

It Does Happen There, Too

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The images of the mayhem that tore apart Springfield, Oregon are by now familiar to us all, no matter how far away we live from the six suburban and rural communities where since last October heavily-armed teenagers have gunned down a total of nearly three score of their classmates and teachers.

The toll is stunning: Pearl, Mississippi, 3 dead, 7 wounded; West Paducah, Kentucky, 3 dead, 5 wounded; Jonesboro, Arkansas, 5 dead, 10 wounded; Edinboro, Pennsylvania, 1 dead, 3 wounded; Fayetteville, Tennessee, 1 dead; and now, Springfield, Oregon, 4 dead, 26 wounded.

Familiar, too, is the grief of the survivors and the shock of residents of these individual communities, and many of us in the larger society, which has followed each of these murderous rampages. Why is this happening here? Is the question being asked with increasing disquiet.

"There is no sense to it," Gary Bowden, the wrestling coach at Springfield's Thurston High School, said last Thursday, struggling to cope with the enormity of the crime there.

But it's not true that there's "no sense" to these killings.

In fact, many people have identified the causes of and contributing factors to these seemingly anarchic bursts of horrific violence.

Norma Paulus, the Oregon state superintendent of schools, said in the wake of the shootings, "this is not a school problem. This is a societal problem."

John Kitzhaber, Oregon's Governor, pointedly asserted, "All of us should look at how we have failed as a society and how this could happen in the heart of Oregon. It has been a priority to build prison cells and prison beds--after the fact. These actions in no way prevent juvenile violence."

Dr. Deborah Prothrow-Stith, of the Harvard School of Public Health, suggested on ABC's "Nightline" last week, that we are seeing the "second wave" of the youth homicide epidemic that

**Salem Residents
surprised with Avalanche of Prizes
While Claiming
\$6.25 Million
Jackpot**

**1998 Ford Explorer XLT
Among Bonus Prizes Awarded To
Jackpot Winners**

To Steven Clinton, May 14, was like any other day, until he stopped on the way to work to pick up a snack and have his Megabucks ticket checked. That ticket, from the May 13, drawing, matched all six numbers, making Clinton the winner of the \$6.25 million Megabucks jackpot. When purchasing his ticket Clinton chose the "Investment Fund" payment plan, which provides Megabucks jackpot winners with one single payment equal to one-half the advertised jackpot amount. When claiming his prize at Lottery headquarters in Salem on May 14, he received a check in the amount of \$2 million after federal and state taxes were withheld. Clinton's winning ticket was purchased at Jack's IGA Foodliner, 3011 Market St. NE, in Salem.

Clinton, 44, became the Oregon Lottery's 151st Megabucks millionaire since the game began in 1985. In total, more than \$365 million in Megabucks prizes have been paid. Clinton purchased 10 sets of numbers, a \$10 investment. He used numbers that he has played on and off for about 8 years. The seventh combination turned out to be the big winner. The winning numbers were 7-13-21-23-25-27. Clinton's winning ticket was one of 8,287 winning tickets from the May 13, drawing.

There were more surprises in store for Clinton when he arrived at Lottery headquarters. "It's amazing how your whole life can change in such a short time," said Clinton.

primarily convulsed black and Hispanic inner-city neighborhoods during the past 15 years now erupt in white small towns and rural communities.

"The late '80s, early '90s was when the youth homicide rate in urban America almost doubled, started with what one might have thought were isolated incidents," Dr. Prothrow-Stith explained. "Eventually, we learned to understand that that was an epidemic," she continued. "I can't, as a public health person, look at what's happened in schools over the last six to eight months and say these are isolated events. If you take troubled kids and add guns and add a precipitating event in a society that glamor-

izes explosive responses to anger, you've got danger and I think it's now happening pretty much across the country."

Many experts on children and adolescents believe that dynamic is helping to fuel the extraordinary callousness and the calculated indiscriminate ferocity shown by these young killers.

Sissela Bok, a philosopher and ethicist who has studied violence in America, told the New York Times, last week, "We have movie role models showing violence as fun, and video games where you kill, and get rewarded for killing, for hours and hours. It is a very combustible mix: enraged young people with access to semiautomatic weapons, ex-

posed to violence as entertainment, violence shown as exciting and thrilling."

But the situation is far from hopeless. The successful effort by public agencies, private institutions and community organizations in Boston to reduce that city's climbing youth homicide rate is just a piece of the voluminous quilt of evidence that we do know how to help great numbers of young people live their adolescence in productive fashion. The current spasm of horrific school violence is another warning that American society must intensify its efforts to do so.

Finally, there is another point about these murderous incidents that cries out for notice--a point

that becomes clear if one imagines it had been African-American youths in six different inner-city neighborhoods who had turned their predominantly-black high schools into killing fields.

We know what "answers" would have been put forth--and what blame assessed--then. We know that we would have been subjected to the purplest "mean streets of the ghetto" prose then--prose that is used to implicitly declare the problems of the inner cities a "Negro Problem" which has nothing to do with White America.

The public discourse about these killings is entirely different precisely because it is not black children but white ones who

are showing the horror a deep alienation from society can produce.

We should examine why some white youths who are not poor are having and acting out murderous impulses--not to play the racial "dozens," but to determine what commonalities and differences exist in how the dynamic of violence operates in those places where violence is expected to happen and in those places where it's not supposed to happen.

To do otherwise would be to ignore the overwhelming evidence that the 'mean streets' produced by the dynamic of violence in American culture can in fact be anywhere.

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