The folks at the Coyote Ugly Bar in Nashville are learning a painful lesson about the hazards of social media. A federal court there recently denied the bar’s motion for summary judgment in an employment retaliation suit based on some blog postings by the bar’s owner. But back to basics. For those of you who missed the movie:

the court’s explanation will suffice: *The saloon employs bartenders and waitresses known as “Coyotes” who, in addition to mixing and selling drinks, entertain customers by performing choreographed dances on the bar and “body shots” of alcohol off their stomachs. While working, “Coyotes” are expected to flirt and be “sassy” with the bar’s customers. To add to the atmosphere, female customers are also permitted and encouraged to dance on the bar.*

I personally can’t help but chuckle when I think about a federal judge writing the words “body shots” and “sassy” – but I digress. The plaintiff was a member of a class of plaintiffs that was suing over a pretty mundane question – whether the bar’s tip pooling plan, which required tips to be shared with security personnel, violated the Fair Labor Standards Act. According to the bartenders, the security folks had virtually zero interaction with the customers, and should not share in the booty. So to speak. The owner and founder of Coyote Ugly is Liliana Lovell. And she was not happy at all with the lawsuit. About one month after it was filed, she posted this on her “Lil Spills” blog, which appears on the Coyote Ugly Web site:

“By the way Lil, you should be getting served with a lawsuit. No worries[,] just sign for it.” This particular case will end up pissing me off[,] cause it is coming from someone we terminated for theft. I have to believe in my heart that[,] somewhere down the road, bad people end up facing bad circumstances!

I have been reading the basics of Buddhism[,] and am going to a class on Monday. The Buddhist way would be to find beauty in the situation and release anger knowing that peace will come. Obviously, I am still a very new Buddhist[,] cause my thoughts are “[f***k] that [b**ch].” Let me do my breathing exercises and see if any of my thoughts change. Lol . . .

Nice. This of course brings to mind another recent film, but again, I digress. Lil’s “LOL” no doubt turned to “OMG” when the plaintiff filed a claim for retaliation – claiming that the employer took adverse action against her for filing the lawsuit. According to the court, “a
jury could find that this alleged conduct would have likely dissuaded a reasonable worker from making or supporting an FLSA claim.”

Pretty simple lesson here. If you are upset with an employee filing a lawsuit, feel free to vent to your bartender, but think twice before sharing it in cyberspace. I suggest that Lil work very hard on her Buddhist breathing exercises once trial starts. And if that doesn’t work, there are always body shots.