

# The Voice of Reason

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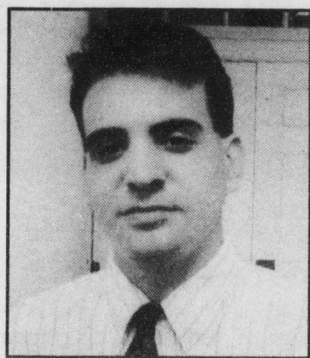


Photo by Mark Lewinter

Spagnola

The Left wing has made a startling discovery: crime is rampant, and criminals may be responsible for their own behavior. It all started a month ago when the soul of liberalism, Mario Cuomo, made a tough speech on crime. Since then, Bill Clinton and a host of state governors including North Carolina's Jim Hunt, have embraced the "three strikes and you're out" policy for violent offenders.

You wouldn't know that there was any change of heart if you read the latest headlines. Connie Chung brought attention to the latest debate on CBS's "Eye to Eye." The Chung report dealt with something that conservatives have long known: our society is increasingly excusing criminal behavior based on psychological and social reasoning. The timing of this report could not have been more perfect.

Two trials recently in the news have put this matter into better focus: the Menendez trial and the Bobbit trial. In both cases, criminal behavior is being excused.

In the Menendez trial, the defense claims that the two boys murdered their parents because they were physically abused over the years. The defense paints a picture of two boys who had no other choice but to plan to kill their parents. The latest jury could not reach a decision whether the boys were responsible for the crimes based on the defense's claims. This is ludicrous. The "reasonable person" standard of our law dictates that defensive action can only be taken as far as what is within reason. In other words, drastic action is only permissible when all other reasonable methods of avoiding conflict are exhausted. Clearly, the

Menendez brothers could have simply left, contacted an abused child network, or gone to the police. This is what a reasonable person would have done. These boys are either guilty (and after their substantial inheritance) or unreasonable, and therefore deserve to be sent to the pen or the nuthouse.

The trial of Lorena Bobbit is even more intriguing. Here we have a woman who claims that her husband raped her countless times during their marriage. With this in mind, one night she approaches him with a knife under the influence of an "uncontrollable impulse" that she suffers for about five seconds, and soon her husband John is a soprano. She then gets into her car and tosses the severed object of her oppression out the window.

There are many problems with the Bobbit case. First, John Bobbit was tried for rape and assault and acquitted. This certainly calls her claims into suspect. This isn't to say that Lorena Bobbit was lying, but does that excuse her actions? According to the facts of the case, her actions did not take place until several hours after the alleged rape occurred. This would eliminate aggravated circumstances as a viable excuse. Also, she was not in clear and present danger. The al-

leged rape had already occurred hours earlier. If she was raped, she could have gone to the police, or left and never gone back.

The standard is to work through the justice system. It would have been one thing if her actions took place during an alleged rape, but for her to wait several hours and then claim to suffer a fleeting moment of insanity is very suspect. Another very important factor to consider is that during John Bobbit's trial, Lorena admitted that the sex that night was consensual. If John Bobbit raped Lorena Bobbit, then he deserves to go jail; however, he did not deserve what happened to him, given the facts in this case.

As far as our society is concerned, a much larger question is at hand. When a kid kills his someone, we blame it on his "broken home," "lack of hope," or we blame the gun that is used. Our society excuses criminal behavior based on sociological reasonings. This is akin to blaming automobiles for drunk drivers.

The problem of people not taking responsibility for their actions extends beyond crime. It is an integral factor in such issues as welfare, teenage pregnancy, abortion, AIDS, homelessness and unemployment. The notion of individual responsibility has been revered for time immemorial; it has only been in the last thirty years that America has moved away from this principle. This obsession with hedonism is no doubt linked with the explosive growth of government, which has sent the message that people can depend on Washington to pick up the pieces when individuals try and fail, or in many cases, when people fail to try. Conservatives have long made such correlations. Now maybe we can get some action.

# Creative Resistance

Naomi Blass  
Staff Writer

*"Faced with the open-ended mystery of freedom, often the misery we know is preferable if only for the comfort of its familiarity."*

-Kay Leigh Hagan, *Fugitive Information*

*"Why is she still with him? He treats her like s--t!"*

-Anonymous

Why do some women habitually date individuals who emotionally, physically, sexually and mentally abuse them? Why, we ask? When men are presented as "normative" and women as "deviant," it follows that women will be negative towards themselves, too. We all enjoy that which is familiar, and for women, negativity about our bodies and interior selves is like an old hat. So hey, why not let others do it to us, too?!

What we see in American culture are women socialized to hate themselves. Women who are taught to take care of other's needs before their own, whose vocabulary does not include phrases such as "No," "I need to take care of myself," and "Go away."

Self worth is a struggle for women. In our culture, appreciable worth is placed on beauty and sexuality, instead of upon intellect and personhood. (Voluptuous, yet anorexic, blankly staring high fashion models do not help.) Similarly, in real life, where eating, showering, and dressing are often limited to thirty minutes, these so-called standards of beauty are impossible to reach, even when

disregarding the use of airbrushing and good lighting in photography.

Thus from the very point of childhood (when did you get your first Barbie?) women begin to internalize false expectations of beauty, body and self. How many of you out there have an internal critic, telling you that you are ugly, fat, stupid, too tall, too whatever? How many of you have an external critic (boyfriend, girlfriend, lover, mother, father, sibling, close friend, whatever) telling you the same derogatory self-concepts?

Even though we are bombarded by negative "affirmations," ("we only hurt the ones we love") ABUSE, no matter how subtle, DOES NOT EQUAL LOVE AND HEALTHY ATTENTION!!! Just because you are used to something, does not make it right. If you've only tasted vanilla, that does not mean chocolate doesn't exist! It's time for a change...

What to do? Look at your past and present relationships; find that pattern and break it. Ask yourself "Why are you doing this to yourself?" Take responsibility. Tell yourself you are worthwhile and deserve good in life. Ask yourself (don't let others tell you) what you want and need. Are you getting it? If not, SPEAK UP! VOICE YOUR OPINION! No one can read your mind. And bump those internal and external critics out, and replace that space with an affirmative voice of compassion.

Be good to yourself! Find women images which are positive and to YOUR liking. Most of all, you are special; your experiences are normal. Be picky--you are neither a commodity nor a convenience for anyone, male or female.

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The Guilfordian encourages submissions. Typed articles and letters are due by 6:00 PM, Monday. Letters are limited to 250 words or less and must include author's name, phone number and P.O. Box. Write to:

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