

## Lessons of U.S. mass shootings

By Drew McWeeney

Eighteen years ago, 33 students at Columbine High School in Colorado ceased to grow older. During a one-day killing spree that began on the morning of April 20, 1999, the deadliest high school shooting in American history tore through this tiny state. According to the History channel, 12 students and one teacher were murdered and 25 additional people were injured by two killers that attended the same high school these victims did. That level of resourcefulness during the Oklahoma City Federal bombing would have resulted in thousands of more deaths than the acknowledged 168 people who perished and 680 people injured, according to National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST).

Most victims of Columbine were shot to death by Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold using illegally-obtained firearms and shotguns from a gun show, NIST reported. Additionally, both killers also used the internet to construct 99 impressive explosive devices which were used during the shooting. This shooting was carefully planned since it only took \$500 worth of weapons bought in 1998. After the shooting, both killers ended their own lives, according to NIST.

Ever since Columbine, there have been many U.S. mass shootings that have included the use of firearms and guns with the end result of the suicide of the killers. Since 1999, other states have experienced their own dangerous flirtation with mass shootings. The Virginia tech shooting resulted in 32 people dead with the killer committing suicide.

The Sandy Hook school shooting resulted in 27 people killed with the killer committing suicide, according to NIST. And just recently, the Las Vegas shooting resulted in 59 people killed with the killer committing suicide, according to a Wall Street Journal article titled, "New Timeline on Las Vegas Shooting Marks Shift."

These, like other continuing dust-ups with mass shootings, creates a culture that is on the threshold of full membership in what I call the "mass shooting club." Worse, much of this carnage could have been prevented if we had a government and a people that understood that guns are not the problem; that people putting their hands on the trigger, and those people who can get access to weapons that should not have access to them are the problem. These massacres took place because of a lack of knowledge and awareness.

The horrors of other mass shootings such as that of Seal Beach, California in 2011 and Oak Creek, Wisconsin in 2012 bear witness that place does not determine mass atrocities or necessarily contribute to them. There are, in fact, no reliable predictive characteristics to mass shootings.

In addition to the inability of place to foretell the likelihood of mass shootings, the race argument also fails. According to the FBI's uniform crime-reporting data from



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2016, 90.1 percent of black victims of homicide were killed by other blacks, while 83.5 percent of whites were killed by other whites. The only shared feature to these and all other known shootings is they are carried out by criminal human agency.

Years ago, former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice identified mass shootings as "a problem from hell," as featured on FOX News in a transcript of Rice's speech at the RNC from 2012. Nikki Haley, current U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, used that very characteristic in a speech she gave to the Trump Administration three days after the Las Vegas shooting, particularly since this shooting is another one that has added to the long list of massacres that have impacted U.S. domestic policy since 1999, as featured in the Salt Lake Tribune in an article titled, "South Carolina Reacts to the Latest Mass Shooting."

Today, only two decades on, everyone in this responsible, pro-Second Amendment society I love to call "America" might want to reflect on the nightmares that Columbine and other mass shootings have brought to our society as terrifying examples of what can happen when political inertia, human rhetoric, apathy and assistance fatigue shapes and establishes its political responses to human catastrophes.

## Excessive humor in Marvel movies

By Jenna Stepleman

"Thor: Ragnarok" smashed the box office at number one this past weekend with \$121 million domestic sales, according to Variety magazine.

However, even with all this success, there seems to be a flaw that recently has been rearing its head into otherwise well-made Marvel content.

Reserve your judgements until the end of this argument—this may sound somewhat like a conspiracy until you really watch and see the timeline.

This phenomenon began in 2014 with the release of "Guardians of the Galaxy." In my opinion, this was one of the best Marvel movies and apparently others agree; as a matter of fact, to date it has grossed \$333 million domestically and \$440 million internationally, according to BoxOfficeMojo.

This movie, with its new comical twist on usually tense superhero plot devices, and an amazing soundtrack that pays homage to the early 70's and 80's, was an instant pop culture phenomenon. The "Awesome Mix Vol. 1," as it's called in the movie, sells for average 9.49\$ on the GooglePlay store and has been reviewed over 38,000 times.

Marvel, of course, being the savvy company it is, sees this success and in essence has basically changed it's format to reflect the "feel" of this franchise.

Unfortunately, they are doing it wrong, both in format and in place.

According to BoxOfficeMojo, "Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 2" topped its predecessor in the box office by around 50



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million dollars.

What Marvel fails to realize is that it was not because it was a superior movie, but because all they needed to do was ride the wave of people who liked the first to fill the seats.

Yes, the movie made more money opening weekend, but it was simply an oversaturated version of its predecessor. It is filled with jokes that don't land just for the sake of reminding you the first movie's jokes did.

That is not to say this movie was terrible. It was a decent movie; just very unoriginal in the sense it could have been amazing had it not felt like a Hollywood quota filled.

But let's get back to the main outrage that comes from "Thor: Ragnarok." Thor is a serious character—literally, he

is a God. In "Thor" 1 and 2, he actually mocks humanity and feels superior. That is a trademark personality trait of his. He is awkward and uncultured about the unspoken social contracts that we humans use.

Yet here we are. In the opening scene of Thor, he's ready to defeat a villain and he's basically a new character. Suave, witty, sharp; the list goes on. What could have caused this sudden rebrand of the Thor character, you might ask?

Maybe they modeled him off of Star Lord, the wise cracking antihero Chris Pratt plays in the the highly successful "Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 2" that came out shortly before the production of "Thor: Ragnarok."

This "overhumorization" as I call it works on a younger audience, but takes out the grit you want to feel in real life dangerous situations. It can be used as a tension breaker sometimes, but if every moment that is supposed to be tension filled is immediately made humorous, the moments are no longer humorous or tense at all. They simply become a hybrid of expectedly cringy jokes.

The plot of "Thor: Ragnarok" was good, as was the action and acting, which is why it is so disappointing to see this continued trend of "overhumorization" when it should leave the audience gasping.

Marvel needs to make a jump back into making unexpected, classic hero movies and not fall into making the same movie with different hero names. They truly do hero movies better than anyone. I don't think anyone wants to let that go for a fad franchise just yet.

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