

Crime fear in America threatens our freedom

OUR OPINION: U.S. can't afford to get friendly with Big Brother or his technological trappings

Been to your bank or an automatic teller machine lately?

Smile, you're probably on candid camera.

How about parking garages, grocery stores, malls or your favorite restaurant? These and many office buildings, hospitals, airports, hotels, storage facilities, apartment complexes, retail clothing dressing rooms and other places where you'd least expect them, all have something in common.

Video cameras taping your adorable mug.

The reason, of course, is to catch not-so-adorable-people in the act of committing unkind and illegal acts.

And the cameras do capture, at least on tape, bank robbers and other criminals who have a higher chance of being apprehended than if they hadn't been taped.

What the video camera can't see is often scanned and noticed by another piece of technology; the metal detector.

Last week, Jackson Middle School students in Southwest Portland had to pass through portable metal detectors as they entered their school.

The detectors are part of a new plan worked out by police and school officials to discourage students from bringing weapons to school.

Five to 10 years ago, we would have all been horrified at the thought of video cameras in so many public places, and metal detectors at any location except the airport.

Today, it appears society

not only accepts all these electronic intrusions, but it welcomes them with open arms.

Are we giving Big Brother a warm and fuzzy hug?

To a point, yes. A society will always be willing to sacrifice certain freedoms to maintain social order and personal safety.

Even though violent crime has recently declined in the U.S., criminals still hold us hostage through fear.

We are afraid of criminals and crime.

We are afraid of misfits like James H. Rincker, the disgruntled terrorist who shot two people and took hostages at Portland's KOIN Center on Jan. 4.

We are horrified by humans who abduct 9-year-old girls and viciously take their lives.

We are outraged and perplexed when three teenagers are taken to a remote hillside in Springfield and shot to death.

Yes, we do have a crime problem. And yes, we need video cameras and metal detectors and police officers and laws.

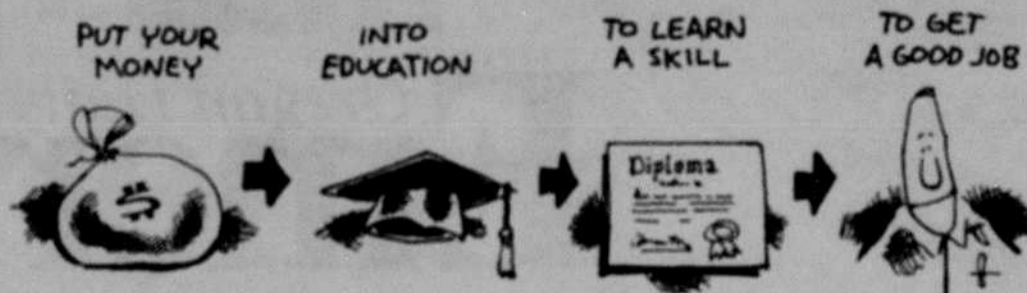
But we need to be careful not to overreact on the side of caution and security.

Put up the cameras and the detectors only where they are needed, and when and if the crime's frequency drops off, contemplate removing them.

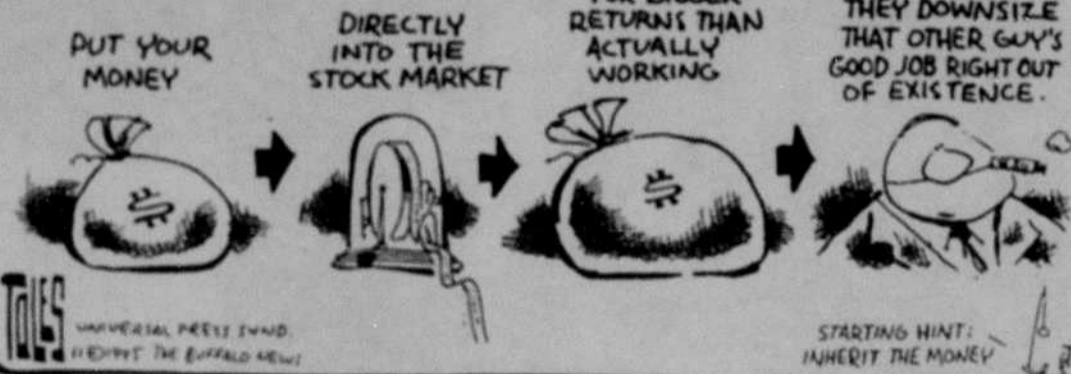
Meanwhile, we should be looking at other solutions to our crime problems. We need tougher laws for violent offenders. We should also start holding the media and entertainment industry responsible for violent programming.

The alternative is an America that looks more like a police state, and less like a democracy.

The Old Way.



The New Way.



Tarantino: value-free violence of the lambs

It's their eyes that scare me the most. Mention the movie *Pulp Fiction* to the fans of this so-called "triumph," and you'll see what I mean. As if transfixed by the music of the Pied Piper, helixes turn in their eyes as soon as the film is mentioned.

They say that *Pulp Fiction* is a work of art, far too important to be ignored. They label writer and director Quentin Tarantino a genius whose talents make him a force to be reckoned with.

Since Tarantino's first major project, *Reservoir Dogs*, was released in 1992, Fiction Affliction has spread so rapidly that it has reached epidemic proportions.

However, contrary to the claims of the fashionable masses, the worship of *Pulp Fiction* does not reveal a critical human eye but a blood-thirsty human taste.

Toward the end of the movie, Samuel Jackson trembles with emotion as he cries, "I'm trying real hard to be the shepherd." The actor utters the intentions of the writer whose ability to present sadism and savagery in a stylish fashion has made him the shepherd of moldable moviegoers.

But Tarantino is a false shepherd. He leads his flock to the slaughter by disguising brutality with comedy, crudeness with sophistication and degeneracy with enlightenment.

While the sufferers of Fiction Affliction claim to be prophets of cinematic vision, they are in fact sightless marchers, no different than the hypnotized children of Hamelin.

Last week I decided to throw caution to the wind and expose myself to the disease. I rented and reviewed Tarantino's past films, and even plopped down six bucks to sit through his latest release, *From Dusk 'Til Dawn*.

Going into the experiment, I possessed only a skeletal knowledge of Fiction Affliction. I knew its sufferers lauded the Tarantino "style" of film-making. The sick sheep said that Tarantino reveals the underworld like no other, that he presents a complex plot that doubles back on itself, that his mastery of fast-pace dialogue is like no other and, most important, that the director never, ever, ever, shows gratuitous violence.

This last aspect requires some delicate expounding.

Oh sure there's murder and mayhem in Tarantino's movies, but he does it all "artistically." You'll see the knife about to split the jugular vein, but you won't see the actual cutting. You'll hear the screaming and see the blood, but the literal dying will be left off camera. This is the genius, the nouveau violence. This is Tarantino's avant-gore.

Lest I forget that this is all supposed to be funny. One scene in Tarantino's first film shows a policeman howling as his ear is severed by a

psychopath. Right after that, a joke is told while gasoline is poured on the squirming victim. Boy, is that funny.

Pulp Fiction shows an exaggerated hypodermic needle being forced into the heart of Uma Thurman, who is emitting mucus and blood while convulsing as a result of a heroin overdose. The jokes keep coming as Thurman immediately rises with the needle lodged in her sternum.

We can't help but laugh as John Travolta and Jackson pick pieces of brain and skull from their hair after accidentally shooting an African-American teenager. Included in the fun are gooks, wetbacks, Jews, niggers and bitches, all of whom are targets of this uproarious humor.

During my viewing of *From Dusk 'Til Dawn*, I was lucky enough to be in an audience that was jam-packed with die-hard Tarantino fans. Before the credits are finished, a man is burned alive. The members of the flock couldn't help but slap their chairs. A Mexican bouncer with greasy, long hair is kicked in the ribs repeatedly and mercilessly by Tarantino himself. The crowd ba-ba-baas with joy. Movie critic Gene Siskel concludes: "You will not see a more violent film this year."

Sadly though, my Fiction Affliction experiment has been a failure.

I am still unable to understand the magnetism of these films. Why do those who claim to be humanists flock to this pop-savagery? How do people disregard their moral culpability for the purpose of enjoying brutality at its rawest core?

I understand that there is something very human about needing to experience violence either literally or vicariously. But Tarantino goes far beyond this "human" need by inundating, indulging and inoculating his audience with a savage overdose.

So desensitized, the audience calls the inhumanity "art." So submerged, the bloodshed is dubbed "genius."

If Fiction Affliction strikes, and you simply can't resist watching a Tarantino film, ask yourself from what sources the filmmaker elicits your laughter. Try and uncover the path Tarantino leads the masses through.

If you become a fawning sheep searching for cathartic carnage, remember that movies shouldn't force you to place your values on hold.

Remember that violence is violence and that cruelty is never chic.

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