

Survivors' agony, loss forgotten in trial hype

■ **OUR OPINION:** Media focus too much on the accused and too little on the victims' suffering

"Healing is an individual matter and no one can tell you where you should be," said Oklahoma Gov. Frank Keating during last Friday's tribute for the victims of the bombing of the Federal Building. But when the media's coverage primarily focuses on the accused, the healing period is often prolonged for these victims.

Observe the focus on today's most popular murder trials: O.J. Simpson, Richard Allen Davis and Timothy McVeigh, who is scheduled to go to trial this fall.

In these cases, the media's tendency is to attempt to enter the mind of the madman and uncover the truth about their crimes.

Whether the accused is guilty or innocent is of the utmost importance — not the victims' pain and suffering.

It says quite a bit about where Americans' key interests lie and what they look for in news: entertainment.

Violence is at the core of entertainment in more places than movie theaters. It can be found on the covers of newspapers, in the reports of anchors and in the pages of magazines. It fascinates people.

When an issue fascinates people, they pay money to absorb all aspects of it — and the media make money. Often what will sell determines the media's focus. It does not determine how responsibly and fairly the media will cover the event.

Take the O.J. Simpson

trial, for example. After Simpson was acquitted and the Goldman family shed their last tears on national television, the media no longer focused on the victims and their progress in healing.

Instead, the new controversial issue was how African-Americans and Caucasians responded to the verdict.

Nowadays, it is very rare to hear about the Brown and Goldman families' pending civil suit against Simpson.

However, one will hear about the new video Simpson made about the absurdity of the charges against him.

Last year, when Richard Allen Davis confessed to killing 12-year-old Polly Klaas and led police to the body, the media focus changed from the victims, Polly and her parents, to the murderer's impending trial.

Though one can attribute this media shift to the hype surrounding the Simpson case, the fact remains that the media appear to care more about whether the confessed murderer is given the death penalty than if the Klaas family has been able to move on with their lives.

We, as consumers of the media, should stop and remember that just because a trial is no longer mentioned on the front page of every newspaper nationwide it does not mean the victims have finished dealing with the pain caused by the crime.

Whether the accused is found guilty or innocent, the fact of the matter remains: people who were loved very dearly were ruthlessly murdered.



Parental guidance failure harms children

As I started my seventh grade year, I fully expected my final project in social studies to be the high point. We were to be given a whole month to, get this, do **WHATEVER** we wanted. It needed to be educational in that we had to learn something. The only other requirements were to include an adult mentor, a journal and a final presentation.

I was lucky; I knew exactly what I wanted to do.

All I wanted to do was raise a sheep.

No small task, you might say, but I had it all figured out. I had found a farmer to mentor me, a sheep to adopt and I could hardly wait to get cracking on my journal entries about Meiska (my sheep of course).

I confidently presented my idea to my mother, and my exuberance was crushed when the firm reply was, "No, no, no and no."

I couldn't fault her reasoning — I was and am intensely allergic to wool, but I knew it would have been different.

I jumped from idea to idea in the next few weeks — pigs were too much of a hassle, hang-gliding was too much of a responsibility and parachuting was just too much — too much danger, too much height, just too much, according to my mother, that is.

Though I hated her for it then, I see my mom's wisdom now. My 12-year-old mind and body were just not ready for the responsibilities I had set before myself. Though I knew I was ready to do it, she knew better and said, quite simply, "No."

That is what made her a mother. She knew when to draw the line and how to stick to it no matter how much I whined about the cruelty of life. She would have rather had me whining than sneezing, stuffed up, or worse — dead.

It seems like some parents do not know when to say, "No." Or when to say, "Yes," for that matter.

One of the most publicized stories of late is about Jessica Dubroff, the 7-year-old who died following "her" dream. At an age where most children get no higher than the trees they climb, she was piloting a small plane. She "decided" to take off in the middle of a thunderstorm, and the price was three lives.

Her statement on the eve before takeoff, "Fly 'til I die," became tragically true, and the nation mourns her.

What kind of choice could she make though? The toughest decision a 7-year-old should have to make is for chocolate or raspberry ice cream, not if weather conditions are good enough to attempt a record-breaking flight.

Her mom said, "Clearly I would want all my children to die in a state of joy. I mean, what more could I ask for? I would prefer it was not at

age seven but, God, she went with her joy and her passion, and her life was in her hands."

But that's the problem. No 7-year-old, no matter how precious, how brave, how inspired, should be expected to be completely responsible for themselves.

It was not Jessica's responsibility or right. It was her parents. It was their responsibility to know when to say, "Yes," and when to say, "No way."

OPINION



Kay Krautscheid

Then there are the parents who have all too easy of a time saying no. No to dancing. No to parties. No too much needed treatment for leukemia.

Lody and Christina Hays made this decision for their 7-year-old son, Anthony, in 1994. As leukemia rapidly defeated his body, they say he didn't want medicine. They

say Anthony just wanted prayers.

But what he really needed was doctors, and medicine, and someone to tell him what to do.

In past centuries, children were perceived not as a gift and a blessing, but as another pair of hands to earn money. No longer.

Parents need to realize that children are not tiny adults. They are children. And children should not be making decisions directly influencing their own lives.

Their parents should make the choice for life, so they can come to realize their own goals, their own hopes and their own dreams — instead of living in their parents' shadows.

Without giving children the chance to mature and grow, parents can steal their lives away.

As for my seventh grade project, I didn't get an animal, and I jumped from no heights. I learned to decorate cakes. It was the perfect choice.

I learned a new way to express myself and was kept safe from harm in the meantime. My mom came up with the cake idea. I said I didn't want to do it. But I finally gave in, and I even enjoyed it.

I was glad then, as I am now, that I learned how to decorate those cakes.

Now I can learn to skydive, parachute or take my life in my own hands by taking on a pet that would leave me a sniveling, wheezing heap.

It is my turn to be an adult. I have that chance only because my mom took her turn at being a parent.

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