



Like a Dove

How the Columbine High School Massacre redefined my worldview

By Joseph Paolo Pastore



We are all Columbine!

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Authors note

Hi everyone! Most people have heard of the Columbine High School Massacre before. However, much of the information widely known is inaccurate to say the least. The coverage of the event by The media and the chaos of the event in general distorted the truth. My hope with this book is to improve the understanding of what happened there, shed light on the victims, and explain how this shooting has affected my life.

(If you do not wish to read about the events of the massacre and its aftermath and only wish to learn about the victims, please skip to the 13 Families section and start from there).

This is dedicated to 13 incredibly special people. Rachel Joy Scott, Danny Lee Rohrbough, Steve Robert Curnow, Cassie René Bernall, Isaiah Eamon Shoels, Matthew Joseph Kechter, Lauren Dawn Townsend, John Robert Tomlin, Kelly Ann Fleming, Daniel Conner Mauser, Corey Tyler DePooter, and Coach William David “Dave” Sanders. You guys are not forgotten, and you will always be loved, by me here on Earth, and by the Lord in Heaven!

4/20/99



“The definition of “normal” changed on that day” - Unnamed Columbine Student

WARNING:

THE FOLLOWING CHAPTER CONTAINS CONTENT THAT MAY NOT BE SUITABLE FOR SOME AUDIENCES. READER DISCRETION IS ADVISED.

(I honestly did not know whether I should include this section. But I ultimately decided to include it because I thought it is important for people to know exactly what happened. I also debated if I should mention the shooters themselves, but I had a lot of thoughts about them and I didn't know where else to put them. Obviously not everyone will feel that way I do and if you want to skip the stuff about the shooting itself [click here](#). The section about the families and the people who died is more important anyway).

The day was April 20th, 1999. In San Francisco, the LA Lakers defeated the Golden State Warriors, 106 to 102. In Kosovo, NATO dropped more bombs than any other time in the Yugoslav Wars. In Columbine, Colorado (A suburb of Denver), it was a typical late April Tuesday. The sun is shining, Birds are chirping, and kids and teachers are making their way to high school. Local mother, Dawn Anna, drops her daughter, Lauren, off at school. The last thing her mom ever sees from her daughter is the American Sign Language symbol for "I Love You".

Two Columbine siblings, Rachel Scott and her brother Craig, make their way to school in Rachel's car. Craig took extra time at home to do his hair and that made them late. They argued about it the whole way there. When they got there, Craig got out and slammed the door in his sister's face. This is the last time he saw his sister alive.

Their school, Columbine High School, is an ordinary (though rather large) school in an ordinary small American town. Its school colors are Blue and Silver. Its mascot is the Revolutionary War minuteman, The Rebel. But something has been brewing in this average American high school. Something evil, something insidious, something that would change the culture of America and personally impact my worldview, philosophical and spiritual beliefs forever.

Planning



*"I want to burn the world, I want to kill everyone except about 5 people...if we get busted any time, we start killing then and there...I ain't going out without a fight."
- Eric Harris*

Two Columbine seniors, Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold had been planning something evil for 2 years. They had planned to completely obliterate their school. They were average American teenagers, they had friends, hobbies, and they both worked at a local pizza chain called Blackjack Pizza. Klebold had even attended the senior prom a few days before the shooting.

They had an amateur understanding of bomb making, their grand plan was to set a timer on two 20-pound propane bombs in the school cafeteria (also known as the "commons"), when it hit max capacity. They figured everyone in the commons would perish and that the library, which was right above the commons, would collapse. They hoped this would kill everyone in the library as well. Then they would pick off survivors rushing out of the commons. They had also rigged their cars to explode which would kill additional police, firefighters, EMTs, and news reporters on the scene.

Harris had written in his diary that their plan after that was to either, die in a shootout with the Police, flee to Mexico, or hijack a plane at the Denver airport and crash it into a building in New York City. (This was probably just a sick fantasy and not an actual plan, but it is still eerie how similar this would be to a later event that would impact America even more).

They had rigged propane tanks with watches and circuitry that would detonate the tanks when the time hit a certain point. Fortunately, they used a non conductive form of plastic instead of metal for their circuitry, Preventing their bombs from detonating. It is believed they got their recipes from “The Anarchists Cookbook”, which was a bomb making guide written in the 1970s, this particular guide is known for being pretty unreliable. Even if they had not used plastic, the bombs still would not have been powerful enough to cause much damage due to the faulty designs they got from the book, any fires caused by them would likely have been put out by the school’s sprinkler system. Regardless, over 500 lives were saved because of their faulty directions.

Harris was wielding a 9mm Hi-Point Carbine semi-automatic rifle, a sawed-off pump action shotgun (he named the shotgun “Arlene” after a character from novels based off the *Doom* video games), and an assortment of knives and small pipe bombs, CO2 bombs (also known as crickets), and Molotov cocktails. Klebold was wielding a double barrel sawed off shotgun, an Intratec TEC-9 semi-automatic pistol, and numerous knives and bombs.

Harris and Klebold’s friend, Robyn Anderson (who was 18 and went to the prom with Klebold a few days before the massacre), bought the shotguns and the carbine rifle for them at the Tanner gun show from an unlicensed merchant. She later claims that had there been a background check she would have been intimidated enough to not buy them. The TEC-9 semi auto pistol was bought by Klebold illegally for \$500 from Mark Manes, who was a coworker of theirs at Blackjack Pizza. Neither Mark nor Robyn had any idea of what those guns would be used for.

Before the massacre, they had recorded 5 videos talking about their heinous plans called the “Basement Tapes” (so named because they were filmed in Harris's basement), the tapes were supposedly destroyed in 2015 by the Jefferson County (Jeffco) Police Department. However, the FBI has a copy of the tapes in Washington, and I believe that copy may still exist, locked

away in a vault or desk drawer somewhere. Full transcripts and recreations of them can be found online.

They referred to this plan as “NBK” an acronym for their favorite movie, *Natural Born Killers*, which is about a couple who go on a murder spree across America. They could have had a bright future, Klebold had applied to a few colleges and Harris was planning to join the Marines (he had been disqualified a few days before the massacre due to him being on an antidepressant known as Luvox).

A few days before the massacre, a neighbor of Harris reportedly heard pipes banging and glass breaking. He did not know this, but it was Harris building pipe bombs. Harris saw him, smiled, and gave two thumbs up.

No one knew what they had been planning, not the cops, not the school, not their friends, not even their parents. On the outside they were normal American teenagers, with friends, functional families, and hobbies. But on the inside, they were budding terrorists, they wanted infamy, and they got it. Their actions have etched their names into the story of America, but they etched their victims' names into the story of America as well.



Dylan at the prom with Robyn a few days before the shooting

Timeline



*“Can you still hear raging guns, Ending dreams of precious ones?
In God's son, hope will come, His red stain will take our pain” -
“Columbine, Friend of Mine” by the Cohen Brothers*

(Harris is wearing a black trench coat and a white T-shirt with the words “Natural Selection” on it, Klebold is wearing a black trench coat as well, and a black T-shirt with the word “Wrath” written on it. After they enter the school, they would ditch their trench coats).

(These timestamps are derived from various sources and may not be exactly accurate).

Around 5:00 AM to 11:00 AM - Harris and Klebold make final preparations, getting ammo and propane tanks, filming their final statements to their families, and making their way to the school. They drive to the AMF Belleview Bowling Alley, where they had a bowling class scheduled for 6:00 AM, they do not actually enter the establishment however, all they do there is say goodbye to some of their unsuspecting bowling classmates. A friend of Harris, Chris Morris was expecting a ride from Harris to school at 5:50 AM, but Harris never showed.

Time Unknown - Harris and Klebold set up a diversionary firebomb a bit away from the school to distract first responders.

11:10 AM - Harris and Klebold arrive at the school and park their car bombs in different parking lots. Harris exits his car and sees fellow student Brooks Brown who came out to smoke a cigarette. Brooks and Harris had a falling out a few months before when Harris threatened to kill Brooks on his website, but they had since made up. Brooks calls Harris out for missing an important test (Harris was very serious about his grades). For reasons unknown, Harris decides to spare him. He says, "That doesn't matter. Brooks, I like you now, go home". Brooks, slightly off put, proceeds to leave the school.

11:14 AM - Harris and Klebold plant their bombs under the tables in the Columbine High commons. The bombs are set to go off at 11:17 AM. Both exit the commons. Harris had meticulously studied the school schedules to determine when the most amount of people would be in the commons.

(The security cameras in the commons malfunctions so they are not seen on tape planting the bombs).

11:19 AM - Diversion bomb set up by Harris and Klebold a bit away from the school detonates and 911 is called.

11:19 to 11:23 AM - Harris and Klebold realize their bombs are faulty, so they begin shooting. Witnesses report hearing them shout "Go, Go!". Meanwhile, Brooks Brown is walking home, and he hears gunshots. He immediately runs to a neighbor's house and calls the police, knowing that it had to be Harris. Harris and Klebold shoot at students Rachel Scott and her friend Richard Castaldo who were eating lunch together on a hill outside of the commons. Rachel is shot in the chest, leg and arm. Richard is shot 8 times in his arms, chest, back, and abdomen. He is paralyzed for life. Richard says that Rachel layed there crying for a few seconds before Harris walked up and shot her in the head.

Rest in peace, Rachel.

11:20 AM - Friends Danny Rohrbough, Sean Graves, and Lance Kirklin exit the school for a smoke break. All three of them are hit by gunfire and fall to the ground.

11:21 AM - Harris and Klebold fire at 5 students who were eating lunch and having a religious discussion, they hit Michael Johnson and Mark Taylor. Michael was shot in the leg. Mark was shot twice in the chest and five times in the back. Both made a full recovery.

11:22 AM - Klebold goes down the stairs to where Danny, Sean, and Lance were shot. Lance pleads for help from Klebold, Klebold says "Sure, I'll help you" and then shoots him point blank in the face with his shotgun. He then shoots Danny in the head. Danny passed instantly. Lance and Sean go on to make full recoveries. **Rest in Peace, Danny.**

11:22 AM - A custodian sees students fleeing in the commons and informs school resource officer, Deputy Neil Gardner, Deputy Gardner makes his way to the commons.

11:23 AM - Klebold goes back up the stairs to Harris. Harris shoots student Anne Marie Hochhalter once in the chest and once in the back. She lives but is paralyzed for life.

11:23 AM - Student calls 911, Deputy Gardner is made aware of injuries.

11:24 AM - William "Dave" Sanders, a popular teacher and coach at Columbine High along with two janitors, John Curtis and Jay Gallentine, help evacuate students from the commons. One of these students, Adam Kyler, runs to hide in the commons kitchen but is hit in the ribs with a chair by accident. He gets up and pulls the fire alarm. Klebold had bullied Adam for his mental disabilities before the massacre. Another student, Nicholas Foss, is running out of the commons and sees Harris and Klebold, he is grazed by a bullet. Nick then runs with some other students and staff to hide in a bathroom.

11:24 AM - Teacher Patti Neilson and student Bryan Anderson are shot at by Harris. Bryan informs Mrs. Nielson that Harris is in his video production class, she assumes that the shooting is just a video Harris is making, she was going outside to tell Harris to knock it off. She is grazed by a bullet. Both are hit by broken glass. Mrs. Neilson and Bryan make their way to the library where she warns every one of the shootings, saying "Get down! They have guns!" Everyone assumes it's a prank but soon they realize the severity of the situation. Student Lauren Townsend, remarks "That's not funny, that's not funny at all".

11:24 AM - Harris and Klebold enter the school through the west entrance. Deputy Gardner parks his vehicle. Deputy Gardner takes cover behind his car as he and Harris exchange fire.

11:24 AM - Harris retreats and reenters the school. Mr. Sanders continues to help students escape and directs them to the exits.

11:25 AM - The Jeffco Police Department advises nearby units of the shooting. Mrs. Neilson, who is now hiding under a library table, calls 911.

11:26 AM - Two Jeffco police officers, Deputies Scott Taborsky and Paul Smoker, arrive on the scene and rescue some injured students.

11:26 AM - Harris spots Deputies Taborsky and Smoker and fires at them. They return fire and Harris retreats.

11:26 AM - Harris and Klebold walk through the hallways shooting randomly and throwing pipe bombs. Student Stephanie Munson is shot in the ankle. She survives.

11:26 AM - The gunmen spot Dave Sanders. Mr. Sanders, who at this point is making sure occupied classrooms are secure, is shot in the shoulder and neck by Klebold. He manages to make it to a science room where he is tended to by the students and teachers inside.

11:27 AM - Deputy Gardner radios a code 33 (Emergency traffic only). Another officer on the scene, Deputy Paul Magor, sets up a roadblock at the southeast of the student parking lot.

11:29 AM - Harris and Klebold enter the library, where the worst of the massacre takes place. They reportedly shout statements such as “All jocks stand up! We’ll get the guys in the white hats” and “This for all of the bullshit you have given us for the past 4 years!”. They shout “Get up” so loudly that you can hear it on Patti Neilson’s 911 call. Harris fires at a desk, student Evan Todd, is under it, he is hit by wood splinters. Klebold spots student Kyle Velasquez who was in the process of hiding under a table. Klebold shoots Kyle in the head. Kyle passed instantly. Miss Nielson notices the shooters and after a few minutes leaves the 911 dispatcher. The call however is still recording, it captures the audio of the entire library massacre, the full audio has never been released to the public. **Rest in Peace, Kyle.**

(Wearing white baseball caps is a tradition among jocks at Columbine High)

11:30 AM - Harris and Klebold throw their bags on nearby tables. Both shooters fire through the library windows at police officers on the ground. The officers return fire. No one is injured in this shootout.

11:30 AM - Klebold removes his trenchcoat and sees students Patrick Ireland, Dan Steepleton, and Makai Hall. He smiles and opens fire. Patrick is shot in the head, Daniel is shot in the left knee, Makai was shot in the knee also, Patrick tries to help Makai, but he is noticed and shot in the head again.

11:31 AM - Harris opens fire at a table with students Steven Curnow and Kacey Ruegsegger hiding under it. Steve is shot in the neck and passes instantly, Kacey is shot in the shoulder and hand, she screams. Harris walks over and tells Kacey to “Quit your bitching”. **Rest in Peace, Steve.**

11:31 AM - Harris bangs his gun on top of a table, kneels, and whispers “peekaboo” to Cassie Bernall, who was hiding under the table. He shoots Cassie in the temple, Cassie passed instantly. Harris held his shotgun with one hand when he shot Cassie and the recoil from his gun broke his nose. This might have been a reason why they decided to spare some people in the library, as he would have been slightly disorientated from the blood loss and injury. **Rest in Peace, Cassie.**

11:31 AM - Student Bree Pasquale is right across from Cassie, Harris aims his gun at Bree and asks, “Do you want to die?” Bree replies no, Harris laughs and says “Everybody’s gonna die, we're gonna blow up the library”.

11:32 AM - Patrick tries to move from his hiding place and is shot by Klebold. Klebold sees friends Craig Scott, Matthew Kechter, and Isaiah Shoels. Isaiah is one of the very few black students at Columbine High. Klebold calls Harris over saying “REB, there's a n****r over here.” Isaiah says “I wanna see my mom”, the shooters continue mocking him for his skin color and then Klebold attempts to drag him out from under the table, when that doesn't work Harris shoots him in the heart. He passed instantly. **Rest in Peace, Isaiah.**

(REB is Harris's online username, voDKa is Klebold's)

11:32 AM - Klebold shoots the other side of the table, shooting Matt in the chest, he passed instantly. Craig is miraculously unharmed and plays dead in the blood of his two fallen friends. Harris throws a cricket at Dan Steepleton, Dan panics and Makai Hall grabs the bomb and hurls it away. It explodes in midair. **Rest in Peace, Matt.**

11:32 AM - Klebold opens fire, shattering a trophy case and hitting student Mark Kintgen in the head and shoulder. Mark survives.

11:33 AM - Klebold turns and shoots under a nearby table, injuring students Lisa Kreutz and Valeen Schnurr. Lisa is grazed by a bullet; Val is hit by the same bullet. Student Lauren Townsend is shot in numerous parts of her body, she lets out her final gasps and passes away. Lauren had spent her final moments comforting her friends, her final recorded words were “Everything is gonna be alright”. (Lauren was shot the most during the massacre), Student Diwata Perez is also hiding with them, but she is unharmed (physically at least). **Rest in Peace, Lauren.**

11:33 AM - Harris dismisses the two crying girls he just shot as “pathetic”. Val sees Lauren fall, she screams “OH MY GOD, HELP ME!”, Klebold asks “Do you believe in God?” Val fumbles and says no but she corrects herself and says yes. when Val responds “Yes” he says “Why? God is gay”, Val responds “Because that's how my parents raised me.” Val crawls back under the table and plays dead.

11:33 AM - Harris shoots at students Nicole Nowlen and John Tomlin, Nicole is hit in the abdomen by a bullet and is showered with wood splinters. Much like Lauren, John had been comforting Nicole before they were shot. John is hit in the chest, He confronts Harris saying, “Haven't you done enough?” He then tries to dodge the shots and escape but is shot in the head by Harris. He passed instantly. **Rest in Peace, John.**

11:33 AM - Harris walks back to the table Lisa, Val, Diwata and Lauren were hiding under and fires, hitting student Kelly Fleming in the chest. Kelly passed shortly after. He shoots again and hits Lauren (who has already departed), he hits Lisa again, and hits student Jeanna Park in the right knee and shoulder and left foot. **Rest in Peace, Kelly.**

11:34 AM - Harris and Klebold reload their weapons, Klebold notices a kid under the table, he approaches him and aims the gun at his head, the kid gently pats the gun out of the way. This prompts Harris to scream “Identify yourself”. The kid is John Savage, who is a friend of Klebold. He asks what Klebold is doing and Klebold responds casually “Oh, just killing people”. John asks if he is gonna kill him too. Klebold responds “What?” possibly due to not being able to hear because of the fire alarm blaring. John asks again, Klebold ponders and tells him to run. John runs for his life out of the school and is greeted by officers outside.

11:34 AM - The students and faculty hiding in the bathroom, including Nick Foss, hear the shooters firing at officers outside. They fear that they will come into the bathroom soon. One student, Tim Kastle, suggests they should climb up into the ceiling and escape that way, Nick climbs up first, then a teacher, Joyce Jankowski, climbs through, they fall through the ceiling into the teachers' lounge and rush back into the bathroom, about 40 minutes after the massacre, a student comes to the bathroom and tells them to escape. (Nick is unaware that his twin brother, Adam, is hiding unharmed in the choir room). Nick runs out and takes his shirt off to help stall the bleeding of the injured outside. Many other male students follow suit. Mrs. Jankowski and Nick suffer minor injuries from the fall.

11:35 AM - Student Daniel Mauser is shot in the hand by Harris. In response, Daniel stands up to him, shoves a chair at him and grabs his leg to knock him down. Harris, outraged, taunts him by saying “Nice Glasses”, he shoots Daniel in the face, Daniel passes instantly. **Rest in Peace, Daniel.**

11:35 AM - Both gunmen open fire at a table where students Austin Eubanks, Jennifer Doyle, and Corey DePooter are hiding. Jennifer was shot in the right hand, Austin is hit in the hand and the bullet grazes his knee, Corey throws himself on his friends to protect them. Corey was shot in the neck, chest, and left arm. He passed on after a few seconds. Corey is the last person shot. **Rest in Peace, Corey.**

11:36 AM - Harris throws a Molotov cocktail but it fails to explode. They both notice Evan Todd again, who was injured earlier by splinters. Klebold asks why they shouldn't kill him, and Evan says that he doesn't want any trouble. Klebold mistakes the question saying, "You don't even know what trouble is!", Evan responds "That's not what I meant! I mean, I don't have a problem with you guys. I never will and I never did." Klebold says that Harris can kill him if he wants but Harris is oblivious to the situation and suggests that they move down to the commons. Evan survives. Before they leave, Klebold out of pure rage slams his gun across a desk, breaking a computer. Mrs. Neilson is hiding right underneath. She flees to a closet where multiple library staff were hiding. The nightmare in the library was over.

11:36 AM - Officers outside suspect that there is a sniper on the roof because they saw a man up there. The man turned out to be a repairman who was fixing the air conditioning system and locked the roof access so the shooters couldn't come up.

11:36 AM - The shooters leave the library. Craig Scott gets up and ushers everyone out of the library, he and another student, Amanda Stair, pick up Kacey Ruegsegger and help her out of the library. If they hadn't done that, Kacey might have very well bled to death from her shoulder wound. Some of the other students run out and hide behind a cop car. All the survivors (except for Lisa Kreutz, Patrick Ireland, and the staff in the closet) have been evacuated.

11:37 AM to 11:44 AM - The gunmen wandered aimlessly through the school doing nothing but throwing pipe bombs and Molotov cocktails and looking into classrooms. At one point, they pass by the room where Mr. Sanders is being treated.

11:44 AM - Harris and Klebold arrive in the commons, which is almost empty thanks to Mr. Sanders. Harris tries to detonate one of their propane bombs by shooting at it, but it fails to detonate. A witness hears Harris say "Today the world's going to come to an end. Today's the day we die".

11:46 AM - Klebold lights a Molotov cocktail and hurls it at one of their propane bombs. It partially detonates causing a small fire. They drink some water leftover from lunch and leave.

11:49 AM - The gunmen head to the main office where some office employees are hiding. Meanwhile Police authorize SWAT to enter the building.

11:53 AM - The gunmen wander the halls, shooting randomly. At one point they walk into a bathroom and are recorded saying “We know you're in here!” and “Let’s kill anyone we find in here”. They don’t kill or injure anyone in that bathroom.

11:56 AM - They return to the commons. The small fire has been put out by the sprinkler system.

11:57 AM - The infamous CCTV capture of them (pictured above) is taken. At this point, television stations are beginning to air footage of the massacre. Many reporters are already in the area due to the JonBenét Ramsey case.

12:02 PM - Perhaps in an attempt to commit suicide by cop, the gunmen return to the library and shoot at officers and first responders. The officers fire back, and first responders rescue Anne Marie Hochhalter, Lance Kirklin, and Sean Graves.

12:08 PM - Harris and Klebold commit suicide in the library next to most of their victims. Harris shoots himself in the mouth with his shotgun and dies instantly. Klebold lights a Molotov, throws it on a nearby table and shoots himself in the left temple with his TEC-9. Klebold doesn't die instantly and instead drowns in his own blood. Some witnesses report hearing the two shout “1 2 3!” before they fired their final shots. Some people theorize that Harris shot Klebold and then himself.

12:08 PM - Only people left alive in the library are Lisa Kreutz, Patrick Ireland, and the staff hiding in the extra rooms, including Mrs. Neilson.

12:11 PM - The repairman on the roof is escorted off.

12:11 PM to 12:25 PM - Multiple injured students are rescued and sent to the hospital.

12:25 PM - EMTs rescue Mark Taylor.

12:35 PM - SWAT rescues Richard Castaldo.

1:09 PM - SWAT finally enters the building. Too little, too late.

1:30 PM - Police walk through the school and rescue any remaining people. Footage of students running with their hands over their heads is shown for the first time worldwide. The students in the science room with Mr. Sanders try to get someone's attention by holding up a white board with 1 BLEEDING TO DEATH written on it.

1:33 PM - President Clinton addresses the Nation during an press conference that was scheduled to be about the economy.

2:30 PM - Police finally reach the room with Mr. Sanders in it. Against the wishes of the students and teachers in the room, they leave Mr. Sanders behind in order to get the others out. He spent his last moments looking at pictures of his family. His last words are "Tell my girls I love them". He joins the others in eonian rest about 42 minutes later, all alone, covered in his own blood. He is the last victim and the only teacher to die. Over a hundred kids are saved by his bravery and sacrifice. **Rest in Peace Dave.**

2:38 PM - Patrick Ireland regains consciousness and crawls over to a window broken from Harris and Klebold's shootout with the police. He crawls up the window and S.W.A.T notices him. They get a truck there and carefully maneuver him onto it. Unfortunately, he falls face first onto the truck. No major injuries come from that, however. This is all captured by a news chopper that's flying around. The footage of Patrick escaping is some of the most iconic and well-known footage from that day. Patrick becomes known nationwide as "the boy in the window".

3:25 PM - SWAT finally enters the library and rescues Lisa Kreutz. She is the last surviving person in the school.

4:00 PM - Sheriff estimates 25 dead.

4:30 PM - Columbine High officially declared safe for entry.

4:38 PM - Dr. Christopher Colwell from the Denver Medical Center arrives to investigate. He finds Rachel and Danny outside and pronounces them dead. He goes through the school and pronounces all the others as dead. Dr. Colwell later described it as one of the worst things he has ever seen.

5:30 PM - More police called in when unexploded bombs were found.

6:15 PM - Police find live car bomb in Klebold's car.

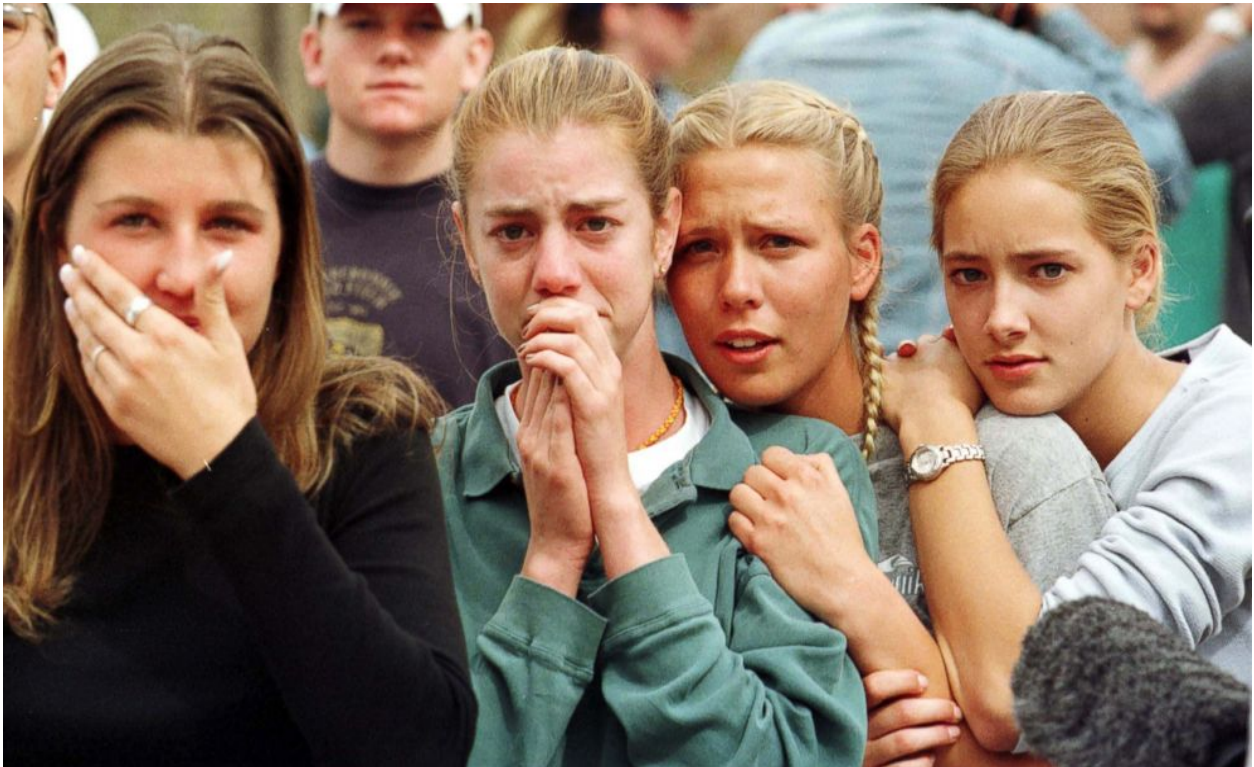
10:45 PM - Klebold's car bomb goes off when the bomb squad tries to defuse it. No one is injured.

"The hardest part to understand was kids killing kids" – Unnamed Columbine Student



Jessica Holliday and Diwata Perez crying over the loss of their friend, Lauren, in the library.

Aftermath



*“A kid my age isn’t supposed to go to that many funerals” - Unnamed
Columbine Student*

Columbine really scarred the country. The events of 4/20/99 are seared into the American consciousness, somewhat like the events of 9/11/01, 12/7/41, and 11/22/63. Dates which will live in infamy. Dates that changed America forever. The aftermath wasn't much prettier. Some sick people were inspired by the massacre and committed mass shootings of their own. It was the birth of a new age, where mass shootings seem routine. In reality, mass shootings are still exceedingly rare. But every time you hear about one, most people think "Here we go again", possibly because The media coverage is so pervasive. Most of the school shootings you hear about on the news can be traced back to Columbine. Many of today's school shooters have praised the two Columbine killers. Perhaps most infamously among them are the terrorists who attacked Sandy Hook Elementary in Newtown, Connecticut, Marjory Stoneman Douglas High in Parkland, Florida, and Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, Virginia. It came as a shock to the suburban community, to America, and to the world, as people thought that type of terrorism couldn't not happen in the peaceful middle-class suburbs. Because of this massacre, people immediately think of the associated violence and evil when they hear the word, Columbine.

But that word, "Columbine". What does it mean? When you hear it, you probably think of violence and death and kids running out of their schools with their hands on their heads. I hate that. The shooters have turned it into something evil. The word actually means hope. It comes from the Latin word "Columbinus" which means "like a Dove" or "Dovelike". The Dove is a Christian symbol for the Holy Spirit and Hope. That's what the word Columbine means to me. The Holy Spirit and Hope. By the end of this book, I hope your definition of the word changed too.



Flower that was painted on the spot Mr. Sanders

fell

Afterevents



“Columbine was a momentous event in the history of our nation...even in the midst of tragedy we have seen the best of our nation and of human nature” - President Bill Clinton

4/21/99 - Columbine swept by bomb squad. Declared all clear. Official death toll of 15 (including the shooters) released.

4/23/99 - John Tomlin's funeral is held at Foothills Bible Church; He is buried in St. Peter's Cemetery, in Waterford, Wisconsin, where he lived before moving to Denver.

4/24/99 - Rachel Scott's funeral is held at Trinity Christian Center. She is buried at Chapel Hill Cemetery. Her funeral is broadcast live on CNN, and becomes the most viewed event in CNN history at the time, getting more views than the funeral of Princess Diana.

4/25/99 - Kelly Fleming and Daniel Mauser have a joint funeral at St. Frances Cabrini Catholic Church, where they both attended. Archbishop of Denver, Charles Chaput, presides over the funeral. Daniel and Kelly are both buried in Mount Olivet Cemetery.

4/25/99 - An official memorial service is held at West Bowles Shopping Center. The service is attended by Vice President Al Gore, Chairman Colin Powell, Colorado Governor Bill Owens, and Columbine High Principal Frank DeAngelis, along with 70,000 other people.

4/26/99 - Cassie Bernall's funeral is held at West Bowles Community Church; She is buried at Golden Cemetery.

4/26/99 - Dave Sanders' funeral is held at Trinity Christian Center; He is buried at Chapel Hill Cemetery.

4/26/99 - Lauren Townsend's funeral is held at Foothills Bible Church; she is buried in Littleton Cemetery.

4/26/99 - Police learn that some of the guns used during the massacre were purchased legally at a gun show by Klebold's friend, Robyn Anderson, shortly after she turned 18.

4/26/99 - Danny Rohrbough's funeral is held at Grace Presbyterian Church; He is buried in Littleton Cemetery.

4/27/99 - Kyle Velasquez's funeral is held at St. James Presbyterian Church. Kyle wanted to join the Navy when he graduated. He is buried with a color guard and full military honors at Fort Logan National Cemetery. The flag flying half-staff at the State Capitol Building is gifted to Kyle's family.

4/27/99 - Matt Kechter's funeral is held at St. Frances Cabrini Catholic Church; He is buried at Mount Olivet Cemetery.

4/28/99 - Corey DePooter's funeral is held at Trinity Christian Center; He is buried next to Rachel in Chapel Hill Memorial Gardens.

4/28/99 - First Columbine copycat shooting occurs at W.R. Myers High School in Alberta, Canada. 1 student, Jason Lang, is killed, and the shooter is arrested. **Rest in Peace, Jason.**

4/28/99 - Steve Curnow's funeral is held at Trinity Christian Center. He wanted to join the Navy after graduation and is buried with full military honors at Fort Logan National Cemetery, next to Kyle.

4/29/99 - Industrial metal musician, Marilyn Manson, cancels his North American tour out of respect for the victims, amidst speculation that his music inspired the shooters.

4/29/99 - Isaiah Shoels' funeral is held at Heritage Christian Center. Martin Luther King III is in attendance and gives a speech. He is buried in Fairmount Cemetery. His is the final Columbine funeral.

5/01/99 - SpongeBob SquarePants premieres on Nickelodeon. (Completely unrelated but I wanted to add something cheery after all that tragedy).

5/01/99 - NRA chooses to hold a rally in Denver days after the shooting. Tom Mauser, the father of Daniel Mauser, joins a huge group of protesters outside of the meeting.

5/03/99 - Columbine High students return to classes at nearby Chatfield High School.

5/03/99 - Mark Manes pleads guilty to selling the TEC-9 semi-automatic pistol to Klebold.

5/20/99 - President Clinton meets with survivors at Dakota Ridge High School.

5/22/99 - Columbine graduation. Survivors, Jeanna Park, Stephanie Munson, Val Schnurr, Nicholas Foss, and Lisa Kreutz graduate. Lauren Townsend and Isaiah Shoels were supposed to graduate today. Lauren's mom, Dawn Anna, accepts the diploma on her behalf. She posthumously graduates with valedictorian status.

6/1/99 - Students return to Columbine High to retrieve things left behind on 4/20.

6/3/99 - Renovations begin at Columbine High to reopen for next school year.

8/16/99 - The American flag in front of Columbine High is raised to full staff as students finally return. A "Take back the school" pep rally is held in an attempt to raise school spirit. However, soon after this students discover freshly painted swastikas around the school.

9/1/99 - Jeffco tightens security as threats start coming in.

9/10/99 - Dave Sanders Memorial Softball Field is dedicated.

9/24/99 - Patrick Ireland is crowned homecoming king.

10/9/99 - Eric Veik, a friend of Harris and Klebold, is arrested for threatening to "Finish the job". He is sentenced to community service.

10/22/99 - Carla Hochhalter (Anne Marie's mother) commits suicide. She suffered from depression before, and the massacre and her daughter's paralysis was too much. **Rest in Peace, Carla.**

11/12/99 - Mark Manes sentenced to 6 years in prison for selling weapons to the shooters.

12/4/99 - Columbine High wins the Colorado State Varsity Football championship. They dedicate the victory to their fallen teammate, Matt Kechter, who would have been a defensive lineman.

1/27/00 - Gun safety bills pass in Colorado. Robyn Anderson speaks on behalf of the bills.

2/13/00 - Two Columbine High sweethearts who survived the massacre, Nicholas Kunselman and Stephanie Hart, are found dead at the Subway where Rachel Scott worked. Nicholas had actually drawn a portrait of Rachel for her family after the shooting. They were buried together. Police thought the shootings were drug related but that was never proven. Their murders remain unsolved to this day. **Rest in Peace, Stephanie and Nick.**

2/14/00 - Mr. Sanders is posthumously given the Arthur Ashe award for courage for his actions on 4/20.

4/20/00 - Columbine High is closed to the public, the families of the victims meet in the gymnasium and various anniversary vigils are held around the area.

5/3/00 - Corey DePooter is posthumously made an honorary marine. He wanted to join the Corps after he graduated.

5/4/00 - Greg Barnes, a Columbine High student, hangs himself. His close friend Matt Kechter died in the shooting, and he was one of the students who treated Mr. Sanders. **Rest In Peace, Greg.**

5/20/00 - Columbine graduation. Cassie Bernall, Corey DePooter, and Rachel Scott would have graduated, Survivors Brian Anderson, Richard Castaldo, Jennifer Doyle, Austin Eubanks, Makai Hall, Anne Marie Hochhalter, Evan Todd, Michael Johnson, co-valedictorian Patrick Ireland, Adam Kyler, Mark Kintgen, and Dan Steepleton graduate.

8/20/00 - The library floor is removed, creating a two story atrium above the commons. The roof of the new atrium is covered in murals of Colorado scenery. The 13 families set up a nonprofit called H.O.P.E (Healing of People Everywhere) to help fund the project. They also funded the construction of the new library.

May, 2001 - Columbine Graduation. Daniel Mauser, Kelly Fleming, Matt Kechter, John Tomlin, and Kyle Velasquez would have graduated. Survivor Nicole Nowlen graduates.

6/9/01 - New Columbine library is opened. The library was built on the hill where the shooting began. The new building is named the "Hope Columbine Memorial library".

9/11/01 - World Trade Center in New York City is attacked. Columbine parents cite 9/11 as the point where they became more open with their mourning. They claim that seeing so many people lose loved ones encouraged them to be more open with their grief. **REST IN PEACE.**

5/18/02 - Columbine Graduation. Steve Curnow and Danny Rohrbough were supposed to graduate. Last Columbine High students who were at school during the massacre graduate, including Craig Scott, Lance Kirklin, and Sean Graves.

10/11/02 - Filmmaker Michael Moore releases the controversial film *Bowling for Columbine*, a documentary about gun control. I have seen this movie. I personally enjoyed it but it is important to take the information presented with a grain of salt. Mr. Moore was reportedly selective with his portrayal of the facts, in an effort fit his point of view.

9/5/04 - An episode of the BBC show "Zero Hour" is aired about the Columbine shooting. The show dramatizes the events of April 20th. The particular episode "Massacre at Columbine High" becomes infamous for its gritty and mostly historically accurate and realistic depiction of the massacre.

3/21/05 - Red Lake Shooting. A student at Red Lake Senior High School on the Red Lake reservation in Minnesota murders 9 people, and himself. It was the deadliest school shooting since Columbine and is (to my knowledge) the only school shooting to occur on tribal land. **Rest in Peace to the Red Lake 9.**

12/26/06 - Brandi Jo Malonson, a student who survived the massacre goes missing. Brandi was friends with Greg Barnes, who killed himself, and with Nick Kunselman and Stefanie Hart, who were murdered a few years earlier. She is still missing to this day. I pray that she is found.

4/16/07 - Virginia Tech Shooting. 32 innocents are killed at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, Virginia. President George W. Bush gives a speech at a memorial event nearby. The shooter cites Columbine as an inspiration. Virginia Tech became and still is (for now) the deadliest school shooting in American history. **Rest in Peace to the Virginia Tech 32.**

9/21/07 - Official Columbine memorial is completed in Clement Park, right across from Columbine High. Clement Park was the location of numerous makeshift memorials before.

1/1/09 - The documentary *13 Families* is released. The film follows what the families of the victims have done with their time since the shooting. Steve Curnow's family declined to be featured, but are still supportive of the the movie. I highly recommend it. It's incredibly heartwarming.

4/06/09 - Author Dave Cullen releases *Columbine*, a book documenting the shooting that he had spent 10 years researching. Mr. Cullen was a reporter on the scene on 4/20/99. The book is the most comprehensive research project ever done on Columbine. However, many people dispute Mr. Cullen's version of the events of Columbine.

7/20/12 - Aurora theater shooting. A gunman opens fire on moviegoers at a theater in Aurora, Colorado, right across town from Littleton, killing 12 innocent moviegoers who went to go see *The Dark Knight Rises*. It is the deadliest mass shooting in Colorado since 1999. **Rest in Peace to the Aurora 12.**

12/14/12 - Sandy Hook Shooting. 26 innocents are killed at Sandy Hook Elementary in Newtown, Connecticut. This includes 20 first graders, none older than 7 years old. The shooter is also inspired by Columbine. President Barack Obama describes it as the darkest day of his presidency. In an address, he states "Our unalienable right to life and liberty and the pursuit of happiness, those rights were stripped from college kids in Blacksburg and Santa Barbara and from high schoolers at Columbine and from first graders in Newtown...first graders". **Rest in Peace to the Sandy Hook 26.**

4/01/14 - Author Jeff Kass releases an updated version of his book *Columbine: A True Crime Story*. Mr. Kass was a journalist with the Rocky Mountain News on the scene in 1999. The book was originally published in 2009 but was released with more content in 2014.

10/1/15 - Umpqua shooting. A student opens fire on classmates at Umpqua Community College in Roseburg, Oregon, killing 9 people. The shooter likens himself to the Columbine killers and claims to be aligned with "demonic forces". **Rest in Peace to the Umpqua 9.**

2/14/18 - Parkland shooting. A former student murders 17 innocents at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida. The shooter admired the two Columbine

shooters. President Donald Trump criticizes police who failed to enter the school. The shooting overtakes Columbine as the deadliest high school shooting in American history. The March For Our Lives movement was started because of this event. **Rest in Peace to the Parkland 17.**

5/18/18 – Sante Fe shooting. A student murders 10 people at Sante Fe High in Santa Fe, Texas. It is among the deadliest school shootings in American history. March For Our Lives organizers urged people to not let this “be swept under the rug”. **Rest in Peace to the Santa Fe 10**

April 2019 - A Florida teen, Sol Pais, flies to Colorado without informing her parents just before the 20th anniversary of Columbine and buys a shotgun. The FBI finds her blog, which is filled with suicidal posts and “fan art” of the two shooters. They fear she is going to shoot students at Columbine High. Colorado schools are on lockdown. On April 17th, Sol was found dead in Clement Park from a self-inflicted shotgun wound. **Rest in Peace, Sol.**

5/07/19 – STEM School Shooting. 2 gunmen open fire at a school in Highlands Ranch, Colorado, which is a few miles away from CHS. One student, Kendrick Castillo, is killed. Kendrick dies while stopping the two shooters. He is the only fatality. **Rest in Peace, Kendrick**

5/18/19 - Austin Eubanks, who survived the library massacre is found dead due to an overdose. **Rest in Peace, Austin.**

3/22/21 – Boulder supermarket shooting. A gunman opens fire at a King Soopers store in Boulder, Colorado. 10 innocent people, including one of the officers who responded to the shooting, are killed. President Joe Biden reveals new gun safety plans. **Rest in Peace to the Boulder 10.**

5/24/22 – Robb Elementary School shooting. 19 4th graders and 3 teachers are murdered at Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas. Heavy criticism is levied against the Uvalde police department for failure to take action. It is the deadliest school shooting since Sandy

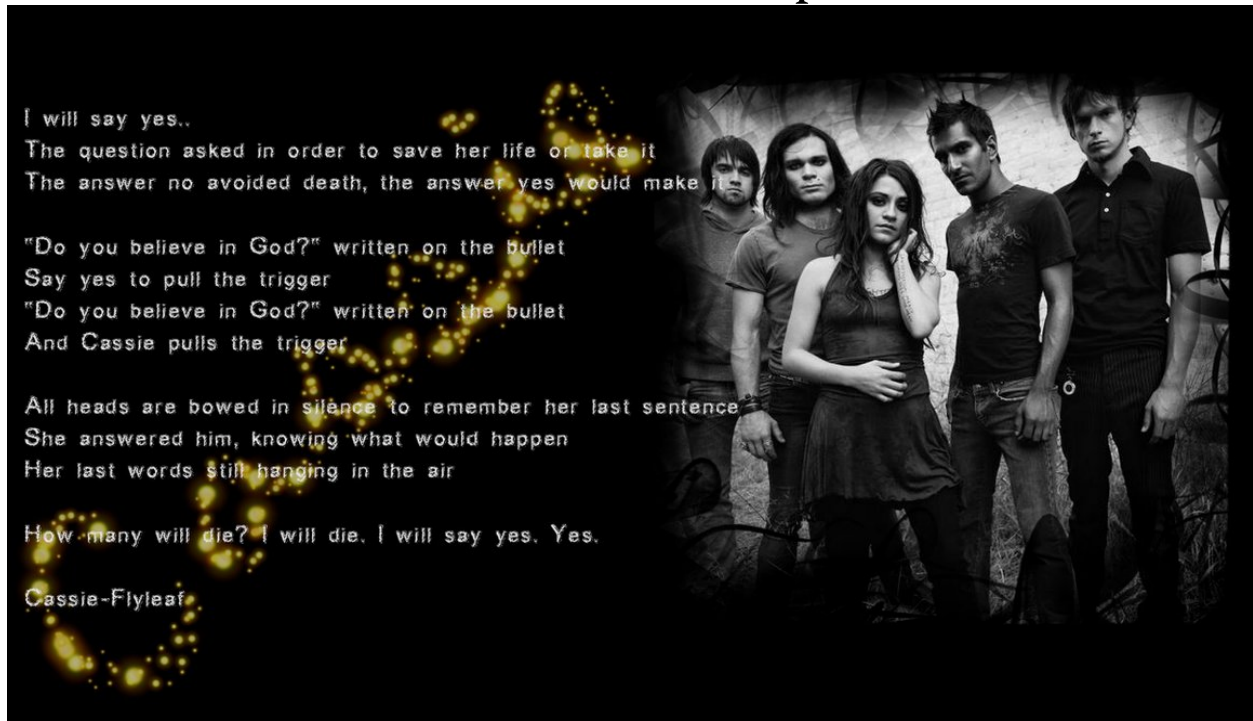
Hook. The March for our Lives movement is energized and holds rallies across the nation on June 12th to encourage gun safety. **Rest in Peace to the Uvalde 22.**

??/? - School shooting in Your Town, USA? Unknown number dead. People are sick and tired of it.



President Barack Obama weeping during a press conference after the Sandy Hook Elementary shootings

Rumor Roundup



“Do you believe in God, written on a bullet? Say ‘Yes’ to pull the trigger.” -

Cassie by Flyleaf

In this section, I will review some of the more well-known rumors, misstated facts and unexplained events about the massacre. Because of the overall poor media coverage, many of these rumors were spread around and taken as fact.

Rumor #1 - Cassie Bernall was asked about her faith in God.

- This is probably one of the biggest rumors surrounding Columbine, but it is not true. Initially, multiple students in the library heard Valeen Schnurr being asked about her faith and mistook Val’s voice for Cassie. Cassie’s actual last words were “Dear God, Dear God, why is this happening?! I just want to go home!”. After it got out that Val was the one who was asked, she got bullied for “taking Cassie’s glory”. Cassie’s

reputed final moments might be myth, but that doesn't mean her life is any less inspiring.

Rumor #2 - Eric and Dylan were part of the Trench Coat Mafia.

- Wayne Harris (Eric's dad) called 911 during the shooting claiming that he suspected that his son was involved. He claimed Eric was part of a clique at the school called the Trench Coat Mafia. They weren't, they had mutual friends who were, but they weren't in it themselves. The Trench Coat Mafia was just an unorganized group of nerdy friends who would do stuff like play Dungeons and Dragons on the weekends. They had a group photo in the yearbook, Eric and Dylan were not in that photo. The term "Trench Coat Mafia" was coined by bullies making fun of them.

Rumor #3 - Eric and Dylan had a hit list.

- It was initially reported that the two shooters had a hit list of students they wanted to kill, including Rachel Scott. This is not true; they had originally planned to bomb the school and kill everyone in it. Eric did have a list of people he hated on his website, however. But no one on that list was killed by them.

Rumor #4 - The killers had a racially or religiously motivated agenda.

- Initially, it was reported that the killers had specifically targeted Christians, African Americans, and Jocks. While it is true that the two despised these groups (they despised everyone), as noted above they had planned to bomb the school, making this unlikely.

Rumor #5 - Columbine could not have been prevented.

- This is 110% false. There were numerous times it could have been prevented.
 - Eric and Dylan both worked at Blackjack Pizza and got in trouble with their boss for showing their coworkers a pipe bomb they made. The cops could have been called and done some digging. But nothing came of that.
 - Both of them got arrested for breaking into a van and stealing electronic equipment. Their reasoning was that the van was unlocked. They both went through a teen rehabilitation course. But Eric was able to fool the instructors

by staying on his best behavior. In an anger management class essay, he wrote “I am happy to say that with the help of this class, and some other diversion related experiences, I do want to try and control my anger”. However shortly after that, he wrote: “Isn't america supposed to be the land of the free? how come, If im free, I cant deprive a stupid fucking dumbshit from his possessions If he leaves then sitting in the front seat of his fucking van out in plain sight and in the middle fucking nowhere on a Fri fucking day night. NATURAL SELECTION. fucker should be shot. [sic]” So, I think it's safe to say that this course did nothing.

- Eric threatened to kill his former friend, Brooks Brown. Eric wrote this on his website “all I want to do is kill and injure as many of you pricks as I can, especially a few people, like brooks brown. [sic]” He also included instructions on how to build pipe bombs. Brooks' dad, Randy, took this threat very seriously, more seriously than the police. If they had investigated Eric's room, he could have very well been stopped. In fact, a warrant was drawn up to search the Harris household, but it was never carried out. After the shooting, the Jeffco sheriffs department purposely withheld that information.
- Eric had ordered something from a local gun store. The store had called the Harris household to inform them that it was delivered. Eric's dad, Wayne, says that he hadn't ordered anything and hangs up. Eric said that if his father had investigated the matter further, the entire plan could have been jeopardized.

Rumor #6 - They planned to do it on 4/20 because it was Hitler's birthday.

- While it is true that Eric was an admirer of Hitler, they had planned to do it on the 19th, the anniversary of the Oklahoma City bombing, which they were planning to outdo. The only reason they did it on the 20th was because Mark Manes was late in getting them ammo.

Rumor #7 - Kelly Ann Fleming and Daniel Conner Mauser were dating.

- Initially it was reported by some sources that Kelly and Daniel were dating. They weren't. They were both Catholic and attended the same Church. They had a joint funeral at their Church, which is possibly where the rumor came from.

Rumor #8 - The shooting took place in Littleton, Colorado.

- The school is located in Columbine, Colorado which is a census designated place. It does not have a zip code. So, when people sent letters of support to Columbine High, they have to list the nearest zip code, which is the zip code for Littleton. Columbine is also not part of the Littleton Public Schools; it is a part of the Jeffco School District. So technically, no, CHS is not in Littleton. But for all intents and purposes it basically is.

Rumor #9 - The third shooter

- Some witnesses reported seeing a gunman that did not resemble Harris or Klebold. Some testimonies include details that don't add up, such as seeing fresh bodies in a stair well, shooting on the football field, and a shootout between the police and the shooters in the gym. All of these can be explained as false memories.
 - A student named Robert Perry was often cited as a shooter by some witnesses. Robert was an associate of Eric and Dylan and was known for wearing a trench coat. Many witnesses mistook Dylan for Robert because they both wore trench coats often. Some controversy has been made about the fact that the supposed third shooter had acne according to the eyewitnesses, which Robert suffered from, but these details can be explained as false memories
 - A few individuals also mistook Eric for Chris Morris. Chris was not at the school when the massacre started, making it unlikely for him to be a third shooter. Chris was however outspoken about his hatred for the school.
 - A witness reported a man running away from the scene that she believed to be Trench Coat Mafia cofounder, Joe Stair. Joe's sister, Amanda, was in the library at the time of the massacre and it wasn't until Amanda got out that Joe found out about the shooting. Joe graduated in 1998 and was not a fan of the school. He claimed that there was a mutual hatred between the jocks and the outcasts and that he wasn't surprised something like this happened. I believe the fact that his sister was in the school makes the theory of him being a shooter very unlikely. Joe unfortunately committed suicide in 2007.

Rumor #10 – The ring around Columbine

- On and around April 20th, 1999, some internet theorists have reported a seeming increase in school shootings. For instance, on April 16th, a student brought a shotgun to school in Notus, Idaho and threatened students and staff with it, no one was killed. In Evans, Georgia, Two students attending Evans High School reportedly made death threats. They were described as wearing combat boots and trench coats. Police found guns in their homes. After Columbine happened, locals speculated a connection to the shooting in Colorado. But this isn't confirmed. I think it is an interesting theory, but I cannot find any evidence that the supposed ring of school shootings around 4/20/99 is nothing more than eerie coincidence.

Rumor #11 – Eric and Dylan's friends knew about the shooting

- I believe it is almost certain that Eric and Dylan told some friends about their plans. Being teenagers however, they probably didn't take it literally. It is kind of suspicious that some of their friends such as Robyn Anderson and Chris Morris were not present during the shooting. Shortly after the shooting began, 3 teenagers from another school collectively known as "the splatterpunks" arrived at CHS to "check things out" after claiming to hear about the shooting on the radio. However, Sheriff John Stone says that at the time they arrived, the news had not hit the airwaves yet. They were arrested around 2:00 pm for looking suspicious. They were known to be associates of Eric and I think it is entirely possible that Eric told them his plans and they went to see if he actually did it.

Impact



“It brought the Nation to its knees, but now that we’ve gotten back up how have things changed; What have we learned?”- Unnamed Columbine Student

Columbine established the stereotype of the modern school shooter. When you think of a school shooter, you think of a white kid in a trench coat with a duffel bag and some sort of semi-automatic weapon. That came from the Columbine killers. It shattered the image of a safe school. It shocked the public. It was the birth of a new age of terror. How could 2 boys from good homes plot something so horrific? While school shootings are still extraordinarily rare, their effect on our collective conscience is astonishing. Schools are supposed to be safe places where kids can learn and interact with peers. This is America. Children are not supposed to flee their school with their hands on their heads. That shouldn't happen. Not in America. Not on Planet Earth.

The media

There were mass shootings before Columbine, including the Texas Tower shooting in 1966, the San Ysidro McDonald’s massacre in 1984, and the Luby’s Cafeteria shooting in 1991. These and other previous shootings only got some nationwide coverage. Columbine happened at the same time that the internet and the 24-hour news cycle were just starting to

ramp up. Columbine got 'round the clock coverage, giving the shooters exactly what they wanted, infamy. With a tragedy of this magnitude, they were going to be infamous no matter what. Unfortunately, The media aided that by showing their faces everywhere. Rarely did they show or discuss the victims, likely because the shooters would get more clicks. The media plastered their faces all over TV and the internet. Impressionable young teens saw them on TV, and some were inspired. The first Columbine copycat shooting happened even before all of the victims were buried. Columbine is an integral part of modern American history and culture. People should know what happened that day and how it impacted all of our lives, but the 13 victims should be the main focus. Everyone should know who those 13 people were.

The Effect

You may have heard of something called "The Columbine Effect". When someone sees a shooter on the news, they might become inspired by that shooter and the fame they receive. They might be inspired to commit a horrible act so they too can be on the news. It sounds ludicrous, but it's unfortunately all too real. As I mentioned earlier, the first incident related to this effect happened before Isaiah Shoels was even buried. The shooter claimed seeing Columbine on the TV made him snap, causing him to kill one person at a high school in Canada. Sandy Hook, Virginia Tech, and Parkland might not have happened if the Columbine shooters were not as notorious as they were. That's a vicious cycle that persists in this country: a shooting happens, The media shows everyone the shooter (thereby granting the shooters wish), angsty young adult sees the shooter and plans his own massacre (Franklin, 2018). I think they focus almost entirely on the shooter because that makes the most money for them. It's immoral and disturbing.

The Fans

There are people who are fans of Eric and Dylan. They have a significant presence on the blogging website, Tumblr, but they have infected other sites as well. These people sympathize with Eric and Dylan, along with other shooters and serial killers. Some make video edits of them as if they were celebrities and others treat them like they were fictional characters. I feel like a majority of these people aren't inherently dangerous to anyone but themselves. Oftentimes, they have been bullied so they can identify with Eric and Dylan, who were also bullied. Sol Pais was an example. She had an Instagram account where she

would post edited pictures she had made of the Columbine killers. She also had a blog filled with writings similar to Dylan's journal entries. She flew to Denver alone, bought a shotgun, and killed herself in the woods near Columbine High. The FBI thought she was going to fire on students at Columbine, but she didn't. I believe she was another victim of Eric and Dylan. I would consider myself as the opposite. Where the fans identified with the hopelessness they found in Eric and Dylan, I found hope in the victims. I have seen the anger and hate that these fans have and it's heartbreaking. I was in a depression and also felt hopeless amidst the instability the COVID pandemic had brought. Learning about the 13 victims of Columbine gave me hope that, while there is definite evil in the world, there is also good. The victims are symbols of that. I pray that the fans of Eric and Dylan are able to find this hope as I have and that they can find peace in a way that's healthy for them and for everyone else.



The music video for Darkness by Eminem

Scapegoats



(Image from "20 Years Later, Columbine is the spectacle the shooters wanted" by Andy Warner for thenib.com)

"The search for a scapegoat is the easiest of all hunting expeditions" – Dwight D. Eisenhower

After Columbine, The media and politicians spread a lot of misinformation. Many things they reported as fact were incorrect. They didn't know how to explain this tragedy, so they just started blaming various elements of youth culture that they didn't understand. Was it video games? Was it heavy metal? Was it violent movies? In this chapter, I am going to give my opinions on these various scapegoats.

Video Games

Like most teenage boys, Eric and Dylan were gamers. They were fans of various games but mostly shooters including *Doom*, *Quake*, *Wolfenstein*, and *Duke Nukem*. The media jumped on that fact and blamed the games, especially *Doom*, for causing their violent behavior, saying stuff like: "They trained on video games" and "*Doom* made them do it". These arguments are flawed. I am a gamer. I mostly play family-friendly Nintendo games, like *Super Mario* and *The Legend of Zelda*, because that's what I enjoy. That doesn't mean that I don't occasionally play some violent video games, like *The Elder Scrolls: Skyrim* or *Bioshock: Infinite*. Those games can be quite violent, but they don't give me a sudden urge

to kill. These games also don't train me how to use weapons in real life. A sword fight in *Skyrim* doesn't teach me how to handle a real-life sword. Using a rocket launcher in *Bioshock* won't prepare me for the recoil of a real rocket launcher. It is doubtful that Eric and Dylan gained any practical experience by playing *Doom*.

I've played and enjoyed *Doom*. It is one of the most important video games of all time. It's a fun game, though fairly violent by 1990s standards. It really isn't that impactful by today's standards. I don't see how simple pixelated polygons can cause someone to kill. Multiple studies, thus far, have failed to directly connect playing violent video games with violence toward people in real life. However, I do think that *Doom* influenced the two shooters in some way. In *Doom*, only the strong and skilled survived and made it to the end of the level (unless you like me and you just use cheat codes). Maybe they used it to cope with feeling weak and vulnerable in real life. In *Doom*, they were the strong ones. Many people in the media and in politics don't understand video games and, as the old saying goes, "People fear what they don't understand." So, they see that the shooters played violent games and jump on that, blaming games for it. It still happens today, even though numerous studies have found little evidence that violent video games lead to violence in real life. Perhaps if someone has a severe mental disability that prevents them from separating reality from fiction, maybe they could be inspired to cause violence. There are cases of that. But it's never the game's fault. Those people suffer from horrible mental illnesses.

The Columbine Game

In 2006, an indie video game was developed by a Colorado native named Danny Ledonne. Mr. Ledonne was in 10th grade when the shooting happened. The game was entitled *Super Columbine Massacre RPG!*. The game is a turn-based role-playing game where you assume the roles of the two shooters, and your goal is to...well you know. The game was (predictably) attacked by the media.

It wasn't not made with malicious intent in mind. It was made to make a statement about how the media reacts to things they don't understand. It was also made to show how video games could be used to make political statements. Mr. Ledonne brought up a good point in an interview with the Columbine Video Archives YouTube channel. He said that if he had written a book or wrote a song, he would have gotten a much more positive response. Like it

or not, video games can be used as a form of artistic communication just like books or movies. Richard Castaldo even spoke on behalf of the game, saying “I appreciate the fact at least to some degree that something like this was made. I think that at least it gets people talking about Columbine in a unique perspective, which is probably a good thing. But that being said there are a lot of things that are hard to play or watch. And it seems to partially glamorize what happened.”

I personally tried out the game, but I didn't get very far. One reason was because, well, I don't like turn-based RPGs that much (I'm not particularly good at them). The other reason was the more I played, the more depressed I felt. I think that's what I was supposed to feel. The game is supposed to make you feel different; it's meant to give you a new perspective on the massacre. It was not made with bad intent. This game is a work of art. It's morbid, it's depressing, even disgusting and confusing at points, but it still has a place in the world. I do think that video games can be used to make artistic and political statements. I agree with what he was trying to do with it but I think the whole presentation could have been way better, as it stands, the game is incredibly offensive. Mr. Ledonne produced a documentary on his game and on how the media reacted to it, called *“Playing Columbine”*.

Music

By far, the most talked about musician in relation to Columbine was Marilyn Manson. Other musicians, like Eminem and Rammstein, were also attacked. But it was mostly Marilyn Manson who took the heat. Personally, even though I do love one of his songs, I am not really a fan of his music. However, I do agree with him on this: In an interview, Mr. Manson explained how The media “pumps the American public full of fear”. What he's saying is true. When asked by Michael Moore in “Bowling for Columbine”, he explained how The media needed someone to point fingers at. Here was Marilyn Manson: an edgy, atheistic, repulsive, death metal musician. They thought he was the perfect scapegoat for it. However, there is no proof that they even listened to Marilyn Manson's music. Klebold was reported to be a “casual fan”, supposedly not paying attention to the lyrics and focusing more on the melodies.

They did however listen to the German industrial metal band KMFDM. When The media got wind of that, and the fact that KMFDM's latest album had released on 4/20/99, and that

4/20 was Hitler's birthday, they began saying that this was a Nazi band that made the shooters Nazis, and that KMFDM was the cause. Now, Eric Harris was definitely a Nazi fanboy, or at least he thought he was. I've read his writings and they are overflowing with hate and swastikas. But KMFDM is not a Nazi band, and their music didn't cause this. They are actually very left wing. Their music might be dark, but it's just like with video games: violence in art doesn't cause violence in real life. Maybe fiction can inspire people with previous mental conditions to commit violence. But that's never the fault of the song or game itself. I firmly believe that music and video games didn't cause the shooting at Columbine High, and they shouldn't be blamed for it.

Movies

Twenty days before Columbine, *The Matrix* was released. The movie is about Neo (played by Keanu Reeves), who is a hacker that becomes a soldier in a rebel army, fighting against an evil occupying force of self-aware machines. In the movie, there's a scene where Neo and another character, Trinity, shoot up a room full of police, hiding their weapons in long black trench coats. Sound familiar? In the context of the movie, these police are under the control of the machines. But I doubt The media cared about context. Of course, *The Matrix* was blamed because of that scene. First of all, the movie came out less than a month before the massacre. The shooters had been planning it for 2 years, making it unlikely that the Matrix inspired the two shooters. Second, there is no proof that the shooters even saw it.

A favorite movie of theirs was *Natural Born Killers*. The movie was directed by Quentin Tarantino and is about a couple who drive across America, killing people. At one point, they take a reporter (played by Robert Downey Jr) hostage. The movie touches on the idea of killers being glorified by The media, which would inspire more killers. The shooters loved this movie, and they even nicknamed their plans "NBK" as an homage to the movie. I don't think this movie was what inspired them to kill, but there is no doubt that it influenced it.

A few other movies are thought to have inspired the killers. *Falling Down* is a movie about a worker who gets caught in traffic and decides to go on a killing spree across town. This movie is thought to have inspired the shooting because of the weapons the worker used: a TEC-9 pistol and a sawed-off shotgun. Another movie thought to have inspired it was *The Basketball Diaries*. This movie is about a depressed teenager (played by Leo DiCaprio) who

has a detailed dream about shooting up his school. There is no proof that these 2 movies had any effect on them, or that they even saw them.

Causes



“The media, the corporations, the politicians... have all done such a good job of scaring the American public, it's come to the point where they don't need to give any reason at all” - Michael Moore

Many people have attempted to pin down a single cause for the massacre. Darrel Scott (Rachel's Dad) believes the primary cause was the lack of morals and absence of God from schools. Michael Shoels (Isaiah's Dad) believes that the main cause was bad parenting. Tom Mauser thinks the chief cause was lax gun policies. Coni Sanders (Dave's daughter) believes that the most important cause was poor mental health. Brooks Brown thinks it was about bullying. I think all of them are right and all of these were contributing factors to the massacre. In this chapter, I'm going to explain all of these factors and give my thoughts on them.

Gun Control

After every one of these mass shootings, one issue always crops up. Gun Control. Everyone has their own opinion on this. Should we have more restrictions or less? Background

checks? Should we ban assault weapons? I am personally in favor of more gun safety, but I don't think that people's guns should be taken away. I don't think we should do what Britain has done and ban all handguns. We don't need to. Switzerland and Canada have a lot of guns, and they have less gun deaths than America. Same with Australia

The Second Amendment should still exist, but I think it should be tempered. If you have a criminal history or a history of unstable mental illness, you shouldn't be able to buy guns. You should have to go through background checks, no matter whether you're buying guns from a gun show, a convention, a sporting goods store, a dealer, etc. There should also be mandatory safe storage laws, and long waiting periods. I think all that sounds pretty reasonable, though I'm sure someone reading this may have vastly different opinions.

There is no doubt that Columbine probably wouldn't have happened the way it did if there was stricter gun control in Colorado. Robyn Anderson says she wouldn't have bought the guns for the shooters if there had been a background check. Due to a loophole in the law, a background check was not required because she bought the guns from an unlicensed seller. So, if you are a gun rights advocate that might think all gun laws are "unconstitutional", please consider the other side of this argument. Because something as dangerous as firearms shouldn't be unregulated. Thoughtful regulations can help provide a safe environment while protecting the rights of responsible gun owners.

Morals and God

Darrel Scott believes that the two shooters were influenced by Satan. Some of you might not believe in God or the Devil, but there is no doubt in my mind that Satan played a part in all of this. The shooters had little respect for human life. They laughed and cheered during the shooting, as if this were a game. The two were morally bankrupt. They had all of this anger and rage at the world and society that wronged them (in their eyes), and they let that anger erode what morals they did have.

Mr. Scott has also said that the removal of prayer from public schools was a factor. As much as I admire Mr. Scott, I have to disagree with him there. I don't think the removal of God from public schools led to the massacre. But I do think that there is an overall lack of good morals here. I'm not trying to sound preachy, and I do not think that believing in God is

essential to good morality. But I think people aren't practicing good morals. American society has trended toward more materialism, division, selfishness and has fostered increasing anger, hubris, lust, and fear. We need to fight that. We need to take being a good person seriously, not just when it fits us.

We live in a culture where people often don't care about other people, or at least don't care enough. I believe the adage that "sticks and stones may break my bones...", but words have more power than we realize. While I think we should develop thick skins and try to not let hurtful words hurt us, that shouldn't give us license to be rude or malicious. We should try to be nice because everyone deserves love. I feel like if people put themselves aside and thought of others then we could truly build a better America. As Rachel says, "You never know how far a little kindness will go!".

Bullying

Mr. Cullen claims in his book that bullying was a non-factor in the motivations for the massacre. He says that the two shooters were popular in the school, and that Eric was a ladies' man and slept with a different woman every night. That is completely false. Brooks Brown says that the two were the losers of the losers; they were bullied constantly. Eric in particular was often targeted for his height. Bullying at Columbine was supposedly worse than other schools, according to Brooks. He says that many of the teachers didn't do anything about it.

According to various interviews with friends of Harris and Klebold, and with various CHS students. Bullying was a problem at Columbine High. Klebold and Harris had ketchup packets squirted at them, they were called f*gs and homos, and they were accused of being drug dealers which lead to locker raids. Some teachers were aware of this and did nothing. As much as I admire Mr. DeAngelis, he was complicit in this, knowingly or not.

I do not think he knowingly let this happen because he didn't like outcast kids. I think he really believed that his school was a safe place for everyone. But ultimately, the bullying at Columbine happened under his watch and he did nothing. However, the bullying situation at CHS seems to have improved since the massacre. Based on statements from former and

current CHS students. The school nowadays is an inclusive place, where most students can feel at home. That doesn't mean it is free from bullying however. It is still a high school.

There is no doubt that bullying was a definite factor in what happened at Columbine. They shouted about getting revenge in the library and talked often about how they were treated. There was a constant fear of being harassed at Columbine. Being an outcast often led to daily bullying. However, being mistreated is certainly no excuse for terrorism. They shouldn't have been bullied, but they definitely shouldn't have done what they did. In my opinion, Harris and Klebold ended up becoming bullies themselves. They didn't solve the problem; they made it worse.

Parenting

Eric Harris's parents were relatively uninvolved in his life. His dad, Wayne Harris, was in the Air Force and they moved around a lot before finally settling in Littleton. His mom was a housewife. They left Eric alone most of the time. Mr. Harris wasn't completely uninvolved, however. He had noticed Eric's violent tendencies and he began to keep a journal of things Eric did, but it's not clear if he ever acted on this information. Eric had ordered some ammo from a local gun store. The store called the house to confirm that the ammo was delivered. Wayne picked up the phone and simply said that he hadn't ordered any ammo. Eric wrote in his journal that if Wayne did some more digging the whole plan would have been discovered. He possibly could have ended the whole thing. The Harrises have stayed silent since 1999.

The Klebolds were a different story. They were active in Dylan's life, or so they thought. Dylan had an entire other life documented in his journals. On the outside, he was known as "The sunshine boy" by his mother, Sue Klebold. But his first journal entry was him thinking about suicide. Mrs. Klebold said that the last thing she heard from Dylan was "Bye!" in a very sarcastic, matter of fact tone. Later in the day when she heard about the shooting, she suspected Dylan was involved so she started praying. She prayed that God would do something to stop the madness her son was potentially causing. Sue wrote a book called "A Mother's Reckoning" about how she dealt with the fact that she didn't really know her son at all. Nowadays, Sue is an advocate for suicide prevention and mental health treatment.

Parenting certainly played a role in this. If the Harrises and the Klebolds were just a bit more involved, this might not have happened. But it's important to remember they are grieving too. The families of the shooters have to deal with losing their children and the fact that their children will forever be remembered as terrorists. They thought they were doing the best they could, and in the end the decisions they're sons made were they're decisions.

Mental Illness

Many gun activists have used mental illness as an excuse for shootings rather than lax gun laws. Columbine was caused by many different problems, lax gun laws and mental illness among them. It's sad that, in America, it is easier to obtain a gun than it is to obtain good mental health care. Eric and Dylan definitely suffered from mental illness. There has been debate over what Eric suffered from, but Dylan's illness was clearer.

According to his journals, Dylan suffered from horrible depression. I think it might have been because of the bullying he experienced. Dylan also struggled with feelings of affection. He had a huge crush on an unnamed girl who didn't return his affections. Dylan often wrote about how his peers and his crush hated him. He self-harmed often and wrote many times how much he wanted to die. I think seeing his best friend get bullied combined with his loss of hope and the perceived hate from his peers pushed him over the edge. Another powerful influence in Dylan's life was his best friend and fellow murderer, Eric Harris.

Eric's specific problem is much harder to pin down. I've heard multiple reports that he was a psychopath or a sociopath. I do not know enough about either of them to make any educated statements about what he had but right now I believe it to be ASPD. He showed no remorse on 4/20 but he actually apologized to his future victims on the Basement Tapes. He had anger issues, but he knew when to keep his anger under control when it benefited him. Perhaps he was just evil. No matter what mental illnesses they had, they made their choices. This is on them.

“I think we can agree that something needs to be done about how we talk about shootings in America. But I don't think we will, because for many tragedy is now profitable.” -

Cody Franklin

MARCH 19, 2001 \$3.50

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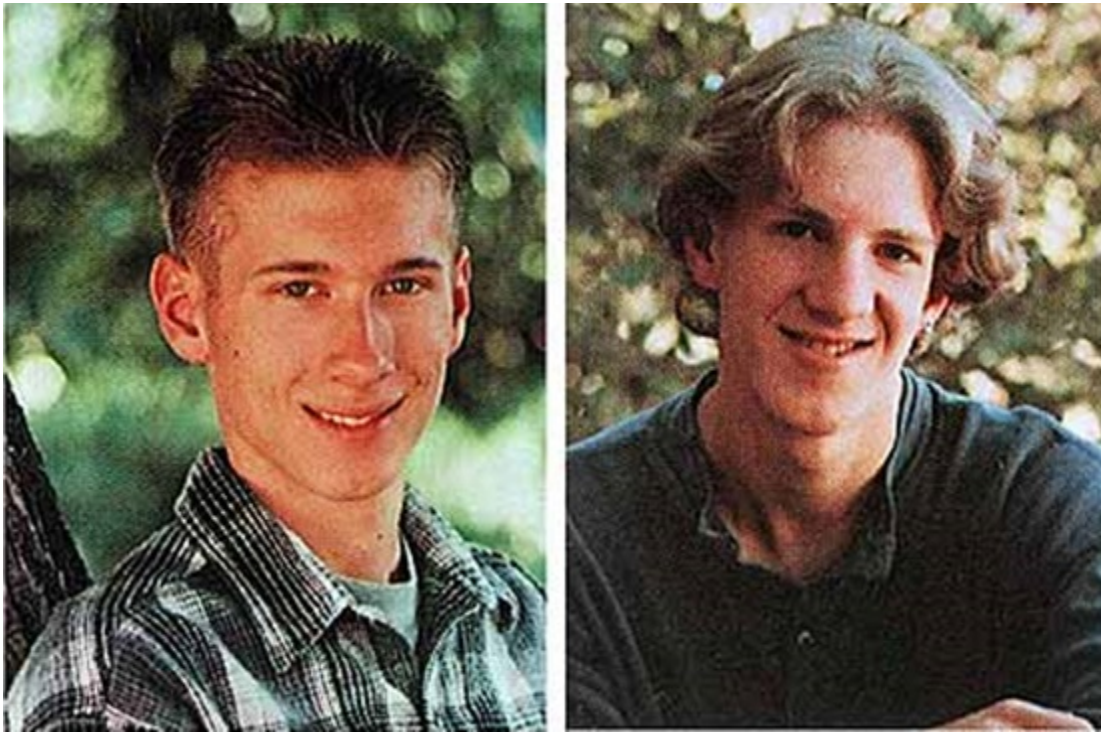


The Columbine Effect

- Inside the mind of the California teen killer
- Confronting the classroom code of silence
- Why some kids snap—and others don't

Time magazine cover from after the Santana High Shooting in March, 2001

Hate and Sadness



“Good wombs have borne bad sons.” - William Shakespeare

It's often been said that the reason Eric and Dylan did this was because they were bullied, Mr. Cullen claims in his book that the bullying motive is 100% false. I however disagree with him, I think that this was a perfect storm, a multitude of reasons why they chose to murder their classmates, including bullying. In this chapter, I'm going to attempt to explain my thoughts on Eric and Dylan's motivations.

Eric Harris



“I say, ‘K I L L M A N K I N D’ no one should survive” - Eric Harris

Eric was born in Topeka, Kansas in 1981. His father was in the air force and the Harrises often moved from city to city. (At one point they actually lived in upstate New York, far away from my area of upstate, though). Eventually they decided to settle down in Littleton, Colorado, where his dad was initially from. There, Eric met Dylan, and a lethal friendship was born. To me, Eric seemed to be motivated by hate, he kept a diary and had a website that was overflowing with his general hate for everyone and everything. His first journal entry sums up his philosophy, “I hate the fucking world, to many god damn fuckers in it. [sic]”

He hated everyone. He hated Black people, Asians, Latin people, homosexuals, White people, Jewish people, Christians, women, handicapped people, geeks, jocks, preps, and himself. He was also a hypocrite. He “hated” racism but also was a racist himself. He hated liars but was a pathological liar. He just hated life in general. As you can imagine, he was fascinated with the Nazis and with the Ku Klux Klan. He even spoke German quite often and would throw up Hitler salutes when he got strikes in bowling. He was a fan of German philosopher, Fredrich Nietzsche, who is most known for his pessimistic views on human nature. He was probably just looking for an ideology that expressed his hate for the world. He likely found Nazism to be attractive because it preached the idea of might makes right, and that some are simply more deserving of life than others. It is incredibly sad to see someone go down this path of hate.

He hated the government and American society as a whole. He especially hated Denver, Colorado. He often wrote about how he would like to blow up Denver. I think it’s fair to say that he hated most of America, and that he only aspired to join the Marines because he liked violence.

He thought he was above everyone else. He thought that he was (as he put it) “fuckin godlike”. When he asked a girl to homecoming freshman year, she rejected him, and he responded by staging a fake suicide. Eric’s mental state was a mystery. Some say that he was a psychopath, some think he had ASPD. When he died, he had therapeutic amounts of Luvox in his system. Luvox is an antidepressant and he couldn't join the Marines because he was taking it. I just think he was evil as I said before. He had almost no respect for human life. No matter what disorder he had, he enjoyed causing harm and chaos. He enjoyed being hateful. It was fun for him. He was evil.

When he was put in an anger management class, he tricked all his instructors into thinking that he was beginning to calm down. A quick look at the ramblings he wrote in his journal and on his website at the same time says otherwise. He had some computer skills. He and Dylan were gamers and were huge fans of the game “Doom”. Eric even made custom levels for Doom and for another game called “Quake” and hosted them on his website. He made multiple websites where he posted updates for he and Dylan’s gaming clan and general mischief he and Dylan would get into. He also used his sites to upload his hate-filled rants.

Eric also explained how to make pipe bombs on his website and threatened to murder his frenemy, Brooks Brown. Brooks' dad, Randy, reported him to the police but they didn't really do anything about it. Eric was, in my opinion, the personification of hate. He thrived off of the stuff. I think his hatred for the world and for humanity is ultimately what drove him to kill. I wish I knew where all this hate came from. His secrets died with him.

Dylan Klebold



“The lonely man strikes with absolute rage” - Dylan Klebold.

Dylan was born and raised in Denver, he met Eric in 7th grade at Ken Caryl Middle School. Many have said that Dylan was just a mindless follower who did whatever Eric did. I disagree. Dylan was just as involved in the planning as Eric was and he sadistically took pleasure during the massacre. In fact, Dylan was the one who originally came up with the idea. That doesn't mean that Dylan was the same as Eric, however. Dylan was much more “normal” (for lack of a better word). He wasn't as much of an outcast as Eric was. He seemed to care more about his future. While Eric often wrote about murder and hate, Dylan wrote more about how much he hated his life and how he wanted to find love. Eric's journal was filled with swastikas, while Dylan's was filled with hearts and rants about how lonely he was. He certainly wasn't “good,” however. He was known to have a bad temper and would shove girls around in gym class. Dylan wrote in his journal about how others were beneath him. He called them “zombies”.

Unlike Eric, Dylan was somewhat social. He had friends and had plans for the future. He was also relatively active in extra curriculars at Columbine High. He was part of the sound department for the Columbine morning announcements, the Rebel News Network. He even attended the Columbine prom just a few days before the massacre, describing it to his mother as “the best day of his life”. Imagine what he must have felt at the prom, thinking all of these people would be dead by his hands in just a few days.

He did, however, have problems interacting with people if the conversation wasn't about things he was interested in or if he didn't have a friend with him. He wrote in his diaries how much he hated his own life. In particular, he lamented the fact that the girl he liked didn't know he existed.

Dylan also practiced self-harm. He wrote in his diary about cutting himself and his autopsy revealed multiple scars that were healing. I think Dylan was mostly motivated by his intense self-hatred and the perceived hatred of his classmates. Dylan actually was the one who tipped off Brooks Brown about Eric's death threats towards him. I think that shows that Dylan had some regard for some people. Perhaps Dylan could have called the whole thing off and turned Eric in. If only.

That's not to paint Dylan as a fallen angel or anything. He viciously murdered 5 people in cold blood, and laughed and cheered while doing it. Some say that he was just a passive follower, and he was just tagging along with Eric. But according to reports, Dylan was just as much of an asshole. He was a bully who made fun of disabled people. He probably did this because he felt like no one liked him. So, he wanted to take revenge for that perceived injustice. His depression grew into wrath.

I think Dylan was so depressed and self-loathing because of this idea that everyone else looked down on him. In my opinion, he was driven to kill; to strike back at everyone he thought hated him. I personally think that if the two never met, Dylan wouldn't have shot up the school. Maybe he would have brought a gun to school and killed himself, but I doubt he would have killed others. Of course I can't know for sure what he would have done had he not met Dylan, but I suspect that he would have gotten into some violence.



Sue Klebold (Dylan's mom) and Beth Nimmo (Rachel's mom).

Lonely and Hateful



“Eric and Dylan are the ones responsible for creating this tragedy... However, Columbine is responsible for creating Eric and Dylan” - Brooks Brown

In many ways, Eric and Dylan were ordinary American teenagers. They loved bowling, video games, movies, and music. They were huge fans of the video game, Doom.violent video games As I said before, Eric had some computer skills, he designed levels for Doom and uploaded them onto his website, you can still find some of these levels online if you so choose.

Dylan was proficient in audio and video technology. In fact he was the sound guy for the school talent show that Rachel Scott was in, even coming to her aid when the sound failed. They also enjoyed making home videos. I mentioned the basement tapes before, but that's only the tip of the iceberg of the home videos they made.

They made one particular video for a school project; the project was to create a home video describing an imaginary business. They made a video entitled "Hitmen for Hire" in which the two are hired by geeks to take out their bullies, using guns. I find it insane how a teacher would accept something like that at all. The teacher for the class told them to "lose the language, and its perfect". If something like that was turned in nowadays it would result in suspensions and investigations.

There were also warning signs in their other school projects. Dylan had written a creative writing story about a man who wears a trench coat and starts shooting preps at a college. His teacher actually saw this as trouble and called a meeting with his parents about it. Not much was done about it as Dylan convinced everyone that it was just a story. Eric had written a creative writing assignment as well.

His was about a soldier who was fighting aliens. The aliens took out his entire squad and it ends with the soldier lying down next to his fallen comrades. The story was filled with graphic imagery. They also got into a bit of trouble with the law. I touched on this a bit before. They broke into a van and stole over \$500 worth of electronic equipment. They were caught and put on trial. The judge saw a promising future in them and dropped the charges, only if they agreed to an anger management course. They complied and passed the course with flying colors! On the outside that is...on the inside they expressed their anger at the system for ruining their "fun".

Many people have argued over what exactly their relationship to each other was. Some people think they fought often. Some people thought they were homosexuals. Some people thought that Eric was dominant over Dylan. I think that Dylan was a bit more dominant over Eric actually. From my research it seems that Eric had very few actual friends, Dylan seemed more liked by his classmates than Eric. Dylan was in multiple extracurriculars, and he had a good group of friends. It also seems like he got bullied less than Eric. Eric, meanwhile, got

bullied more and he seemed to attach himself to Dylan's friend group. For instance, Dylan met Brooks Brown in first grade. They had a close friendship. Then Eric came along and "joined" them, we all know how Eric and Brooks got along.

So, I don't think Eric was "dominant" over Dylan. I think Eric was a leech, who ended up ruining Dylan's life, and his own. Again, I'm not trying to make Dylan look good, Dylan murdered 5 people. He ruined his own life. Dylan was evil. I'm just saying that I think that Eric heavily contributed to his downfall.

Eric and Dylan indeed could have had a promising future, Eric could have joined the Marines and become a decorated war vet, Dylan could have graduated from college and pursued a successful career in IT or AV stuff. Dylan had even applied to the University of Arizona. But no, they let the hate, negativity, fear, and nihilism consume them.

They both represent two kinds of evil. Eric represented clean, clinical, evil. He shoots, he moves on silently. Dylan represents a more chaotic kind of evil, he shoots, he cheers, he moves on, and cheers while he is murdering innocent people. They are both evil. They were examples of all the pessimism, selfishness, and nihilism that is all too present in modern society, we have to do our very best to change the way we talk and think, to prevent any more Erics and Dylans from being spawned.

They unleashed a horrific high school blitzkrieg that took the lives of 13 innocent beautiful people that day. Their goal was to spread fear and chaos. Well, they failed, they failed hard, they failed just as miserably as their faulty bombs. They might have ushered in an era of fear, but they also martyred those 13 people on the national level. The 13 will forever be remembered as examples of human decency (at least by me they will be), meanwhile Eric and Dylan will be remembered as two terrorists who murdered 13 innocent people, and who unsuccessfully tried to kill more.

I don't know for sure what God has in store for them. But given their unbridled evil, I don't think it's a stretch to say that they will be spending some time in the oven.



Cartoon from May 9th, 2019, by Jeff Darcey of Cleveland.com

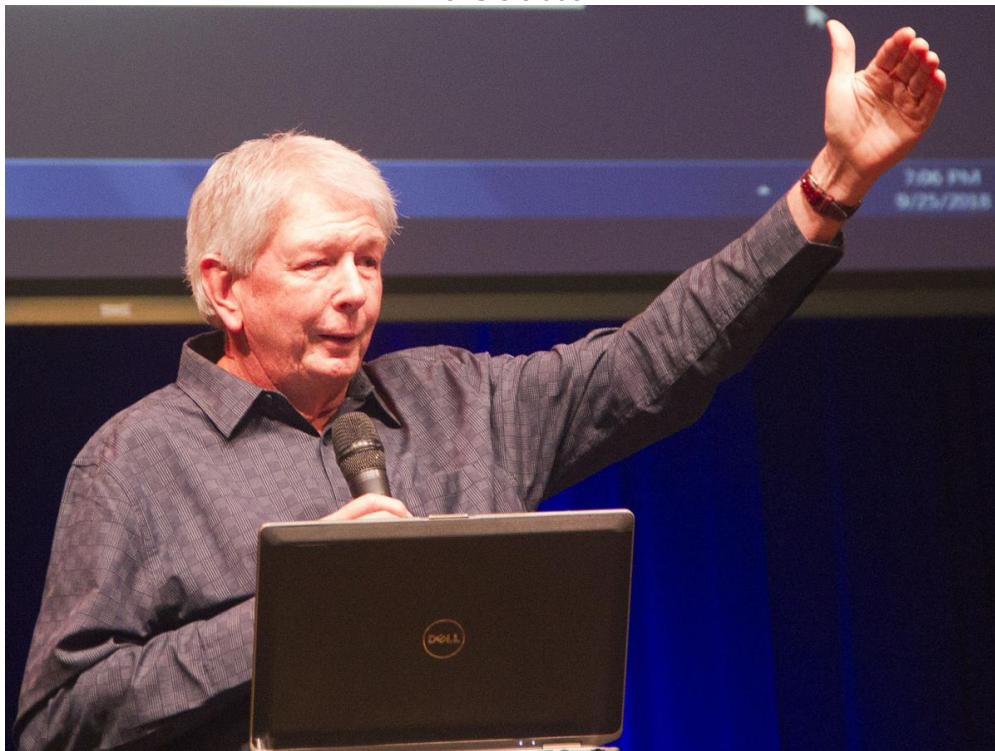
The Thirteen Families



“They're here; can you feel them? Our angels..” - Dawn Anna (at the Columbine Memorial groundbreaking ceremony)

Often overlooked is how each one of the Columbine families reacted to losing their loved ones. The Curnows and the Velasquez family chose to grieve in private. While others, like the Scotts, became very vocal and worked to spread their daughter's message. I think their stories are worth telling and I think it's sad they aren't well known. They are truly some of the most amazing people I have read about. I am delighted to shine more light onto them. I can't imagine the grief they went through, but seeing how they handled all of it really touched me and led me down the path to a deeper understanding and connection to Jesus Christ.

The Scotts



“My daughter’s death will not be in vain! The young people of this country will not allow that to happen!” - Darrel Scott

The 13 Tears

The Scotts became famous almost overnight. For days afterwards they would get letters and phone calls from well-wishers. One call in particular struck Rachel's dad, Darrel. It was a call from a businessman who had a dream about Rachel. She was crying tears of blood that were watering a rose. The man asked if that meant anything at the time. Darrel said that he

didn't know what that meant. A few days later the Scotts received Rachel's backpack from the Police Department. In it was a drawing of a pair of eyes crying tears that turn into blood watering a rose. Darrel was shocked, there were 13 tears, one for each victim, watering a rose. The rose flower can mean a new hope or major changes. I do not really believe in signs but I do find this to be really beautiful. The 13 tears, representing the victims, are watering a rose representing a hopeful future.

A Chain Reaction

When Rachel's mom, Beth, was cleaning out her room she saw a piece of paper between her bed and her mattress. The paper was an essay entitled "My Ethics, My Codes of Life". It was something Rachel had written for school, describing how she would change the world. It described how she thought compassion was the greatest form of love that mankind had to offer. One of the most important things she said was that people never know how far a little kindness can go. She described how just a simple act could start a chain reaction of kindness.

I have a copy of that essay hanging in my room. It is the basis of a school program called Rachel's Challenge. The program goes to schools and spreads Rachel's message of compassion. Many suicides and some school shootings have been prevented because of Rachel's Challenge. For most of my life, I was disinterested in helping others. But Rachel's story hit me like a ton of bricks. I am working to spread Rachel's Challenge wherever I go. I want to leave a lasting mark on the world. I want that to be a good mark. Be kind to people! You might just start a chain reaction!

I Am Not Ashamed!

In 2016, a Christian movie studio called Pure Flix released a movie based on Rachel's story called "*I'm Not Ashamed*". The movie stars Masey McClain as Rachel as she discovers God and tries to live life as a normal teenager, as well as a devout Christian. The movie generally got negative reviews. Critics have said the movie is "historically inaccurate", "disrespectful" and "a shameless cash grab". I used to absolutely love this movie, but looking back I can see why it got negative reviews. Rachel was a lot more than her religion and I think a movie focusing on more than just that aspect would have been better. In addition, Rachel's religious beliefs were reportedly different than her families and there is no mention of them.

But I don't really think that this movie was made to make her family rich. Most of the proceeds from the movie went to charity. I feel like it was more of a healing mechanism for her family. I think it is an alright movie for what it is. I wish they focused a lot more on Rachel, I would have preferred if the shooters weren't in it at all.



A Rachel's Challenge presenter speaking at an event

The Rohrboroughs



“Family was important to you and always included in your life. Just beginning your journey with so much to learn, yet you taught us so much. We miss you ...” - Brian Rohrborough

A Gruesome Discovery

Danny always helped at his dad’s shop after school, but on 4/20/99 he didn't show up. That's when his parents knew something was wrong. They were not informed by the police that

their son was a victim until a few days after. They found out in a much more horrific way. The next morning, when they were still unaware of the status of their son, they opened that day's paper and right on the front page was a picture of Danny lying dead on the concrete; their dead son on the front page of the paper for everyone to see. The callousness of the paper that printed this is horrifying. Anything for money.

Legal Troubles

After Danny's death was confirmed, deputy James Taylor, a family friend from nearby Arapahoe county, told the Rohrboughs that their son may have been killed by friendly fire from an officer firing at the shooters. After many investigations and lawsuits, it was determined that Danny was indeed killed by one of the shooters. They apologized to the Jeffco police department for causing any defamation. The Rohrboughs later sued Mr. Taylor for defamation, negligence, and outrageous conduct. Mr. Taylor got fired from the Arapahoe County PD.

Finally Grieving

After hearing of her son's death, Danny's mom, Sue, decided to do some laundry in an effort to make things feel normal. She found Danny's shirt and socks and then it struck her that Danny was really gone. It took several years for Danny's mom to begin giving away his things. Danny died on a slab of sidewalk concrete, the Rohrboughs got permission to remove the particular slab and they turned it into a backyard porch swing. That was the last place their son was on this Earth, and it is always with them.



Danny with his family

The Velasquezes



"Kyle's in God's hands now. Somehow, we have to keep living without him." - Phyllis Velasquez

Rebuilding

The Velasquezes have been quiet and have maintained a low profile since the tragic loss of their son. That doesn't mean that they were completely quiet. After the shooting, Columbine High reopened the library to the outrage of the families whose kids died there. The Velasquezes were instrumental in tearing it down and replacing it with a beautiful atrium that would hang over the commons. Kyle's mom, Phyllis, says the way each of the families came together for this cause made the grieving for their fallen son easier.

Together at last

Unfortunately, in 2019, Kyle's dad, Albert, passed away. The Velasquez family mourned but expressed happiness that Albert is finally resting with his son. You know what? I agree with that. Kyle should have been alive for his father's funeral, but I can't imagine how happy he will be to see his dad again. Love is stronger than death. I can't wait to meet Kyle and his dad! Albert was buried right across from his son in the same veterans' cemetery. His name is etched onto the same stone. I thought that was a bittersweet thing to do.

The Curnows



"Thank you for that special moment two weeks ago when you said, 'Mom, I bet there aren't many guys who can discuss things with their moms like we do.'"

- Susan Curnow

Private Mourning

The Curnows chose to not interact with The media very much. They haven't participated in many interviews, and they have never been in any documentaries. But that doesn't mean that they haven't grieved. They lost a son that day and didn't want to be bombarded by media interviews. Steve's dad, Robert, cried for 19 days, and so did his sister, Nancy. The Curnows may have been private in their grieving, but that doesn't mean that the pain they went through is forgotten. They are remembered!

The Force is with Him

1999 was also a big year for Star Wars fans. The first Star Wars movie since the '80s, *The Phantom Menace*, was set to come out that May. Steve was a huge Star Wars fan and was looking forward to its release. Unfortunately, he died just 29 days before it hit the theaters. Coincidentally at the same time, the biggest Star Wars convention, Star Wars Celebration,

was coming to Denver. When the shooting happened, Lucasarts wanted to cancel the event because it didn't feel appropriate to them, so soon after the tragedy.

However, many people in Denver, including the mayor, petitioned Lucasarts to not cancel the event. They thought it was just what the city needed. So, the Convention did end up happening. It started with a moment of silence for the 13, and all the proceeds went to Columbine related charities. I honestly believe in the Force. Not in a moving objects or Jedi mind tricks kind of way, but as a force that exists in all of living things. I think that it is God. God is love, and love is the Force. The Force was truly with Denver in that dark time!

The Bernalls



“If there is anything I would like to leave you, the reader, it is the same thought: Cassie’s story is not only mine and Brad’s. It is yours, and what you do with it now will give it meaning.” - Misty Bernall

Hope for Children

Cassie wanted to be an obstetrician (someone who delivers babies) when she grew up. Her parents, Misty and Brad, decided the best way to honor her was to start a children's

orphanage in her name. They went to Las Lajas, Honduras, described as one of the poorest areas in the western hemisphere, to start it. The Cassie Bernall Home for Children is an orphanage for kids there who have no other place to live. The Home opened in 2000 and can house 75 children at a time. I'm sure Cassie would be honored!!

Who Said Yes?

Cassie was a devout Christian, she talked about Jesus often and just wanted to live her life for him. Her mom was not surprised to hear that Cassie's last word was "yes", in response to one of the shooters asking if she believed in God. However, this didn't actually happen. Cassie was never asked anything. A gunman asked Valeen Schnurr if she believed and she said yes, Students mistook Val for Cassie. People believed this rumor because it helped them make sense of the tragedy.

She Said Yes

But Misty didn't know that at the time, she chose to write a book about her daughter's journey to being born again in Christ. A lot of people criticized Misty because they thought she was "profiting from her daughters' death" and "spreading lies". But Misty barely talks about her daughter's supposed martyrdom. The book is mostly about Cassie's struggle in her early teenage years and how she finally came home to Christ. I think the title can be interpreted in a different way. Instead of it being Cassie saying yes to the gunman's question, it could be Cassie saying yes to God. Misty wrote this book to inspire teenagers. Since I'm writing a whole book about it, I think it's safe to say that Cassie is still inspiring teenagers. You can buy Misty's book online and in bookstores, but you can also find a free eBook version that encourages you to share it with your friends. It's clear to me that Misty's intention is to spread her daughter's story rather than make money. This is how she chooses to remember her daughter. I don't think there is anything wrong with that. Misty's efforts are not forgotten! I will write more about her and her amazing daughter later.

The Shoels



“Let’s get with our children, stop teaching them hate, teach them love. Let’s teach them all to get along. Once we’re gone, they’re all that’s left.” - Michael Shoels

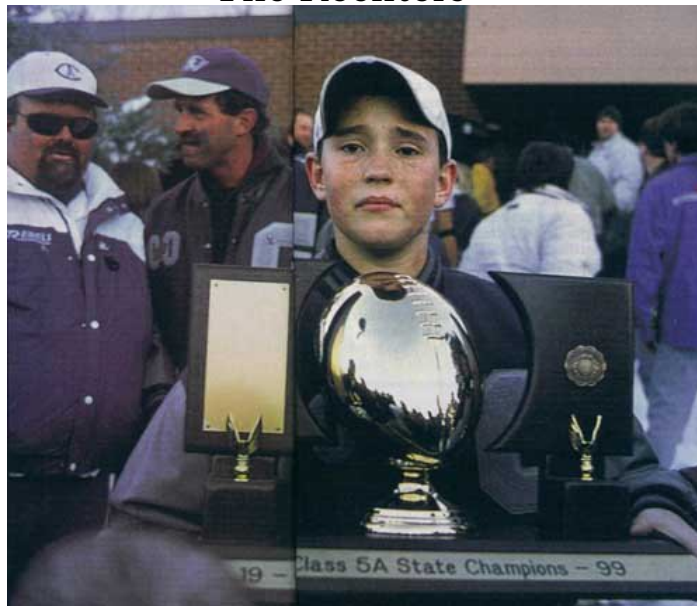
A Safer Neighborhood

The Shoels were originally from Lakewood, Colorado. They had moved to Littleton because Lakewood was a seedy neighborhood. Isaiah’s dad, Michael, never in a million years could have thought that Littleton was where his son would be murdered. Michael was shocked and heartbroken at what his son experienced in his last moments. Unfortunately, this wasn't the first instance of racism at Columbine, Isaiah's family said he quit the football team because of racial remarks from his teammates. Isaiah was a good kid. it’s disgusting that he faced bullying because of his race. Michael went on the *Today Show* with Craig Scott, one of Isaiah’s best friends, He talked about Isaiah and Craig talked about Rachel and eventually they just broke down in tears and hugged each other.

Anger turned to love

Michael was very angry with the parents of the shooters for what their kids did to his son. “Those parents now are telling The media to respect their privacy. Well, we can’t respect our own privacy because my son is getting ready to go into the ground.” But he didn't stay that way. Later, he and his wife started setting up rallies encouraging parents to better connect to their children and teach love rather than hate. Michael is spot on. People can be too selfish and hateful. Let's teach our kids love rather than hate. They are the future, after all.

The Kechters



“Thank you, God, for bringing me to the ranch and finding this. You know I love Matthew so much. I know he's here with me”

- Ann Kechter

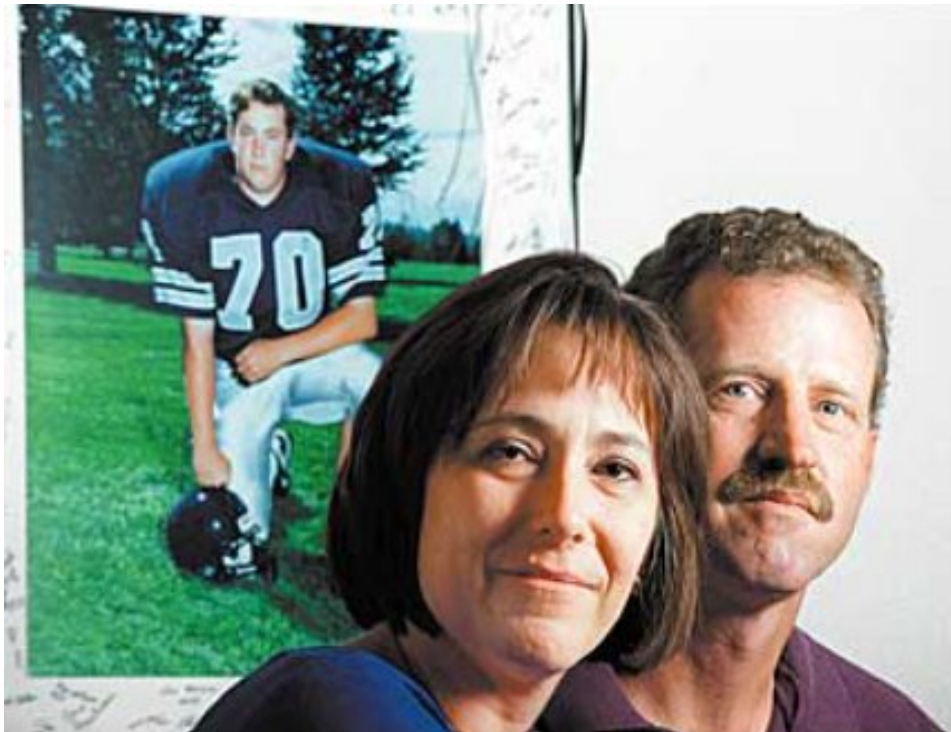
MJK! MJK!

Matt was a star football player. He played as a lineman on the Columbine High football team. When he was so brutally slaughtered in the Columbine High library, many people blamed the football team. They said it was bullying from the team that caused the shooters to snap. But the team didn't let that hinder their ability to play. They pressed on, and won 13 games that season, one for each victim. When the final championship game against Cherry Creek came, they fell behind; they were losing. But they didn't give up. They won the 1999

state championship and after every win they chanted "MJK, MJK, MJK", the initials of their fallen lineman. They gifted the trophy to the Kechters. Matt's brother Adam accepted the trophy and held it up high in the air.

Equestrian Bond

After losing Matt, the Kechters decided to move away from Littleton and adopt an 8-year-old girl named Ashley. Ashley was getting along well with Matt's dad, Joe, but not so much with his mom, Ann. Ashley and Ann struggled to bond at first. Then Joe saw an ad for a nearby horse ranch and thought it would be the perfect activity for Ann and Ashley to do together. Ann initially went to the ranch alone and while riding her horse, Chico, she started talking about Matt, when a hawk flew over. Now, every time she goes riding and thinks about Matt, she notices a hawk nearby. Hawks also frequented the fields where the Columbine High football team played. Ashley soon joined Ann on her rides, and they finally bonded. Nature can provide healing. That couldn't be more evident than in the Kechter's story.



Joe and Ann Kechter

The Townsends



“The hole in my heart never gets smaller but by doing something every day to help someone else my heart grows bigger...Then, the hole doesn’t seem so large” - Dawn Anna

Everything is gonna be alright

April 20th, 1999, was an average day for the Townsend family. Dawn Anna woke her kids up for school, they all said their goodbyes and I love yous and went on with their day. Dawn had dropped her daughter Lauren off at Columbine High. The last thing Lauren did was give her mother this symbol ☐. This is the American Sign Language symbol for “I love you” and it was an important Townsend family tradition. Dawn had recently taken a break from her teaching career at Columbine High due to health issues. When she first heard about the shooting at Columbine, she was scared. Somehow, she knew that Lauren was in the library and she thought that she would just go there and say “Lauren, we're going home”. As she

was driving there, she was trying to pray for her daughter to not be dead, but she just couldn't. She couldn't say those words. When she got back to her house, everyone had their eye on the TV. It wasn't until later that they found out that Lauren had passed on. It was difficult at first, but the Townsends were inspired by Lauren's last words, "Everything is gonna be alright".

A Mother's Love

In 2005, the Lifetime Network released a made-for-TV movie called "*Dawn Anna*". The movie is based on the remarkable true story of Lauren's mom. Dawn Anna (played by Debra Winger) had been diagnosed with a brain abnormality in 1993, it was tough on the family, she had to relearn how to speak and how to walk, but she made it through with the help of loving children and her boyfriend/fiancé, Bruce Beck. According to one of Lauren's friends, Ashley, the movie was highly accurate and very true to who Lauren was. This movie reminded me about why I started doing research on Columbine in the first place. It was because I was so awestruck by Lauren and her attitude and personality. It's a little cheesy but I thought it was beautiful. I highly recommend you watch it.

Heaven's Flower

After the shooting, Dawn Anna became kind of a spokesperson for the Columbine families. She was often chosen to give speeches on behalf of them at Columbine-related events. Dawn has spoken out in favor of stricter gun laws but that's not her main goal. Her main goal is to spread her daughter's legacy of cheerful optimism and positivity. She wrote a book entitled "Heavens Flower". The book is about a gardener who has a Columbine plant that got knocked down during a storm. The gardener finds that the flower's root is still there, and it's growing an even bigger plant. This quote from the description of it on Barnes & Noble.com sums it up better than I ever could, "It is a story of celebration, of loss, of hope, but, most of all, of love. This is a book to be held and to be shared. After reading the final page, your heart will remember that love never dies." I have read this book and I cannot recommend it more. All the proceeds go to the Lauren Townsend Memorial Wildlife Fund.

The Tomlins



“Since the night of April 20th, I've experienced God's comfort in a deeper way than ever before. He hasn't taken away the pain of grieving, but has become my partner in it” - Doreen Tomlin

You can always turn to God

John's girlfriend, Michelle Oetter, was hit hard by his passing. She says that he would stay up all night long talking to her over the phone. They were supposed to attend prom at Michelle's school on May 1st. The night before 4/20/99, John and Michelle talked for a while. The last words Michelle heard from him were “Michelle, I know you're going through some tough times in your relationship with your friend, but even if I am not around to help, remember you can always turn to God”. She thinks that it was odd for him to say. She also thinks that it was a premonition from God. She is happy that she got to have one final conversation with him. She takes comfort in Tom's undying faith; she says that she knows that they will meet again someday.

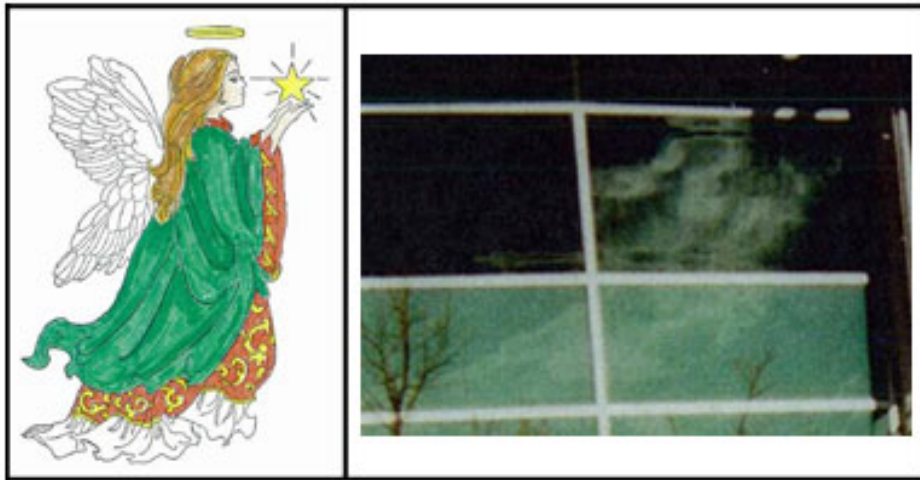
Memorial on Wheels

One of John's greatest loves was his Chevrolet pickup truck, his casket was lined with Chevy trucks. When he died it was parked in the Columbine parking lot and (much like Rachel's Acura) was turned into a makeshift memorial. His family each took turns sitting in the truck and crying.

Good Trumps Evil

The Tomlins forgave the killer's families. Their priest has said that evil and hatred is what Satan relishes in. This shows the power of forgiveness and how good will snuff out evil. The two killers would have loved for their venomous hatred to spread but John's dad didn't let that happen. Forgiveness trumps revenge. Now, always, and forever.

The Flemings



"I feel like I'm seeing life more through Kelly's eyes now, like she's showing me a lot of things." - Dee Fleming

Kelly's Alien

The Flemings didn't change a thing about Kelly's room when she died. they didn't have the heart to. Before Kelly died, she had blown up an alien balloon in her room. Her parents kept

that balloon blown up. They couldn't pop it because that was Kelly's breath in the balloon. It lasted for at least 10 years.

The Library Angel

After the shooting, Dee Fleming couldn't even drive by the school because it was too painful for her to think of the suffering her daughter endured in the library. But in 2004, Dee had decided to drive to the school to check out the progress of the new memorial library that was being built. When she got there, she saw a figure standing in the old library where her daughter was killed. She said that it looked like an angel that was on a Christmas card. She snapped the picture above. Also, once when she visited Kelly's grave, she prayed for a sign that Kelly was happy and at peace. As soon as that happened, she saw a rainbow over her grave. She took that as her sign that Kelly was resting in peace.

One Last Smile

Kelly was always self-conscious about her smile. She wore braces and she thought they made her look ugly. As I said, Dee and Don couldn't bear to change anything in her room. So, when they found a disposable camera, they couldn't bear to develop the photos inside because they didn't want to change anything. Eventually they relented and finally had the photos developed. What they found brought a smile to their faces. The photo (taken a few weeks before she died) showed Kelly without her braces with a big cheerful smile. This photo brought healing and happiness to Don and Dee, who had lost their beautiful daughter just weeks earlier.



Kelly's alien balloon

The Mausers



“I am here today because my son Daniel would want me to be here today. If my son Daniel was not one of the victims, he would be here with me today” - Tom Mauser.

Signs from God

The Mauser family was hit hard by the loss of their son, Daniel. But they took comfort in little signs that they believed were God telling them that Daniel was alright and not to worry. One of the first was on April 20th, 1999. Daniels’s sister, Christie, said that the final thing Daniel said to her was that he loved her. That struck her as odd as Daniel was an average teenager who didn't say “I love you” much except for special occasions.

Another sign was on the day of his funeral. He had a joint funeral with Kelly Fleming because they attended the same church. It was very rainy on the day of the funeral. When they entered the church for mass, it was downpouring. But when they moved the two caskets for the final prayers, the sun began shining through the stained glass onto both of them.

The last sign I want to talk about occurred while the Mausers were on their way to the burial. They noticed a herd of deer gathered near the highway. This was a whole herd of them, right on the edge of the highway. Two years later, on the 2nd anniversary of the tragedy, they visited his grave again. They remarked that they sadly didn't see any deer on the way. But, when they got there, they again saw a herd of them on the highway. I agree with the Mausers. Daniel's spirit is at peace with God.

Adopted Treasure

After Daniel died, the Mausers felt very incomplete, they had a lot of love to go around so they decided to adopt a baby girl! They went to four cities in China in search of a girl to adopt. In Nanning, they found their daughter, Madeline HaiXing Mauser. They knew that she was the one when they saw her, she smiled a lot, had a lot of energy, and was very strong. The reason they chose a Chinese girl was because at the time, China had a one child policy where couples could only have one child. This resulted in a lot of children, especially girls, being abandoned. It wasn't until after they named her that they realized that "Madeline" could be an anagram for "Daniel M" (with a leftover E).

In His Son's Shoes

Weeks before Daniel died, he and his dad, Tom Mauser, were having a political discussion about gun control. Daniel brought up a loophole in the Brady Bill (which was a gun control bill that made it the law for gun sellers to run background checks). The loophole was that if you bought a gun from a private seller at a gun show, you didn't need a background check. The gun that killed Daniel was obtained through this very loophole. This outraged Tom and from that point on, he would become a gun control activist.

Literally weeks after Columbine, the NRA decided to hold a rally in Denver, against the wishes of locals, including Mayor Willington Webb. They held the rally, which led to a large protest forming that included Tom Mauser. He got arrested during his one-man march at the N.R.A headquarters back in 2001, He said that he had been through much worse things than being arrested. He continues to do activism work to this day. He does all of this in his son's shoes, literally. He realized after Daniel died that they had the same shoe size. So, when the police were asking him what stuff that Daniel had on him that day they wanted, he asked "Do you have his shoes?". He now wears them every time he does activism work. He

helped close the gun show loophole in Colorado and he wrote a book about his experiences called "Walking in Daniel's Shoes". I highly recommend you read it; Mr. Mauser is a very talented writer.

The DePooters



"People said he was the kind of guy people like to be around. I know I sure did. Corey was always able to pick our spirits up in a gloomy situation. I love you Corey and you'll be by my side forever" - Austin Eubanks

Semper Fi

Corey was a very patriotic person. After he graduated from Columbine High School, he was planning to either join the Marine Corps, or go to college. He had Marine Corps pamphlets in his backpack and was reading a book about Marine Corps history when he died.

According to his friends, he was always talking about the Marines. After 4/20, his grandmother got in touch with the Marines and set up a ceremony to posthumously make Corey a Marine. So, on May 3rd, 2000, at his gravesite, Corey was posthumously inducted into the Marine Corps. Semper Fi, Corey!

The Memorial Fund

Every Christmastime since 1947, the Marines have run a charity program called Toys for Tots that gives gifts to needy kids whose families couldn't afford them. Since Corey had always wanted to join the Marine Corps, his mom, Patricia, thought it would be fitting to partner with them to honor her son. She set up the Corey DePooter Memorial Fund. The fund is the same as Toys for Tots, but it focuses on giving gifts to needy teenagers instead of children. Austin Eubanks, Corey's best friend, gave the first gift. It was a fishing rod he had bought in preparation for a trip. That's a very fitting first gift since Corey loved fishing.

The Dangers of Addiction

Corey's best friend, Austin Eubanks, was with him in the library when he died. After the massacre he became addicted to painkillers, especially heroin. Eventually, he recovered from his addiction and became a motivational speaker. He traveled across the country speaking to crowds about how dangerous drugs can be, and how the drug industry profits from pain by getting you hooked on painkillers. He wanted to make sure no one ended up addicted like he did. Unfortunately, he relapsed and ended up passing away from a heroin overdose in 2019. His speeches are very insightful into how tragedy leads to drug addiction. I strongly encourage you watch them. Rest in Peace, Austin.



Austin Eubanks at a TED Talk presentation.

The Sanders'



“What you did in that school on Tuesday was an amazing act of heroism. Even after you were hurt, you continued to be the brave, selfless man we all know you were” – Cindy Sanders

Blue and Silver

William David Sanders was the only teacher killed at Columbine. He was a coach for the girls' softball team and was very well-liked. He could have saved himself, but he chose to save others instead. He made sure that every student he could find was either out of the school or secured in a room. Numerous students have said that they wouldn't be alive now if it wasn't for his bravery. One student even says that Dave was the father he never had, his own father wasn't around much so he went to Dave when he needed advice. It was a joke among Columbine Coaches that they would bleed blue and silver instead of red; blue and silver being the school colors. "Dave on Tuesday bled the ultimate blue and silver. He will never ever be taken from us. His spirit, his strength, his kindness will be with us always," - Columbine High Teacher, Joe Marshall.

Living his Legacy

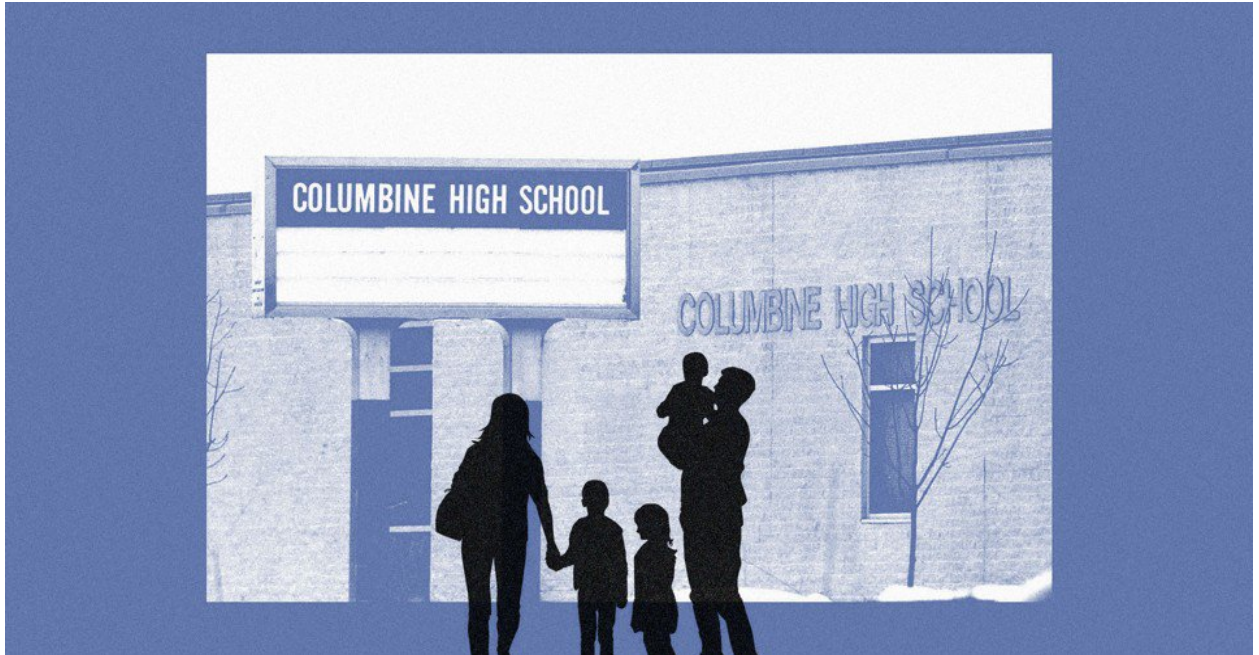
Dave Sanders' daughter, Coni Sanders, was heartbroken by her father's death. She initially kept it inside. But one day, a few years after the shooting, Coni was driving on the highway when it all hit her at once. She pulled over and laid in a ditch for a few minutes. She drove home and finally confronted her grief. That was when she knew that she needed therapy. She did some reading on the two killers and decided to dedicate her life to helping people like them get through their illnesses without committing violence. She says that she is doing this to prevent future shootings. In doing so, she is carrying on her dad's legacy by helping to save lives from violence.

The Brave Selfless Man They Knew He Was

Dave was a husband, a father, and a grandfather. He had three daughters, Coni, Angela, and Cindy. I already talked about how Coni took in everything, so I'm gonna talk about how the rest of Dave's family dealt with everything. Cindy Smith, Dave's stepdaughter, was a 911 dispatcher on 4/20, however she had gotten off work at 7:00 am, before the calls started coming in. It was hard for Cindy at first, but she decided to get therapy and move to Grand Junction. Nowadays she is living in Oregon and is doing much better. Dave's grandchild, Amber, was only about 9 months old when it happened. She was told about what happened to her granddad later in her life. Another one of Dave's grandkids, Mallory, was 7 years old when Dave passed. She didn't really have a father figure beside Dave, so she was heartbroken when it happened. The Sanders Family was upset at first at what Dave did, they saw it as a selfish thing to do. But they came to terms with his actions that fateful day. Because they can remember their beloved relative as a hero.

"To ease another's heartache, is to forget one's own" - Abraham Lincoln

Victors not Victims



"When I was a boy and I would see scary things in the news, my mother would say to me, 'Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping.' To this day, especially in times of 'disaster,' I remember my mother's words, and I am always comforted by realizing that there are still so many helpers - so many caring people in this world." - Fred Rogers

Mr. Rogers is right! Even in the darkest tragedies, there are always heroes working. Columbine was no different. Nicholas Foss could have escaped, but instead he stayed behind to help students nearby who were bleeding out. Then there were all of the paramedics who put themselves in the line of fire to help get injured students to the hospital. There was John Tomlin and Daniel Mauser, who stood up to the shooters and paid with their lives. Also, Corey DePooter and Lauren Townsend, who made sure their friends were calm during the shootings. Corey even threw himself on his friends to protect them. And of course, there's Dave Sanders. Dave saved dozens of lives at the cost of his own. I'd consider all of the survivors of this tragedy heroes of sorts, even if some of them didn't save any lives. I will be talking about just 8 of the many who were there that day. They aren't victims, they are victors, they all beat the evil that was everywhere that day, and they deserve to be remembered.

Frank DeAngelis



“When I wake up in bed each morning, that's the first thing I do is recite the names. Then I go into my office and pray, they have been with me since that day, and they'll continue to be with me for the rest of my life in the Columbine community.” – Frank DeAngelis

Many people claimed that Mr. DeAngelis (or Mr. De as his students call him) was responsible for the shootings because he ignored the bullying problem at Columbine. Mr. De (who was a jock himself in his high school days) was struggling with this idea, he struggled with knowing that 12 students and a teacher died under his watch. But he didn't let his depression consume him, he says that his Catholic faith in Jesus was key to his healing. He made a promise not to retire until every student in the Jeffco school district who was in school during the shootings graduated, he finally retired in 2014 after 35 years of service. I'm not trying to say that he wasn't ignorant of the bullying problem, he still is to some degree. But I feel like he genuinely does care about his students and that he worked hard to make his school a better place.

Many survivors of the shooting struggled with sending their own kids to school when the time came, they would often call Mr. De and ask for his advice. Nowadays, Mr. De works as a school safety consultant and visits schools that have experienced a mass shooting. Every day before he gets out of bed, he recites the names of his beloved thirteen. In 2019, he wrote a book about his experiences called "They Called Me Mr. De".

Patrick Ireland



“Evil will not win, there are too many good people in this World” - Patrick Ireland

Patrick is most well known for being “The boy in the window”. He was in the library with his friends when the shooting happened. He was shot in the head once when the shooters

shot at him and his friends. After he was shot, he tried to help his friends who were sitting with him. He poked his head above the table accidentally and was shot in the head again. Later he regained consciousness and crawled towards a shot out window. He climbed up and literally escaped from the library with two gaping head wounds. I cannot stress how strong willed this man is.

But Patrick was a warrior. He managed to make a full recovery, he relearned how to walk and talk in mere months. He was voted homecoming king in August following the massacre and graduated in 2000 with valedictorian status. Nowadays, Patrick is a successful businessman. He has a wife and three children. He didn't want to let the shooters win, and they lost. He even forgave them for the trauma and pain they caused him. This man was shot in the head more than once, but he forgave his shooters and still believes that there is good in the world. He lives with a limp and with those bullets still in his brain. He is successful and has a beautiful family now. Patrick is a living example of how the shooters have lost. He lives with those bullets in him.



Patrick Ireland walking at the 2000 graduation

Lance Kirklin



“Noticing my symptoms and being able to deal with them, that gives me hope, you know, for a brighter future” – Lance Kirklin

Lance was with his friends Sean Grave and Danny Rohrbough when he was shot. He just assumed it was a paintball gun that hit him. He was shot a few times in the chest and passed out. He awoke a few seconds later, still thinking it was just a prank. He asked for help from one of the shooters, the shooter responded “Sure, i’ll help you” and then shot him point blank in the face with his shotgun. It took 35 surgeries to rebuild his face and over a year for him to get out of the hospital. His family was hit hard by it, Lance’s brother committed suicide shortly before Columbine. But they got through it, his father Mike says that Lance is his hero. Mike says we shouldn't let anger consume us. I agree with him, we shouldn't let our anger determine our actions. That's what the shooters did.

In 2001, he found out he was going to be a father, he decided to stop the surgeries and leave the hospital. Lance loves to hunt; he was scared that he wouldn't be able to anymore due to PTSD. The first thing he did when he got home was shoot his shotgun to confirm he could still hunt. His shooters would be laughing at the fact that they ruined his favorite hobby. But they didn't, they failed. In 2015, the stresses of life had gotten to him. He was a single father, and his funds were running thin, he developed a drinking addiction. Around this time, he also finally developed some PTSD. But nowadays he is fighting to kick his addiction and

PTSD, he's going to rehab and therapy, and he is rebuilding his life. Over 20 years later and the shooters are still losing, and they always will be.

Sean Graves



“No, this is my home” - Sean Graves (In response to being asked if he wants to move away from Denver)

Before the shooting, Sean had a recurring nightmare where he would be shot and paralyzed. Those nightmares stopped when Sean was shot and paralyzed for real. Sean was with Lance and Danny Rohrbough when he was shot. He was shot in the spine and instantly paralyzed. He did however have some movement in his leg, but it was very little. The doctors thought he would never walk again. It took 49 surgeries before he could leave the hospital.

But he had a goal. He was going to ditch his wheelchair at graduation and walk to get his diploma. After months of practicing in his room, he did it. He got up out of his chair and never looked back. Later on, he visited a teenager who was paralyzed in a car crash. He went to his hospital and talked to him about living with paralysis. Sean didn't really think the conversation would amount to much. But years later he came across a newspaper article

about the same teen. The teen had ditched his wheelchair at his graduation, just like Sean. He said that it was Sean's visit that inspired him to do that. Sean carries a copy of that article every day in his wallet. Nowadays, Sean has a wife, Kara. They also have a daughter, after 6 miscarriages and a failed adoption they finally managed to have a child. They named her Olivia. Kara calls Sean and Olivia her miracle babies. Sean beat the odds stacked against him and ditched his wheelchair at graduation. Yet another example of how the shooters have failed.

Anne Marie Hochalter



"I have my down days; I just don't stay there" - Anne Marie Hochalter

Anne Marie Hochalter was shot in the initial stages of the shooting, she was shot in her spine which paralyzed her for life. She should have died at Columbine, her lungs were punctured, and she laid on the ground, bleeding out for 40 minutes before the paramedics got to her. When they got there, they were amazed that she was still alive, they called her "The Miracle Girl". She had to spend the rest of her life in a wheelchair, just like Sean. But Anne Marie never recovered like Sean did. Not only that but her mom, Carla, committed suicide months after the shooting. She had suffered from depression before, and the whole tragedy of her daughter getting paralyzed pushed her over the edge. So, she walked into a gun store, examined a gun, and shot herself right on the spot. Anne Marie felt very lost when she returned to school. Her mom was gone, she was paralyzed, and she would have to relearn how to drive. No one knew how to talk to her after.

But eventually she turned her life around. She moved a little way away from the area and started anew. She became a born-again Christian, went back to college, and learned how to drive again. She also developed a life changing friendship, she met Lauren Townsend's stepmom, Sue, and Sue started driving her to therapy. At first it was just cordial, but Anne Marie developed a deep friendship with the Townsend Family. They have described her as an unofficial member of the family. The shooters may have paralyzed her for the rest of her life, but they didn't extinguish her. They lost.



Anne Marie Hochalter greeting Sue Townsend, her new physical therapy partner, who also happens to be Lauren Townsend's stepmom.

Kacey Ruegsegger-Johnson



“I know that with each day spent in this new season, the changing views Over My Shoulder will provide all I need to continue forward, enjoying the new landscape in front of me.” -

Kacey Ruegsegger-Johnson

Kacey transferred to Columbine shortly before the shooting. She switched schools because a few of her friends had committed suicide, one of them also died of cancer. The strain was too much on Kacey, she even attempted to commit suicide herself. But her parents stopped her. She transferred to Columbine weeks before it happened. She was in the library, sitting next to Steve Curnow, when she was shot in the shoulder, which severely damaged her shoulder bones and nerves. Doctors thought she wouldn't be able to use that arm again.

But thanks to bone donors and experimental new treatment, eventually she regained full use of her arm. Kacey had wanted to go to the University of Denver when she graduated, she also wanted to be an American Quarter Horse racing champion, but she eventually stopped horse racing. She did however win a few quarter horse racing competitions mere months after the

shooting, with her shoulder still injured. But she decided to give up horse racing shortly after this. Kacey got married in 2006 and has 4 children. One of her kids was born without pupils, making her basically blind. Even with that disability, in addition to already having to raise 3 kids. Kacey still perseveres with a smile on her face. This woman has been through a lot, but she still always comes out of it on top.

The shooters would be delighted to hear that the injury they inflicted on her shoulder had ruined her life. But it didn't, Kacey has 4 beautiful children now, children that wouldn't have been born if she had died, but she lived. Kacey is another living example of how the shooters have failed in their mission to cause chaos and terror. Kacey overcame her grueling, and seemingly impossible challenges. She won. She now lives in North Carolina with her husband and kids. Kacey was faced with heartache and pain, but she fought through it, She's like the exact opposite of the shooters.



Kacey in the hospital with the members of NSYNC

Patti Neilson



“I have my life, and I have my kids. I'm not going to let those guys destroy that” - Patti Neilson

Even before Columbine, Mrs. Neilson's life wasn't very easy. She was raising 3 kids, one of them was still a baby, all by herself. Mrs. Neilson was an art teacher who was working on getting her master's degree at the time of the shooting. She was teaching 3 art classes, part time at Columbine High. On the day of the shooting, she was the hall monitor and heard the shooting start. She asked nearby student, Brian Anderson, what's going on? Brian is in a video production class with the shooters, and he assumes that they are just making a video. Then one of them shot out the windows nearby and both Brian and Mrs. Neilson got hit with glass. She goes to the library and calls 911. She abandons the call to flee to a closet. But her call is still recording. She got treated at Centura Littleton Adventist Hospital and was released the same day.

After the shooting, Mrs. Neilson suffered from PTSD, she had bad flashbacks and she stayed home for most of the rest of the year. However, she did finish out the year at the temporary school where students were going to graduate at. She often would talk to her students as friends and just couldn't abandon them like that. But most importantly, she had a change of

priorities. Before the shooting, she would often ask herself “How am I gonna get through today?”, but after she asked, “Why am I gonna get through today?”. The answer for her was always the same, her children. Her children became her main focus. She feared sending them to school due to her PTSD. But she overcame that. Mrs. Neilson came face to face with death, and it changed her view on everything. Now the only things that matter are her life, and her kids. She has both, and she is happy. Safe to say that the shooters really failed here. Mrs. Neilson’s past does not control her.

Valeen Schnurr



“You just have to find a balance of not letting it bother you as much and just accepting yourself for who you are. And, you know, I feel like I've been able to do that. And that I love myself.” - Val Schnurr

Poor Val. She went through so much on 4/20. Val walked into the library to do a research project about the Civil War with her friends, Lauren, Diwata, Jeanna, and Lisa. Kelly

Fleming joined them a bit later. By the end of it, Val was shot 9 times, not only that but she felt her best friend die, she was holding Lauren's hand when she died. When Lauren died, Val immediately started screaming. She screamed at the shooter, asking him why and pleading for help. Some say she even called him a bastard. Eventually Val was asked if she believed in God, she fumbled at first but said yes. This was the source of the Cassie myth. It was Val who was asked, Val even had to endure bullying for supposedly "stealing Cassie's glory". But Cassie doesn't need to be a martyr to be awesome. Anyways, back to Val.

Val recovered from her wounds, but she still lives with bullets in her body. She doesn't like wearing bikinis because she is self-conscious about the scars, she got on 4/20. But Val hasn't let her past consume her. She graduated triumphantly, raising her fist in the air. She doesn't get talked about enough, none of Lauren's friends do. I'd like to dedicate this section to Lauren's brave and amazing friends, Val Schnurr, Jeanna Park, Lisa Kreutz, Diwata Perez, and Jessica Holliday. Val's family says that her story of not denying her faith is inspiring to them. The shooters took her innocence, they took her best friend, they took her senior year. But they couldn't take her faith, and they couldn't take her life.

"Believe you can, and you are halfway there" - Teddy Roosevelt

The Better Angels of our Nature



Rachel Joy Scott
August 5th, 1981



Danny Lee Rohrbough
March 2nd, 1984



Kyle Albert Velasquez
May 5th, 1982



Steven Robert Curnow
August 28th, 1984



Cassie René Bernall
November 6th, 1981



Isaiah Eamon Shoels
August 4th, 1980



David "Dave"
Sanders
October
22nd, 1951



Matthew Joseph Kechter
February 19th, 1983



Lauren Dawn Townsend
January 17th, 1981



John Robert Tomlin
September 1st, 1982



Kelly Ann Fleming
January 6th, 1983



Daniel Conner Mauser
June 25th, 1983



Corey Tyler DePooter
March 3rd, 1982

We here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain” - Abraham Lincoln

In this chapter, I'm gonna talk about the 13 who died at Columbine. They were pretty average people, just trying to find their way in life. But they were also extraordinary. I don't know if it's just my desire to assign meaning to everything, but these 13 people each represented (to me at least) 13 of the most important parts of human nature and experience. They are my examples, they are the good guys.

They were each a gift from God, He used them to bring me to Him, He used them to show me how I should live. His promise and the way the 13 lived their lives gave me a new hope and optimism for the future, and it is my profound honor to be able to talk about them here.

Compassion



“You never know how far a little kindness will go!” - Rachel Joy Scott

Rachel, Rachel, Rachel, what can I say about Rachel that hasn't been already said before. I myself have [written about her before](#) publishing this book. Safe to say that she is one of my biggest heroes. Rachel Joy Scott was born on August 5th, 1981 to Beth Nimmo and Darrel Scott, she had two older sisters, Bethanee and Dana, and two younger brothers, Craig and Mike. She was a pretty average girl; she loved silly hats and would often wear them to school to express her personality. In 1989, Beth and Darrel chose to get a divorce, but they both got joint custody. It was hard on Rachel at first, but something happened a few years later that would change everything. When she was 11, she visited her cousins in Shreveport, Louisiana. Her cousin's family were Pentecostal Christians and while she was there, Rachel decided to attend Church with them, and while she was in Church, she had an epiphany, she just opened her heart out to God and she cried and cried. After that, she was a changed woman. I wrote more about Rachel's spiritual life in the link above if you want to check that out. Her aunt had also given her a journal, this was the beginning of Rachel's many journals, documenting her wisdom and thoughts on life. Beth moved her and her kids to Littleton,

Colorado (they lived in Lakeview, Colorado before), it was there where Rachel started attending Columbine High. There, she blossomed!

She wanted to be either an actress or a missionary when she grew up, and those two paths shined at Columbine High. She was the lead in the school play, called "Smoke in the Room". But her two paths often clashed, when she started becoming more and more dedicated to her faith, she started attending a youth group called Breakthru. This increasing dedication to her faith made her friends start ignoring her. She also made the difficult choice to break up with her longtime boyfriend because she felt the relationship was becoming "too physical", all this took a huge toll on her mental health, a few passages from her journals even suggested that she was suicidal, but it was all worth it for her. Even through all these trials, her true colors shone through. She believed that "compassion was the greatest form of love humans had to offer" and she lived that idea. There are so many stories about Rachel's compassion. I'm gonna talk about a few of them.

Rachel had a lot of friends from multiple different cliques. One of her friends was Adam Kyler, a handicapped student at Columbine who didn't have many friends and got bullied often, one day she went and asked him out on a date, he was thrilled! He had never been on a date before, and for Rachel to ask him out meant a lot, they planned on seeing a movie together next week. Unfortunately, the day Rachel asked him out just so happened to be April 20th, 1999.

Another story about her that really shows how much she valued compassion is when she befriended a homeless teen and converted him to Christianity. Mark Petit grew up on the streets of Denver, his parents were drug addicts and didn't keep an eye on him. He went to Rachel's Breakthru youth group a couple of times and Rachel, always happy to make a new friend, noticed him there and introduced herself. Later she followed him to a local grocery store and caught him stealing something, instead of reporting him she offered to pay for him. This was the beginning of a long friendship. Mark said that he had a more positive outlook on life after meeting Rachel, and that Rachel made him feel loved. He also spoke at her funeral, giving a heartfelt speech.

“I haven’t had the best life, and I’ve always prayed to God that he would send somebody that would love me, that would care about me, and make me feel wanted. And I just praise God for sending me an angel. In the short time that we had our friendship, Rachel made me feel like the most important person in this world. She called me her bigger brother, and I just say this to you Rachel, I love you, and I know you’re in Heaven, and I’ll see you there someday.” - Mark Petit

Rachel, your sweet, kind, caring personality has inspired me to accept your Challenge. You will never be forgotten!

“Wherever people are suffering, make it your task to serve them.” - Pope John Paul II

“Be kind to one another, tenderly compassionate, dealing graciously among yourselves, as God, in Christ, deals graciously with you.” - Ephesians 4:32



Likely the most famous photo of Rachel

Family



“I love you dad; I’ll see you tomorrow!” - Danny Lee Rohrbough

Danny would spend his summers working on his grandpa’s farm down in Kansas. Not only did he help his grandpa with farm work, but he also used all of the money to buy Christmas presents for his family. He never spent any on himself, at all. He even got visibly upset when he came up four dollars short on his gift money. He was always eager to help out his family too, He would go to his dad’s shop every day after school to help out, he made money there too and he always spent it on his family. He also would always call his mom or dad when he was home alone before he did, well anything. He wanted to make sure his parents knew he was ok, no matter what he did. They first knew that something was wrong as the clocked ticked by on 4/20 without him calling.

I love my family a lot, and I have no shame in expressing my love for them. I feel that everyones’ lives would be a lot better if they expressed their love of their families more. It's incredibly sad that so many children don’t have families to go home to, you should treasure your family, cause some people don’t have any family to treasure. By the way, family doesn’t

have to only be by blood. Family can be whoever you are close with. Family is who you depend on and who takes care of you, blood relation or not. We should all look up to Danny, he is an example of the dedication you can have for your family.

Danny, your dedication to your family warms my heart. More people should be like you. You will never be forgotten!

“The most important thing is family” - Walt Disney

“Honor thy father and thy mother”- Exodus 20:12



Danny in a school video

Gentleness



“You are the special one, and I love you” - Kyle in a Mother’s Day card

Gentleness is fleeting in this world. What’s the need for all this complex division and hatred? Sometimes it’s good to just lay on the couch and watch TV, not worry about the many problems of the world.

Kyle was a simple guy, when I say simple, I don’t mean stupid, what I mean is he enjoyed simple things, like football, cartoons, and ice cream. He was a huge fan of the Denver Broncos, and the Ninja Turtles. He was planning to join the Navy or become a firefighter when he graduated. His dad was a Navy veteran. He would often call a family friend when his parents weren’t home, asking if they had any extra ice cream. He didn’t get involved in drugs or petty drama or stuff that other high school kids do sadly. He was just a simple guy, who enjoyed simple things, didn’t get into any trouble, and was described by his family as “a child at heart”. He enjoyed life and living. He died in the library of his school, his new school by the way. He had just started at Columbine a few months before 4/20, and was very much enjoying being there, his last words to his mom were “Goodbye, love you mom!”.

(The media perpetrated a disgusting lie that he was killed because he didn't know how to hide because of his handicap. That is false. Kyle did know to hide; he was in the process of hiding when the two killers walked in).

When he was born, he suffered a stroke which left him mentally handicapped. He had unfortunately been bullied and ignored for this by his classmates. Before the shooting, he was beginning to come out of his shell. He had just started eating lunch at school instead of going home for lunch as he did before. He never let the bullying get to him. He kept his head high and a smile on his face. I am on the autism spectrum. I used to be kind of ashamed of that fact, I really didn't like talking about it and I would feel extremely embarrassed when anyone brought it up. But after seeing how well Kyle lived his life despite his disability, it really changed the way I think about myself. I feel proud of who I am now and I can trace that back to being inspired by Kyle's example. Semper Fortis, Kyle!

Kyle you are an inspiration to me, you always had a smile on your face, and you were a little kid at heart. You will never be forgotten!

“I think that inside every adult is the heart of a child. We just gradually convince ourselves that we have to act more like adults.” - Shigeru Miyamoto

“Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near.” - Philippians 4:5



Kyle and his family

Happiness



“Every time we’d play, he’d have a huge smile on his face.” - Justin Norman
(Soccer teammate)

While I was researching Columbine, something struck me about Steve Curnow. Steve was the youngest victim, at only 14 years old. What struck me was the giant smile in his yearbook picture. He looked like a little kid in his first year of high school, eagerly awaiting his future. Because that’s exactly what he was. Steve was born on August 28th, 1984. He loved soccer a lot. His friends say that when he kicked the ball people would run out of the way because he kicked it so hard. Steve says that he took any anger, anxiety, or frustration he had out on the ball, “It’s good exercise” he said. He loved his mom a lot, he wrote this shortly before he died “Mom, I bet there aren't many guys who can discuss things with their moms like we do.” Patrick Ireland remarked that when he was crawling across the library floor, he noticed Steve’s body. Patrick said that he looked calm and at peace.

Steve was also a huge Star Wars fan. The next Star Wars movie, *The Phantom Menace*, was coming out that May, and Steve was anxiously awaiting its release. He could quote every line

from all 3 of the Star Wars movies, and he wanted to be a Navy Top Gun pilot, but he dreamed most of being a space fighter.

Too many people never smile, I've noticed. Everyone either has a blank expression on their face or a frown. No one seems to be happy, I can't really blame them however, life can be very draining. But I think it's important to take joy in things you like, we should all try to replicate Steve's smile, the smile of a young man, excited to be in high school, excited to play on his school's soccer team, and the smile of a young man who started death in the face and didn't let it worry him.

Steve, your smile and your happiness even in the face of death is truly inspiring to me. You will never be forgotten!

“Truly wonderful the mind of a child is.” - Master Yoda from *Star Wars*

“I will put off my sad face and wear a smile.” - Job 9:27



Steve refereeing a soccer game

Perseverance



“Mom, I’ve changed. I’ve totally changed. I know you aren’t going to believe it, but I’ll prove it” - Cassie René Bernall

Cassie René Bernall was born on November 6th, 1981. Cassie was born to Brad and Misty Bernall. She also had a little brother named Chris. Chris looked up to her a lot. She loved rabbits, The Cranberries, and children. She was a babysitter and she wanted to be an obstetrician. Cassie was also planning to cut her beautiful long blonde hair to donate to children with cancer. Cassie was a pretty average little girl, until about 6th grade. That was the year her life would change, for better, or for worse. Cassie went through a VERY dark spot in life, much like the shooters actually.

Cassie hung out with a bad group of friends, chief among them was her best friend, Mona. Mona and her friends were into some pretty dark stuff, and that reflected in Cassie’s and Mona’s letters to each other. Cassie and Mona wrote about sick fantasies involving murder, suicide, and Satan. There were also pages and pages of graphic drawings involving her

teachers in pools of blood. They exchanged letters describing a plan to kill one of their teachers, they also wrote about murdering Cassie's parents. Most sickeningly, they drew crude depictions of Cassie's parents being hung by their intestines. They even spoke about joining a Satanic cult where the initiation ritual required you to kill a kitten and drink its blood.

Cassie's parents had noticed Mona's growing grasp on Cassie since 8th grade and they started trying to minimize contact between them. One day Misty went searching in her room for a bible she had given Cassie when she sensed her drifting away. She found the bible, but she also found the letters. She was shocked and horrified that her daughter was writing such sinister things. Misty and Brad put her on lockdown, she couldn't see her friends, she couldn't use the phone, she couldn't leave the house and she couldn't listen to music. She and Brad met with Mona's parents, but they seemed to be taking Mona and Cassie's side in all of it. At one point Mona complained about Cassie's parents to her parents, her parents responded, "It's ok honey, the Bernalls are just mean people". Their daughter threatened to murder her friends' parents, and they respond by blaming them? I feel bad for Mona, her parents clearly didn't care about their daughter. They also offered Cassie shelter should she choose to run away from home (She threatened to do that quite often).

Misty eventually made Cassie go to a youth group, and transferred her to a Christian private school. It was there when she met Jamie. Jamie was a student at her new school, and she dressed similarly to Cassie, Cassie and Jamie became friends pretty quickly. Of course, Cassie was still moody and irritated, but she was getting better. Then one day Jamie invited Cassie to a youth retreat, her parents were reluctant at first, but they eventually let her go, initially they feared they made a bad choice, oh how wrong they were.

When Cassie got there, she was pretty silent and didn't pay much attention to the sermons. But then, on March 8th, Cassie went outside and just laid down and started in the universe. She took in the glory of God's awesome creation. The Holy Spirit entered Cassie's heart. When she got back her parents could tell that she was different, in their words, "we had gotten our daughter back". Cassie spent the remainder of her days exploring her faith, she became active in her youth group and got transferred to Columbine High School as a reward

for her good behavior (Cassie told her parents that she wanted to go to Columbine). Cassie's story is one filled with tragedy, but it's also inspirational, her struggles are struggling many teenagers face. Her triumph over her pain through Jesus is one of the most inspiring things I have ever read.

Something about Cassie strikes me as really familiar. She just gives off a friendly vibe, kind of like the vibe I get from Lauren. Cassie went through a lot, but when Cassie died she had put that in the past, she died a warm and friendly person. She loved children a lot, Cassie was a babysitter, wanted to be an obstetrician, and she wanted to donate her hair to kids with cancer. She wanted to cut her beautiful blonde hair so it could help suffering children. A good friend of mine once told me that caring for children means you have a beautiful soul. Cassie had a beautiful soul.

Cassie, your journey to Christ despite overwhelming negativity has inspired me. You never gave up and neither will I. You are not forgotten!

“When we talk about our feelings, they become less overwhelming, less upsetting, less scary.” - Fred Rogers

“Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance.” - Romans 5:3



Cassie babysitting

Laughter



“He was just a great kid who loved to joke”

- Betty Shoels (Isaiah’s Aunt)

It's been said that laughter is the best form of medicine. I completely agree with that. Isaiah Shoels had a similar philosophy, he was known around the school for being a joker, he made everyone on the bus laugh. Isaiah Eamon Shoels was born on August 4th, 1980. He was the oldest of the 12 students who died at Columbine. His family was originally from Lakewood, Colorado. Lakewood was a pretty seedy area of Denver, so his dad chose to move to Littleton, on the other side of town. His dad was a music executive who promoted up and coming black Denver area artists. Isaiah wanted to be a comedian or a music executive like his dad.

Unfortunately, the color of his skin did play apart in his death, the shooters noticed him because of his skin color, and the last thing he heard was him being called horrible racial

slurs. Isaiah's final moments are sickening. He called out for his mother and they murdered him after insulting him for his skin color.

But I refuse to remember him for his last moments alone. I will remember him for the joy and laughter his jokes and antics brought people. His friends said that Isaiah was the type of guy that would ask how you were doing even if he didn't know you, he always wanted to make people laugh. He was also shorter than the average student at Columbine. He was small, but he was also strong.

Isaiah aspired of becoming a comedian. He loved Eddie Murphy, and he would make sketches making fun of his family. He made everyone laugh. He would constantly tickle and tease his aunt. Craig Scott (Rachel's brother and one of Isaiah's closest friends), said that Isaiah would get on his shoulders and walk around in the halls like that since Isaiah was so short. Isaiah was known throughout the school as being a positive influence who made everyone laugh.

Isaiah, you were so much more than a murder victim. You were a jokester, you made people laugh, and you always cared about your friends and even people you didn't know. I won't let you be forgotten!

“All I ever wanted to do was make people laugh.” - Jerry Seinfeld

“They lift up their voices, they sing for joy, over the majesty of the Lord they shout from the west.” - Isaiah 24:14



Baby Isaiah with his dad

Modesty



"When I heard he was one of the ones from the library, it only made sense, He was always in the library studying. He always put academics first."

- Greg Barnes (Matt's friend)

Matthew Joseph Kechter was born on February 19th, 1983. He was a pretty average kid, like all of the 12 students it seems. He weighed 210 pounds, he loved wrestling and he was on the football team. But he was also very ambitious, he always set the highest goals for himself, according to his family.

Matt was the only football player killed in the attack; he was working on a World War II project when it happened. It wasn't a surprise to his friends that he was in the library. He valued his grades, and always put academics first. He would always get straight A's, but he would never brag about it, he was very humble and was constantly smiling. His friend, Jason Jones, remarks that the only time he ever saw him in a bad mood was when he got a B+ on an assignment. One of my personal favorite stories I've heard about Matt is when he was doing

homework while watching Football and his mom thought it was a distraction, Matt responded in a Forrest Gump voice “I have a 4.0, and that is all i’m going to say about that”.

He was on the Columbine High varsity football team and he was described as “The type of kid you always wanted on your football team” by his coach, Andy Lowry. He always worked hard in weight room but just like with his studies, he was never braggy about it. He always enjoyed himself when he played. The team dedicated their ‘99 state championship victory to him.

Matt was a good guy. He was dedicated to whatever he was working on, he loved his friends, and his family. He just loved life all together. He always waited outside by the mailbox for his brother, Adam, to come home. Speaking of Adam, Daniel and Adam were very close, they both loved sports, wrestling in particular was a shared favorite of theirs.

Matt, your drive to succeed in everything you did while being humble and happy for others at the same time is something everyone should be like. You have inspired me, and you will never be forgotten!

“It is our choices that show us who we truly are, far more than our abilities.” -

Albus Dumbledore from *Harry Potter*

“For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.” - Matthew 23:12



Matt in his football uniform

Optimism



“Everything is gonna be alright” - Lauren Dawn Townsend

I have been looking forward to writing about Lauren! She is the reason why I am writing this whole thing. She was a wonderful human being who left too soon. I am so excited to finally be writing about her. Lauren Dawn Townsend (nicknamed Lulu by her family) was born on January 17th, 1981, to her parents Dawn Anna Townsend and Rick Townsend. Dawn always called Lauren her “Early Girl” because Lauren was born prematurely and the doctors said that neither her nor Dawn would make it, but they did, and everything was alright.

Lauren was full of life, and she loved everything and everyone. She loved animals a lot, she worked at a local animal shelter and was planning on being a biologist when she graduated from Columbine, she was also hatching a chicken egg as a project when she was killed. She had several pets, 2 dogs, a rabbit, gerbils and hamsters, fish, and the aforementioned baby chick. She also would capture spiders inside and release them outside. That fact touched me a lot because that's exactly what I like to do.

She often wrote in her diary about nature and how people are closest to God when they are in nature. One of my favorite quotes from her is “The wind is God, because God is everywhere”. I read books about Columbine and wrote some of this sitting in a chair outside.

I could feel God with me in the wind. It was truly a beautiful feeling, sitting outside in a chair, with just me and God.

One of her other passions was volleyball. She was the captain of the Columbine High girls' volleyball team, (Her mom was the coach). Her teammates loved her; she would often spend entire days focusing on new freshmen who joined the team so they would feel involved. When she played, she would "be consumed by it", as her friends put it. She was always interested in sports, whenever she would go to her siblings' games she would cheer and congratulate them, saying "Good Job! Did you win?". When she died, her teammates retired her jersey number, 8, and held a tearful memorial ceremony. Lauren struggled a bit with life, she thought everything was moving too fast. She is right, especially at that age. Life moves too fast.

Another thing Lauren loved was traveling, her and her siblings went to Puerto Rico a year prior to her death, and over spring break in 1999 she traveled through Britain with her English classmates, visiting England and Scotland, going to Britain was her lifelong dream. Like Matt Kechter, Lauren was very focused on her grades, she was in many extracurriculars and was enrolled in several AP classes. She had received two scholarships to Colorado State and posthumously graduated with a perfect 4.0 GPA and was the senior valedictorian. Lauren loved reading, one of her favorite books was Shakespeare's *Othello*, lines from *Othello* were quoted at her funeral. She also loved classical music, especially Mozart, and animated Disney movies, her favorites were *Beauty and the Beast*, *The Lion King*, and *The Little Mermaid*. All of her family, friends, and teachers loved her.

Lauren had premonitions about "something big" happening soon, she wanted to be there to see it. But she knew that you never know when your time has come, so she wrote down important thoughts like what she wanted to do when she met Jesus. She also wrote this "You know, when I leave, I don't want you to mourn. You can mourn for a little bit, but then I want you to start laughing and be happy because if you mourn, I'm going to come back and haunt you". Lauren would not want us to constantly mourn and cry when we think of her.

But my favorite aspect about her was just how hopeful, quirky, faithful, and optimistic she was. She loved Jesus, she wrote about how excited she will be when she meets Him, she

loved seeing people smile and laugh, and she just loved living life in general. She was in the library studying with her friends when it happened. When she heard that it might have all just been a joke she said, "That's not funny, that's not funny at all". She spent her last moments alive comforting her friends, assuring them that help would come and most importantly, telling them that "Everything is gonna be alright". Lauren was shot the most out of everyone during the massacre. No one is exactly sure why that is, some believe that it's because she threw herself on her friends so that they might live. I have no doubt in my mind that she would have done that.

While writing this portion I almost cried, Lauren is just so great, she of course, like any human, had flaws, she was kind of a klutz and she stressed about her future. But that doesn't change the fact that she was an incredibly sweet, kind, and caring person. She always made people laugh and went through life with a smile always on her face. She was described as "an old soul in a young person's body" by Dawn Anna. I definitely will be writing more about Lauren in the future!

In the movie made about her family, Dawn Anna, two actresses play Lauren. Tatiana Maslany plays 12-year-old Lauren and Quinn Singer plays 18-year-old Lauren. There is virtually no difference between the two that I could see. 12-year-old Lauren is like a 7-year-old, and I mean that in the most complimentary way! She oozes personality and joy. She runs around the house saying that she's a hawk, she has little hamsters that get loose and raise a ruckus in the house, and she loves snuggling with her siblings and her mom. Teenage Lauren is just like that, except just a bit more mature. She gets upset that her egg hasn't hatched yet, and when it finally hatches, she names it Mushu after the little red dragon from *Mulan*. She's just a sweet kid, plain and simple, whatever her age. The world needs more Laurens.

Lauren was the embodiment of the Christian spirit of hope and optimism. She always looked forward to the future, she always had a smile on her face, and she was as innocent and wholesome as a teenager could be. It breaks my heart that she had to face what she did in that library, but even in her final moments, the light God put in her still shined through, she spent her last moments on this Earth making sure her friends were alright.

Lauren isn't dead. I think every human has three distinct parts of them. They have the physical body, the spirit, and the soul. Lauren's body died on April 20th, but her spirit went up to the Lord. She is resting with the Lord; she is with the God she loved so much. Her soul is down here with us, it is in us. Her spirit is the spirit of optimism, the spirit of hope, and the spirit of positivity. Her goal was to cheer up everyone she met. Thanks to her, I feel like I have regained some form of childhood wonder and innocence, the same kind of innocence she had. I believe that is what the Lord wants for me, He wants me to live in peace and spread His message. Lauren faced evil, terror, and hate in that library. But Lauren's number one priority was making sure her friends were calm. Live like Lauren, embrace her spirit. Don't let her soul die too. Make her proud! That is my mission for all of you, ignore me, focus on her, and on the almighty Lord who blessed her with her wonderful soul.

Lauren, you are my role model. I wouldn't be writing this if you didn't exist. You were used by God to put the Holy Spirit in my heart. You and your undeniably optimistic, childlike spirit is why I have hope. You helped bring me to Christ, and I cannot wait until I join you with Him. Rest in peace.

“For thou has kill'd the sweetest innocent that e'er did lift up eye,” - Emilia from “Othello”

“May the God of Hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” - Romans

15:13



Lauren and her volleyball teammates

Generosity



“Michelle, I know you’re going through some tough times in your relationship with your friend, but even if I am not around to help, remember you can always turn to God.” – John Robert Tomlin

John was just a good kid (Heh, I’ve been saying that a lot haven’t I). He loved his family, his friends, his girlfriend, his country, and he loved God. He always was willing to help out and do charity work. He even went down to Juarez, Mexico, one of the most dangerous places in the world, to build houses for the homeless. John Robert Tomlin was born on September 1st, 1982 to John Sr and Doreen Tomlin. Originally, they were from Wisconsin, but they moved to Denver because John Sr. got a job offering there. Out of the blue his mother asked where he would like to be buried if he died, John replied “Waterford, Wisconsin”, and so that is where he was buried. John was a BIG fan of cars, particularly Chevy. He had always wanted

to get himself a Chevy pickup truck, and so he did. He raised his own money to buy his own pickup truck. He worked 30 hours a week loading trees, making deliveries, and driving tractors after school and on the weekend. That's dedication right there. Even when he was making money for himself, he was still helping others. He also was a dedicated Christian. He always kept a bible on his truck's dashboard so someone could see it and be inspired. His truck was turned into a memorial, just like Rachel's Acura.

But what I admire the most about John was his generous spirit. I mentioned earlier that he volunteered in Juarez to build houses for the homeless, but that is only one thing that he did. During the shooting John was hiding under a library table when a girl he didn't know, Nicole Nowlen, ran up to him and asked to hide, John let her hide with him and he even held her hand to keep her calm, throughout the ordeal John remained calm, Nicole said. He spent his last moments on this Earth comforting someone else. He was also a good son, his dad remarked that if you told him to wash the car, he would wash both of them. He truly loved his family. Another person he loved was his girlfriend, Michelle. John had met Michelle at a youth group 8 months before the shooting, the two were deeply in love. John would stay up all night talking Michelle through her issues over the phone. But on April 19th, the last time they ever talked, John said that he might not always be around and that if he isn't, she should turn to God when she was stressed. He was described as "Gentlemanly to the T" by a coworker at the nursery he worked at. He was pretty shy, but once you got to know him, he would turn into a goofball.

John is a role model. He was respectful, he was happy, he was dedicated, and above all, he was generous. John, I never knew you, but I know that your example of generosity and charity has inspired me! You will not be forgotten!

"Life's most persistent and urgent question is, "What are you doing for others?" - Martin Luther King Jr.

"We ought therefore to show hospitality to such people so that we may work together for the truth." - 3 John 1:8

Creativity



“I’m not shy anymore” - Kelly Ann Fleming

Kelly Fleming was a sweet, shy girl. She loved poetry and Halloween. She was an aspiring writer; she was actually writing an autobiography on her PC when she died. Kelly was in the library writing that day, just writing, she wasn't bullying anyone, she wasn't hurting anyone, she was writing short stories, many of her stories had happy endings. When the shooters came in, all Kelly had for defense was a pencil in her hand. She has really inspired me to write this. I now know that I love writing thanks to her. She did eventually become a published writer, one of her poems was published in a teenage poem book series called *Chicken Soup for the Teenage Soul*.

Kelly Ann Fleming was born January 6th, 1983 in Glendale, Arizona, just outside of Phoenix. She had only moved to Littleton mere months before she died. She was just beginning to learn how to drive, and she was very excited to get her license. Columbine High really changed her, much like it has changed me. Before she moved, she was relatively shy, she didn't talk or smile much, but one day about 2 months before the shooting, she came home and told her parents that she “isn't shy anymore”, she was just beginning to break out of her shell when she died. Kelly was born with a jaw that was too small compared to her face

which made it kind of hard for her to breathe. She was planning on having correcting surgery in the summer, she was very excited to start running since she couldn't because of her breathing issues. Kelly was also very spiritual; she wrote many poems about God and angels and she attended church at St. Frances Cabrini Catholic Church.

Kelly did not smile much because she had braces, she thought they didn't look good. A few months before Columbine, she got her braces off. Her family found a photo of her with a huge smile that was taken a few weeks before she died. That photo is the one above. She was buried without her braces.

What struck me most about Kelly was just how innocent she was. She was shy, she was the new kid, she expressed herself in her writings. All she was doing that day was writing in her school library, she didn't have any ill will in her body. She died surrounded by violence and terror. This innocent 16-year-old girl, died in her high school library because of terrorism.

But I won't let her death be in vain (along with the others). This event has inspired me in ways I can't fully explain. Kelly, you did nothing wrong, all you did was write. I will never forget you!!

“Creativity is contagious. Pass it on!” - Albert Einstein

“My heart is stirred by a noble theme as I recite my verses for the king; my tongue is the pen of a skillful writer.” - Psalm 45:1



Baby Kelly playing outside

Triumph



“Take on your weaknesses! He sought to overcome his own limitations. He didn't take the easy way out by doing only those things with which he was comfortable. He challenged himself” - Tom Mauser

Daniel really reminds me of myself. Daniel Conner Mauser was born on June 25th, 1983, making him only 15 when he died. He was born to Tom and Linda Mauser. Daniel was very smart; he got excellent grades in school and was posthumously inducted into the National Honor Society (Along with Matt Kechter).

Like I said, Daniel reminds me a lot of me. He loved shows like the *Simpsons* and *Seinfeld*. He was a huge fan of useless trivia, often playing video game adaptations of *Jeopardy!* and *Wheel of Fortune*. He truly loved learning. He was also very interested in current events. One day a few weeks before the massacre, he and Tom were eating dinner and he brought up a loophole in the Brady Bill (Which is a gun control bill in the US). The loophole was that, if a gun seller was a private seller, then they were not required to run a background check. Since most of these private sellers operated at gun shows, it was known as the Gun Show loophole. The gun that ended Daniel's time on this Earth was purchased through this loophole.

What I admire most about Daniel is how he overcame his issues. Daniel was a pretty shy kid, but he decided to join the Columbine Debate Team. He was great at debating; he even earned a membership in the National Forensic League. While he was at Ken Caryl Middle School, he won two National Science Olympiad awards. He wasn't very athletic, but he still decided to join the Columbine cross country team. He also loved skiing and biking. Another thing he loved that really touched me was video games. He played games a lot with his family and friends on the NES and the N64. One thing that touched me in particular about that was that he would play Super Mario Bros on the NES with his dad. This touched me because it reminded me of when I would do that with my dad on the Wii.

Daniel was only 15 when he died. Yet at 15 he was so accomplished. Even when he was in that library, he still overcame fear. He was shot in the hand by one of the shooters and in response according to some reports, he shoved a chair at the shooter and tried to pull him down. He paid for his bravery with his life.

Daniel, you remind me of myself in a lot of ways. But the thing I admire most about you is how you triumphed over your weaknesses. Rest in Peace Daniel! You are not forgotten!

“You can make something of your life. It just depends on your drive” - Eminem

“Daniel, I have now come to give you wisdom and understanding.” - Daniel

9:22

Consolement



“Corey, he could always sense when someone was in need of support or something, and if anything was happening that was embarrassing or uncomfortable for someone, he would do something funny to direct the attention to him so that the person that was uncomfortable didn’t have all these people looking at them and making them feel even worse” - Patricia DePooter

Corey Tyler DePooter was born on March 3rd, 1982 to Patricia and Neal DePooter. Corey was described as an “All-American Kid”. He loved the outdoors a lot, he would often go fishing with his best friend, Austin Eubanks. Corey and Austin went on a fishing trip with Austin in Oklahoma. The trip started off pretty badly, Corey locked his keys in his car before a snowstorm. But they made it to their destination, and Corey ended up catching the biggest fish of his life, 7 pounds. He describes it as the greatest trip of his life.

Corey wasn’t just about fishing, he loved wrestling also. He was on the Columbine High wrestling team, and he loved it. He had dreams of being a star wrestler, but he quit in order to focus on his grades, and on his part time job at the local golf course where he golfed. Corey was saving up to buy a fishing boat. Corey was a very athletic guy, in addition to

fishing, golfing and wrestling, he loved hunting, parasailing, cross country (he was on the team along with Daniel), and skating. He also loved dancing, his mom taught him how to dance when he was little and the last time, they danced together was April 19th.

Corey was a dedicated Christian; he went to church often and he dreamed of one day sharing his Christian faith with his children. Corey was also very patriotic. He wanted to join the Marine Corps when he graduated, when he died, he had Marine leaflets in his backpack. Despite all of that, he still valued his grades. He expressed disappointment that he couldn't go to school because of a dentist appointment one day.

But what I admire most about Corey is his uplifting nature. His smile could easily light up a room. He could sense when someone was embarrassed, and he would do something funny to make everyone focus on him. While he was under that library table, he was completely calm. He told his friends “Stay tight, the cops will come”, they took his advice and tried to control their shaking. Austin says that Corey was always calm, he was never afraid.

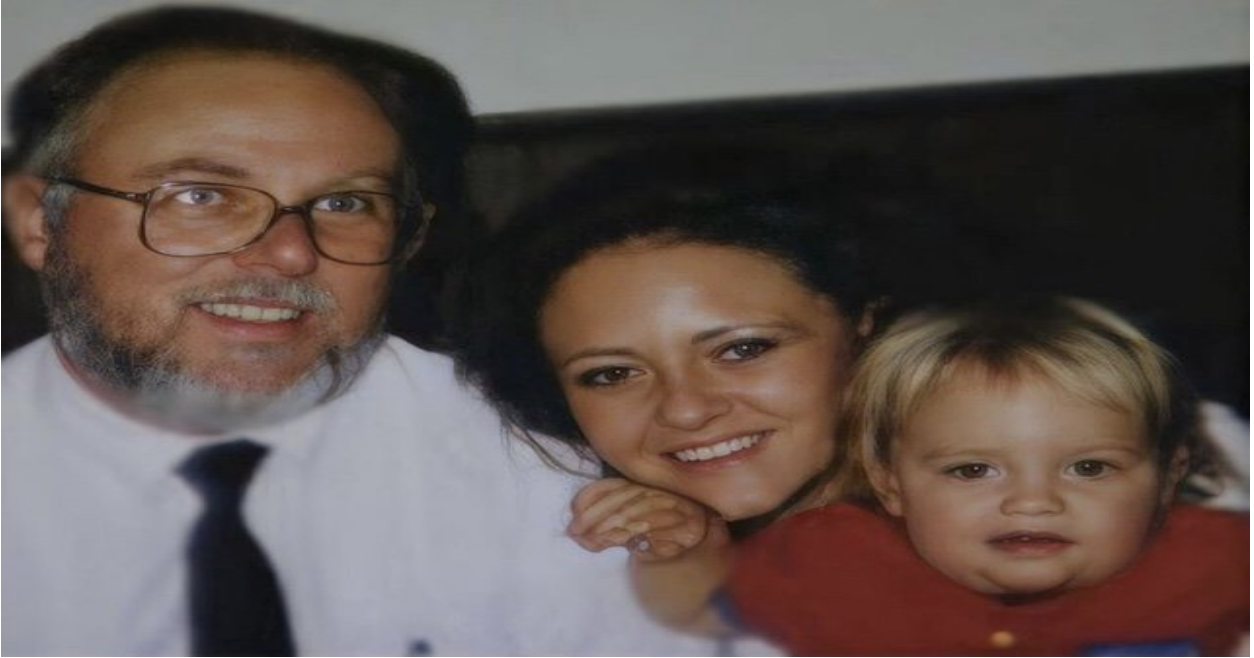
He stared death down and wasn't afraid. Even during those 7 terrifying minutes in that library, Corey's bravery was still there. He sacrificed himself so his friends could live. He would have been a great Marine. He's a real Captain America. He always had a smile on his face and was always ready to cheer someone up if they needed it. Corey sacrificed himself for his friends, he would have made a great Marine.

Corey, I admire your comforting, calm, and patriotic nature. The way you kept your friends calm and how you weren't scared is inspiring. I can't wait to meet you! You won't be forgotten!

“You must promise me one thing. That you will stay who you are. Not a perfect soldier, but a good man.” - Dr. Abraham Erskine from *Captain America: The First Avenger*

“Be careful, keep calm and don't be afraid. Do not lose heart because of these two smoldering stubs of firewood.” - Isaiah 7:4

Dedication



“Dave on Tuesday bled the ultimate blue and silver. He will never ever be taken from us. His spirit, his strength, his kindness will be with us always” - Joe Marshall (Columbine Teacher)

Dave Sanders was the only teacher killed at Columbine. He was born on October 22nd, 1951 in Eldorado, Illinois, but he later moved to Indiana. As a child growing up in the fifties and sixties, he enjoyed baseball, basketball, and Davy Crockett. He attended Fountain Central High School in Veedersburg, Indiana, he was a star basketball player at Fountain. After college he started his teaching career at Columbine High School in 1974, right after Columbine High opened in 1973.

At Columbine, he was a business teacher. But his real love was coaching. He was the coach for the girls' softball and basketball team. It was often said that he only taught at Columbine so he could coach. He was dedicated to his team; he was so dedicated that he watched the soap opera “Days of our Lives” over the summer so he could join the conversations about the show with his team. Dave was very well liked at Columbine. He was much more than a teacher; he was an inspiration to his students. He didn't just care about grades or sports; he valued his students well being. He would ask how they were doing at home. One student even said that Dave was basically his second father.

What I admire most about Dave was his dedication to his family and to his students. He loved his kids, his grand-kids, and his wife. But he also loved his students, when he heard gunfire, he didn't save himself and run, no, he and two janitors helped students evacuate. He showed them out and made sure they were safe. If he had just stopped there and then fled, he would be a living hero. But he didn't, he went the extra mile and went through the halls making sure students were out and the classroom doors were secure. He paid for his bravery with his life. But even after he was shot, he made his way to a classroom and lived for three more hours. He outlived his killers, and he spent his last moments looking at pictures of his family. His last words were "Tell my girls I love them".

Dave, when I read about your deeds that day I tear up, you were a great father, a great husband, a great grandpa, and a great teacher. You could have lived but you chose to put your life on the line for your students. You are an American hero; your sacrifice and dedication are inspiring to me. I will never let you be forgotten!

"A hero is someone who voluntarily walks into the unknown." - Tom Hanks

"And I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd." - Ezekiel 34:23

"All of us must change our lives to honor these children." - Vice President Al Gore

Epiphany



Painting by Terri Robertson

“Someday will find it, The rainbow connection, the lovers, the dreamers, and me!” - The Rainbow Connection by Kermit the Frog

We all have our own personal questions, but we all also all share one question. What is the meaning of life? Why are we here? What happens when we die? Thousands of people have produced magnificent works of art based on these questions. But no one seems to have found the answer. I think I have (for me at least). I have found the meaning of life, I have found the Rainbow Connection, and I never would have if it weren't for the 13 people who died at Columbine.

Beginnings



"I cry when angels deserve to die!!" – Chop Suey by System of a Down

For most of my life, I was a relatively happy child. There were hiccups here and there but from preschool to 6th grade, I didn't feel much, if any, sorrow. Life was generally alright. All of that changed when I entered middle school. Middle school was so much different. Suddenly, I had tons of homework for every class, suddenly all my friends were in different classes and I had to make new ones, it felt like reality was crushing what had been a pretty worry less life for me so far. That coupled with my parents' divorce around the same time really cemented the fact that life can actually be difficult. All of that was before I grasped the

existential concepts of death and annihilation. I had been aware of the concept of mass shootings in elementary school. But I didn't exactly grasp them. I do not remember the Sandy Hook shooting at all, I don't remember seeing it on the news and I do not remember my parents hugging me the day it happened. Middle school was the first time I really began to question life and mortality. It was also when I first heard of Columbine. I had been interested in horror since 6th grade and once in I would say 2016, I was scrolling through YouTube and I came across a video about tragic last words. One of the topics talked about was Cassie Bernall's final words, "Dear God, Dear God, why is this happening. I just want to go home". The idea of a teenager fearing for her life at school was so incredibly foreign and shocking to me. From the same YouTube channel, I also became aware of more aspects of the tragedy, like Coach Sanders' bravery and Patrick Ireland's escape. So at this point I was aware of what Columbine was but I didn't think much of it. I thought it was just a shooting that happened. I had no idea what its impact was. That was until 2017.

2017 was a very important year for me. It was during 2017 that I first truly feared for my life. The geopolitical situations of Syria and North Korea at the time made me, with my little middle school brain, truly fear that nuclear war would be upon us soon. Looking back it seems kind of silly, but the fear was very real for me at the time. I left my dad's house to go to mom's for the week thinking that could be the last time I would ever see him. But back on track, 2017 was also the year I discovered the impact that Columbine actually had. Before April 20th, 2017, I thought Columbine was just a small blip that no one else knew about. But on that day, my home economics teacher did a lesson about why it happened. I still remember the first line of the article she read, "Why. Why did they do it". I could hear sadness in her voice. That was the moment I realized that Columbine was much more than just a fluke in history, this was something important.

Ever since that day, Columbine was in the back of my head. Out of curiosity, I watched the Zero Hour episode about Columbine. It was the moment where John Savage is running out of the school, running through the bloody hallways with that horrified look on his face, saying that when your young you think you have forever, but you don't. That was the exact moment my childhood innocence died. Because of Columbine, life began to feel somber. It was always in my head, I struggled going into the school library because I would think of what happened in the CHS library. 2017 was also my first year of high school. My first day, I

remember clearly thinking that two separate students in two separate classes were going to shoot up the school. Every day I would go to school with the fear of getting shot. Some days it was worse than others, but it was always there. It was around this time that I also began to grasp the scale of the current adolescent mental health crisis. I remember hearing about this 12 year old girl who was abused by her family and unfortunately took her own life. I really didn't know what to think about life anymore. Why does this stuff happen? Why was the world so cruel?

Parkland



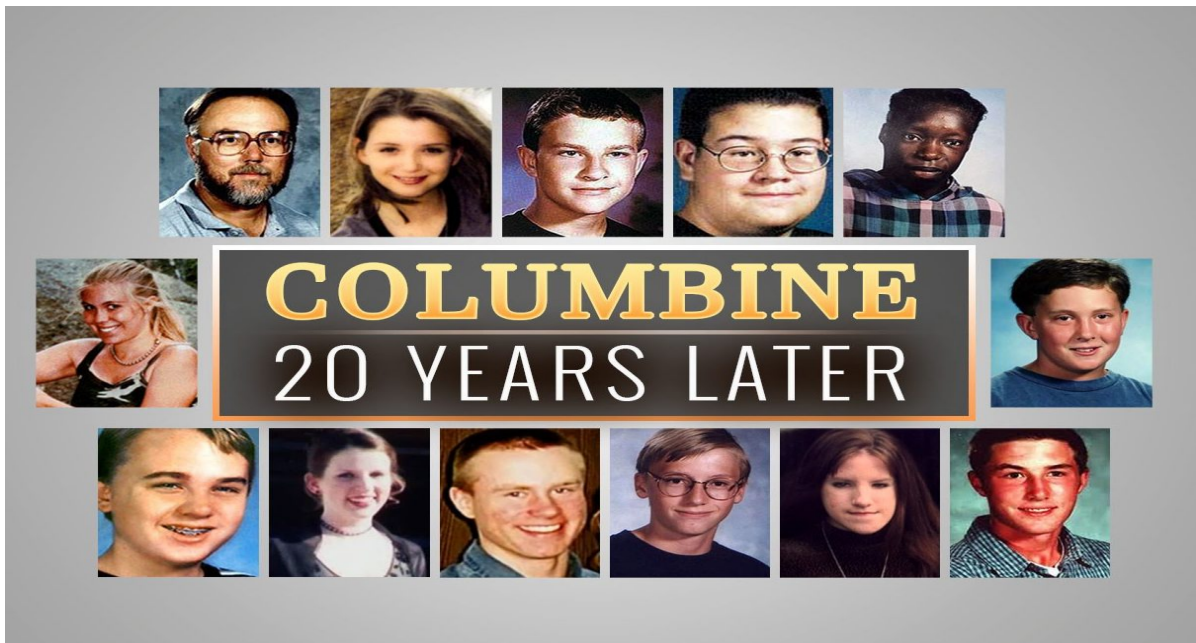
"But tonight, we can be as one tonight!" - Sunday, Bloody Sunday by U2

I remember exactly where I was when I first heard about the Parkland shooting. I was in gym class, last block. It was on the bus where I saw the news alert. I was too young to know what was going on when Virginia Tech happened, and I don't remember hearing about Sandy Hook at all. But I remember Parkland. It was Valentine's Day, 2018. A shooter murdered 17 of his former classmates and teachers. Unlike other shootings, he didn't commit suicide, he was arrested by the police. I remember everyone at school talking about it, how the shooter should be executed, and how the Parkland students reacted to it. One thing that still shocks me about it all these years later is a video posted by a survivor on Snapchat of the shooter shooting into the classroom he was in. For the first time, you could see and hear what a school shooting looked and sounded like, and it scared me.

On April 20th, 2018, the school held an “official” “unofficial” walkout. You could either go to the stadium or stay inside. At the stadium they talked about school shootings, then they would name off the Parkland victims. Then they named the 13 Columbine victims. I chose to stay inside; I said a prayer and went on with my day. But that day wasn't an ordinary day. Something depressing was in the air. Something just, strange. This stuff still happened, it had been 19 years since Columbine and innocent children were still dying. Their spirits still haunting my every thought.

The latter half of 2018 was not good for me, like it was an unbelievably bad year for me, for reasons I won't talk about. But it also led me to becoming the man I am today;

2019



“But I still, haven't found, what i'm looking for” - I Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For by U2

2019 was the year I began to rebuild my life from the disaster that was the latter half of 2018. It was tough, but there was a feeling of calm in the air. Things didn't seem that bad, I was kind of enjoying the latter half of 10th grade. April 20th, 2019, the 20th anniversary of the massacre came and went. My school didn't do anything, (to be fair the 20th was a Saturday so we wouldn't be in school). The flag was half-mast but that was really it. I felt kind of

disappointed by that. Surely there could have been some sort of morning announcements tribute? Moments of silence? Oh well. At least the flag was flying half-staff.

2019 was a pretty average year for me. It was unbelievably better than 2018 mind you, but something felt missing. Like a part of me felt empty. I wasn't depressed or anything, I was actually calm, but I wasn't exactly perfectly content with life. 11th grade was alright. One class I liked a lot was English, it was always a pretty relaxing class, (If you're reading this, Hi Mrs. F!) But even that couldn't really fix the general boredom I felt. I felt happy no doubt, but I also felt empty. I guess you could say it was my rest stop year in between the hell that was 2018 and, well, I'm sure everyone knows what comes next.

Quarantine



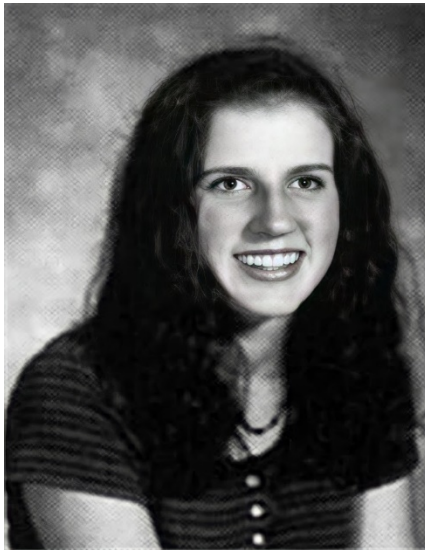
“Oh, I never wanted to change the world, but I'm looking for a new New Jersey, because tramps like us, baby we were born to die!” - A More Perfect Union by Titus Andronicus

I never really feared COVID. When I first heard about it, I just thought it would disappear and be just another news thing that everyone forgets about. I never thought it would be integral to who I am now as a person. I never really liked school and I was excited to be staying home and having an early summer. My teachers were saying that it wasn't that and we would be back in two weeks but that clearly never happened. Anyway, I was generally happy, my uncle works in the Air Force and his daycare center closed because of COVID. So, me, my mom, and my sister would go over to my uncle's house every day and babysit my cousins. I really enjoyed that; I love my cousins, and their house was the perfect place. I didn't know it then, but all of the pieces were falling into place.

But the reality that nothing would be the same again was beginning to set in. I didn't realize how monumentally life altering the COVID-19 pandemic would be. I didn't know what life was before the pandemic, kind of just cruising along. COVID shattered any semblance of normalcy 2019 had built.

Around this time, in early April, my dad was planning a family vacation to Seattle, which is a city I always wanted to go to. Unfortunately, COVID interrupted our plans. But we did end up going on vacation. We went to a little house in the woods type place. It was just a simple building in the middle of the woods. That was very peaceful, and I can actually say that I was happy then, we saw a flock of turkeys just like walking across the yard, we also saw a few deer. It was a pretty good example of what life was gonna be like for now. So that was fun, but that was only temporary.

Crossroads



"They will never, leave our hearts or fade away, Live forever, they were far too young to die in such a way!" - Cliffs of Gallipoli by Sabaton

Sometime in between my birthday on April 12th, 2020 and April 20th, 2020, I fell into a bad depression. The lockdown was getting to me, all of the crazy anti maskers and all of the fear

mongering about climate change. All of the crap you hear on the news, all of the anger and fear. I remember hearing about the plot to kidnap the governor of Michigan and wondering what this could mean for the future. It kept me up at night. I seriously was scared for the future, it was awful. That went on for days. On April 20th, I made a post on my Instagram account in memoriam of the victims. That was it, later that night I watched a disaster movie with my family. That was 4/20/20 for me. Pretty uneventful.

So, I slept on the couch that night, tossing and turning as usual. When I woke up, I decided to stay home from babysitting that day, April 21st. I decided to watch a Columbine documentary. I usually watch one every April 20th, but I couldn't find the particular one I was looking for. On April 21st, I decided to do some more digging, and I found it. It wasn't much, it was just a simple video explaining the actions of the shooters. It was made by a YouTuber who specializes in real life horror content. That in addition to me watching another disaster movie after the documentary had really changed something. All of it got me thinking more about the meaning of life and death. I decided to do some more research on the massacre, and I came across the photo pictured above.

That black and white yearbook photo of Lauren smiling really resonated in me. I don't know what it was about that simple black and white photo, but I was instantly drawn to her, in a "I feel like I knew this girl" kind of way. Just something about her smile really mesmerized me. I felt like I had lost a close friend. After further research on Lauren, I found out why. Lauren sounds like the perfect friend. Someone I would want to have in my life. I felt incredibly sad about the fact that Lauren was dead. I just couldn't wrap my head around the fact. I had to do something to honor Lauren and the others. I thought learning more about them and their deaths would be a good way.



Lauren (middle) with some friends

The Dove



“Glory, Glory, Hallelujah! His Truth is marching on!!” - The Battle Hymn of the Republic by Julia Ward Howe

I had remembered while doing my research that I noticed one of my friends reading a book about Columbine in school. The book was *She Said Yes* by Misty Bernall. I thought it would be nice to read it. My friend told me where to order it, and it became the first thing I ever ordered online by myself. So, I bought it and I started reading, it didn't grab me much at first. But that would soon change.

So, I was at my uncle's house babysitting as usual over quarantine, It was the 8th of May. I started laying on his couch as soon as I got there since we have to get there by 7 so we wake up at 5. I was reading the book on his couch, and I got to the part where Cassie converted. I was listening to a great orchestral cover of the Battle Hymn of the Republic, which is an American spiritual/patriotic hymn, and right when they were talking about how Cassie looked into the sky and how God entered her heart, that's when it happened.

The song crescendoed just as I read that part. Immediately, I felt different. The Holy Spirit had entered my heart, it was pure bliss. I can't exactly describe it in words, the closest thing I can think of is that it felt like Christmas Day, but even that couldn't match the sheer awesome, peacefulness of it. Everything was perfect. My cousins were playing hide and seek, I was comfortable, and for the first time in a long time, I was at peace. I honestly don't know

how I could live before that moment. The first thing I did after that was put my book down and go play with my cousins. A new love for life had entered my heart, God has entered my heart, and He will never leave.

I Accepted Rachel's Challenge



“This is my one desire, to burn with holy fire, My life may never fade away!” - I’m Not Ashamed by Jeremy Camp

Around the same time as that, I remembered a school program about Rachel called Rachel's Challenge. I didn't really know anything about it at that point, so I did some more research on it. The challenge is to spread Rachel's cherished idea of a “chain reaction of kindness”. It's done through school assemblies hosted by special presenters, some of the presenters include Craig Scott, Darrel Scott, Michael Scott, and Bethanee McCandless (Rachel's sister). The program has a reportedly very high success rate, many suicides and even some school shootings have been prevented because of it. The program receives numerous letters every day from people who have been touched by Rachel's story.

I did more research about it, and I fell in love with it! It was such a good message and I think the execution is brilliant. After the presentation, a Friends of Rachel school club is set up to keep Rachel's chain reaction going, and to make sure the challenge doesn't last for just one

assembly. Success rates vary from school to school, but it is clear that the program itself has had a positive impact on the world.

Rachel's Challenge inspired me to pick up a few books written by Rachel's family about her. Her beliefs, her Christianity, and her journals really inspired me to live like her, and like Christ. I would read her books sitting under a shady tree, listening to the soundtrack of the Ken Burns American Civil War documentary. Reading those books while listening to folk music outside in the shade with the wind blowing is a really nice feeling. It's just like what Lauren said, we are closest to God when we are outside. I could feel that feeling.

The Test



*"It's the same old theme, since nineteen sixteen" -
Zombie by the Cranberries*

So, if you remember, I had an anxiety attack of sorts back in 2017 because of the North Korea crisis. I think I may have been on my way to a similar event in April, before I started researching Columbine. I thought that hope was fleeting, and I had never felt so far from God. Learning about the Columbine 13, specifically Lauren, made me realize how great life

can be. They really changed me. But would my new beliefs and ideology hold up? A coming event would put that to the test.

On Memorial Day, May 25th, an African American man named George Floyd was killed during an encounter with the Minneapolis Police Department. His death was just one of many that had occurred under similar circumstances to African Americans. You can debate the politics of the event itself all you want but that's not what i'm going to do. I'm going to talk about the aftermath of Mr. Floyd's death and how it affected me.

Soon after the tragedy, deadly riots began in Minneapolis. It was heartbreaking for me, it was heartbreaking seeing how this stuff still happened nowadays, it was heartbreaking to see how angry people were, to the point that they disregard basic civility. It was heartbreaking how this event drew out all of the people who don't care about justice but only about violence. It was heartbreaking how many people believed that violence is the answer. It is absolutely evil and heartbreaking how Black Americans in this country still suffer violence at the hand of society.

Violence is evil. The best counter to it is love and optimism. You would think that this would make me give up, but it didn't, in fact, now I think that experience has made me even more determined to spread my new beliefs. I think that's a good way to honor George Floyd. His family says that he was a gentle man. That's the purpose of this book. To try to share my experience of how love and hope can bloom out of violence and evil. That is my service to God and to humanity.

We are Columbine!



*“Free at last, they took your life, they could not take your pride!”
- Pride (In the name of Love) by U2*

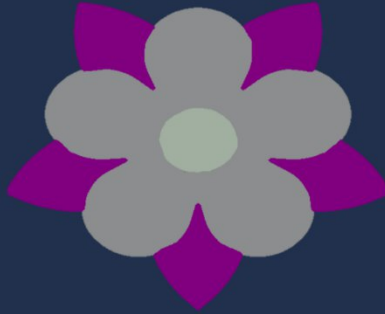
This epiphany wasn't just 1 day. It is never ending. This type of thing isn't something that exactly ends. August 8th was Rachel's birthday, to celebrate I did little bios of each of the Columbine 13 on my personal Instagram story. It really touched my heart how much people interacted with what I posted. Especially my parents, I know they are reading this right now, I love you guys!

I have met several people on the Internet who feel similarly to me about Columbine, and other tragedies. Over the years since we have met, we have become very close. I have met some of my closest friends because of this experience, and I wouldn't have it any other way.

Why is CHS so special? I think it's because of the shooting, but more specifically, it's about the way the community responded. The two shooters wanted to cause chaos and fear, but like I've said many times before, they failed. In fact, in some ways, they caused the opposite. The school chant of “We Are Columbine!” took on a whole new meaning. The community was in it together. They would mourn together. They would chant together. They would rebuild together. Columbine High School entered into the Soul of America on that day. It is the American school, for better or for worse.

You can say that school bullying had a role in the massacre (you're right). Bullying was a huge problem at Columbine High, some teachers (including Principal DeAngelis) even looked the other way because the bullies were often jocks. But they took on those demons, they weren't vanquished entirely, there unfortunately is still bullying there. In that sense, it is like every other school. But almost all of the interviews I have read with current CHS students all have one thing in common, they love the school. The shooters tried to bring fear and hate, but instead they caused the spirit they hoped to destroy to grow and become even stronger. Columbine High School is an American symbol, somewhat like the Freedom Tower. It represents triumph over tragedy, and victory of unity over evil.

Thoughts



EVERYTHINGS GONNA BE ALRIGHT
APRIL 20TH, 1999

“I do think humanity is losing touch with itself and their relationship with their surroundings. Unfortunately, it usually takes a huge trauma to get people to realize what is important and I feel that is what is going to happen to wake up everyone to get in touch with their spiritual sides. I am not afraid of death for it is only a transition. For, in the end all there is, is love.” - Lauren Dawn

Townsend

What are they?



*"I don't think we should be sad.
We should be happy we knew
her" - Rachel Danford (Lauren's
friend)*

Columbine instilled a few different values in me. I have had ideas similar to these before, but I never really wrote them down because I just didn't have the knowledge or drive to. But then I found Lauren, Lauren reminded me of me. Lauren represents everything good that has come from Columbine. Lauren looked at life and laughed, she always could light up a room with her smile. I don't know everything about Lauren, but from what her family and friends have said about her, I feel like me and Lauren would be close friends because we both try to look at the world with a positive lens. We both try to look at the world glass half full style. She always was nice and polite and tried to help instead of hurt people. I'm going to talk about some of the values I have read that Lauren expressed in her life. Optimism, Compassion, Wonder, and Spirituality. Like I said, I don't know everything about Lauren, I only know what her family and friends have said about her. But that's all I needed to have my entire worldview changed forever.

Just because I don't know Lauren doesn't mean I can't admire her. She is my role model; she has inspired me to spread her lifestyle. She isn't God, she was just a kid; she was applying to

college. But she was also very wise and kind, her mom describes her as “an old soul in a young person's body”. She showed undying love to everyone around her. That's the main point, to look at life like Lauren did, to truly live up to the example she set. I am honored to spread her way of life. I hope this inspires you to start living like her!

Values



“Lauren Townsend, my friend who died in the library at C.H.S., was a very studious and hardworking girl, yet she also found time to fit in pleasure, without stressing herself too much. I hope to learn from her example, now knowing all too well how quickly life can escape us.” -

Pam Gleznor

These are certain things that Lauren believed and expressed throughout her life. Among these are optimism, compassion, wonder, and spirituality. Lauren had all of these. I think the world would be a much better place if there were more Laurens. People who remind others that everything's gonna be fine. Not enough people care about others nowadays. I also think that there is a Lauren in all of us. We just have to awaken her.

Optimism

The first value is optimism. Optimism is the belief that good is coming, Lauren held that core belief up until the moment she died, she made sure her friends around her knew that everything was going to be alright. That is the main point, trusting that no matter how crappy life and the world may seem, there is always a reason to keep going. Everyone has a

reason for living, if you're still alive then you know you have a reason. My reason is spending time with my family, playing video games, studying the Bible. Simple things like that. These things are beautiful to me because they are simple and familiar. In this world everything seems so sad and dreary. But those simple things in life, that is among what gives me hope. I have faith in God, and God sends me little simple things like the things I mentioned to remind me, that everything is indeed going to be alright. I am an optimist because of Lauren, her death showed me that light can be found even in the darkest and most hellish of places.

Compassion

The second value is compassion or love for your fellow humans. That is something that is sorely lacking in today's society, especially post COVID. It's pretty sad how far we've fallen. But Lauren wasn't like that. Lauren loved everything around her. She loved animals a lot, I talked about that before but i'll talk about it again because I love talking about Lauren. She had two dogs, a rabbit, several fish, a baby chick (that she herself hatched), and several hamsters and gerbils. She just loved animals, she would capture spiders she found and release them outside instead of killing them, she also volunteered at a local animal shelter. Every Friday she would beg her parents to take in a stray dog she found at the shelter. She could not stand the idea of anyone doing harm to any of God's creatures. Her love for life wasn't exclusive to just animals, however. When she wasn't at the shelter, she would volunteer at a local soup kitchen. Her family was incredibly close knit. She would always go to her siblings' sports games and always cheer and congratulate them, win or loss. Her goal everyday was to make someone laugh, and she succeeded. She was the Captain of the Columbine Girls Volleyball Team, and she loved her teammates, they loved her too. Her mom says that she could see Lauren's face in each of her teammates. She would always make sure new teammates would feel welcomed and loved. From what I have heard from CHS students who knew her, she was very sweet to everyone she met. She was a real leader; someone her teammates could look to for encouragement.

Childlike Wonder

Being childlike, as in living life with the innocence of a child, laughing, being silly, and

having fun. Lauren was all of that. She would make funny home videos with her brothers and sister. One of them, called an “action thriller” by her siblings, centered on how the fate of the world would depend on how well they could make sandwiches. Other videos involved the many family pets. Lauren was a very happy child, one of her favorite activities when she was a baby was taking all of the Tupperware out of the cabinets, throwing them on the floor, and gleefully watching as her siblings would put them back for her to throw on the floor again. She never outgrew that childlike nature. Her household never outgrew trick or treating or Santa Claus, and up until the day she died, she still had an aura of childlike wonder. She was also a huge fan of Disney animated movies. Her favorites were Beauty and the Beast, The Little Mermaid, and The Lion King. She would often draw fan art of Disney characters. Lauren always had that childlike spark of wonder in her, according to her mom. That's the part I want you to focus on. People are too cynical, too selfish, too boring (for lack of a better word). The point is that few people express childlike wonder anymore, which I can understand, the world is a scary place, but Lauren did, despite all of that. God used her example to awaken my inner child, and I know and pray that He can do the same to you.

Spirituality

This is not exclusive to any one religion. However, I think (true) Christianity plays a major role in my personal views of it. Lauren was a devout Christian, she wrote often about God and Jesus in her diary, she frequently talked about Jesus with her friend, Jessica Holliday, she also drew pictures of Jesus on the Cross for Jessica, and they would sing Jesus Christ Superstar together. She attended various youth groups in the local area. She wrote in her diary that she felt like she was on the verge of enlightenment. I know that feeling, the feeling of pure calm and joy that can only come from God. She also drew detailed drawings with strong Christian themes, in fact her very last sketch was of an angel. Christianity is centered around the idea that the world is full of death, and because we die, we sin. God sent his Son, Jesus Christ, down to Earth to try to lead humanity away from death, and away from sin. He ended up paying the price for all the sins of all humanity, past, present, and future. He showed undying love for his fellow man, to the point that he was essentially tortured to death for us all. Death will one day die because of what he did on the Cross. So, if death is dying, why fear? Fear is a natural emotion for when your brain senses danger which can lead to death. In my opinion, fear has been obsolete since Jesus' time, and Lauren lived her life like that. Always trusting in God, and always having faith that everything was going to be

alright. Her belief saved her friends under table 2 with her, and it saved me from horrible depression brought on by the pandemic. The world needs to rediscover spirituality, it's not arbitrary rules and dogma. It's meditation, its prayer, its pondering. You can be spiritual without believing in a God. Everyone, across all belief systems, needs to embrace spirituality. Just like Lauren did

Lauren Quotes

We love you, too, Lulu. “– Lauren’s siblings

"Lulu, you'll always be my baby." – Rick Townsend (Father)

"We know Lauren well enough that she would have been at the front of the line if she knew that her life would help change hundreds upon thousands upon millions of others” - Bruce Beck (Lauren’s Stepdad)

"I remember her always laughing. She made me laugh so hard."- Angela King (Lauren’s friend)

"Lauren was to be a senior class valedictorian at her graduation next month. Lauren, unfortunately, won't have the opportunity to make the impact on the world that I'm sure she would have." – David Beck (step uncle)

“She was a great person to know but all in all, everything turned out okay because we knew that Lauren had helped others make it out from under that table that day, even though she didn't.” – Ashley (Lauren’s Friend)

"We'd talk about our way-down secrets that we wouldn't tell anybody else. Lauren had problems, but she'd never really let anybody know. She talked to me about it. But she never had a bad day. She had quiet days. But not bad days." - Jessica Holliday (Lauren’s friend)

I want to live more like Lauren - try to get along with everybody, try to work harder. She's my hero. I want to do something to help people. So that every day is like a new day, you know?" - Jessica Holliday (Lauren's Friend)

"People say that Lauren was a victim. I don't think of her in that way. The ugly thing that happened last Tuesday, they couldn't conquer her beauty." - Matt (Lauren's brother)

"I love my sister. Not only that, I like my sister." - Josh (Lauren's brother)

"She was the best little sister in the whole world, an angel on Earth. I know she's looking down us now" - Kathy (Lauren's stepsister)

"She was a marvelous sketch artist. She had sketched her own wedding dress - one for summer and one for winter, just in case. " - Rev. Bill Selby



"Lauren was a fine young woman. Her heart appreciated things that were gentle, and she was wise academically." - Carol Samson (Lauren's teacher)

Mission Statement



“Be, excellent to each other.”- Bill and Ted

The shooters talk about “kick starting a revolution.” They wanted to start a chain reaction of violence and terror. Lauren spoke of something similar. Lauren wrote about how it was going to take something big to change the world, she wanted to be there to see it. Her step dad said that he was sure that Lauren would be there, at the front of the line, ready to sacrifice herself if it meant the world would change, ready to change the world. How can I hear that and not be inspired? This girl was probably ready to give her life if it meant changing the world for the better. I am here to make sure that her unknowing sacrifice will not be in vain. God has used her example to guide me. I am overflowing with joy and gratitude thanks to Him.

I intend to do something similar to what the shooters wanted. They wanted to change the world with guns and bombs, I want to change it with a mouse and keyboard. Some people say that the Internet is a waste of time or does more harm than good. I disagree, yeah, the Internet can be used for wrong and downright evil purposes. But it can also be used for good. My life is indescribably better because of the Internet, and I intend to use it to spread Lauren’s legacy. God has blessed the world with this wonderful tool, it is in His service that I am doing what I do.

What's my goal for this chapter? What message am I trying to spread? That quote above I think sums up what I think Lauren was like. She was kind and welcoming to everyone, and she was innocent, fun, and childlike. That's the key, that's why Lauren inspires me so much. She was an ordinary teenager, she was stressing about the future, she talked with her mom that she felt like everything was going too fast. But even then, she didn't let that keep her down. Her goal was to make people happy. She wasn't super serious all the time, she just gave life her whole with a beautiful, radiant smile on her face. Columbine is something that should be taught in schools, we need to talk about how the victims lived their lives, how their lives changed other lives, how their deaths changed lives, and most importantly, how they can inspire you to change lives. If more schools started something like that and kept it going, the world would be a much better place.

Every time I feel overwhelmed, I think of Lauren. I think of her beautiful smile, her cheery disposition. I never knew Lauren, but I do know that from what her family and friends have said about her, I know this is someone who deserves to be remembered. She is the embodiment of hope and cheer like I said before, she truly just loved life. That's my new goal in life, I want to spread cheer and give hope to people who need it, I want to keep people calm, I want to make people laugh, I want to be the one people go to when they feel overwhelmed. I want to be the person everyone remembers as being nice and funny. Just like Lauren was. Everything else is secondary to making sure people around me are happy and healthy. Will it be easy? No. But it will always be right.

I just have so much respect for Lauren and her family. She has made me the man I am today. God used her life to show me what I should do with my life at a time when I was losing hope, this is how I am going to honor Lauren, by continuing on the path she started, the path of love, kindness, laughter, childlike wonder, and spiritual wisdom. I am picking up the torch that she held up until the very moment she fell asleep, and I highly encourage all of you to do the same. Lauren Dawn Townsend, you are not dead, you are not gone, your body may lie in the grave, your spirit may be at rest, but you will be back, and in the meantime, your truth is marching on!

“It is important to do something every day that will make you happy!” - Bob Ross

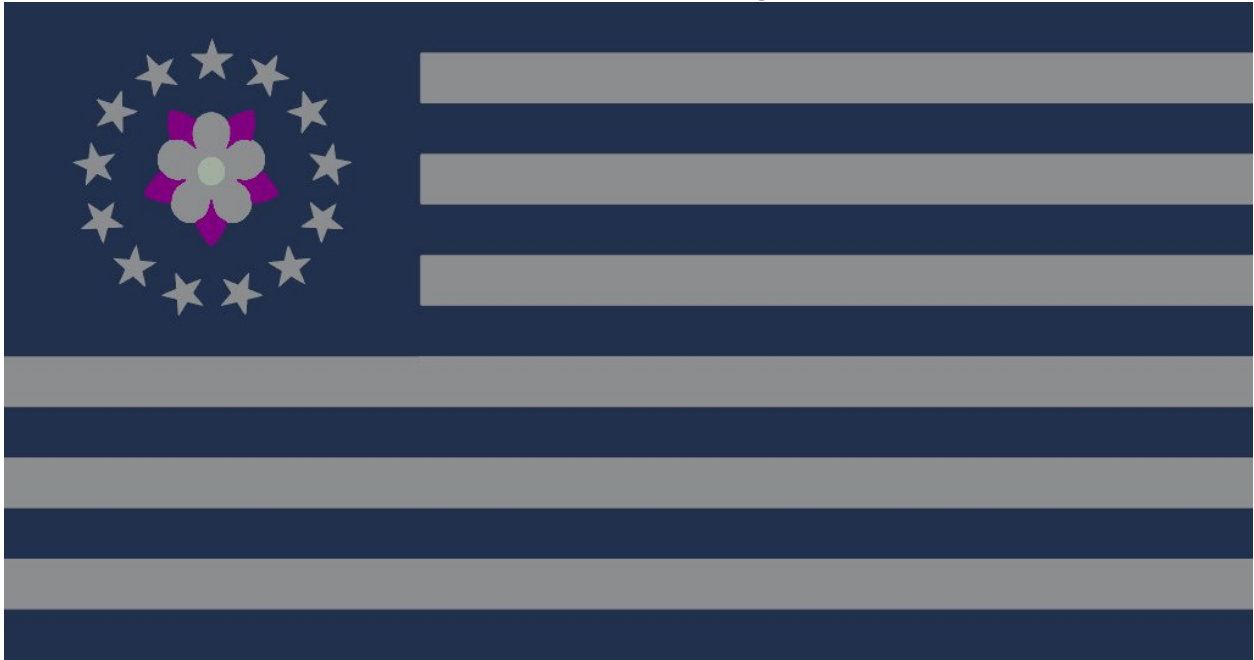
Final Thoughts



“Columbine High School today is a symbol and a model of resiliency, my hope is that any person or group of people who have experienced tragedy can look to Columbine for hope. Columbine High School and our community is an example of the good that can occur when people come together and unite in the face of adversity. We are proof, good conquers over evil, and that faith in one another is so very very important, we are stronger than we were before, in fact there is nothing stronger than Rebel Pride and the Columbine Spirit. Columbine is special, it is a place that is truly loved. I love it, our staff loves it, our students love it. I am honored to be principal; I understand the incredible responsibility that I have. I promise to love Columbine and to work every day to fulfill my responsibility to continue to move the school forward. To all of you who believed in Columbine and stood by it during the most difficult of times, again thank you. Thank you for your resilience, thank you for your kindness, and thank you for your faith in this place that so many of us call home. In the end, thank you everyone who has been a part of Columbine. As I say to our students, thank you, for making Columbine what it is, which is, THE best school on the planet.” - Scott Christy (Columbine High Principal)

Mr. Christy is 100% right. The legacy of 4/20/99 is one of love, heroism, and unity. The example set by Littleton got me through a tough spot in life and gave me the courage and drive to begin to do something worthwhile. The 13, especially Lauren, gave me the motive to help people. I had always had a thing for helping people, but Columbine gave me drive to. I am not a part of the Rebel Community in person, but I feel like I am in spirit.

Final Message



Wow. Just wow. It's been almost 4 years since that day in August when I started writing this. I have felt what Mr. Christy is talking about. I can feel the love and the pride and the Spirit that inhabits the Columbine community. I can feel the Rebel Pride. It is palpable. The 13 victims got me through a tough time in my life, the Rebel Community got me through a tough time in life, and the friends I've made along the way have changed my life forever. Rebel Pride is truly unbreakable, you can't break it. The shooters tried to, but they failed, they are losers, plain and simple. The thirteen were brought to this world by God to change lives, they have succeeded. I have never been happier because of them and the Columbine community. I am an example of the good that came from this tragedy.

I had always been interested in tragedy. I am not sure why but disasters like Columbine had always fascinated me. The human response to them is probably what fascinated me the most. I didn't know it then but when I first began writing and researching for this all those years ago, I was living through the deadliest disaster in American history. This book is absolutely a product of the pandemic. Millions of Americans are gone, millions of lives are

reshaped forever in many different ways because of the great lock-down of 2020. Mine included. This pandemic is the culturally defining event of my generation. People need to realize that.

I can't deny that Columbine has a spiritual side to it. The shooters brought a wave of violence and negativity. But the spirits of the community stayed strong, Satan cannot keep them down. I was lucky enough to discover this story before I really got depressed. I was lucky to have been inspired by the Rebel spirit before something really bad happened. I pray that everyone in my generation can break through the shackles of fear and hate that Satan has on the world. I pray that Columbine High School will one day be seen as a symbol of triumph, instead of pain and terror.

God used the massacre that day to change my life, that was my path. I have been searching since April for a way to truly honor them. This is how I will. The point of this book is to spread my experience, and to share the story of Columbine, both the tragedy from 4/20/99 and the inspiring aftermath. If you're going to take anything from this, I hope it's that life is always worth living. Please, I encourage you to do your own research into this impactful tragedy. Some people might think i'm weird for getting all of this out of a school shooting, but I don't really care. I am what I am. If that makes me weird or creepy, then so be it.

When I hear the word "Columbine", I don't think of the shooters, or violence. I think of the victims, I think of the Rebel Pride, I think of the hope that it has brought me. That's what the word means after all, Columbine is Latin for Dovelike. Doves are symbols of God's hope. Columbine High School's story of triumph over tragedy is truly like a dove.

If you have made it this far then I just have one thing to say, I love you all!

Credits

First and foremost, I would like to thank the 13 victims. All they did was live their lives. In a weird way, this shooting improved lives. Because it brought these 13 wonderful people to national attention. My life would be worse if it weren't for those 13 people. Thank you so much, Rachel, Danny, Kyle, Steve, Cassie, Isaiah, Matt, Lauren, John, Kelly, Daniel, Corey, and Dave. You guys are my heroes.

I also want to thank my wonderful parents, who have been so supportive and interested in my writing. Especially my dad for being my editor. I love you guys so much!

Thanks to all my friends and family. Thanks especially to my girlfriend who I never would have met if it wasn't for this experience.

Thanks to all of the survivors of 4/20/99.

Thanks to all of the 13 families who went through so much pain but came out on top.

Thanks to all of the documentarians and researchers who helped me gather information for this project. Thanks especially to Bill Ockham, Randy Brown, Jeff Kass, the Columbine Video Archives, Cyn Shepard, NationSquid, and r/Columbine on Reddit.

Biggest thanks to Jesus. The King of Earth, The Son of Man, The Prince of Peace, The Savior. Thank you for sacrificing yourself for the redemption of mankind and for showing me how to live.

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“I am not afraid of death for it is only a transition. In the end, all there is, is love.” - Lauren Dawn Townsend

