

Reaction to school shooting in Littleton, Colorado

23 April 1999

Dear WSWS,

I just read your analysis of school violence in Colorado. While I agree with your assertion that the glorification of violence to solve international disputes does contribute to an atmosphere that makes such incidents possible, I felt that your analysis neglected to take into account the more everyday activities that desensitize people toward violence.

The US government, both at the federal and state level, reserves for itself the right to legitimately commit violence against the American citizenry. This is seen in the extreme in the practice of the death penalty and incidents of police brutality, but can also be seen in such mundane ways as the fact that a police officer can legitimately "subdue" a "suspect" with a nightstick or pepper spray; that the mentally ill can be locked away in institutions as opposed to humanely rehabilitated; and that US prisons feature a level of violence that Amnesty International defines as an institutionalized human rights violation yet the government portrays as acceptable if not deserved.

The US government also reserves for itself the right to authorize citizens to become legitimate violent agents in cases of "self-defence" or when their property is threatened. The common theme that runs through all of these cases is that threats to the government-defined social order can be legitimately dealt with through violence. I would argue that this constant level of violence committed by the state against its own "deviant" citizens, and its portrayal as both legitimate and necessary, have a greater role in desensitizing people to violence and furthering the idea that violence is a legitimate means to achieve one's ends, both nationally and internationally.

Just a small point of contention though. Keep up the excellent coverage.

Yours,

SM

Dear WSWS,

This article is the most intelligent story I've read in a very long time about the overall condition of America. If I were there in person I would like to shake the author(s) hand in congratulations. I plan to take it on myself to forward this article to as many people in positions of power and media as possible. The message of your article needs to be heard. The article really hit home with me in a way I haven't been "reached" before.

I came to your site from a link from Yahoo, read the above article and looked over your coverage of the NATO war with Kosovo. It was very thought provoking and insightful also. Thanks.

KP

I agree with all the points expressed in the article written by the Editorial board on April 21. But I think further attention needs to be paid to the "Global Economy" that is supposedly propelling Americans to previously unheard of standards of living. How many families that are still actually comprised of two parents these days have no parent at home when young children come home from school? My guess would be the overwhelming majority. Most families need to have both adults working full time just to maintain their current standard of living. Tell me this has no effect on the youth in this country. There is increasing despair in this country when the headlines are constantly negative.

Filled with stories of downsizing, ultra-wealthy athletes and CEO's, all glorified in the national media while being told by the right-wing free traders that this is healthy and normal for an economy. It is patently unfair for any CEO to make over 400 times more than the average worker under his employ. How the mainstream media gets away with this bullshit about the best "economy" in a generation is beyond me. I don't see it. I see increasingly overworked office

personnel in constantly down sized companies, where more and more blue collar jobs are shipped to low wage countries and Americans are thrown out of work. At the same time the CEO's and top executives get huge bonuses and the stock market goes through the roof. Is it any wonder there are some pissed off people in this country? Anger often leads to violence and most often the middle and lower class segments of the population are the recipient.

TF

Thank you for an intelligent, rational report on what I believe to be dead on truth. I hope everyone reads this article and gets a jolt of reality.

JD

To the editor,

I couldn't agree more. Last night I was screaming at the TV that it was the fault of the nazi thugs and ax-murderers that run the Empire, and who set the example of mass murder with absolutely no remorse, for the rest of us to follow. Incredible as it seems, the goons on MS-NBC would report with grief and horror about the slaughter in Colorado, and then, without the slightest hesitation, report how the Empire was blowing up and killing people in Yugoslavia. These creeps just don't seem to get it. And tonight, they actually had, of all people, Pat Buchanan stating his brain-dead analysis of the events in Littleton. Pat Buchanan, who believes the US didn't kill enough peasant families in Korea, Laos, Cambodia, north and south Viet Nam, who defends the CIA Gestapo and their death-squad atrocities, who sent Reagan to Germany to pay tribute to the German SS torturers and murderers, who spent half of his rotten life defending WWII Nazi war criminals who were brought into this hemisphere by the Empire, and who praised Adolf Hitler as a noble international leader and a brave warrior in the "great patriotic war".

The capitalist government and media, like the capitalist mafia that owns them, are so depraved and schizophrenic that they are incapable of even the most elementary logic and rational thinking. They're completely mad. Which is why I spend less and less time getting aggravated with the garbage from the corporate media, and more time getting news and information from the internet.

Your journalism and critical analysis are exemplary, keep up the good work.

Take care.

GD

To the editor,

Given that war has been an intricate element of society since its existence, I am puzzled how you tie the Littleton incident to Yugoslavia. Your remarks about the way the media presents war have some merit. You forget though that war has been glorified in literature, movies, and toys for years.....centuries in fact. Yet history does not record correlating events of violence and murder by societies youth.

How can I even give your viewpoint consideration when you fail to introduce other elements of society that could effect the molding of a teenagers mind? Specifically, "entertainers - musicians" that glorify and promote horrid subjects such as racial hatred, suicide, and a variety of violent acts. If for no other reason than to argue why these elements do not relate to Columbine. Radical thoughts play an important role in society. Smart people listen to view points from the other side of the fence. Opposing perspective is healthy and promotes appropriate adjustments in philosophies and on occasion total change.

Consideration requires logic though. Rhetoric will not work. Sorry.

DC



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