Her teen committed suicide over ‘sexting’
Cynthia Logan’s daughter was taunted about photo she sent to boyfriend

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The image was blurred and the voice distorted, but the words spoken by a young Ohio woman are haunting. She had sent nude pictures of herself to a boyfriend. When they broke up, he sent them to other high school girls. The girls were harassing her, calling her a slut and a whore. She was miserable and depressed, afraid even to go to school.

And now Jesse Logan was going on a Cincinnati television station to tell her story. Her purpose was simple: “I just want to make sure no one else will have to go through this again.”

The interview was in May 2008. Two months later, Jessica Logan hanged herself in her bedroom. She was 18.

Conveying the message
“She was vivacious. She was fun. She was artistic. She was compassionate. She was a good kid,” the young woman’s mother, Cynthia Logan, told TODAY’s Matt Lauer Friday in New York. Still grieving over the loss of her daughter, she said she is taking her story public to warn kids about the dangers of sending sexually charged pictures and messages to boyfriends and girlfriends.

“It’s very, very difficult. She’s my only child,” Logan told Lauer. “I’m trying my best to get the message out there.”

It is a growing problem that has resulted in child pornography charges being filed against some teens across the nation. But for Cynthia Logan, “sexting” is about more than possibly criminal activity: It’s about life and death.

Last fall, the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy surveyed teens and young adults about sexting — sending sexually charged material via cell phone text messages — or posting such materials online. The results revealed that 39 percent of teens are sending or posting sexually suggestive messages, and 48 percent reported receiving such messages.

‘She was being tortured’
Jesse Logan’s mother said she never knew the full extent of her daughter’s anguish until it was too late. Cynthia Logan only learned there was a problem at all when she started getting daily letters from her daughter’s school reporting that the young woman was skipping school.

“I only had snapshots, bits and pieces, until the very last semester of school,” Logan told Lauer.
She took away her daughter’s car and drove her to school herself, but Jesse still skipped classes. She told her mother there were pictures involved and that a group of younger girls who had received them were harassing her, calling her vicious names, even throwing objects at her. But she didn’t realize the full extent of her daughter’s despair.

“She was being attacked and tortured,” Logan said.

“When she would come to school, she would always hear, ‘Oh, that’s the girl who sent the picture. She’s just a whore,’ ” Jesse’s friend, Lauren Taylor, told NBC News.

Logan said that officials at Sycamore High School were aware of the harassment but did not take sufficient action to stop it. She said that a school official offered only to go to one of the girls who had the pictures and tell her to delete them from her phone and never speak to Jesse again. That girl was 16.

Logan suggested talking to the parents of the girls who were bullying Jesse, but her daughter said that would only open her to even more ridicule.

“She said, ‘No, I need to do something else. I’m going to go on the news,’ and that’s what she did,” Logan said.

Finding Jesse
When Cynthia Logan decided to go public with her story, she told Lauer that a school official told a local television station that he had given Jesse the option of prosecuting her tormentors. “That was not so. It’s absolutely not true,” she told Lauer. “And if he did, why didn’t I get a notice in the mail that he gave her that option?”

After her daughter’s death, Logan quit her

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job and was hospitalized for a time with what she described as a mental breakdown. When she spoke about finding her daughter in her bedroom last July, tears coursed down her cheeks.

Jesse had been talking about going to the University of Cincinnati to study graphic design. Her mother thought she was over the worst of the bullying. Then one of Jesse’s acquaintances committed suicide. Jesse went to the funeral. When she came home, she hanged herself.

“I just had a scan of the room, her closet doors were open,” Logan told NBC News. “And I walked over into her room and saw her hanging. The cell phone was in the middle of the floor.”

**Quest for justice**

Logan said she’s been through six lawyers in what has so far been an unsuccessful battle to hold school officials responsible for the bullying of her daughter.

She was joined on TODAY by Parry Aftab, an Internet security expert and activist in the battle to protect teens from the dangers that lurk in cyberspace. Aftab said that there are laws that apply.

“There absolutely is a law,” Aftab told Lauer. “It depends on the age of the child. If somebody’s under the age of 18, it’s child pornography, and even the girl that posted the pictures can be charged. They could be registered sex offenders at the end of all of this. Even at the age of 18, because it was sent to somebody under age, it’s disseminating pornography to a minor. There are criminal charges that could be made here.”

Aftab said that it is normal kids just like Jesse who fall victim to the perils of the Internet and the easy exchange of information on cell phones.

“We talked about her being a good kid, a normal kid. Those are most of the ones that are sending out those images,” she said. “Forty-four percent of the boys say that they’ve seen sexual images of girls in their school, and about 15 percent of them are disseminating those images when they break up with the girls.”

Aftab asked Logan to join her in her fight against the electronic exploitation of kids. “I’m going to get her involved in a huge campaign to allow kids to understand the consequences of this and allow schools to understand what they need to do to keep our kids alive,” she said.

Aftab turned to Logan to see if she would help.

“Absolutely,” she said.