

Some Precautionary statements about the recent Virginia-based killer and others of his ilk

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August 27, 2015

Americans will never fully understand or be able to predict the likes of killers in general, including the recent one in Virginia, *by looking at them under a microscope* in an effort to determine their motives.

Such motive-based inquiries have gotten us nowhere. A killer's motives are present-tense machinations that may have little or nothing to do with objective reality.

To truly *understand* the killer we must significantly broaden that focus to encompass the person's all-important intimate relationship history including his relationships over time with key family members. It is this history that serves as the petri dish where he has grown into the killer he is today.

In other words, they come from the angry and dysfunctional and impoverished families that produced them, whether they be American citizens or illegal immigrants. The typical dysfunctional attributes of such families include:

- (1) an environment of seething, angry parenting that the killer has grown to hate from childhood;
- (2) parents who grew up with similar angry feelings and relationships between themselves and their parents;
- (3) an environment of volatile and strained if not totally impoverished relationships between key family members over several generations;
- (4) evidence of a significant level of immaturity and social inadequacy in all family members including the killer; and
- (5) ignorance

The family is a system of interconnected relationships characterized by *repeating patterns*. In seriously dysfunctional families these patterns engulf family members involved in key relationships that have

Historical, problematic roots. The higher the anxiety in these key relationships, the more rigid and predictable the patterns of the ensuing relationships.

Relationship patterns repeat in healthy families, too, although these repeating patterns reflect quality parent-child relationships and extended family relationships that are nurturing, supportive, mature, low anxious, encouraging, globally educated and self-defining from one generation to the next.

In order to understand what we are looking at in a killer, we need to have a reliable means to track their life history that includes:

- (1) the killer's prior health issues and number and kinds of hospitalizations;
- (2) the killer's childhood, high school failures and young adult dropout events;
- (3) familial problems with parents and siblings that include physical abuse, substance abuse, marital disruptions, severely broken sibling relationships, a patchwork of similar life problems in all other family members over at several generations;
- (4) the killer's *and his family's* altercations with the outside world (illegal behaviors, imprisonment, neighborhood disruptions and other angry incidents, horrific divorces, feuds, isolation from friends and others, serious traffic accidents, workplace altercations and firings, psychiatric hospitalizations, history of suicide attempts, and more.

This is the SHORT LIST of the information we need to know.

Taken together, these and other defining events give us a portrait of the stability (or lack of stability) of the killer's family and its members. With instability comes high anxiety, immaturity, a generally rocky trek through life, and immense personal inadequacy. The collection of such in-depth information reveals heretofore-unseen trends that typically lead to explosive outcomes.

Experienced family relationship experts possess the unique tools and system perspective to sort out the significant relationship dynamics underlying the killer's sudden explosion onto the world scene; dynamics that run much deeper and are far more insightful than a person's here and now motives for killing someone.

It is true that *such a diagnosis after-the-fact* won't alter the murderous course taken by a particular killer, but such broad family scrutiny will collectively teach the rest of us what to look for and how to better predict and monitor in the future the dysfunctional individuals and families that live among us. They are out there, in droves. It is just that the well-functioning public has absolutely no idea what to look for and therefore has little means to put two and two together before it is too late to do anything about it.

It is important to note that these killers do not exist in a vacuum. Their problematic and violent emotional and behavioral profiles have been evolving since childhood, within families that modeled highly dysfunctional and seriously angry and troubled relationships to them behind closed doors. And a great many people have witnessed the tantalizing signs.

It is also important to understand that the term "mental illness" is itself one that narrowly and short-sightedly places our collective focus on the INDIVIDUAL perpetrator.

Elementary school environments, for example, yield early and critical signs of emerging behavioral trends in children and their families. Yet these trends are mostly dismissed by people who don't understand what they are seeing or frankly don't know what to do about it anyway.

We need to modify privacy laws so that we can enable knowledgeable and skilled people to intervene and report, and systematically follow-up on troubled children, instead of just passing them off to higher level academic curriculums with records that are magically wiped clean of all problem histories as these children cross over into adulthood.

While weapons like guns are used by violent killers, the real problem is their emotional history prior to pulling the trigger, not the guns themselves.

Current background checks provide us with some important data but these checks yield zero information about the emotional profile of the gun purchaser. And privacy laws themselves further hinder the collection of useful data.

Quite frankly, even the oft-encouraged packaged 'mental health screenings' are inadequate because of their inherent fixation on the ID

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and EGO of the individual, instead of on the emotional and relationship history of the troubled family that produced that troubled individual.

The reality is that broken families are producing untold iterations of broken children. And until we recognize that fact as a society, we will continue to be vulnerable to their inevitable and violent explosions.

I don't know about you, but I am tired the *same ole same ole* police and psychological and news media approaches to violent perpetrators that refuse to consider the whole person and the life-long history that they bring with them to the crime scene.

One wonders just how many more American lives will be lost before our inadequate response system is fixed.

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