

'Entertainment Industry Functions at the Moral Level of Drug Dealers'

Lt. Col. David Grossman (U.S. Army, ret.), one of the nation's foremost experts on the "new violence," and co-author of Stop Teaching Our Kids to Kill: A Call To Action Against TV, Movie & Video Game Violence (New York: Crown Publishers, 1999), issued the following statement on Sept. 14:

The Federal Trade Commission's (FTC) findings on the marketing of media violence to kids are out. We now can have no doubt that the entertainment industry aggressively markets violent video games, TV programs, and movies toward young children even though they are "labeled" for mature audiences.

This is a big step forward for anyone who cares about our children. This revelation by the FTC simply echoes what I have been discussing for the past few years, and what the U.S. Surgeon General, the American Medical Association (AMA), the American Psychological Association (APA), the American Academy of Pediatrics, and the National Institute of Mental Health have already established. Media violence causes violent crime, and an irresponsible, out-of-control industry is systematically marketing this addictive, toxic substance to children.

Film Director Sydney Pollack recently stated that, "the industry will give people what they want; as long as there's an appetite, the industry will feed it." This is nothing more than drug-dealer logic. The entertainment industry is functioning at the moral level of drug dealers and pimps, justifying actions that they know are harmful simply because people buy it and they can make money off of it. The tobacco industry accepts regulation of their product when it comes to kids. The media functions at a moral level beneath the tobacco industry; they function at the moral level of drug dealers and pimps!

Visual violent imagery is the addictive ingredient in their product. It is the nicotine in the cigarette, the alcohol in the beer. Like alcohol and nicotine, it is especially addictive if marketed to children. If Hollywood had to stop marketing violent, visual imagery to children, then their market share (TV, movies, and video games) would plummet, and the written word (newspapers, books, and magazines) would flourish.

The written word cannot be processed until around age eight, the spoken word cannot be processed until around age four, and both of these mediums have to be filtered, decoded, and processed by the rational mind. But violent visual images can be fully processed at the age of 18 months, and the infor-

mation goes straight into the emotional center.

The toddler is genetically primed to scan their environment for danger and violence and to learn from what they see. They cannot look away from violent visual images, because for every species this is vital survival information, except that your children cannot understand that it is not real. Thus we convince our children, from the very youngest ages, that they are in a dark, harsh, violent world. As a result, they are "hooked" on violence, and in the years to come they seek movies, TV, video games, and music drenched in violence, in order to affirm their world view. And some of them take this process one step further, some of them kill.

The violence industry knows that their products are causing violent crime. The Surgeon General, the AMA, and the APA have told them so. And the President of CBS stated that: "Anyone who thinks the media has nothing to do with [the mass murders at Columbine High School] is an idiot." Like drug dealers, Hollywood knows that their product is killing people, and like drug dealers, they just don't care. Their defense is, "People buy it, so we sell it. We are driven by the marketplace!" That is truly drug-dealer logic. Pimp logic. Except even drug dealers and pimps don't try to market to little children. Like Colombian drug lords, the media moguls intentionally sell an addictive, toxic product to children. This makes them hypocrites, accessories to the crime, and child abusers. But they don't care, because it also makes them millionaires.

We Must Educate Parents

A corporation can *not* stop doing something that makes money. If one corporation stops, their competitors will continue and will destroy them. The only thing that modifies a corporation's behavior is education, legislation, and litigation. We must educate America's parents about the harmful effects of media violence. We must regulate the marketing of violent video games to kids. These video games are firearms training devices at best, and murder simulators at worst, and there is no Constitutional right to teach nine-year-olds to blow people's heads off at the local video arcade. Finally, the ultimate way to make an industry stop doing something, is to make them lose money through lawsuits. We have the safest toys and the safest cars in the world, because if you sell a product that kills people, you will ultimately lose money.

Education, legislation, and litigation. These are not just three words that rhyme. These are three interactive, mutually supporting processes by which a society controls predatory corporations. If they could, the tobacco and the alcohol industry would still market their product to kids. It took a comprehensive societal campaign of education, legislation, and litigation to make these industries act like responsible members of our society. And, ultimately, this is how we will force the entertainment industry to, as the title of our book says: Stop Teaching Our Kids To Kill.