

EDITORIAL

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THANK YOU FOR READING THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Letter To The Editor

Dear Friends,

My name is Kevin Miles and I am currently a sophomore at Grant High School in northeast Portland.

I have been wrestling since the age of seven with the Peninsula Wrestling Club, under the coaching direction of Mr. Roy Pittman. I have learned many things through my wrestling involvement - how to lose with grace and dignity, how to accept success, and most importantly - to do my best regardless of the outcome.

I have been fortunate to have had many successes along the way. I have been the Oregon kids champion for my age and weight in collegiate, freestyle and Greco several times over. I have represented Oregon in seven Western regional tournaments, always placing in the top three and I was the champion for our 12 state region in both styles in 1997, placing second in both last year. As a freshman and again this year as a sophomore, I won my weight group in the Portland Interscholastic League and was voted the PIL's outstanding wrestler.

This year I have the honor of representing Oregon in both freestyle and Greco at the national wrestling

tournament in Fargo, North Dakota. Competition will be held in late July. I am training hard so that I will be ready and able to do my best representing my state.

The entire cost of this trip, as well as an intensive training camp, will be close to \$1,000. I am asking for your help by sponsoring me with a donation towards this amount. Oregon Cadet National Team is a recognized tax-exempt organization - tax ID #93-1150366 and any funds you donate are tax deductible.

You can make a check out to me- Kevin Miles- and note in the memo portion the tax ID number. Or if you would rather make it out directly to the Oregon Cadet National Team, and note my name on the check, that would be fine too.

Any amount would be greatly appreciated! Thank you for your support and I promise to represent Oregon well! I hope to hear from you soon. If you have any questions, please call! My number is 282-5351.

Thank you again!  
Kevin Miles  
OREGON CADET NATIONAL TEAM MEMBER

By Hugh B. Price  
PRESIDENT NATIONAL URBAN LEAGUE

Once again, a maelstrom of hate, violence and death, carried out by young boys in communities seemingly sheltered from turbulence, has overwhelmed an American high school and its community and the nation.

Once again, we have watched, in horror and amazement, the pictures of bloodshed, panic, destruction, bewilderment, and unbearable sadness.

Once again, as we learn about the victims, we realize the great opportunity lost forever to our society.

Once again, we try to fathom the source of the killers' evil rage.

We've now gone through the same shocking routine six times in the last 18 months: Before Littleton, it happened in Pearl, Miss., West Paducah, Ky., Jonesboro, Ark., Edinboro, Pa., and Springfield, Ore. The body count: 14 dead, more than 40 wounded.

This time the violence left its bloody imprint on Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado.

The shooters were equal opportunity haters; they murdered whites and blacks, athletes and non-athletes, those who professed their belief in God and those they didn't give time to say anything. The two killers' hate was chilling and apparently bottomless. The toll was 13 innocents dead, 23 wounded.

Then, discovering that police had

quickly surrounded the school and were preparing to close in on them, the two killed themselves.

And yet, we can say that Littleton was lucky-given the diabolical scope of the killers' intent: to try to kill 500 students by blowing up the school, wreak havoc on the larger community, and even commandeer a jet aircraft at the nearby Denver airport, force it into the air and crash it in New York.

And finally, once again, in the first hours and even days after the attack, we heard from students and teachers, from parents, and even from news commentators that revealing phrase: it isn't supposed to happen here.

But we must face facts, and draw an important conclusion.

These rampages have been occurring in the same kind of places, with the same kind of perpetrators and the same results: young white males, most from materially comfortable circumstances, are striking out to deliberately commit mass murder.

And, before and after Littleton, there've been other similar plots uncovered—such as the one broken up four days after Littleton in Wimberly, Texas. There, four 14-year-old boys were charged with planning to blow up their junior high school. Authorities said the boys had begun their plotting in January and had a list of 9 students, teachers and administrators they specifically intended to kill.

High School Adopts Gun Hotline

By Carol Davis

Almost five years ago to the day that Colorado students were killed by classmates' gunfire, Nashville reeled from the shooting death of a seventh-grader by his friend and classmate.

Terrance Murray, who would have graduated from high school this spring, has instead left a legacy of sweeping, safety-conscious changes in the city's school system.

In the Nashville tragedy, the shooting was not intentional. A classmate took the .25-caliber semi-automatic from under his mother's mattress and, during a class when the lights were low as students watched the movie, "Beauty and the Beast," he handed the gun to a friend, who thought it was unloaded. The weapon fired, hitting Terrance who was sitting a row in front of the shooter. He was dead on arrival at the hospital.

"The student's apparent motive was to raise his status in the eyes of his peers. What better way to be a big man than to pack a weapon?" said Warren Thompson, a Vanderbilt University psychology professor, clinical psychologist for Nashville's school system and father of a student at the school where Terrance was killed.

Since the shooting, Nashville schools have established several district-wide changes:

- A hotline provides a way for students to anonymously report a gun at school. "It is my belief that students are our best early warning system," Thompson said.

- A zero tolerance policy was adopted in which students bringing a weapon or drugs to school or who are physically aggressive are expelled from that school for one year and must attend an alternative school which has been established solely for these students.

- Security cameras have been installed in every high school.

- Faculty are training with a national program called Crisis Prevention Intervention. "We're doing some conflict resolution training with faculty with the notion being that we're helping them not escalate the conflict and instead helping de-escalate the agitated student," Thompson said.

- Thompson has provided a series of school violence workshops in which representatives from every Nashville school have attended.

Nashville has instituted a number of conflict resolution programs in schools, said Jim Turbeville, Nashville's director of high schools. However, he said, "one negative of conflict resolution is that some people you can't have resolution with and for lack of a better term, I'll call them the bullies of the world," he said. "There was the illusion that we could prevent

something like this and that there were no weapons in school. It squashed that illusion and made parents, teachers and principals more vigilant."

In the shootings' aftermath, Thompson and other school psychologists steered parents toward positive, constructive action, he said. For example, several students and parents went to Tennessee's Capitol Hill to

protest a bill on the governor's desk that permitted the legal carrying of concealed weapons.

The governor signed the bill, but the efforts were good for the parents, Thompson said. "We tried to find a way to put their energy into something positive instead of blaming someone for the shooting," he said.

Carol Davis is a free-lance writer

It's time for Americans to stop pretending this kind of shocking, malevolent violence "isn't supposed to happen" in white enclaves that have the trappings of the American Dream.

It is supposed to happen there—because it keeps happening.

Why?

To force America to honestly discuss the impact on young minds of the pervasiveness of an entertainment culture that too often glorifies extreme, mindless, random violence.

To urge America to stop pretending that the easy availability of guns and other implements of mass destruction plays no role in all of this.

To shock White America out of the widespread, racially-oriented belief that only those boys and young men (it is males overwhelmingly who commit such violence) who live in poor black and Hispanic neighborhoods can fall prey to feelings of alienation and worthlessness that curdle into violent rage.

This is not happening among poor black and Hispanic kids in inner cities. It cannot be written off as a "ghetto" or "barrio" problem which the rest of America need not pay heed to.

Indeed, after the Springfield, Oregon school killings last May, Dr. Deborah Prothrow-Stith, of the Harvard School of Public Health, suggested that these incidents are the "second wave" of the youth homi-

cide epidemic that convulsed black and Hispanic inner-city neighborhoods in the 1980s and early 1990s.

"I can't, as a public health person," she said on ABC's "Nightline," "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 precipitation event in a society that glamorizes explosive responses to anger, you've got danger and I think it's now happening pretty much across the country."

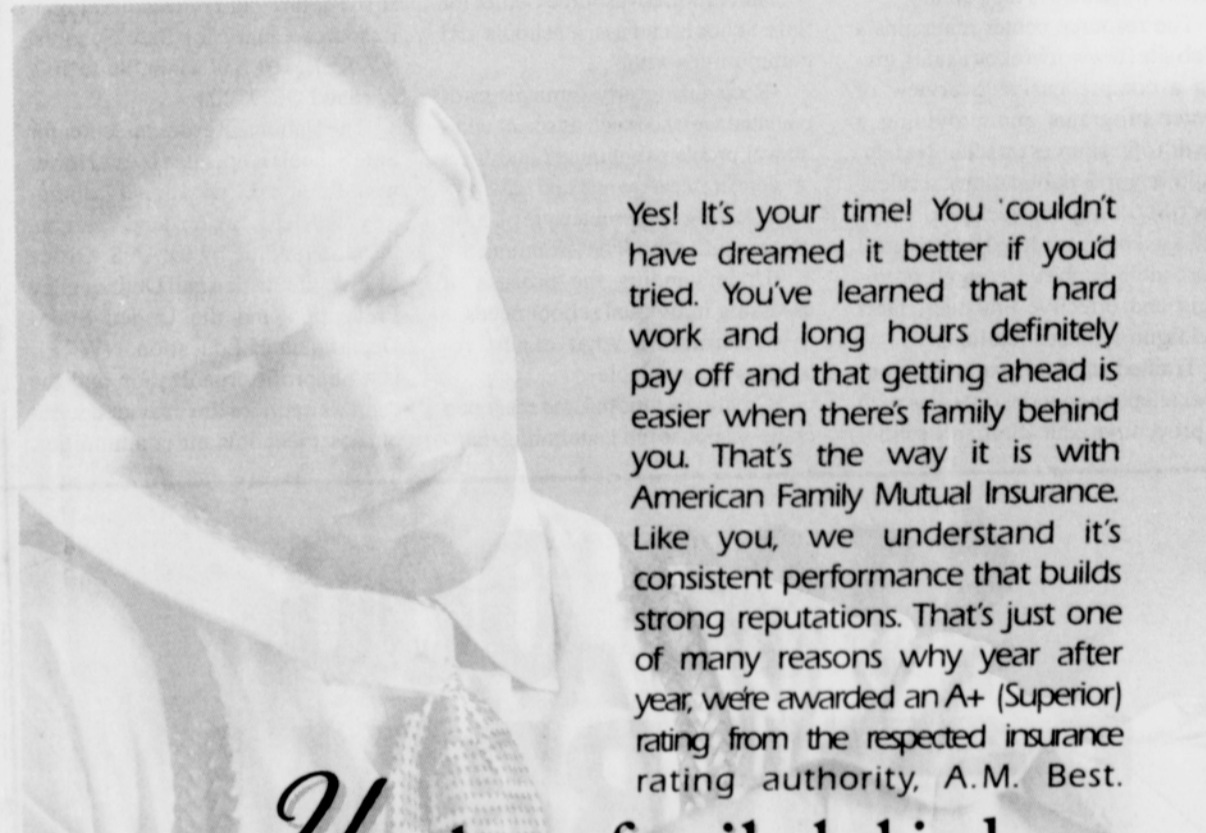
What is driving young white boys to these murderous acts? What are the commonalities and what are the differences between the present epidemic of youth violence and the earlier one in urban neighborhoods? We must recognize that beneath the murderous hatred of these killers lies a profound, boiling rage that comes from an even more profound sense of inadequacy and pain.

What is causing this?

For all our sakes, America must take this opportunity to explore the racial issues embedded in these differing but connected outbreaks of significant youth violence.

As the reigning superpower, America tries to shield the world from terrorism.

But the terrorism in our schools and the terror in the hearts and minds of many of our children, on all sides of the color line, cry out for attention, too.



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