taking two exceptional extremes, connect the one to one group (hundred years ago) and the other to another one (people today), and you have the proof for any thesis you want!Man, you could find both extremes in either century. None of them is the average type of its age.

[12/13/08 11:59 AM](#)

Anonymous said...

Thank you. So many people rip into teachers without having the whole story and never alter their stance (even when they learn the facts). This is part of what made me leave the profession. You're a good man.

[12/13/08 12:05 PM](#)

Anonymous said...

Well done. The strength of your character is revealed in this apology. You have resolved a very bad and adversarial situation with great dignity. You deserve credit for being able to show others that the right thing can be done, even in situations of extreme stress.

[12/13/08 12:17 PM](#)

[Shannon VanWagner](#) said...

Thank you for making this whole thing happen. I thought your explanation of something learned by all parties was very eloquent indeed. I especially agree with your views on how we as humans should appreciate educators for the services they have committed to provide to our children. Humanity would be in a sad and savage, anarchistic state, were it not for people devoting their lives to educate others. With that being said, I now look forward to the positive potential of great magnitude that has now been created for teacher Karen. I believe the situation has instilled a fierce anti-ignorance in teacher Karen that will carry on for many years to come. I believe teacher Karen will now fight to bring out the truth about GNU/Linux and technological freedom to everyone whose brain she touches. To the efforts of Freedom in Technology, this is extremely valuable. I think it is very professional and beneficial to GNU/Linux of you to have kept in contact with this teacher, and to have provided a path for something good to become of this entire situation. I salute you friend, you truly are an effective soldier of Freedom in Technology. Thank you for your efforts, and for enabling humans with technology. Shannon VanWagner GNU/Linux Enthusiast

[12/13/08 12:27 PM](#)

[Durnik](#) said...

Thanks Ken.. & thanks Winter.. an enemy converted is better.. & morals, as an excuse, have started too many wars/altercations.. I try to remember something I heard somewhere in a fairly busy life.. "We punish someone for the worst moment in their life.. while ignoring the many good parts of that life".. Not quite fair, eh? A bit of open minded conversation can do so much toward understanding. Thanks for your efforts, Ken. Thanks for calling, Karen. However difficult it can be juggling children with one hand & an often out of touch school board with the other, know that some of us accept mistakes as the result of action taken - the only people who make no mistakes are those who try nothing. Not all teenage boys are completely focused on prurient interests.. some have (other ;-)) interests too.. The most important part of making a mistake is what is learned from it.. enjoy bobbyp.s. to all the (very) many who missed it, Karen's apology was her call & talk with Ken. Now, y'all get to apologize.. (thanks to --SYG & others for also pointing that out..) Sorry isn't simply the words (I'm sorry).. it is more so the feeling as well as the actions of change. They both apologized..

[12/13/08 12:45 PM](#)

[FelixTheCat](#) said...

@Anon 9:44 *Let me know when I can buy the latest game off the shelf and install it on Linux. Until then I'll be happily "trapped" in Windows. I have tried 3 different distros. None can do what I do on my Windows box. Still don't see how she magically managed to contact you about it. Was your name on the discs? I'm calling shens.* 1. I am addicted to WoW - guess where I play it? Nope, wrong, not on a Windows box, not even dual-boot. It works **perfectly** on my Linux workstation. 2. Since you are spouting off about what you know little about, here is some **fact** for you. The kid was one of the kids helios helped out by getting him a computer with Linux on it when his family otherwise couldn't afford it. Feel sheepish yet? Probably not, but we can all hope. So, the kid likes Linux and the apparent power it gives him on his computer that he decides to share it (Oh noes! He can't play YOUR game so it must be wrong!) with other kids. Other kids are enthralled and some of them take a disk to try it themselves. Helios gets "implicated" because Aaron needs to say a name of someone that is more knowledgeable of Linux and FOSS than he is - heck, Aarons's being grilled, probably being accused of something illegal and who knows what kind of punishment. He needs reinforcements. He names helios since helios apparently has better answers. Do you get it? I didn't think so. :(

[12/13/08 12:46 PM](#)

[FelixTheCat](#) said...

@Aoede *Good God, is this how Linux people treat women?* Ummm, no. Why would you even go there? Those anons give no good evidence they are even part of the Linux community, yet you'll assume they are? Is that how Windows people generalize the world?

[12/13/08 12:50 PM](#)

Anonymous said...

A crying woman saying "I'm sorry". God help us.

[12/13/08 12:51 PM](#)

Richard Michaels said...

Still don't see how she magically managed to contact you about it. Was your name on the discs? From Character-Assassinations-Ain't-US "For whatever reason, this story took on a life of its own. By 10:30 AM, I had to turn my cell phone off. People were getting my number from my business website and calling me with their comments and reactions." His name and number is also on the desktop of every computer he gives away. I know, he has graciously supplied my family with one of his great computers. You know...doing a bit of reading before reacting can either stall or stop your headlong dive into moron-hood. Congratulations moron

[12/13/08 1:00 PM](#)

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[The HeliOS Project Donation Point - Bringing Linux and Technology To Kids Who Need It Most.](#)

Only one hard and fast rule here

Many of the kids we build computers for visit this blog. Please post anything you want but do it with the thought of an 11 year old child sitting next to you. Our kids get exposed to enough garbage in the world, let's not add to it here. We can't "clean up" the internet, but we can do our part not to add to the garbage pile. - Thanks for being part of what we do. - h





World of Goo



Finally...someone gets it: Linux users play games and they don't mind paying a fair price for them. The 2D boys have created World of Goo for Linux! Now maybe the "big boys" will figure it out. Support those who support us by clicking something purple. Go get yours today.

The HeliOS Project Now Has It's Own Blog

As The HeliOS Project has expanded, we needed to give it room to grow. You can see [The HeliOS Project Blog here](#). We also have a website devoted to this effort. You can [go here to see](#) what we are doing at any given time. Thanks for being part of what we do.

Purchase of these great animals supports FOSS - thanks



OPEN ANIMALS
Where All the Animals Roam Free

[can be trained as an attack penguin](#)

Wanna keep up with BOH?



Zareason: Linux Computers That Work First Time - Every Time.

We proudly link to Zareason under our Things of Immense Interest. See below.

Support those who fully support Open Source by choice, not by profit motive.

Things of immense interest...or not

- [The HeliOS Project Donation Point](#)
- [Linux Computers done right...and at a great price](#)
- [Zareason](#)
- [Lindependence 2008](#)
- [The Best Linux News Site Available](#)
- [Devnet's Guide to Linux Communities \(New User Help\)](#)
- [Linux News and Views - some great investigative reporting from time to time](#)

Who IS this guy?



Ken Starks

You've entered into the realm of someone who thinks the proliferation of Linux on the desktop is worth the hard work and sacrifice. There are few things in life aside from my family I have found worth fighting for. On these pages, you will discover that for me...there is one other.

[View my complete profile](#)

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Random Pixel Statements

Meet Frazzle...Our Mascot during HeliOS

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