

Mourn for the Killers, Too

"THEY WERE JUST KIDS. BUT SOMEONE
HAD TO MAKE MONSTERS OUT OF THEM."

Devon Adams



The article "Mourn for the Killers, Too" was written by Devon Adams, who went to Columbine High School in 1999. She survived the shootings and has since been active in the grassroots organization SAFE Colorado ("Sane Alternatives to the Firearms Epidemic"). Dylan Klebold was her friend, along with Rachel Scott who was killed in the shootings.

PRE-READING

1 In the following article, references are made to a much-discussed magazine cover of the American *TIME* magazine. The cover showed photos of Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold surrounded by photos of their victims and the headline was "The Monsters Next Door". Devon Adams, the writer of the article below, says, "They were just kids."

What do you think? Monsters or kids? Why?

2 Devon Adams also says, "But someone had to make monsters out of them." Who would want to make monsters out of them? Why?

Mourn for the Killers, Too

by Devon Adams

August 23, 1999

A 17-year-old survivor of the massacre in Littleton, Colorado, reflects on the horror and on her own campaign for 'reasonable' gun control.

This year, I went back to school early. My junior year at Columbine High School officially begins this week. But last Friday, I was back in the building to show incoming freshmen around. The idea was basically to have fun – and we did. The serious part of the program was to let the freshmen know that there are people they can turn to when they have questions, or if they're in some kind of trouble. We finished last year at another school, but I've been inside Columbine several times since April, when Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold killed a teacher, 12 kids and themselves. The library, where the worst bloodshed occurred, has been sealed off by a wall of lockers and replaced by a temporary library. By now, I've walked past the lockers so many times, that I almost forget what's behind them. It looks so normal, and I think that's healthy. If the new kids see us treating the area as normal, then they won't be spooked by it.

Columbine has been the biggest part of my life since I was an incoming freshman. I'm glad I have two more years here – in a way, I never want to leave. And I never want to forget the people who died, including Eric and Dylan. I think we should mourn all of them. Dylan was my friend, and I still don't understand why he did it. At first, I blamed myself; I could have been a better friend. But then I began to see that all of society was to blame. Eric and Dylan were constantly ridiculed by many kids. And it was too easy for them to obtain guns.

Not long after the shooting, I joined a new, bipartisan organization called SAFE Colorado; the acronym stands for Sane Alternatives to the Firearms Epidemic. Our goal is to obtain reasonable gun legislation. We need to find compromises. Some people say background checks on gun purchasers should be completed within 24 hours. Others say five days. I think there's a happy medium: three days. Finding out if someone is dangerous takes more than 24 hours but less than five days.

Littleton is not the Wild West. It's more like a typical American suburb. I know that some of my friends' parents have handguns in the house, though I have never seen them because they are locked up. I don't want to outlaw all guns. I can even see someone having a handgun in the home for protection. But we need restrictions on automatic guns with a dozen or more bullets in their clips. The only purpose for that kind of gun is to kill lots of people quickly. I also think guns should

mourn sørge
junior year næstsidste
studieår
freshman rus (førsteårs-
elev)
occur forekomme
seal off (af)spærre
temporary midlertidig
spook skræmme
ridicule gøre nar af
obtain opnå
bipartisan tosidet
acronym initialord (dan-
net af forbogstaver, fx
NATO)
sane fornuftig
legislation lovgivning
purchaser køber
a happy medium en
gylden mellemvej
suburb forstad
outlaw forbyde
clip laderamme (til pa-
troner)

be licensed, just like cars. And the minimum age for gun purchasers should be raised from 18 to 21 – the drinking age. If you're not responsible enough to drink alcohol, you're not responsible enough to buy a gun.

5 Last July, a group of us from SAFE went to Washington, D.C., to lobby for gun legislation, including an end to unregulated sales at gun shows. We talked to the president and the vice president, but half of Colorado's congressional delegation turned a deaf ear to us. My lobbying experience has left me disappointed in politicians. They just don't
10 get it – that 13 young people die every day in this country from gun violence. And they don't seem to care that 70 to 80 percent of Americans support reasonable gun legislation.

I'm also saddened by a lot of the news coverage of Columbine. Some reporters respected our grief, but many were insulting. As one
15 TV reporter primped for the camera, he was heard to say: "Do I look devastated enough?" And even people who hated Dylan and Eric were appalled by the magazine cover that called them "The Monsters Next Door." They were our friends, too. They were just kids. But someone had to make monsters out of them.

20 After the shootings, it was reported that Eric and Dylan wanted to kill nonwhite students and athletes, but many of their victims didn't fall into either category. One of them was a dear friend of mine, Rachel Scott. She was no athlete, she was a theatre person. Rachel was beautiful, inside and out. She was a hard worker with a great sense of humor.
25 After I got out of the school on the day of the shooting, I watched the news coverage on TV, trying to find out who had been shot. I saw videotape of students running past a body on the ground. All you could see clearly was the victim's hair, but that was enough. I had helped to cut Rachel's hair, so I knew she was the one lying there. The sad thing is
30 that Rachel would have been a perfect friend for Eric and Dylan, if only they had known her well, because she would have accepted them: I still can't believe they meant to kill her.

And now the shooting in Los Angeles. It was horrible enough that, at the age of 17, I had to run for my life from my own high school. It is
35 even more hideous when guns are turned against preschoolers. This must stop, and it must stop now.

be licensed (her:) kræve tilladelse
lobby udøve lobbyvirksomhed; forsøge at påvirke en senator eller et kongresmedlem til fordel for en bestemt sag
unregulated ikke kontrolleret af stat eller lov
congressional delegation kongresdelegation
grief sorg
insult fornærme
primp pynte (sig)
devastated sønderknust
appalled forfærdet
hideous hæslig
preschooler førskolebarn

WHILE-READING

In pairs

1 Take turns summarising the article by using the key words below. Student A begins and student B takes over. If you forget the context of your word, your partner may give you a hint.

Student A: survivor – school – freshmen – fun – library – normal – mourn – blame
– guns – SAFE Colorado

Student B: goal – reasonable – compromises – restrictions – lobby – deaf – 13
– news coverage – monsters – Rachel

2 Take turns answering the following questions.

- In what way is Devon Adams connected to the events at Columbine High School?
- What is different about the library at Columbine High School?
- How do you think Devon Adams copes with her experiences at Columbine High School? How would you explain this reaction?
- Who is to blame for the tragedy according to Devon Adams? Do you agree with her? Why/why not?
- What organisation has she joined and why?
- What does she think about the news coverage in connection with the Columbine High School shootings?
- Who is Rachel Scott, and what was she like, according to Devon Adams?
- How does Devon Adams recognise Rachel Scott?
- How would you characterise her tone of voice when she tells us how she recognised her friend. Choose from the following adjectives. Look up the words you do not know.

* matter-of-fact, optimistic, level-headed, emotional, objective, detached, journalistic, open-hearted, puzzled, sensitive, mature

POST-READING

1 Comment on Devon Adams' final line, "This must stop, and it must stop now." Is it possible to put a stop to school shootings? Why/why not?

2 What does Devon Adams do in order to stop school shootings from happening? Is her strategy the right one? What would you do?

3 Comment on the title. Is Devon Adams merely influenced by the fact that she was Dylan Klebold's friend?