

Case Brief

People v. Croddy

People v. Croddy is the trial of Lee Croddy who hosts a popular YouTube channel called The Right Choice of News (RCN). Croddy has been charged with two counts: (1) aiding and abetting in the commission of first-degree burglary by another, and (2) accessory after the fact.

Croddy posts videos on RCN in which Croddy discusses topics Croddy believes are suppressed by the government. One favorite topic of Croddy's is government cover-ups related to UFOs. Croddy attracted the attention of an enthusiastic fan, Remi Montoya. For almost a year, Montoya and Croddy communicated frequently in non-public Twitter group chats.

During one group chat in February 2020, Croddy shared a short video clip that included an image of government documents. The documents contained personal information about a California official named Drew Marshak who allegedly had information about UFOs. A few days later, Montoya stole a briefcase from within Marshak's home and copied files from Marshak's computer. In a brief confrontation, Montoya hit Marshak in the face. Montoya later pleaded guilty to first-degree burglary and assault on a peace officer.

The prosecution alleges that Lee Croddy aided and abetted Montoya in the burglary. The prosecution will present evidence that Croddy showed a video with Marshak's information to Montoya and others in the group chat while instructing Montoya to "take what's ours" from Marshak at Marshak's home. Other evidence allegedly shows that Croddy specifically told Montoya in a private text to go to Marshak's home to "get" documents, and that Montoya acted under Croddy's influence. The prosecution further alleges that Croddy let Montoya spend the night in Croddy's home after the burglary, knowing that Montoya had committed a crime.

The defense argues that Lee Croddy did not knowingly aid or abet Montoya in any crime. The defense will present evidence that Croddy merely intended to build camaraderie within a political movement for government transparency through Croddy's videos, chat messages, and text messages. Therefore, the defense argues that Croddy did not have the intent to aid or abet Montoya's criminal acts. Furthermore, Croddy had no knowledge of the crimes after they occurred, and so was not an accessory after the fact.

The pretrial issue centers on the Fifth Amendment protection against self-incrimination and as set forth in *Miranda v. Arizona*. The issue in this case is whether or not the circumstances surrounding Lee Croddy's interaction with the police amounted to custodial interrogation. If so, the circumstances would require the protection of the Fifth Amendment and thus would have required the officer to read the defendant the *Miranda* warnings prior to interrogation.