

**PHOTOCOPY  
PRESERVATION**

**Marketing Violence to Kids  
The White House  
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THE WHITE HOUSE  
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REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT AND MRS. CLINTON  
ON CHILDREN, VIOLENCE AND MARKETING

The Rose Garden

11:46 A.M. EDT

MRS. CLINTON: Good morning, and please be seated, and thank you for joining us today in the Rose Garden as we continue a national conversation about how to address the problems of youth violence in our communities and schools.

I want to thank everyone for coming this morning, and I'd like to acknowledge Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee, Mayor Deedee Corradini, Mayor Timothy Kaine, and County Executives Wayne Curry and Charles Ruppertsburger. In addition to the Chairman of the FTC, whom you will hear from in a minute, Robert Pitofsky, we also have Commissioner Sheila Anthony and Commissioner Mozelle Thompson. I'm also pleased that Pamela Eakes, who led the very innovative group, Mothers Against Violence in America, has worked with us on this event as she has on past events that are also part of our efforts to try to create ways in which every American can take his or her part in doing whatever we can against youth violence.

As a nation, we've reacted to the shootings at Columbine High School like almost no other event I can remember in recent memory. It has literally pierced the heart of America. Yet, in my conversations with young people and parents over the past few weeks, I've heard less talk about people feeling helpless or hopeless and more about a growing consensus that finger-pointing doesn't lead to solutions and that we have to move forward together to take steps to end the violence, not only in our schools, but in our broader community. And that it is time—some might say past time—that we all play a role in making a positive difference in the lives of our children.

I want to thank the Attorney General and the Chair of the FTC for joining us today, as well as the many parents, educators, religious leaders, members of the media and students who are here as well. I'm pleased that we will be hearing from a 4<sup>th</sup> grader this morning who will tell us how he became part of the solution in his home state of Washington.

I think all of us recognize that there is no single answer or solution to the problem of violence in our society, but that we must move on many fronts—from passing common-sense gun control efforts to helping parents understand better how to exercise authority over the media that their children are exposed to, and enabling more parents to spend more time with their own children.

We've come together to talk about some of the ways we can begin to reverse the culture of violence that is engulfing American children every day, particularly the role that the media plays in shaping the lives and values of our children and young people.

In 1972, a Surgeon General report said, and I quote: "We know that children imitate and learn from everything they see—parents, fellow children, school, the media. It would be extraordinary, indeed, if they did not imitate and learn from what they see on television."

The report went on to say that violence on television causes children either to mimic directly the actions they see or to act generally in a more aggressive way. Yet, today, more than 25 years after this report was written, our culture is even more saturated with TV programs, movies and songs that romanticize and glorify violence. What kind of values are we promoting when a child can walk into a store and find video games where you win based on how many people you can kill or how many places you can blow up.

We can no longer ignore the well-documented connection between violence in the media and the effects that it has on children's behavior. One study has found, for example, that if an actor is rewarded for violent behavior, children are more likely to imitate it. Another tells us that media violence has a particularly negative effect on children who already have a tendency toward aggressive or antisocial behavior.

According to the American Psychiatric Association, viewers of violence not only become desensitized and fearful, they begin to identify with an aggressive solution to their own personal problems. America's culture of violence is having a profound effect on our children, and we have to resolve to do all we can to change that culture.

One of the ways we can do that is to give parents the tools they need to control what their own children are exposed to. And we've already moved forward in that direction. Today's announcement is another important step in the fight against violence. We know there is a lot of work to be done. But I'm encouraged that so many leaders and citizens are coming together and talking honestly not only about the challenges we face, but what we have to do, together, to meet those challenges.

I'm particularly heartened that as a result of the meeting the President convened at the White House a few weeks ago, there was general agreement from a broad cross-section of Americans that we would launch a national grass roots campaign to prevent youth violence. We would model the campaign on successful national efforts like Mothers Against Drunk Driving, which showed us that we can change the culture when enough people from all walks of life say enough is enough. So I look forward to seeing everyone working together on this new nationwide effort to prevent youth violence.

Now, I'd like to introduce someone who cares deeply about the future of our children and who has fought tirelessly to create safe schools and communities. Our Attorney General, Janet Reno. (Applause.)

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THE PRESIDENT: Give him another hand. He was great.

Bravo. (Applause.) Thank you.

When I was listening to Arthur speak, I didn't know whether to offer him a job as a White House speechwriter -- (laughter) -- or just wait for the opportunity to vote for him someday. Let me say -- (applause) -- thank you very much. Thank you.

And we thank your mother for bringing you here, and congratulations. (Applause.) And Representative Mary Lou Dickerson, thank you; and Pam Eakes, founder of Mothers Against Violence in America, thank you.

I thank the Attorney General, and Chairman Pitofsky, for their remarks and their commitment. I thank Mayor Corradini, Mayor Kaine, County Executive Curry and County Executive Dutch Ruppertsburger for the interest that our local government leaders have. I thank Representative Sheila Jackson Lee for her passionate commitment to this issue. And, all of you, welcome to the White House.

And most of all, I want to say again how much I appreciate Arthur Sawe for coming here, and for sharing a child's perspective. We have other children in this audience today, and we are really here about them, and their future.

As Hillary said, the tragedy at Littleton had a profound effect on America. It certainly had a profound effect on us, and on our family—particularly after we had the chance to go to Colorado and visit with the families of the children who were killed, and many of the young children who are still grievously wounded—and the kids at the school with them, who are hurting still, and the teachers.

I do think that what Hillary said is right: we sense a determination, not only in that community but throughout our country, not just to grieve about this, but to do something about it. The national grassroots campaign against violence against children is rooted in our faith that we can do better.

We know we can prevent more youth violence if we work together, across all the lines that divide us. We know we can do it if we're all willing to assume responsibility, and stop trying to assign blame. Of course, the responsibility begins at home. It must be reinforced and supported at schools and houses of worship in the community as a whole. Those of us in public service must also do our part. There is broad and growing consensus for us to do more.

Let me say I am also very grateful that the gun manufacturers came here last month and voiced their support for common-sense restrictions to make it more difficult for guns to get into the hands of children and criminals. I'm encouraged that the Senate acted to close the deadly gun show loophole, to require safety locks to be sold with every handgun, to ban the importation of large-capacity ammunition clips, and ban violent juveniles from owning guns as adults. I hope the House of Representatives will pass these common-sense measures as soon as they return from the Memorial Day recess. (Applause.) We have a lot to do this year, but this should be put at the top of the agenda, and not put on hold.

As you have already heard, members of the entertainment industry must also do their part. They, and the rest of us, cannot kid ourselves. Our children are being fed a dependable daily dose of violence—and it sells. Now, 30 years of studies have shown that this desensitizes our children to violence, and to the consequences of it.

We now know that by the time the typical American child reaches the age of 18, he or she has seen 200,000 dramatized acts of violence, and 40,000 dramatized murders. Kids become attracted to it, and more numb to its consequences. As their exposure to violence grows, so, in some deeply troubling cases of particularly vulnerable children, does the taste for it. We should not be surprised that half the video games a typical seventh-grader plays are violent.

Anyone who doubts the impact of the cultural assault can look at what now, over 30 years, amounts to somewhere over 300 studies, all of whom show that there is a link between sustained exposure, hour after hour, day after day, week after week, year after year, to violent entertainment and violent behavior.

What the studies say, quite simply, is that the boundary between fantasy and reality violence, which is a clear line for most adults, can become very blurred for vulnerable children. Kids steeped in the culture of violence do become desensitized to it and more capable of committing it themselves.

That is why I have strongly urged people in the entertainment industry to consider the consequences of what they create and how they advertise it. One can value the First Amendment right to free speech and at the same time care for and act with restraint. Our administration has worked to give parents more tools to protect their kids, to block violent programming from entering their living room with the V-chip and the rating system. We've made progress on parental screening for Internet and ratings for Internet game sites.

Still, when violent entertainment made for adults is marketed to children, it undermines the rating system designed to protect them. And if you look at some of these ads, it's hard to argue with a straight face that the games were made for adults in the first place. Like the one Arthur mentioned.

Advertisements have a particular role here. They have the power to egg children on and lure them in. Every parent knows what response a commercial for sugar cereal or the latest Star Wars toy will get from their children. People advertise because it works. They want that product and, one way or the other, they're determined to get it. So we ought to think twice about the impact of ads for so-called "first person shooter video games," like the recent ad for a game that invites players to—and I quote—"get in touch with your gun-toting, cold-blooded murdering side."

I was given—today, Arthur brought me the magazine with the ad that he mentioned, and he was kind enough to mark it for me. There really is a gun here. It says: More fun than shooting your neighbor's cat. I was given another ad that says:

What kind of psycho drives a school bus into a war zone? And here's a school bus, heavily armed. This came out right after the incident in Springfield, Oregon.

Here's an ad that turns the argument I just made on its head: Psychiatrists say it's important to feel something when you kill. And then it goes on to say, you ought to get this technology because it bumps and you feel it. It says: Every sensation, every vibration, every mutilation, nine programmable weapons buttons. Customizable feedback software. Push the stick that pushes back and feel your pain. And here's one that's the most unbelievable of all. It says: Kill your friends guilt-free.

Now, obviously, Arthur has the inner strength and the good upbringing to reject that kind of violent appeal. Most of our children do. But not all of our children do. We cannot be surprised when this kind of thing has an impact on our most vulnerable children. Is it 100 percent to

blame? No. It's easier to get guns in this society. Parents on average spend 22 hours a week less with their children than they did 30 years ago because of the demands of work and commuting, the busyness of daily life.

But when you put it all together, there are bound to be explosive negative consequences. That's why today I am asking the Department of Justice and the Federal Trade Commission to study the extent to which the video game, music and movie markets do actually market violence to children, and whether those industries are abiding by their own voluntary systems of regulations.

To any company that sells violent products, I say, children are more than consumers. I understand nobody made anybody buy any of this stuff. But every day, a responsible society declines to do some things for short-term gain that it can do. And that is what we have to think about. These children are our future, our most precious resource. Raising them is any society's most important job.

Don't make young people want what your own rating systems say they shouldn't have. I might say again, as has already been acknowledged, they shouldn't have. I might say again, as has already been acknowledged, many, many people in the entertainment industry have worked with us on this—on the ratings system, on the V-chip, on the screening technology for the Internet.

I noticed one network executive, a few days ago, actually cancelled a program because its violent content was inappropriate, and I applaud that. But I also read with concern the news that some of the new programming coming up for this fall on some networks will be even more violent than last year's. The time has come to show some restraint, even if it has a short-term impact on the bottom line.

I also want to challenge the owners of movie theaters and video stores, distributors—anyone at any point of sale—enforce the rating systems on the products that you sell. Check the IDs, draw the line. If underage children are buying violent video games or getting into R-rated movies, the rating system should be enforced to put a stop to it. (Applause.)

And if, as many of us suspect, there is still too much gratuitous violence in PG-13-rated movies, the rating systems themselves should be re-evaluated.

I want to thank Senators Brownback, Lieberman, Hatch and Kohl, for the bipartisan work they have done on this issue. Again, I want to commend State Representative Mary Lou Dickerson from Washington, who read about young Arthur, helped to create a task force on video game violence, and thanks to her work with Pam and the Mothers Against Violence in America and the Washington Retailers' Association—who are all represented here today—video game retailers in Washington state now voluntarily sign a pledge to parents, committing themselves to check IDs and block sales of violent games to minors. That's something that ought to happen in every state in the United States of America. (Applause.)

Again I say, we can do something about this. It will take a grass roots campaign. It will take everybody doing his or her part. This is a problem we face together, a problem America can solve together. There is no more urgent task for our future.

You were all looking at this young man speaking today, thinking, what a wonderful thing that a person that young could speak so clearly, so confidently, about things that are so right. You look around at the other young people here today who are involved in this effort in some way or another, and you thank God that we have this legacy of children.

A lot of those kids that haven't made it through all these school violence incidents were just as good, just as fine, had just as much to give the world. We've got to quit fooling around with this. We've got a chance. Our hearts are open, our ears are open, are heads are thinking.

I know this stuff sells. But that doesn't make it right.

Thank you, and God bless you. (Applause.)

12:16 P.M. EDT