

Violence

Richard Socarides 05/08/99 12:22:18 PM

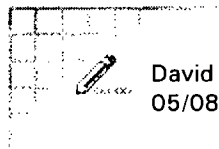
Record Type: Record

To: Bruce N. Reed/OPD/EOP, Karin Kullman/OPD/EOP, Neera Tanden/WHO/EOP, Thomas L. Freedman/OPD/EOP

cc:

Subject: Re: CURRENT LIST FOR CONFERENCE - titles as confirmed by participants

----- Forwarded by Richard Socarides/WHO/EOP on 05/08/99 12:22 PM -----



David W. Beier@OVP
05/08/99 12:21:13 PM

Record Type: Record

To: Richard Socarides/WHO/EOP@EOP

cc: Trooper Sanders/OVP@OVP, Miguel M. Bustos/OVP@OVP, Eli G. Attie/OVP@OVP

Subject: Re: CURRENT LIST FOR CONFERENCE - titles as confirmed by participants

Trooper and Miguel,

Here are the draft questions for the VP. Could you please take care that these get into the briefing book for the VP. Trooper, I can not attend the 230. So please represent us. If you could summarize via email the results that could help. I will be available later tonight at 703-241-8972.

QUESTIONS FOR THE VICE PRESIDENT:

1. VIDEO GAMES (Doug Lowenstein):

Your industry currently has a rating system for video games, but this system does work very well in cyberspace. Many ---- if not most retailers---- will not sell video games that are not rated, but on line there are no such safeguards. Could you commit today to work with leading Internet Service Providers to block access by kids to unrated video games?

Note: He should say yes, and indicate that they have previous had some difficulties in working with the ISP community. You can then turn to Steve Case and ask him to help.

2. MOVIES (Valenti)

The movie industry has a rating system that depend, in part on parents understanding and using the ratings to guide their children's viewing. It is also true that this system depends on

enforcement of the R rating system by theater owners. What practical steps can you take with theater owners to make sure that children under 17 --- not accompanied by an adult --- are not sold tickets to R rated movies?

3. MUSIC (*Rosen or Gloria Estaphan*)

What role does the music industry, including its recording artists, have to prevent hate crimes? What steps can the industry take to reduce the level of hostility to members of minority groups, or degradation of women?

4. TELEVISION (*Moonves or Iger*)

*In the report of the President's Commission on Public Interest Obligations in Digital Television there was a discussion about the desirability of a voluntary industry code of conduct. Help me understand why the industry --- with appropriate antitrust protections --- should not have a **voluntary** code of conduct that could serve to reduce the amount of violence on television?*

5. INTERNET: (*Steve Case*)

Could you please describe the efforts that the Internet Community has undertaken to help empower parents to control access to inappropriate material and how the Internet can help build new communities for our children?

6. GUNS (*FOP, or either Smith and Wesson or the Sports Shooting Council*)

What steps can we as a society take to make clear the distinctions between the use of guns and rifles for hunting and sports purposes and the illegitimate use of firearms by children above and beyond the measures offered by the President (Brady waiting period, one gun per month, trigger safety locks, gun show background checks and parental liability laws)?

7. EDUCATION (*Chase, Feldman, or the PTA representative*)

How can we better train and prepare teachers and allied professionals within schools to identify and act on the early warning signs of potential trouble in our youth? Are there an adequate number of counselors and resources in our schools? Is more federal leadership needed here?

8. MEDICINE/MENTAL HEALTH (*AMA*)

What role do pediatricians and mental health professionals have in warning parents about troubled youth? Are physicians and allied health professionals adequately trained to know how to respond to youth who are crying out for attention or help?

9. STATE AND LOCAL OFFICIALS (*Mayor Belton or A.G. Colorado*)

What risks do we run as a society, if as a result of this tragedy, we overreach and make our high schools and middle schools into hostile scary places? Could the inappropriate use of metal detectors and armed police in schools actually interfere with the educational process?

10. FEDERAL OFFICIALS (*FCC, Bill Kennard*)

What prevents broadcasters or cable operators from voluntarily creating a code of conduct that implements a public interest commitment to reduce the level of violence that they broadcast or transmit?

What positive steps could broadcasters and cable take to implement a locally based campaign to educate parents and kids about the resources that are available in their community and their schools to help kids?

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The Voluntary Movie Rating System

How It Began

Its Purpose

The Public Reaction

By JACK VALENTI
President and Chief Executive Officer
Motion Picture Association of America

1996

FAX

UNITED STATES SENATOR • CONNECTICUT

Joseph I. Lieberman



Volume

Fax to:

Tom Friedman

Date

5/12

Fax#

456-7431

Pages

From:

Dan Gurestein

Message:

Here's the stuff you asked for

*Send to
Bruce*

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May 4, 1999

W. Lieberman

Testimony of Senator Joe Lieberman before the Senate Commerce Committee Hearing on the Marketing of Violence to Children

Mr. Chairman, I want to thank you for calling this hearing and working to foster a serious dialogue about the impact the popular culture is having on our children and our country.

This conversation has been percolating beneath the civic surface for some time, as concerns have grown about the influence of the media on our children, and it has now bubbled over in the wake of the horrific shooting in Littleton two weeks ago today and the other massacres that preceded it. Even some of the most reluctant of skeptics are beginning to focus on the culture of carnage surrounding our children, particularly the hyperviolent movies, music, and video games that have apparently mesmerized these child killers, and to consider whether the accumulated weight of this entertainment media violence is contributing to the recurring nightmare of youth violence we are caught up in now.

We must not be simplistic in pursuing this conversation. We must acknowledge and accept the complexities of this problem and the many factors involved in the larger epidemic of urban and suburban youth violence, such as the easy connection kids have to guns and the disconnection many kids feel from their parents, their peers and their community. It is for this very reason that a group of us in the Senate have proposed creating a national commission to step back and thoroughly examine all the possible root causes of this problem to help us understand why too many of our children are senselessly slaughtering each other in classrooms, schoolyards, and on street corners.

We cannot, though, ignore the years of social science research, the pattern emerging from the school shootings, and our reasoned judgment -- all of which tells us that we would be foolish not to ask, as ethicist Sissela Bok wrote in her thought-provoking book *Mayhem*, "what happens to the souls of children nurtured, as in no past society, on images of rape, torture, bombings, and massacre that are channeled into their homes from infancy."

- More -

L. Lieberman

*Gallagher
youth news*

W. Lieberman

This morning, Mr. Chairman, you have asked us to consider a more specific question, and that is whether the entertainment industry is directly marketing violence to children. The answer, I am afraid, is not reassuring. While the facts have not to our knowledge been gathered into a conclusive set of findings, the evidence we have strongly suggests that Joe Camel has sadly not gone away, but has been adopted by the entertainment industry instead.

Let me first consider the anecdotal evidence from the movie industry, which indicates that violent films rated for adults only are being marketed to children. Over the last few years we have seen the rise of a new class of teen-targeted films - referred to by some as "teensploitation" movies - which has engaged producers and directors in a conspicuous contest to see who can be more violent, more sexually provocative, and generally more perverse to attract youth audiences. A perfect example of this trend is *Very Bad Things*, a supposed comedy about a bachelor party gone wrong, which finds fun in the dismembering of a stripper and the successive mutilation of the partygoers

The latest entry is *Idle Hands*, which was released just last week. It is promoted as "sick and twisted laugh riot," and it's not hard to see where this description comes from - according to reviews, the film features a severed hand that fondles a girl before strangling her, a knitting needle that is driven through a policeman's ear, and a decapitation by circular saw blade, all apparently played for laughs.

What these movies have in common, beyond their violent and offensive content, is that they are rated "R," meaning that they not meant for children under 17. Yet according to several recent news media reports, most producers and studio executives assume that underage kids can and will get in. "Well, let's hope so," says Roger Kumble, the director of *Cruel Intentions*, the teen remake of *Dangerous Liaisons* which is by all accounts far more salacious than the original. This sentiment was affirmed by Don Mancini, the writer of all four R-rated *Child's Play* horror films, who acknowledged that young teens were the target for his most recent release, *Bride of Chucky*, and other similarly bloody slasher films. "They have grown up watching these movies on home video," he said. "Now that there are new ones coming out, these kids are tantalized."

To apparently help lure in young audiences, these teensploitation movies are heavily advertised on MTV and network series that teens watch regularly, such as *Dawson's Creek* and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, and are stocked with actors from these teen-favored TV shows. This pattern succeeded with the teen slasher movies *Scream* and *I Know What You Did Last Summer*, and it continues with the current *Cruel Intentions* - the director said casting Sarah Michelle Gellar of *Buffy* fame was like "dangling the carrot" in front of young teens. This dangling is apparently working - according to a recent Gallup poll, half of American teens say they have seen an "R"-rated movie in the last month, including 42 percent of those aged 13-15.

The video and PC and arcade gamemakers are less candid about targeting their marketing to teens than the moviemakers, but the evidence is there just the same. Action figures based on bloodthirsty characters from *Resident Evil 2*, *Duke Nukem*, and *Mortal Kombat* - three heavily-violent titles that are rated "M" for 17-and-up - are being sold at Toys-R-Us and similar toy stores. Those same toy stores, which cater largely to children, typically carry those games and many other "M"-rated titles filled with guns and gore.

Equally disturbing is the advertising that publishers place in the various glossy game-player magazines. These magazines are widely read by young gamers, and they are filled with

- More -

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reports
- Video games

perverse and antisocial messages. Here are a just a few: *Carnageddon* boasts it is "as easy as killing babies with axes"; *Point Blank* claims it is "more fun than shooting your neighbor's cat"; *Die by the Sword* instructs, "Escape. Dismember. Massacre."; and *Cardinal Sin* features a severed, bloodied head on top of a spear, with the tag line, "Happiness is a Warm Cranium." A good indication these messages are reaching their target audience came from a survey done by the National Institute on Media and the Family last winter, which found that while only five percent of parents were familiar with the game *Duke Nukem*, 80 percent of junior high students knew of it.

Taken together, the evidence here is enough to demonstrate that there is a troubling trend in the entertainment industry, one that it needs to stop now. The marketing of these ever-more vicious and violent products is making a mockery of the various rating systems, telling parents that these products are inappropriate for children but we're going to sell them to them anyway, and reminding us of similar behavior by the tobacco industry. And it is expanding and exacerbating the culture of carnage surrounding our children.

I hope that when confronted with this evidence, the movie studios and the gamemakers and the record companies will stop this trend before it goes any further. None of us want to resort to regulation, but if the entertainment industry continues to move in this direction, and continues to market death and degradation to our children, and continues to pay no heed to the real bloodshed staining our communities, then the government will act. Senator Hatch and I have discussed the possibility of demanding an FTC investigation of these marketing practices, to see if they are engaging in false advertising or unfair trade practices, and we will pursue it if there is no sign of change from the entertainment industry. The FTC and Congress can subpoena marketing plans and internal memos to find out exactly which distributors are pushing violence to our kids.

But the far more preferable option would be for each media industry to strengthen their existing codes of conduct to help us better protect our children. That of course remains the first responsibility of parents, but we are all members of this national community and as such have an obligation to keep kids safe from harm, and that obligation embraces our cultural producers. A good place to start would be for each entertainment industry to ban the targeting of adult-rated products to children, and restore the integrity to the ratings they themselves have adopted and implemented. We should also ask theater owners to uniformly enforce the R-rating prohibition for underage children, and ask video game retail and rental outlets to adopt a similar policy barring the sale or rental of adult-rated games to kids.

In the end, as we have often said, we are not seeking censorship but better citizenship. We are appealing to the industry's conscience, to recognize that you are part of the national community that is endangered by the virus of youth violence, and to work with us to do whatever we can to prevent another local community from feeling the searing pain and grief which visited Littleton and the rest of America over the last two weeks.

GALLUP YOUTH SURVEY<

^With GraphicsNet Illustration Slugged Gallup Violence<

^RELEASE: August 14, and thereafter<

^Boys More Exposed to Media Violence Than Girls<

^By GEORGE GALLUP=^and ALEC GALLUP=

^For AP Newsfeatures=

PRINCETON, N.J. _ While teen-age boys are more likely to be exposed to violent movies and television programs than are girls, they appear to be less concerned about the effects.

The latest Gallup Youth Survey found that nearly half of American teens (49 percent) saw a movie in the past month that was rated "R" or intended for adult audiences. This figure is higher among boys (55 percent of them saw such a movie, as compared with only 43 percent of girls), and among older teens 16 or 17 years old (60 percent vs. 42 percent of teens 13 to 15).

Teens also were asked about movies and television programs which contained violence that they saw recently. During the past month, more than one teen in three (36 percent) saw a movie containing a lot of violence or rough behavior. This figure includes 43 percent of boys and 29 percent of girls; it also includes 42 percent of teens 16 and 17, and only 33 percent of younger teens (13 to 15).

Teens give similar responses to a question about watching violent television programs during the past month. Again, more than a third (36 percent) saw a particularly violent television show, including 41 percent of boys and 30 percent of girls.

Teens were also asked whether they agree with a series of statements about violence in the media. Nearly eight in 10 teens (78 percent) agree that they "do not have a problem watching violent movies or television programs." However, fully half agree that "violence on television and in movies sends the wrong messages to young people (53 percent)." About three in 10 agree that programming for teens contains too much violence (31 percent say this is the case with movies; 29 percent with television).

The differences in attitude between boys and girls on the subject of media violence are notable. While more than eight in 10 boys (83 percent) "do not have a problem watching violent movies or television programs," this is true for only 74 percent of girls.

Less than two-thirds of teen-age boys (65 percent) agree that "teens need a greater number of positive role models on television, in movies, and in song lyrics," while nearly eight of 10 girls (79 percent) agree.

While less than half of boys surveyed (44 percent) agree that "violence on television and in movies sends the wrong messages to young people," more than six

in 10 girls (62 percent) agree with this statement.

And while only three in 10 boys (32 percent) agree that "there should be greater restrictions" on the number and type of movies and television programs that feature violence, sex, or bad language, more than half of girls (55 percent) hold this view.

Findings for teen-agers are based on telephone interviews with a representative national cross section of 500 teen-agers, conducted January through March, 1998.

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Gallup youth survey

Violent viewing

During the past month, did you happen to see any movies in a theater that were rated "R" or intended for adult audiences?

During the past month, did you happen to see any movies in a theater that you thought contained a lot of violence or rough behavior?

During the past month, did you happen to see any programs on television that you thought were particularly violent?

	By Sex			By Age	
	All Teens	Boys	Girls	13-15	16-17
Saw R-rated movie past month	49%	55%	43%	42%	60%
Saw movie containing a lot of violence or rough behavior past month	36%	43%	29%	33%	42%
Saw a particularly violent TV program past month	36%	41%	30%	37%	33%

Teen attitudes concerning violence

	Agree with statements		
	All Teens	Boys	Girls
You do not have a problem watching violent movies or television programs	78%	83%	74%
Teens need a greater number of positive role models on television, in movies, and in song lyrics	72%	65%	79%
Movies and television have a great deal of influence on the messages to young people today	65%	60%	72%
Violence on television and in movies sends the wrong messages to young people	53%	44%	62%
There should be greater restrictions on the number and type of movies and television programs that include violence, sex or bad language	43%	32%	55%
Watching violent television programs or movies make teens violent	34%	29%	39%
Movies intended for teenagers contain too much violence	31%	26%	36%
Television programs intended for teenagers contain too much violence	29%	26%	32%



AP

Associated Press
GRAPHICS

<AP> APN GALLUP VIOLENCE 080798; Gallup youth survey on teens opinions about violence; With Gallup violence; 2c x 8 38"; 108mm x 162mm; A.Sibiny; ETA Friday, 08/07. </AP>



AP

Challenge to Limit Children to Age Appropriate Entertainment.

The President challenged theater owners to uniformly enforce the R-rating prohibition for underage children, and to require young patrons show identification. According to a recent Gallup poll, half of American teens say they have seen an “R” rated movie in the last month, including 42 percent of those aged 13-15. The President also challenged producers not to advertise inappropriate films on television programs directed to children, and for parents to know what their children watch and the video games they play.



Jeffrey A. Shesol
05/14/99 02:57:37 PM

*N
Violence*

Record Type: Record

To: See the distribution list at the bottom of this message

cc:

Subject: final draft -- radio address

Final 05/14/99 2:30pm

Jeff Shesol

**PRESIDENT WILLIAM J. CLINTON
RADIO ADDRESS ON VIOLENCE AND
THE ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY
SEATTLE, WASHINGTON
May 15, 1999**

Good morning. In the past few weeks, ever since that terrible day in Littleton, people across America have searched their souls and searched for solutions to prevent this kind of tragedy from happening again. Last Monday, at our White House strategy session on children and violence, representatives of every sector of society agreed on one fundamental fact: making progress requires taking responsibility.

That responsibility begins at home. Parents have a duty to guide children as they grow, staying engaged, staying involved in their lives. The most important influence on a child is a parent.

Here in Washington, we have a responsibility to keep guns out of the hands of criminals and children. There is a broad national consensus on that point -- everywhere, it seems, except the U.S. Senate. Last week, the Senate twice passed a phony proposal instead of a real law that would close the deadly gun-show loophole, through which tens of thousands of guns are sold each year without background checks. Even worse, the Senate bill is riddled with new loopholes -- permitting convicted felons to get guns at pawn shops, no questions asked; and making it harder, not easier, for law enforcement to trace guns used in crimes.

If the Senate says it wants to fix the problem, it should fix the problem. It should not make the problem worse. The American people deserve -- and have demanded -- better. They know that law-abiding citizens don't need loopholes in our gun laws. Only criminals do. I strongly hope that in the coming weeks, the Senate will step up to its responsibility and do the right thing by our children.

I have always said that the entertainment industry must also do its part. In 1993, shortly after I became President, I traveled to Hollywood and spoke to members of the

community about their responsibility. I said: "You have the capacity to do good -- to help change the way we behave, the way we think of ourselves. . . Examine what together you might do to help us rebuild the frayed bonds of community, to give children nonviolent ways to resolve their frustrations."

Today, the entertainment industry is helping parents limit children's exposure to violence -- working with the administration on a voluntary ratings system for television and parental screening for the Internet. But there is still too much violence on our nation's screens, large and small. There are too many creators and purveyors of violence who say there is nothing they can do about it. And there are too many vulnerable children who are steeped in this culture of violence -- becoming desensitized to it and, as studies show, more capable of committing it themselves. By age 18, the typical American will see 40,000 dramatized murders. All in the name of entertainment.

Those who say they can do nothing about this are wrong. By changing the way they do business. . . by making movies, music, TV programs and video games as if their own children were watching. . . members of the entertainment industry can make a big difference. And today, I want to issue three specific challenges to the entertainment industry. First, the whole industry should stop showing guns in any ads or previews children might see. Second, I challenge theater owners across America to enforce more strictly the age requirements on the movies they show. Theater owners should check IDs, not turn the other way as a child walks unchaperoned into an R-rated movie. And third, I challenge the movie industry to re-evaluate its entire ratings system -- especially the PG-13 rating, to determine whether it is allowing gratuitous violence in movies viewed by children. Our administration is fighting to do all we can to protect our children. The entertainment industry should do everything in its power, too.

Across America, people are coming together and saying, yes, we can change this culture of violence. I believe that we can -- and that we will -- build in its place a culture of values which we will be proud to pass on to future generations. Thank you.

Message Sent To:

Loretta M. Ucelli/WHO/EOP
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Bill 12 of 50

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To designate March 24, 1999, as 'National School Violence Victims' Memorial Day'. (Introduced in the Senate)

SRES 53 IS

106th CONGRESS

1st Session

S. RES. 53

Current legislation

To designate March 24, 1999, as 'National School Violence Victims' Memorial Day'.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

February 25, 1999

Mr. HUTCHINSON (for himself, Mr. BUNNING, Mr. SPECTER, Mrs. FEINSTEIN, Mr. MCCONNELL, Mr. SESSIONS, Mr. ASHCROFT, Mr. DEWINE, Mr. JEFFORDS, Mr. HELMS, Mr. DORGAN, Mr. MURKOWSKI, Mr. ABRAHAM, Mr. COVERDELL, Mr. GRAMS, Mr. THURMOND, Mr. ENZI, Mr. WELLSTONE, Mr. HATCH, Mr. BROWBACK, Mr. REID, Mr. ROBB, Mr. BIDEN, Mrs. HUTCHISON, Mr. CONRAD, Mr. KENNEDY, Mr. BINGAMAN, Mr. BAUCUS, Mr. JOHNSON, Mr. EDWARDS, Mr. LEVIN, Mr. SARBANES, Mr. BURNS, Mr. CLELAND, Mr. REED, Mr. DASCHLE, Mr. CAMPBELL, Mr. LAUTENBERG, Mrs. BOXER, Mr. KOHL, Ms. LANDRIEU, Mr. KERREY, Ms. COLLINS, Ms. MIKULSKI, Mrs. LINCOLN, and Mr. **LIEBERMAN**) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary

RESOLUTION

To designate March 24, 1999, as 'National School Violence Victims' Memorial Day'.

Whereas approximately 10 percent of all public schools reported at least 1 serious violent crime to a law

enforcement agency over the course of the 1996-97 school year;

Whereas in 1996, approximately 225,000 students between the ages of 12 and 18 were victims of nonfatal violent crime in schools in the United States;

Whereas during 1992 through 1994, 76 students and 29 non-students were victims of murders or suicides that were committed in schools in the United States;

Whereas because of escalating school violence, the children of the United States are increasingly afraid that they will be attacked or harmed at school;

Whereas efforts must be made to decrease incidences of school violence through an annual remembrance and prevention education; and

Whereas the Senate encourages school administrators in the United States to develop school violence awareness activities and programs for implementation on March 24, 1999: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate--

(1) designates March 24, 1999, as 'National School Violence Victims' Memorial Day'; and

(2) requests the President to issue a proclamation designating March 24, 1999, as 'National School Violence Victims' Memorial Day' and calling on the people of the United States to observe the day with appropriate ceremonies and activities.

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Bill 32 of 50

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Whereas young people will be the stewards of our communities, Nation, and world in critical times, and the present and future well-being of our society requires an involved, caring... (Agreed to by the Senate)

SRES 176 ATS

105th CONGRESS

2d Session

S. RES. 176

Proclaiming the week of October 18 through October 24, 1998, as 'National Character Counts Week'.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES**February 12, 1998**

Mr. DOMENICI (for himself, Mr. DODD, Mr. COCHRAN, Ms. MIKULSKI, Mr. BENNETT, Mr. LIEBERMAN, Mr. KEMPTHORNE, Mr. DORGAN, Mr. FRIST, Mr. CLELAND, Mr. ROCKEFELLER, Mr. FORD, Mrs. MURRAY, Mr. WARNER, Mr. NICKLES, Mrs. FEINSTEIN, Mr. KOHL, Mr. D'AMATO, Mr. LAUTENBERG, Mr. SARBANES, Mr. BAUCUS, Mrs. BOXER, Mr. FAIRCLOTH, Mr. BREAUX, Mr. STEVENS, Mr. CHAFEE, Mr. INHOFE, Mr. BROWNBAC, Mr. ENZI, Mr. BIDEN, Mr. HUTCHINSON, Mr. DEWINE, Mr. REID, Mr. ABRAHAM, Mr. THURMOND, Mr. JOHNSON, Mr. JEFFORDS, Mr. BOND, Mrs. HUTCHISON, Mr. BYRD, Mr. WELLSTONE, Mr. BINGAMAN, Mr. COVERDELL, Mr. SMITH of Oregon, Mr. LOTT, Ms. COLLINS, Mr. BURNS, Mr. GREGG, Mr. MURKOWSKI, Mr. HAGEL, Mr. KENNEDY, Mr. CONRAD, and Mr. AKAKA) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary

June 19, 1998

Reported by Mr. HATCH, without amendment

June 24, 1998

Considered and agreed to

RESOLUTION

Proclaiming the week of October 18 through October 24, 1998, as 'National Character Counts Week'.

Whereas young people will be the stewards of our communities, Nation, and world in critical times, and the present and future well-being of our society requires an involved, caring citizenry with good character;

Whereas concerns about the character training of children have taken on a new sense of urgency as violence by and against youth threatens the physical and psychological well-being of the Nation;

Whereas more than ever, children need strong and constructive guidance from their families and their communities, including schools, youth organizations, religious institutions, and civic groups;

Whereas the character of a nation is only as strong as the character of its individual citizens;

Whereas the public good is advanced when young people are taught the importance of good character and that character counts in personal relationships, in school, and in the workplace;

Whereas scholars and educators agree that people do not automatically develop good character and, therefore, conscientious efforts must be made by institutions and individuals that influence youth to help young people develop the essential traits and characteristics that comprise good character;

Whereas, although character development is, first and foremost, an obligation of families, the efforts of faith communities, schools, and youth, civic, and human service organizations also play a very important role in supporting family efforts by fostering and promoting good character;

Whereas the Senate encourages students, teachers, parents, youth, and community leaders to recognize the valuable role our youth play in the present and future of our Nation and to recognize that character is an important part of that future;

Whereas, in July 1992, the Aspen Declaration was written by an eminent group of educators, youth leaders, and ethics scholars for the purpose of articulating a coherent framework for character education appropriate to a diverse and pluralistic society;

Whereas the Aspen Declaration states, 'Effective character education is based on core ethical values which form the foundation of democratic society.';

Whereas the core ethical values identified by the Aspen Declaration constitute the 6 core elements of character;

Whereas the 6 core elements of character are trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and citizenship;

Whereas the 6 core elements of character transcend cultural, religious, and socioeconomic differences;

Whereas the Aspen Declaration states, 'The character and conduct of our youth reflect the character and conduct of society; therefore, every adult has the responsibility to teach and model the core ethical values and every social institution has the responsibility to promote the development of good character.';

Whereas the Senate encourages individuals and organizations, especially those who have an interest in the education and training of our youth, to adopt the 6 core elements of character as intrinsic to the well-being of individuals, communities, and society as a whole; and

Whereas the Senate encourages communities, especially schools and youth organizations, to integrate the 6 core elements of character into programs serving students and children: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate--

(1) proclaims the week of October 18 through October 24, 1998, as 'National Character Counts Week'; and

(2) requests that the President issue a proclamation calling upon the people of the United States and interested groups to embrace the 6 core elements of character and to observe the week with appropriate ceremonies and activities.

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Expressing the sense of Congress that all Members mourn the loss of life at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado, and condemn this and previous incidents of deadly violence... (Introduced in the House)

HCON 90 IH

106th CONGRESS

1st Session

H. CON. RES. 90

Expressing the sense of Congress that all Members mourn the loss of life at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado, and condemn this and previous incidents of deadly **violence** in our Nation's schools.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**April 21, 1999**

Ms. STABENOW (for herself and Mrs. JONES of Ohio) submitted the following concurrent resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Education and the Workforce, and in addition to the Committee on the Judiciary, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

Expressing the sense of Congress that all Members mourn the loss of life at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado, and condemn this and previous incidents of deadly **violence** in our Nation's schools.

Whereas it is clear that **school violence** is a national problem, as the country has witnessed increasing acts of intense **violence** in Springfield, Oregon, Fayetteville, Tennessee, Edinboro, Pennsylvania, Jonesboro, Arkansas, West Paducah, Kentucky, and Pearl, Mississippi;

Whereas this increased **violence** in our schools not only clouds the educational environment, making it

harder for students of all ages to obtain a quality education and pursue their dreams, but also rips at the heart of our communities;

Whereas this specter of **violence** robs parents of their children, students of their friends, and society of its future leaders;

Whereas these incidents of **violence** raise many questions about why some individuals turn to guns and hatred to express their frustrations with the world, and about our inability to reach out to them before it is too late;

Whereas the anguish that consumes some children and leads them to destructive behavior must be addressed;

Whereas 57 percent of violent crimes committed by juveniles occur on **school** days;

Whereas a comprehensive system to address crime in our Nation's schools is not in place and it is necessary to ensure that every **school** has a professional trained to recognize and combat **school** -related crime, disorder problems, and the signs of gang and drug activity;

Whereas our schools should be havens for the pursuit of knowledge, not places where children fear for their safety;

Whereas we should expand crime prevention efforts for students and educate **school** -age individuals in crime prevention, conflict resolution, and personal safety;

Whereas we should provide our communities with the resources necessary to prevent juvenile crime, but funding for **school** resource officers in our schools is insufficient; and

Whereas we should establish **school** -based partnerships between local law enforcement agencies and local **school** systems by using **school** resource officers who operate in and around elementary and secondary schools to combat **school** -related crime, such as the Community Oriented Policing Services program: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That it is the sense of Congress that we must redouble our efforts to combat **school violence** and expand community justice initiatives for students by increasing funding for **school** resource officers through the Community Oriented Policing Services program.

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S.735

Children's Gun Violence Prevention Act of 1999 (Introduced in the Senate)

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LEVEL 1 - 1 OF 3 STORIES

The Associated Press

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July 8, 1998, Wednesday, PM cycle

SECTION: Washington Dateline

LENGTH: 443 words

HEADLINE: Lawmakers look at causes, solutions to violence among juveniles

BYLINE: By LIBBY QUAID, Associated Press Writer

DATELINE: WASHINGTON

BODY:

Children kill because parents and other adults are uninvolved in their lives, a panel of experts told lawmakers who have condemned violent music lyrics.

A group including law enforcement, clergy and social scientists spoke to Sens. Sam Brownback, R-Kan., and Joe Lieberman, D-Conn., both of whom organized Tuesday's panel discussion. Most agreed that television, movies, music and video games share the blame, but all the panelists pointed to a deeper cause: an increasing lack of adult involvement.

Fatherless families leave mothers with overwhelming responsibility and kids with what sociologist Barbara Whitehead called "protest masculinity," prompting even small-town teens to join gangs.

"Adult time and supervision matter," said Whitehead, who has written that the dissolution of the traditional two-parent family is harmful to both children and society.

In rap music and in other forms, violence is filling a cultural void in suburban and rural America, said Eugene F. Rivers, a Boston pastor who co-founded a coalition of 43 churches credited with lowering crime rates in Boston.

"The male that we're discovering is infinitely more dangerous is not the inner-city brother, because he's going to confine his violence to the 'hood," Rivers said.

"It's the (convicted Oklahoma City bomber Timothy) McVeigh - he's the scary one, he's the one that takes down an entire building facility, not some kid with a Saturday-night special in the 'hood who is in most cases going to shoot

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The Associated Press, July 8, 1998

somebody he knows," Rivers said. "There's something much deeper going on."

Recent deadly school shootings in Kentucky, Oregon, Arkansas and Mississippi prompted Brownback and Lieberman to convene the group.

"The young and the violent are found in small towns as well as big cities, and their numbers, as well as their crimes, are growing," Brownback said. "Gangs and guns are ever more visible in our schools. Fistfights begin to seem quaint by comparison."

Lieberman, a longtime critic of media violence, is considering legislation that would order the Justice Department to conduct an intensive study on the links between media violence and juvenile crime, "to explore in-depth the question of whether the welter of media violence is helping to break down inhibitions and increase the likelihood that young people will settle conflicts with bullets," he said.

The facts and figures on youth violence are confusing Americans, said James Fox, a criminologist at Northeastern University. While juvenile homicide has decreased by about one-third over the past five years, the rate of murder committed by teen-agers remains 102 percent higher than in 1985.

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: July 8, 1998



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LEVEL 1 - 4 OF 50 STORIES

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November 6, 1997 Thursday, FINAL / ALL

SECTION: NATIONAL; Pg. 23A

LENGTH: 814 words

HEADLINE: SENATOR TO CHAIR HEARING ON IMPACT OF **VIOLENT** ROCK LYRICS

BYLINE: By MICHAEL NORMAN; PLAIN DEALER MUSIC CRITIC

BODY:

I am the god of (expletive)

I am the god of (expletive)

Virgins sold in quantity, herded by heredity

Red neck burn out midwest mind

Who said date rape isn't kind?

- from Marilyn Manson's "Cake and Sodomy"

Sen. Sam **Brownback**, the Kansas Republican who took over Bob Dole's seat in the U.S. Senate, is not the sort of fellow you would expect to be intimately familiar with the words and music of Marilyn Manson.

But **Brownback** probably knows the Canton, Ohio-born shock rocker's lyrics better than the average teenage Marilyn Manson fan. He even carries copies of the songs in his briefcase so he can hand them out to unsuspecting congressional colleagues and constituents.

"I want people to read them out loud," said **Brownback**, who chairs a Senate subcommittee that will begin informational hearings today on the impact of **violent** music lyrics on youth behavior. "I want to expose people to these songs, which glorify everything from cop killing to date rape. I want them to understand what we're up against.

"A lot of people today are really fearful of sending children out into this culture. It's a culture of violence. And I think you can lay some of the blame for that on music and television and movies. People shouldn't have to fight their culture to raise their kids."

Until recently, most of the national debate about the lyrical content of pop music - from Tipper Gore's warning-label campaign to former drug czar William Bennett's public "shaming" of record-industry executives - has focused on the



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work of gangsta rappers such as Snoop Doggy Dogg, Ice-T, Tupac Shakur and the Notorious B.I.G.

But within the past year, Manson (whose real name is Brian Warner) has become the favorite target of conservative political and religious groups who see him as the ultimate symbol of the debasement of the American culture.

Manson - whose group is signed to the Cleveland-based Nothing Records label run by Nine Inch Nails' frontman Trent Reznor - plays the role of the self-professed "Anti-Christ Superstar" to the extreme.

His albums ("Anti-Christ Superstar," "Smells Like Children" and "Portrait of an American Family") are filled with songs with references to Satanism, rape, murder, self-mutilation, drug abuse, pornography and child abuse. His stage shows are even more controversial - theatrical, horror-show productions full of satanic and fascist imagery and spiced with occasional nudity and onstage sex (some simulated, some not).

Manson and his manager, former Blossom Music Center marketing director Tony Ciulla, could not be reached for comment on **Brownback's** hearings. But in a recent speech at a music-industry trade convention in New York City, Manson said he was simply celebrating freedom and individuality by skewering religious hypocrisy, political correctness and social conformity.

"All I am really trying to do with my songs and performances is make people think," he said. "I don't go around burning down churches or protesting Sunday school or kicking nuns in the kneecaps.

"Satanism does appeal to me, but I'm not a devil worshiper. In my view, satanism is a philosophy not unlike Nietzsche or Darwin. It's man as self-preservation. Man being his own God. The word Satan tends to scare people. But to me, it just represents the ultimate rebellion against the mainstream. The character of Lucifer in the Bible always was a hero to me because he got kicked out of heaven because he wanted to be God."

That sort of philosophical talk doesn't impress **Brownback**, who sees Manson as an amoral mercenary pandering to teenage audiences looking for new ways to shock their parents.

"There is a lot of very good music out there," the senator said. "I don't want to come across as saying that none of this music is good. And I am not advocating censorship. But this stuff crosses the line. It goes way beyond shocking your parents. It glorifies date rape, child abuse, violence. And I believe it does have an impact on people.

"The level of violence, particularly among **juveniles** and teens, has risen dramatically. **Violent** crime is up like 500 percent since the mid 1960s. And among teens, it's more brutal and predatory than at any time in history. I don't think we can lay that all on pop music. But I think we can lay some of it on the overall culture of violence. And the people who market this music bear a responsibility for that."

Today's hearings will be held in front of the Senate Governmental Affairs Subcommittee on Oversight of Government Management, Restructuring and the District of Columbia.



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The Plain Dealer, November 6, 1997

Among the witnesses scheduled to testify are Sen. Joseph Lieberman, a Democrat from Connecticut; C. Delores Tucker, a prominent critic of popular music who chairs the National Political Congress of Black Women; and Raymond Kuntz, a North Dakota father whose son reportedly committed suicide while listening to Marilyn Manson music.

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: November 7, 1997



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LEVEL 1 - 6 OF 50 STORIES

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THE HARTFORD COURANT

November 7, 1997 Friday, STATEWIDE

SECTION: MAIN; Pg. A12

LENGTH: 435 words

HEADLINE: **LIEBERMAN** CRITICIZES VIOLENT, VULGAR SONGS

BYLINE: MICHAEL WAGNER; Courant Staff Writer

DATELINE: WASHINGTON --

BODY:

Sen. Joseph I. **Lieberman**, D-Conn., urged the recording industry in a heated subcommittee hearing Thursday to assume more responsibility for the violent songs it releases.

Hillary Rosen, president of the Recording Industry Association of America, said it is not the music that creates the violence -- it merely reflects society's problems. She said that attacking song lyrics today is no different from parents in the 1950s objecting to Elvis Presley.

"We are not talking about censorship or the First Amendment -- we are talking about morals," **Lieberman** said.

The atmosphere remained calm through the emotional testimony by a North Dakota man whose son killed himself last December. He said the suicide was motivated by the lyrics to a song by Marilyn Manson, a popular but controversial rock band.

Raymond Kuntz, the boy's father, said a draft of his son's English paper about the singer was lying next to the body.

"This music hurts us as a people," he said. "Our children are quietly being destroyed, dying, by [Manson's] music, by ones and twos in scattered isolation throughout our nation today."

The hearing, called to spur a national dialogue about the issue, erupted into a heated debate after Rosen spoke.

"To unilaterally deny an artist the opportunity to produce these lyrics is to deny that there are some in our society who express pain or anger in a way that is valuable, musical and adds to our nation's cultural diversity," she said.

Lieberman told Rosen he was disappointed by her statement but not surprised. He said he was most disturbed that she did not acknowledge how extremely vulgar the music is.

"This is a long way from ragtime, rhythm and blues," he said. "Now we're



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talking about the murdering of cops."

Rosen said it is up to parents to censor what their children listen to and to look for psychological indications of suicide. She said the real problems, like funding for college and deadbeat fathers, are not being addressed -- but was quickly interrupted by Lieberman.

"One doesn't justify the other," he protested.

The recording association's parental advisory label later came into question from Lieberman and Sen. Sam Brownback, R- Kan. Brownback is chairman of the committee holding the hearing. They criticized its effectiveness.

Rosen said the recording association cannot and will not adopt a more specific label, like the new television or video game ratings systems, because it would not be helpful.

She said in both of those mediums visual and audio messages are connected and are therefore not as subject to interpretation as a song would be.

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: November 10, 1997



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The Houston Chronicle

December 2, 1993, Thursday, 2 STAR Edition

SECTION: A; Pg. 7

LENGTH: 614 words

HEADLINE: Slasher videos need warnings, foes say;
Beheadings, bloodsucking too much for youngsters, lawmaker maintains

BYLINE: Houston Chronicle News Services

DATELINE: WASHINGTON

BODY:

WASHINGTON -- A screaming sorority sister beset by bloodsucking attackers; a fight ending with the removal of the head and spine of the loser. These video game images must be kept from children through parental warnings, a lawmaker said Wednesday.

Sen. Joseph Lieberman, D-Conn., flanked by Captain Kangaroo and other children's advocates, said that while these and similar video games are protected as free speech, they are too violent to be played by children.

"Few parents would buy these games for their kids if they really knew what was in them," Lieberman said during a news conference.

Sega of America Inc., one of the nation's largest video game distributors, said it is already keeping violent games away from children and younger teen-agers. Sega Vice President Bill White said, "The adult market today wants something more than just playing Pac Man. " Apparently, they're getting it.

Lieberman showed reporters segments of two video games, "Mortal Kombat" and "Night Trap. " Mortal Kombat features two martial-arts warriors pounding away at each other amid much spattering of blood. The game instructs a player to "finish" a downed opponent. The choices for murder include ripping the heart out of the victim or removing, in one blow, the victim's head and spinal column.

In Night Trap, the goal is to prevent a gang of black-hooded killers from capturing scantily clad sorority sisters and using a neck drill device to drain their blood. The software for the game includes images from scenes filmed with real actors. In the scene played at the news conference, the attackers get their screaming victim and attach the blood-draining device to her neck with a



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high-pitched drilling noise.

"We're not talking 'Pac Man' or 'Space Invaders' anymore," **Lieberman** said. "We're talking about video games that glorify violence and teach children to enjoy inflicting the most gruesome forms of cruelty imaginable. "

Lieberman said he would prefer that Congress ban such violent games, but he said they are constitutionally protected.

Captain Kangaroo, whose real name is Bob Keeshan, said his initial reaction on seeing the videos was "disbelief -- I just could not believe anybody could go that far. " Keeshan said greed was the sole motive behind the games.

Lieberman quoted one industry estimate that Mortal Kombat would generate \$ 100 million in business this Christmas season. He said more than 3 million copies of the game have already been sold.

Sega said that games intended for mature audiences account for only 2 percent of sales.

The games cost between \$ 40 and \$ 80 but can be rented at video stores for a few dollars. They are also available in video arcades.

Sega, of Redwood City, Calif., distributes both games.

Nintendo, with its U.S. headquarters in Redmond, Wash., distributes a somewhat less violent version of Mortal Kombat.

Lieberman's bill, co-sponsored by Sen. Herb Kohl, D-Wis., would give the video game industry one year to produce "a credible, uniform system to warn parents. " If the industry failed to produce its own system of ratings or warning labels, the bill would create an independent council to impose a warning system.

Sega says it already rates its games. Nintendo did not return a call seeking comment.

Lieberman said future games would become even more realistic as virtual reality technology is developed.

"Already, there are CD games that feature explicit images of actual women whom the player directs to perform sexual acts.

While made for adults, it is very easy for teen-agers and children to get access to such games," he said.

GRAPHIC: Mug: Joseph **Lieberman**

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: December 3, 1993



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LEVEL 1 - 34 OF 50 STORIES

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Los Angeles Times

March 5, 1994, Saturday, Home Edition

SECTION: Part A; Page 4; Column 1; National Desk

LENGTH: 541 words

HEADLINE: VIDEO GAME INDUSTRY VOWS TO DEVELOP RATING SYSTEM;
TECHNOLOGY: A SPOKESMAN FOR FIRMS TELLS SENATORS THAT STANDARDS WILL BE READY BY
CHRISTMAS. THREE RETAILERS SAY THEY WON'T STOCK UNRATED TITLES.

BYLINE: By WILLIAM J. EATON, TIMES STAFF WRITER

DATELINE: WASHINGTON

BODY:

Leading makers of video games, seeking to avoid government regulation of their burgeoning \$6-billion industry, pledged Friday to develop an independent rating system before next Christmas season in order to warn buyers of **violent** or sexually explicit content not suitable for children.

At the same time, officials of three retailers promised to keep unrated games off their stores' shelves and to help consumers understand how to use the classifications to select products appropriate for youngsters.

The pledges were made at a hearing conducted by Sens. Joseph I. **Lieberman** (D-Conn.) and Herbert Kohl (D-Wis.), co-sponsors of a bill to establish federal ratings of video games if the industry does not police itself.

"We're making real progress," **Lieberman** said after the testimony. But he said two Senate subcommittees would monitor the industry's actions over the next few months and "keep your feet to the fire" to get results.

"If you rate a game as being OK for kids, and we still find blood and guts on the screen, then in my view the rating is meaningless," **Lieberman** warned before the hearing. "If you didn't put blood and gore and sex in the games, you wouldn't need to rate the games."

The viewpoint of the biggest game-makers was articulated by Jack Heistand, an official for an interactive entertainment industry rating committee.

Reacting to public outcries and Senate hearings last December that focused on such **violent** games as Mortal Kombat and Night Trap, Heistand said a rating system would be developed to advise consumers about the approximately 2,500 video titles that come on the market each year.

"We strongly believe that it's time to put the game controls in the hands of



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parents and adult consumers through the creation of a universal, responsible, reliable, understandable and independent industry ratings system," Heistand told a joint hearing of the Senate Governmental Affairs subcommittee on regulation and the Judiciary subcommittee on juvenile justice.

"We have agreed to have a rating system in place by Christmas," he said. "Products coming to market after Nov. 1 will, if submitted by publishers in a timely fashion, be rated under the new system."

An independent rating board, acting anonymously, will be established to develop guidelines and categories, with symbols designating games intended for children and games suitable for teen-agers or adults, he said. Sanctions will be imposed on companies that withhold information or secure a rating through fraud.

But Heistand said the industry -- which began in 1976 when Atari marketed a video game called Pong -- is still rapidly changing.

"Originally, the predominant market for our products was children," he said. "But as more sophisticated technology evolves, our market is rapidly attracting a more diverse and older audience."

"The Atari generation of the 1970s and the Nintendo generation of the 1980s have grown up and many young adults are using a wide variety of interactive entertainment software products," he said.

Voicing support for an industry rating system, officials of Wal-Mart, Toys R Us and Babbage's retail stores said they would not stock video games that did not carry a rating symbol in the coming holiday season.

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: March 6, 1994



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LEVEL 1 - 45 OF 50 STORIES

The Associated Press

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December 9, 1993, Thursday, AM cycle

SECTION: Business News

LENGTH: 668 words

HEADLINE: Lawmakers Skeptical Video Industry Will Police Self

BYLINE: By JOHN DIAMOND, Associated Press Writer

DATELINE: WASHINGTON

BODY:

The video game industry promised a voluntary rating system Thursday to restrict sales of **violent** games, but lawmakers quickly expressed doubts.

An hour before a Senate hearing on a bill to impose federal restrictions, a coalition of some 140 manufacturers and distributors made the industry's case.

"The market does not need and the public does not want another government entity to be created for this purpose," said Ilene Rosenthal, general counsel for the Software Publishers Association. "It is our job to do and we are here this morning to announce that it is a job we will do."

Two senators, whose legislation would impose restrictions if the video industry fails to police itself, remained unconvinced.

"Creating a rating system is, frankly, the very least the video game industry can do," said Sen. Joseph **Lieberman**, D-Conn. "It would be far better for America's parents and kids if they simply kept the gory violence and sex out of their games."

Sen. Herb Kohl, D-Wis., told a panel of industry witnesses: "I hope you walk away with one thought today: that if you don't do something about it, we will."

Lieberman and Kohl proposed their bill in response to games such as "Mortal Kombat," in which the winner can triumphantly pluck out the spinal column of a victim, and "Night Trap," in which the player tries to defend a group of scantily clad sorority girls against bloodsucking assailants. Both are distributed by Sega of America.

"The only thing I can say to the manufacturers of those video games is shame on you," witness Marilyn Droz, vice president of the National Coalition on



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The Associated Press, December 9, 1993

Television Violence, told the panel. "How would you like your teen-age daughter to go out on a date with someone who had just played three hours of that game?"

Lieberman ran a tape of a Sega ad for Mortal Kombat. While the company says it rates the game "MA-13" for use only by players 13 and over, the ad shows a boy who could easily be younger than 13 gaining the respect of his peers by winning in Mortal Kombat.

"The rating system is a fig leaf to cover a lot of transgressions," **Lieberman** said.

The hearing was a joint meeting of the Senate Subcommittee on Juvenile Justice, chaired by Kohl, and the Government Affairs Subcommittee on Regulation, chaired by **Lieberman**.

The day started with the video game industry in apparent harmony about how to head off legislation. Industry representatives, in a news conference in a separate Senate meeting room, said they would begin work on a rating system at a video game convention in two weeks.

But in the hearing it looked as though combat might break out between rival distributors Sega of America and Nintendo, two firms that dominate the \$ 5.3 billion industry.

When **Lieberman** held up a blue plastic handgun used to operate a Sega game, Sega Vice President Bill White pulled out a bazooka lookalike used in a Nintendo game.

Nintendo Vice President Howard Lincoln said the bazooka was used for "target shooting and what not," an assertion that drew derisive laughter from a group of Sega executives.

Lincoln counterattacked, saying his company goes further than Sega by keeping overly **violent** games off the market, not merely issuing hard-to-read warnings that parents may or may not see.

"Our concern is that a rating system will be open season on more **violent** games," Lincoln said.

Nintendo refused to distribute Night Trap and has a tamer version of Mortal Kombat, without the spine-removal scene. These decisions cost Nintendo "many millions" Lincoln said, and provoked complaints from customers who want the **violent** material and shareholders and stock holders who complain of lost market share. Indeed, since 1991, Sega has cut Nintendo's control of the market nearly in half.

The senators showed an ad for a Nintendo game, "The Untouchables," which ran under the headline, "They've got a bullet with your name on it."

Lincoln called that a "slipup" and blamed a Nintendo licensee for using language without Nintendo's approval.

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: December 9, 1993



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E. J. Dionne Jr.

America The Violent

Can't we now ask: Isn't there something powerfully troubling about this year of mass killings, one after another after another?

The seven people killed in Fort Worth were shot dead in a church by a deranged man shouting anti-religious epithets. Might that not move us to a touch of reverence before we descend into our "it's guns/it's the culture" shouting matches? Reverence in this case is defined not as saccharine expressions of empathy for the dead and the wounded but as a willingness to contemplate what might be wrong with us.

We need to face the fact that we are an exceptionally violent nation. There is no developed country like ours when it comes to killing.

But we don't like to think that of ourselves. Each time one of these horrible things happens—at Columbine High School and in Atlanta and in Arkansas and in Los Angeles—many perfectly sensible things are said: that someone quite mad or troubled is behind the latest horror; that individuals are accountable for what they do and their responsibility should not be diluted by blaming society; that our talk-crazed media culture is too eager to draw big lessons from isolated acts.

All true, but also an evasion. "This mania is unknown in any country in the world," Father Robert Drinan, law professor and former congressman, said the other day on CNN. Again, you could say many other countries have had deadly shooting sprees. Other places—Russia and South Africa come to mind—have bigger crime problems. You might reasonably urge that we not get hysterical, since we are finally having some success in bringing crime under control.

But Drinan is still right: There is a lethal combination in our country of a violence-prone culture and gun laws that are more permissive than in any comparable nation. There is no getting around either fact.

If we're honest, we'll ask if there might be a link between the culture of weaponry and the culture of movie and television violence—two different forms of glorification of the very aggression we claim to despise. And we might acknowledge that the frontier spirit we revere as part of our history and culture may have a dysfunctional side when it comes to shaping our current lives in cities and suburbs.

We also need to make distinctions between ordinary crime and lethal acts, as Franklin Zimring and Gordon Hawkins pointed out in an important article two years ago in the journal *The Responsive Community*.

"What sets the United States apart from other countries is not our high crime rates," they wrote. "What sets the United States apart is our distinctively high rates of lethal violence. Our cities have no more property crime than major cities abroad. . . . But the rate of violent death, from assault in the United States is from 4 to 18 times as high as in other G7 nations; and this is largely a consequence of the widespread use of handguns in assaults and robberies."

In an interview, Zimring, a law professor at the University of California at Berkeley, colorfully explained the distinction between violence and violence leading to death. "You're just as likely to get punched in the mouth in a bar in Sydney [Australia] as in a bar in Los Angeles. But you're 20 times as likely to be killed in Los Angeles."

Zimring rightly cites these facts as an argument for tougher gun laws. But he's too honest an analyst to pretend that gun laws explain everything. Americans, he says, are also more likely to kill people with knives than citizens of comparable countries. There is something in our culture, he says, that makes us "much more likely to consider it legitimate as part of getting into a fight to use means that threaten deadly results."

So, yes, we're back to guns and the culture. Is it possible this time that the president and his political opponents in Congress might recess the usual argument and encourage an objective look—fat chance, I know—at the causes of violence and a bit of national soul-searching leading to action?

"I don't know of a law—a government law—that will put love in people's hearts," Gov. George W. Bush of Texas said in response to the Fort Worth slaughter. Of course that's right—and utterly irrelevant. You don't have to love someone not to shoot them. We don't ask politicians to make us love each other. We ask them to criticize attitudes and ideas that lead to more killing and to pass reasonable laws that will make killing less likely.

The Washington Post

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 1999

Reconstructionist Judaism

Judaism has more than three branches now. The Metro story, "For Some Cantors, a Mission Beyond Music" (Sept. 19) reported on trends in cantorial training and practice by the three well-known Jewish religious groups: Orthodox, Conservative and Reform. But it doesn't mention Reconstructionist Judaism, now more than 60 years old and the fastest-growing branch of Judaism in the United States.

In the 1930s Rabbi Mordecai Kaplan recognized that many Jews were losing interest in religious observance, except perhaps for the high holidays. As a cogent philosopher and the leader of a congregation in New York, Rabbi Kaplan began to evolve a fresh approach to Jewish belief and practice. In "Juda-

ism as a Civilization," published in 1934, he laid out the views he later elaborated in many books, articles and lectures.

His son-in-law, Rabbi Ira Eisenstein, now a resident of Silver Spring, synthesized Rabbi Kaplan's philosophy and turned it into a movement now practiced in more than 90 synagogues and fellowships across the country. It is fostered by the Jewish Reconstructionist Federation, a national body.

The essence of Reconstructionism is that Judaism is not just a religion but an evolving religious civilization. Reconstructionists believe in the importance of music, art, dance, the Hebrew language, a dedication to the State of Israel and a sense of Jewish peoplehood, along

with a strong spirit of moral and ethical behavior and the maintenance of many traditional Jewish religious practices.

Reconstructionist Jews may hold varying theological views on the nature of God, though a central theme views God as a force for salvation in the universe and not an anthropomorphic being. More important, belief is only one of the three B's that Reconstructionists recognize. The other two are perhaps more crucial: belonging to the Jewish peoplehood and behaving as ethical human beings.

ISADORE SEEMAN
Silver Spring

The writer is president of the Reconstructionist Havurah of Greater Washington.

Fighting to Reach the Redskins

As a longtime season ticket holder, I have attended my last football game at Redskins Stadium ["Opening Day Nightmare," front page, Sept. 13]. Let me tell you about my experience on Sept. 12.

11 a.m.: I leave Vienna and head for the stadium with my husband and son. First we hit "Beltway Hell!" Traffic is backed up to Telegraph Road, although the traffic reports said Branch Avenue.

12:50 p.m.: We can see the stadium, but the cars are not moving. We are in the wrong lane for the gold lot (not that it mattered) because there are no signs at the first turn. The police are not moving traffic.

1:05 p.m.: We are directed into a gold lot, which appears to be full of red tickets as well. There are no spots. At 1:15 we make our own space.

1:25 p.m.: We enter the stadium and proceed to the club level. The escalator guard tells us we have to go back to the other escalator because they want to close the one we are about to get on.

1:30 p.m.: We arrive at our seats. At the end of the first quarter we wait 20 minutes in line to buy a beer, water and a sandwich. Once at the counter, we are told they have none of the above. We go back and order from a server with a hand-held computer. The sun is so bright he can't see the buttons. It takes 10 minutes to order a beer, water and french fries—\$16.50. Then we wait 15 minutes for them to be delivered by two different servers.

Eight hours later, we return home with headaches, hot, hungry and irritated. To quote my husband, "We have a big-screen TV; I don't need this!"

SALLIE REESE
Vienna

I'm not surprised that only 5,480 fans—a mere 7 percent of those attending the game—used the \$2 shut-

tle buses run by Metro between the stadium and the parking lots at the Addison Road Metro Station. Metro and the Redskins' Web site offered little or no help to fans seeking alternative transportation means.

On the morning of the season opener against Dallas, I found a "directions" page on the Redskins' Web site that included only driving directions and nothing on Metro access. Given the disastrous history of major traffic problems getting to and from the stadium, how in the world did www.redskins.com evolve without any clear mention of mass transportation options?

I called all the Metro lines I could find, but heard no specific information about travel to the stadium. So I drove, alone.

Lack of planning, coordination and communication by the Redskins and Metro is to blame when lone fans commute. The Baltimore Ravens inform their fans about travel options quite nicely on their Web site. Is there a Redskins' game plan outside the stadium?

JOHN J. SENG
Rockville

Believe it or not, The Post's story understated the traffic problem at the Dallas game. We left home as usual at 11 a.m. so we could arrive an hour early. We did not get into our seats until two minutes before the end of the first half.

When we finally got into the parking area, we noticed that a huge area that had been red parking was now marked gold. On the other side of the road the cash lot had been expanded, taking more red parking. Every car that I saw had a parking pass (red or gold). Surely Mr. Snyder knows how many parking spaces he had and how many passes he sold. It does not matter how many cars showed up. Mr. Snyder sold parking passes, and there were not enough spaces for the passes that he

sold. We deserve a refund!

CHARLES LLOYD
Annandale

Here's one part of the parking problem at Redskins Stadium that can be fixed quite easily. A friend and I were amazed that dozens of spaces in Lot A were appropriated by tailgate parties.

I suppose it's acceptable to cramp the lanes with coolers, grills and bulging bellies. But many of the revelers put their gear in empty spaces beside and behind their vehicles, then plopped there in lawn chairs, in effect daring anyone to try to park. We eventually found an empty space. Upon leaving at the end of the day, I removed a beer bottle wedged under one of our tires. A few rules and some enforcement for the tailgate parties would help.

TERRY CARTER
Alexandria