

Office of the District Attorney  
First Judicial District  
Jefferson and Gilpin Counties

DAVID J. THOMAS  
DISTRICT ATTORNEY



July 12, 2001

Governor Bill Owens  
136 State Capitol  
Denver, Colorado 80203-1792

RE: Proposed Columbine Project

Dear Governor Owens:

I am writing to let you know about a project that I am supporting, and to solicit your support for this project. Some time ago I suggested that a "psychiatric autopsy" be conducted on the Columbine killers, Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold. Such an examination could provide some answers to the still looming question of "why?" It could provide a look into what went wrong in the lives of these two young men. Just such an examination is now in the works through an organization called "The Threat Assessment Group" (TAG). This group of forensic psychiatrists, psychologists and other professionals is well known and very well respected for its work. Dr. Park Dietz, who is nationally known for his work on cases such as Jeffrey Dahmer, John Hinckley, "the Unabomber", along with many others, heads the organization. There are extensive materials available about the group and their prior work, and I will certainly provide contact information if you are interested. These experts are particularly experienced in the area of workplace violence and violent behavior.

I have advocated for this project because I believe it can help us answer, in part, many of the nagging questions that linger from the killings at Columbine High School. Just as your Commission helped answer some questions and put us on a track to try and prevent future incidents such as this, I believe this type of project can also help in our future planning efforts.

Professionals working with TAG have already reviewed and catalogued the entire investigative report released by the Sheriff's Office. They propose to interview many of the people who interacted with Harris and Klebold in the days and months preceding the tragic event. They hope to interview the parents and family members of each young man. Because they are nationally recognized experts without extensive Colorado ties, your support of this project would be important and would help to facilitate many of the interviews and activities that TAG has proposed.

I believe this project is worthwhile and that TAG has the professional experience to conduct this type of examination and to report the results. TAG has also partnered with Kurtis Productions. The result of their project would be the production of a documentary media piece that will air on A & E. My only role has been to propose the idea to this distinguished group of professionals. They have requested that I assist by contacting you and the Jefferson County School District to provide information about the project and to seek your support. I have agreed to offer my support for the project to help them with gaining access to individuals they hope to interview and other information they hope to analyze. Other than providing office space for the members of TAG and those from Kurtis Productions who will be in Colorado during the week of September 1 through September 9, I have no other involvement in the project. I do believe, however, that our joint support of this effort might help the researchers, psychiatrists, psychologists and other professionals obtain access to the information they will need to complete this important project.

I am available to answer any questions you may have. I would suggest that because I am not involved in the details of the project, I could also put you in touch with the members of the Threat Assessment Group. The phone number for TAG is 949-644-3537. Along with my thanks for your prior leadership and efforts to seek answers to Colorado's tragedy, I want to thank you for your time and consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

*David J. Thomas*  
*by gr*

David J. Thomas  
District Attorney

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