

Judith Reisman

From: Judith Reisman [jareisman@cox.net]
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<http://www.capitolweek.net/images/Dr.gif>

California Capitolweek #527 3/17/01 School Violence

((Melissa)) Hello, I'm Melissa Crowley

((Jack)) And I'm Jack Kavanaugh...Those stories and more up next.

((Melissa)) This type of prevention and intervention program is one way to try and stop violence, but are there other ways to get to the root of the problem?

Joining us now Dr. Judith Reisman, author of the "Kinsey: Crimes & Consequences" report for the U.S. Department of Justice and Paul Seave, former U.S. attorney and current manager of the crime and prevention center in the California Department of Justice. Thank you both for being with us.

Dr. Reisman, the frightening part is that school violence, actually violence can incur anywhere in today's society.



((Dr. Judith Reisman, Institute For Media Education))

People have been telling themselves for years that this is a lower echelon, lower level problem. Something that occurred only with underserved children, but as they look around their lovely suburban schools of course they are recognizing that the profile can fit any school. It can fit the upper suburban school as well as any other school, but recognizing my position, in the Institute for Media Education, I would argue that we would not solve these problems in any way, shape or form until we address the way in which our general society is treating violence, is treating sexuality issues. We had 4,200 children reported as rape victims, as battery rape, sexual battery victims just in school in 1996 reported in one of the D-O-J reports so this violence perpetuates itself in a whole broad spectrum of ways.

((Melissa))

Paul, what are we learning in terms of what Judith is saying and you have been a prosecutor and have seen these crimes escalate in the court rooms.



((Paul Seave, California Department of Justice))

What we are learning; what we've been learning for the past ten years is to start thinking in terms of what is causing this violence is risk factors. In other words, there is not a single cause. There is not a simple explanation. It's like someone who has heart disease or may have heart disease. The more risk factors he has—overweight, high blood pressure, doesn't exercise and so forth—the more likely they are going to have a heart attack. We can't say that he will but it's a greater likelihood. It's the same with violence especially among youth. And the risk factor starts unbelievably at age 0 and even while the child en utero. If a pregnant woman is taking drugs or alcohol, that can cause mild level of brain damage or worse. Harsh parenting, let alone, abuse or neglect is a risk factor.

Domestic violence - this is a new approach; the child doesn't have to be subjected to violence, simply being exposed to violence affects the development of the

brain in the first 5 years.

((Melissa)) So should we change – When we talk about prevention now, we just saw our story on teens trying to prevent conflict. Is that too late or is that still effective, but we need to sort of rethink our preventive efforts?

((Dr. Judith Reisman, Institute for Media Education))

Well, I would agree with everything that Paul has said but I have to add that one of the major risk factors, and we knew this since 1972 in the Surgeon General's report on television violence, has been the media. And I know that this is something that's a huge taboo that people are grappling with, but we have allowed the media to have such widespread availability. We have media in which these young boy killers get their picture on the paper; they get their pictures on television; they get their pictures on "Time" magazine; they get their name known everywhere; this is one of the most exciting things that have ever happened to them. And we know that this is a huge risk factor and certain kinds of kids wanting to imitate that and have that kind of opportunity. We have to stop that. We can't have their pictures out there and we can't use their names.

((Paul Seave, California Department of Justice))

Now, traditionally, we have been aiming our programs to children who are at least six years old and older and especially in junior high and high school. I think we have to rethink the way we are spending our money on prevention to really start in the first five years of life. At that time, if we can start fixing it there, we'll get more bang for the buck there than if we wait until the child has already been exposed to a lot of risk factors by the age of five, and we're already behind the eight ball there. I think the Department of Justice—we are already talking to the California Department of Education with whom we have a partnership, and we are exploring how to shift down to from age 0 on.

((Melissa)) Okay, one concern with that is when we look at the most recent case with the Santee shooting with the suspect. He didn't have a record. He didn't have any outward aggressive signs. It was at fifteen that maybe the grades started to slip a little bit, so how would we know to sort of look for the sign? Are the signs subtler? Are we keying in the wrong signs? In other words, are we looking at people who show a pattern of behavior when some of the deadliest violence has occurred with teens that have no record? * * * **((Melissa))** So how do we prevent it?

((Paul Seave, California Department of Justice))

Well, there are a number of general approaches. One is, as I said, we start looking at programs to deal with youth society-wide from age 0 on. Now, there are also programs in schools. When you get to junior high and high school programs, there are anti-bullying programs. Some have been scientifically tested and have had some success. There's the idea of "code of silence." Youth may know that their friends are considering doing something like what happened down in San Diego, and we can have programs that facilitate people that have this knowledge telling authorities. That's a very difficult issue, but we can work with that.

((Dr. Judith Reisman, Institute for Media Education))



Paul, now you're talking about stepping in again, halfway down the road. Look, one of the biggest problems I see with the violence issue in terms of the Department of Justice's work is their failure, in my view, to ignore the role of violent videos and that sort of thing. **Now, in Oklahoma they just passed a resolution, a law, that they would ban violent videos from children of a certain age, that sort of thing. I don't know all the details yet because I just read about it yesterday. We know that the violent videos and the games that the children are watching—Lieutenant Dave Grossman's been testifying about this for years—we know that there are certain things that are triggering young boys and—by the way, I don't think we've had any girl killers yet, have we?**

((Melissa)) No, I don't think so. Now, is that more of a parental role though?

((Dr. Judith Reisman, Institute for Media Education)) Well now that's what I wanted to argue.

((Melissa)) Is that more of a parental breakdown versus a system breakdown?



((Dr. Judith Reisman, Institute for Media Education))

That's what I wanted to say. I don't like the idea that we are simply talking about shifting responsibility to, number one, peer kids in the school and, number two, what we're going to do in the classroom, when, in my mind, we've undermined the role of parents for the past twenty to thirty years.

((Paul Seave, California Department of Justice))

Which fits into the point I was making earlier that the Department of Justice, when looking at risk factors, we feel that we have to start—I mean, the family is where violence and the risk factors start, and we should be looking at zero to five and then six and onward. Many of the programs about schools and high schools—you asked about that. There are things that we can do there, and I outlined two of them, but to really have an impact on violence prevention before it happens, we need to get in at the beginning, and I don't disagree with you that a risk factor is what people see in the media. That is one of many risk factors.

((Dr. Judith Reisman, Institute for Media Education))



The Columbine killers, these kids did not come from hostile, overaggressive parents, and I want to be very careful that the parents out there do not hear that when they try to be disciplinarians with their children—appropriate disciplinarians; I'm not talking about sadists, but as parents have been in the past, appropriate disciplinarians—that they're not going to worry, "Oh no, I'm going to turn this child into a killer." That is absolutely not scientifically established at all. We know that over-permissive parents can produce these kinds of children as well, but we have an over-permissive society, Paul. We have been corrupt, all of us, and we've been passing that corruption on to the children.

((Melissa)) Thank you very much. On that note, we are out of time. Dr. Reisman and Paul Seave, thank you very much.