

*December 4th, 2021*

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I am deeply saddened by the loss of young life in Oxford High School, Michigan, this morning. Having just returned from surgery Friday December 3rd, I can imagine no greater tragedy for a parent than to entrust their child to the public and then receive the news they will never see their son or daughter again. Effort to direct the anger and blame for such events on some one or several someones is overwhelming.

It is not, however, appropriate to direct that anger at the parents of other children; to excuse the duty of the public institution in which we entrusted our children to be safe.

As a young man, I wore clothing and dressed for my theatrical work as thousands of people now do in interactive media such as TWITCH.TV - entertaining friends and enjoying an escape from the small town community and limited industry of such a rural district school. If you did not play football, drink to excess, or do drugs - there wasn't much to do in my home town, as a teenager.

At this time of tragedy, I hope that the community remember - those escapes into healthy science fiction and literature, fantasy, and even video games - are not to blame for the deficiencies in our community and our young people's loss of hope and confidence in a future that holds vast possibility.

The very idea that someone would abuse you to the extent that violence or murder is your only escape, should not be misconstrued as a defect of character in the abused person - especially a minor.

We must ask, "What was going on before this?" and not dwell on the trope excuses of what sort of "art" or "impression" confiscated fragments represent in a person's life. There is always a story there.

I am disgusted to see persons calling for the abuse of children who are clearly not receiving the care and respect from persons in the public sector that is a minimum standard for any public institution; and in the additional effort to shift blame onto parents based on public policy that has NOTHING to do with the real issue and real hardship many of our children suffer every day.

At one point, I was called in to explain artwork, by Larry Elwood - a great oil painter I deeply admire and owe my life to his great storytelling and wonderful illustration skills, because less sophisticated persons could see only in one painting of those beautiful works known worldwide in Dragonlance Chronicles and Snarfquest comics, an image that had a gun. If that were the only time that ever happened, it would be casual. But even pointing a can of cheeze whiz at a classmate almost got me expelled... because, again... it reminded a teacher of a "gun".

We have to hire better teachers. We have to stop this stupid abusive cycle in public schools. I spent my high school years talking friends out of suicide over abuse and sexual assault covered up by my school. We cannot simply drop this issue because someone yells "Gun" and ignore the cause of this behavior.

Sincerely,  
JAMES A. ALLEN,  
President - RACCOON TECHNOLOGIES INCORPORATED