

OPINION PAGES

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Our VIEW

Not asking for it

Rape article is insult to women, men

Women, if you are worried about rape and sexual harassment, Cheryl Lavin has some advice for you.

Her article "The Politics of Skin," which ran in the April 18 edition of the Chicago Tribune Magazine encouraged women to dress and act modestly as a way to protect themselves.

"Read the paper," Lavin advised women. "Rising instances of date rape, stalking, sexual harassment. Do you have to be an old-timer to wonder if it's time for women to cover themselves up?"

Lavin doesn't think it's fair of women to flaunt their skin and body parts in front of men because men, of course, cannot help but stare. And if they don't want to be assaulted by men, they shouldn't entice them.

Well, she can try to present this modesty "movement" as some friendly advice to women, but it's really the same story women have been hearing for years. And offering it in the fashion section of the Chicago Tribune Magazine doesn't suddenly make it trendy.

Blaming the victim is tired. Sorry, Cheryl Lavin, but men don't rape women or harass them or stalk them because they become so turned on by them that they just can't help themselves. And if you can find some kind of relationship between the way women are dressed and their chances of being sexually assaulted, then you're probably the first.

Women can cover their bodies, cross their legs and shut their mouths, but that won't make rape go away. Rape and sexual harassment are about power and control. And it is time to stop presenting them as women's issues and start addressing the source of the problem, which is the men who commit these crimes.

It is common knowledge banks are packed with money, but just try to rob one and then use the defense that the bank was asking for it because it presented too much of a temptation. No jury would let an excuse like that slide. But it sure seems to work well in rape trials.

Like Lavin, many people think men just can't control themselves once their hormones start raging, and women should know exactly what kind of behavior and way of dressing will arouse men too much.

It's about time we start giving both women and men more credit. Lavin implies that all men are capable of this kind of behavior if enraptured enough by women's flesh, but most men don't rape. Obviously, men are capable of a little more thought and compassion than Lavin gives them credit for. At the same time, she makes excuses for the men who are raping, sexually harassing and stalking women.

Cheryl Lavin may think she has stumbled on a new concept for women to advance in a patriarchal society, but, no matter how she dresses it up, she is really just reinforcing the status quo.

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Horsey's VIEW

AMERICA'S SACRIFICE...



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HORSEY
POST-RETRIBUTION
UNDER PRESSURE
SURRENDER

Where blame is due

Violent teen-agers are responsible for own actions



**A.L. FORKNER is a junior
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Aren't the 1990s wonderful? No one does anything wrong. Ever. Oh, 'tis truly a joyous and magical time. There are no bad people that commit crimes against their fellow human beings.

There's still crime, just no criminals. There are just victims. Victims of the crime, and victims that commit the crime.

Take, for example, the two students police say committed the murders in Littleton, Colo.

Were they vicious cold-blooded killers? No, video games made them pull the trigger on innocent classmates.

Did they plan and plot everyone's deaths? Uh-uh, that would be violent movies and TV shows that made them do it.

Was it deliberate research that provided those kids with the information to build pipe bombs? Fugheddaboutit, it was the Internet that made them procure the supplies.

Did they work within the system to obtain the weapons they used? No way, the gun manufacturers made them load up and kill.

Obviously, I was being factitious. However, that was the impression that I got from listening to the news this last week. Blame was a word bandied about like a comma.

"The parents were to blame..." "Marilyn Manson is to blame..." "The media are to blame..."

No. The two dead kids are to

blame. They planned it, prepared for it and went through with it. They are to blame, simple as that.

Am I disputing all of the above as influences? No, I'm not that naive. Yes, the world is a violent place. TV is rough, music is violent and arcades make for pretty good shooting galleries.

It doesn't matter. The final decision in anything belongs to the individual. Outside forces can try to sway my decision, but the final say is mine and mine alone.

Look at me. I can recite "Dirty Harry" and "Die Hard" movies verbatim. I am damn good at shooting games. I read books from "The Executioner" series in grade school. Hell, I make it a point to fire a real gun every now and then just to reassure myself I can.

Have I ever killed anyone? No. Have I ever thought about it? Yes. Seriously? No.

Want to know why I have never really thought about it any further than, "I'd like to kill that guy"?

It's wrong. Two words, a whole lotta meaning. My parents never specifically said, "A.L., you can't kill people. It's wrong." I never got the good vs. evil talk after a particularly bloody game of "guns." My folks bought me G.I. Joes and toy guns for birthdays and Christmas.

Yet, I still know it's wrong. Therefore, no killings on my record.

Am I oversimplifying things too much? I don't think so. I believe that things have been over-thought. Instead of hearing those children were messed up in the head, people want a more complex answer. You can't go in front of a news conference and say, "These two suspects were messed up."

I had a personal experience with school violence when I was a junior in high school. One of my childhood friends, Ryan, walked into his math class, pulled out a sawed-off shotgun and held his classmates hostage for eight hours.

I was sitting in the newsroom at my high school across town. Meanwhile, another of my good friends, John, was sitting in that classroom for the whole ordeal.

After the standoff ended without violence, the media and the experts spun the blame onto a Stephen King novel. Others tried to blame his parents.

I knew Ryan and his folks. His parents were attentive and active in Ryan's life. Ryan, on the other hand, surprised none of us when we heard the news. To be honest, when it happened I turned to a mutual friend and jokingly said, "It's probably Ryan."

In retrospect, it was pretty obvious. Ryan was dark and sullen in a loving home environment. He had no real problems, he only thought he did. The standoff was his attempt at suicide-by-cop.

I'm sorry, but the blame in Ryan's, and all the others', cases can only be placed in one spot — the kids. Sure, maybe their parents didn't sit them down for the "Don't kill people" talk, but that's a lesson that is learned in life. A 4-year-old might not get it, but a 17-year-old damn better.

When they don't, it's no one's fault but their own.

My opinion does nothing to diminish the horrible acts, nor does it try to explain their actions. It's just that until we cut out the finger-pointing, we're never going to be able to deal with another tragedy. Without dealing with this problem at its roots, students will be needlessly harassed and others needing help will continue to be ignored.

It's not about trenchcoats, Korn videos or Kenny getting killed every week. It's about kids with problems not knowing how to deal with them. These kids are usually recognized and helped. Sometimes, however, they slip through the cracks. Instead of blaming the Rocky Mountain News, we need to get past the blame and get to the cracks.

P.S. Write Back



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