



August 10, 2001



Dear Ms. 

I am writing to ask for your support and participation in a project that focuses on the Columbine High School tragedy. In August, 1999, David J. Thomas, Jefferson County District Attorney approached Threat Assessment Group, Inc. (TAG), about conducting psychiatric autopsies on Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris. Mr. Thomas explained that he wanted to better understand how the Columbine High School tragedy could have happened.

More than two years have passed since this tragedy occurred. A number of governmental agencies have reviewed the events that occurred on April 20, 1999, and provided instructive feedback about what could have been done differently in response to this tragedy and what can be done to prevent such a tragedy from happening again. Despite these inroads, Mr. Thomas' question remains unanswered.

TAG is a specialized violence prevention firm comprised of leading authorities in forensic psychiatry, forensic psychology, and criminology. TAG uses educational methods and case interventions to help schools and other employers prevent the harm that comes from harassment, intimidation, bullying, threats, violence, and suicide. TAG's president, Dr. Park Dietz has participated in such notable cases as those involving John Hinckley, Jeffrey Dahmer, Susan Smith, Polly Klass, the Unabomber, and school shootings in Los Angeles, San Diego, Oregon, and Georgia.

Psychiatric autopsies have been used for years by mental health professionals to understand what drives a person to commit suicide or murder-suicide. A psychiatric autopsy is a detailed retrospective analysis of an individual's behavior during the months, weeks, days, and hours leading up to death. We believe that by conducting psychiatric autopsies of Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold, we will be able to facilitate a better understanding of what caused the events of April 20, 1999.

August 10, 2001

Page 2

In this particular case, our methodology includes reviewing all investigative reports, autopsy reports, toxicology reports, and physical evidence (including firearms, written materials, reading materials, photographs, videotapes, and visiting the crime scene). In addition, it is our goal to conduct in-depth interviews with Eric Harris' and Dylan Klebold's immediate family, friends, and associates, and anyone else who can help us understand these two young men. Areas of inquiry would include, but not be limited to, Harris' and Klebold's birth and developmental history, educational history, relationship history (with their parents, siblings, peers, and teachers), employment history, weapons history, psychiatric history, medical history, family medical history, family psychiatric history, religious upbringing, socioeconomic upbringing, juvenile behavioral history, legal history, traumatic childhood experiences, discipline history, substance use history, habits, interests, values, behavior, and plans.

The information will then be synthesized and summarized so as to address Mr. Thomas's questions, which include, but are not limited to: (1) What precipitated these acts by Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold? (2) Did Eric Harris and/or Dylan Klebold suffer from a psychiatric condition(s), and if so, to what extent did this influence the events of April 20, 1999? (3) What can be learned from careful analysis of this tragedy to help prevent future acts of violence?

Because of the importance of this project and in effort to educate the public about our findings, TAG has partnered with Bill Kurtis Productions to produce a documentary about this project. The program will be a one-hour show, to be broadcast on the A&E network.

When our work is done, we want to offer our findings to the affected families before they are made public. To this end, Kurtis Productions has agreed to notify TAG at least 30 days in advance of the broadcast date to allow time for us to schedule a presentation of our findings to the affected families on the day of the broadcast.

Although it is unusual to have a psychiatric autopsy filmed, we are asking anyone in your family who has information to meet with us so that we can have as complete a picture of the facts as possible in our effort to understand why this tragedy occurred. You are certainly free to decline to be interviewed, to decline to be included in the documentary, or to decline to discuss certain issues. We hope, however, that you will want to contribute your time to this effort, and we would greatly appreciate your cooperation. This project has the support of the Jefferson County District Attorney's office, Governor Bill Owens, and the Governor's Columbine Review Commission. (See enclosures)

TAG and Kurtis Productions will be in Denver from September 1, 2001, through September 9, 2001, and we are prepared to work around your schedule. We suggest that you block out two hours to complete the interview process. We will arrange an interview location that is convenient for you. In addition, we recognize that because of the ongoing civil litigation, you may have retained a



August 10, 2001

Page 3

lawyer. If so, we have no objection whatsoever to your lawyer accompanying you to the interview and sitting off camera during the interview.

Before beginning the interview, you will be asked to sign a program participant release. This is to authorize Kurtis Productions to use your interview in connection with the program and to authorize TAG to use your interview in educational efforts. *Also, please note that minors must be accompanied to the interview by a parent or guardian who can sign the release.*

Please understand that it is not our intent to inconvenience you. We only ask that you be responsive to the telephone call that you will be receiving some time in the next week inviting you to schedule an interview and participate in this project.

Thanking you in advance for your consideration, I am,

Very truly yours,



Erin M. Spiers, M.A.
Research Director, Columbine Psychiatric Autopsy Project

Enclosures