

POINT OF VIEW

REXBABIN TIMES UNION

Our View

Clothing style could tip off possible troublemakers

In the wake of last week's killing spree at Columbine High School, a firestorm of scrutiny has been trained on so-called "triggers" that prompt American youth to grab guns and explosives and act out their bloodlust.

Everything from violent video games, to Adolph Hitler-inspired Aryan supremacy manifestos, to fascination with macabre music makers has been blamed for inspiring two young men to go on a shooting spree that killed 12 students and a teacher and later commit suicide. It was revealed in recent news reports that the killers planned to slay at least 500 people, then take on the surrounding city until "they ran out of bullets," according to the diary of one of the teenage gunmen.

Let's understand one thing: No one will ever truly know the methodology of their madness, despite diary confessions or interviews with parents, family and friends. The school shootings in Oregon, Kentucky, Mississippi and Pennsylvania that trained the nation's eye on teen violence in small town America have been dissected to the hilt, but all the study, couldn't shed insight on why more and more schools are becoming killing fields.

Perhaps friends and family should take morbid talk more seriously and maybe school administrations should take groups with forboding names such as the Trench Coat Mafia more seriously.

Locally, staff at one school banned long black trench coats in response to the Littleton tragedy. Some students viewed it as infringing on their rights. The move was reactionary at best and pales in comparison to the efforts in many schools nationwide to purge campuses of gangs.

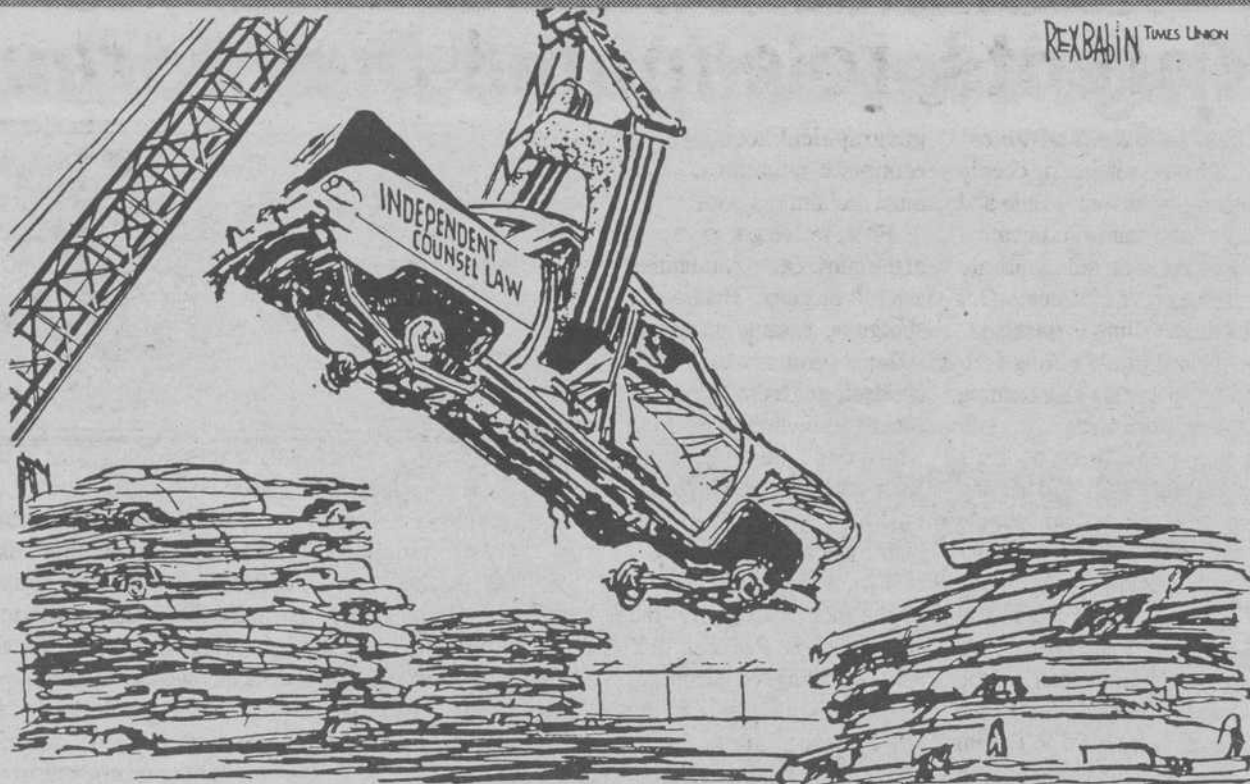
Some people have suggested that had the Trench Coat Mafia been Bloods or Crips, they would have been under harsher scrutiny. That's probably true.

Arguments can be made that Bloods and Crips are proven threats, street gangs that have pumped neighborhoods full of drugs and death while the Trench Coat Mafia was a collection of misbegotten outcasts who wore black trench coats, dressed in Gothic style and never hurt anybody, other than hurling racial epithets and insulting jocks. They would be right. But failing to take that group as seriously as any other non-sanctioned school group is dangerous.

The mere name, Trench Coat Mafia, doesn't sit well with any normal ear. The principal's claims that he knew nothing about the group flies in the face of students' and staff's awareness of its existence.

Of course, not every person in the Trench Coat Mafia is a Nazi-inspired, minority-hating, gun-toting monster just as not every member of a street gang is a purveyor of violence. For the record, we're not in favor of either. What is important is that fringe groups like the Trench Coat Mafia get the same scrutiny as proven troublemakers.

In the 1960s, police often associated anyone with an afro as a black power sympathizer. Today, officers sweat minorities for wearing certain colors or apparel from certain teams. Why not extend the scope to include mostly-white groups, such as the Trench Coat Mafia, whose purpose and goals, just as those of the street gangs, aren't found in a school bio.



America's scourge of violence doesn't discriminate

Special to Sentinel-Voice

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 potential 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., Jonesboror, 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

## To Be Equal

By Hugh B. Price  
President  
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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're 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.

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 over-

whelmingly 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 the 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 homicide 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 precipitating event in a society that glamorizes explosive responses to anger, you've got danger and I think it's now happening pretty

(See Hate, Page 14)

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