

# The "YouTube" Killers

---

 [blogs.lse.ac.uk/polis/2007/04/20/the-youtube-killers/](http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/polis/2007/04/20/the-youtube-killers/)

2007-4-20

The [Virginia Tech](#) massacre has confirmed that we now live in the nightmarish world of the citizen journalist murderer. The row about showing the video made by [Cho Seung-Hui](#) is not the most interesting point. I think that you can't really argue against broadcasting this material. Otherwise you are opening the door to censorship and secrecy in anything that may cause hurt. But I do accept that every lunatic or terrorist now uses the media as a platform for their carefully-crafted home-movies. [Osama Bin Laden](#), the [beheaders](#) of western hostages and, of course, the British-born [London tube bombers](#) all made their own ghastly propaganda promos. But Seung-Hui's YouTube-style piece of macabre self-indulgence opens up the possibility of

a wave of copy-cat killer videos. Before you only lived on in the news coverage of your acts. Now you can immortalise your own words and image. The mass media will happily oblige and transmit your work which will now live on the internet for eternity. There is nothing new in killers and criminals and mass murderers being publicity hungry. In the US the early Western robbers and gangsters exploited the new technologies of newspapers and the telegraph to give themselves an romantic image. Hitler was notoriously adept at using the talents of people like filmmaker [Leni Riefenstahl](#). But what's new about the 21st century extreme egotist is the way that cheap, easy technology enables even the sickest mind to make their own testament of terror, and the new broadcast and online technologies mean their message will go further and faster than ever before.

- Copyright © 2014 London School of Economics and Political Science