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Violence committed by younger offenders

The Daily Utah Chronicle

SALT LAKE CITY (U-WIRE) — In an attempt to experience the sensation of murder, two New Jersey teen-agers baited two pizza delivery people to an abandoned building to slay them.

To settle business concerning "old girlfriends, new girlfriends and old boyfriends and new boyfriends," three Salt Lake women — ages 17, 18 and 20 — pinned down Roldon Edmond, 22, and stabbed him until he died.

Allow us to reiterate:

Two New Jersey teen-agers, chasing after the thrill of the kill, repeatedly shot two pizza delivery people in the head and upper torso with .22- and .45-caliber pistols. The delivery people were responding to an order for two cheese pizzas.

With a long-bladed knife Roldon Edmond was repeatedly stabbed because he intervened in an argument over boyfriends.

Repeatedly.

Three lives exchanged for cheese pizza and girlfriends and boyfriends who have probably gotten over their murderous ex-girlfriends.

Three lives.

Franklin, N.J., Salt Lake City, Utah — what is the difference if each city's citizens are killing each other for thrills and wounded egos? It brings new meaning to the term petty crime.

Petty crimes, like shoplifting, can be ignored. What refuses to be ignored is that the average age of murderers is decreasing.

Recent legislation aimed at opening the records of juvenile offenders arose largely because research has discovered the most violent juvenile crimes are committed by 11- to 12-year-olds. Those kids know what it is like to kill someone before most have had their first kiss.

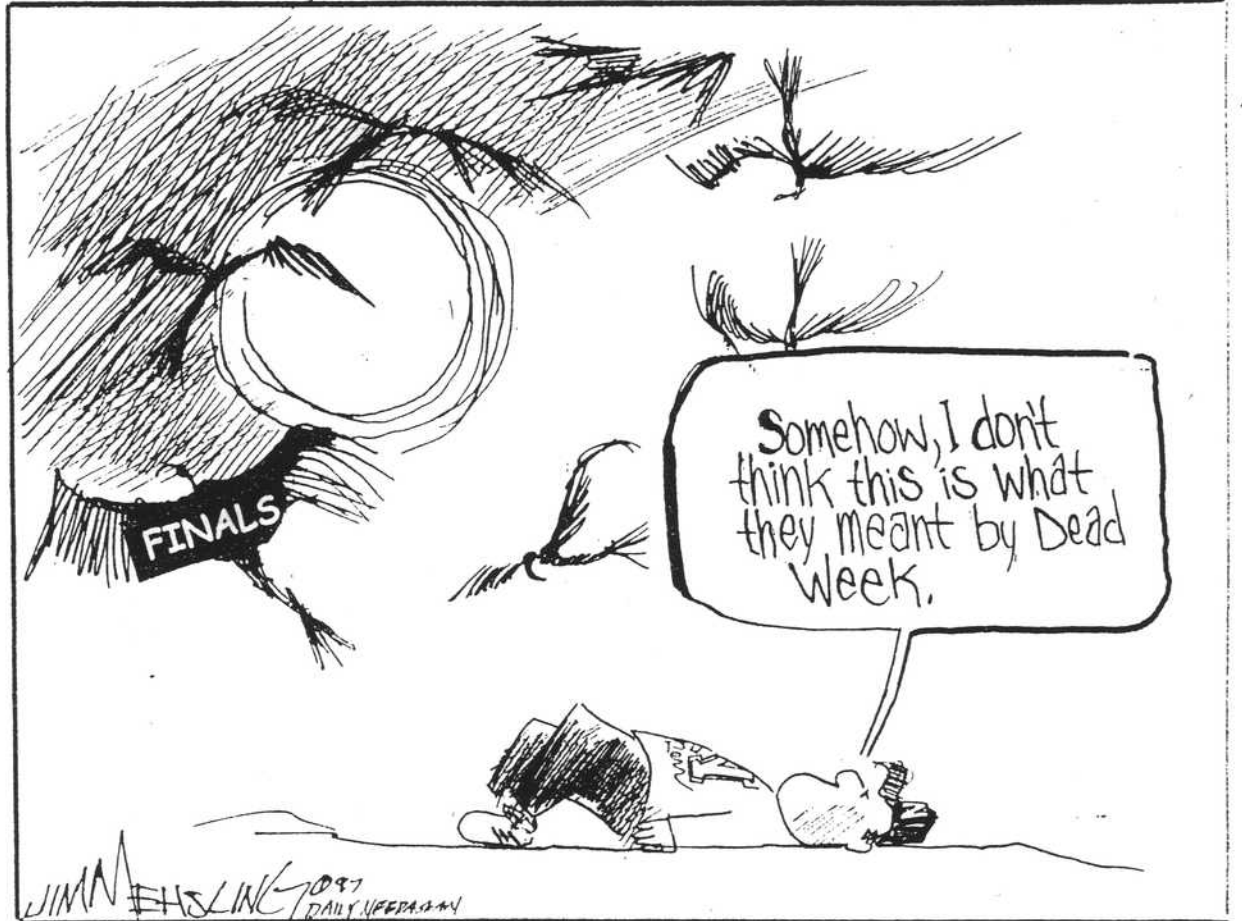
This is not intended to frighten parents or students into thinking that the boy next door could easily be the next Charles Manson. It is just to say that as life moves faster, so do those nefarious influences.

Children are experimenting with everything from drugs to murder to robbery to gangs sooner than most parents realize.

It is a delicate situation to suggest that parents need to look after their children more closely. As the statistics indicate, however, the wires cross earlier and earlier until a child goes haywire.

And despite the rush that may be attached to a smoking gun or a blood-smothered knife, at 18 you are still a child.

Mehsling's
VIEW



Guest
VIEW

The next step...

After watching the Legislature's attack on my future during its supposed "debate" over same-sex marriage, I feel it necessary to speak up and show where many of these arguments lead. Banning same-sex marriages is touted as a first step in restoring and protecting the sanctity of the American family. I hope to demonstrate how this "first step" suggests further steps, initiates a march to sanitize American society and ultimately leads to insidious and violent implications. Are we ready to take responsibility for where these arguments ultimately take our society?

The Rabbit Test: Did You Procreate Yet?

Another claim is that the primary purpose of marriage is to procreate. This position argues that gays and lesbians can't procreate and they must therefore be excluded from marriage. However, doesn't this argument apply to others as well?

Some refute the argument that sterile couples should not marry claiming that they intend or desire to have children even though, as a couple, they are biologically unable. Best intentions aside, they are still not fulfilling the supposed primary purpose of marriage any more than a same-sex couple could.

If it is logical to exclude one group (say gays and lesbians) because of its inability to fulfill this purpose, then it is logical to exclude those who can't and those who choose not to. Why is it not argued that couples who choose not to have children ought to be excluded from marriage? Before the marriage license is granted, shouldn't a couple guarantee their ability as well as the intent to procreate.

How long should a marriage be allowed to fulfill its primary purpose? One, five, 10, 20 years? After a certain period of time, shouldn't childless couples have their marriages annulled for not having met the "primary purpose?"

The logical extension of this argument demands that the list of those excluded from marriage included the elderly, the sterile, those unwilling to procreate, and those who don't ultimately procreate.

This fundamentalist's view of marriage should clearly demand such an extreme next step. Questions left unanswered: If the family is already degenerating, as many demonstrate by pointing to the increasing divorce rate, how is it that same-sex marriages (which don't exist yet) cause the degeneration?

How can gays and lesbians be condemned for being promiscuous when promiscuity, as fundamentalists define it, is sex outside of wedlock (pre-marital sex and adultery)?

The argument denying gays and lesbians the institution of marriage forces them into a deceptive and inescapable immorality. As long as they are never allowed to marry, they remain the right's immoral scapegoat. The circularity of these assumptions should be clear, without same-sex marriage all same-sex couples are promiscuous by definition.

Isn't it this very refusal to allow monogamous relationships that leads to the demoralization of society so feared by fundamentalists? Marriage was created for the joining of one man and one woman? What are the origins of marriage? People of many diverse cultures or religions around the world have their own concepts of marriage. Even the Judeo-Christian tradition isn't clearly defined (see John Boswell, *Same-Sex Unions in Pre-Modern Europe*).

How many of those cultures intersect within the American melting pot? Isn't this religiously based prescription for marriage criminally exclusive? American law is based on the Constitution, the Bill of Rights and the Declaration of Independence. Though it should be obvious, these documents guarantee religious freedom and separation of church and state. The fundamentalists have every right to freely express their religious marriage doctrine. However, what right do they have to impose it on the entire population?

Conclusions: The Inherent

Appeal to Violence

To hear our elected officials make these claims and spread the unfounded myths of the radical right is frightening. Fueled by intolerance and cultural exclusivity, they violate people's existence with their language and rhetoric, and further, they encourage and even incite acts of physical violence.

Hatred and fear form the foundation of this rhetoric and parallel that of the fundamentally religious right as described by Dr. Mel White, the former ghostwriter for Pat Robertson and Jerry Falwell and, more recently, author of "Stranger at the Gate," the story of his coming out. While visiting campus last semester, Dr. White recounted the story of a man who had been abducted by gay-bashers, taken to a remote quarry, and shot in the legs and arms until he defecated and urinated on himself.

When they grew tired of terrifying him, the bashers riddled his body with so many bullets that the medical examiner was unable to count the holes. Though guilty and convicted, the bashers received little punishment because, as the judge said, the victim of their crime was merely a "homosexual." The man's parents, who follow the same bashers, offended their fundamentally religious beliefs.

The political right, at the national and now the local level, has the dangerous need to blame gay and lesbian people for the decay of the American family and the moral corruption of American society even though they fail to give any substantial argument to support this claim. How long shall the scapegoat remain passive? How long would you endure unfounded hatred so others don't have to take responsibility for the problems in their own families and relationships? How long until the persecuted and those who see the injustice of their persecution begin dumping the proverbial "tea into the harbor."

We must speak up, now!

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