

Colorado School Shootings and Pot Prosperity

Part 4 of 'Whom the Gods Would Destroy'

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by Mike Scruggs

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Nine states and DC have legal recreational marijuana. Wiki

Shortly before 2:00 PM on Tuesday, May 7, two teen-age students penetrated deep into Highlands Ranch K-12 STEM School in Douglas County, Colorado. Pulling out pistols, they began a shooting spree at two locations killing one student and wounding eight more. The heroic action of three students, one of whom was Kendrick Castillo, the only fatality, disarmed the shooters, who were arrested and taken into custody by Douglas County sheriff deputies within two minutes. The 1,800-student school did not currently have a School Resource Officer but had private security

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According to Douglas County Sheriff Tony Spurlock. Highlands Ranch is a high income suburban area 12 miles south of Denver. In the public schools system, STEM stands for science, technology, engineering, and math.
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Both shooters were students at Highlands Branch STEM School. One of the shooters was 18-year-old Devon Erickson, a senior at Highlands Ranch. The other was a sixteen-year-old female “transgendering” to a male. She has since been identified as Maya “Alec” McKinney. According to Sheriff Spurlock, at least one of them was a user of both “legal” and illegal substances and had been in mental health counseling. Sheriff Spurlock believed revenge and anger were among the motives. Erickson’s Facebook page and paintings on his car indicated his ideology was strongly left-liberal, anti-social, anti-authority, and anti-Christian. One of his Facebook posts was a confused diatribe against Deuteronomy 17: 12-13, saying basically that he “hated” some Christians because of their conservative Biblical views [presumably on homosexuality or gender identity].

The next day, Wednesday, students were gathered for what was supposed to be a vigil supporting the victims, the student body, parents, and teachers. One of the speakers, Colorado legislator Democrat Representative Jason Crow’s speech began to turn attention to tightening Colorado’s gun laws. Many students, seeing the meeting was being turned to political purposes, began to walk out. Outside they began to chant to the media: “mental health, mental health.”

Following a public referendum in November 2012, supporting recreational marijuana, Colorado’s Constitution was changed to legalize and regulate recreational cannabis (marijuana) effective January 1, 2014. Marijuana has been proven to have negative effects on mental health, including acts of violence. It is especially dangerous to the mental health of adolescents and young adults up to age 26 whose brain functions have not matured. Since 2013, marijuana use has increased at least 45 percent in Colorado and is nearly double the national level. Violent crime has increased 18 percent, and auto deaths have risen 35 percent. One out of four auto deaths in Colorado are attributed to marijuana use. Not all the victims are marijuana users. Many are passengers, other drivers, pedestrians, and cyclists.

The Colorado law regulating recreational marijuana requires a minimum age of 21 to purchase it, but with 491 cannabis stores in the state and a large black market with cheaper prices, adolescents, college students, and young adults have easy access to it.

A report by the Coalition of Campus Alcohol and Drug Educators (CADE) released in December 2018 revealed that frequent use of marijuana by college students in Colorado is higher than any other state. The survey found that 14 percent of Colorado college students use marijuana 15 or more days per month. Some use it two to five times a day. Many college counselors believe frequent cannabis use among students often derails educational and career plans. College counselor Laura Thompson laments that many students use it to overcome anxiety, but its longer range effect is to increase anxiety. Some even use it to manage mental health issues, but, of course, it makes things worse.

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The perpetrators of mass shootings are frequently linked to marijuana, but it is seldom reported, except on back pages of newspapers. Currently the cannabis lobby in Colorado has a vested interest in covering up murder attributions to marijuana.
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However, the *New York Times* reported that Dylann Roof, the 21-year-old, who in 2015 murdered nine people (all African-Americans) in a church in Charleston, South Carolina, started using marijuana as a teenager. News stories emphasized racial hatred and Confederate symbols. Mentioning marijuana and mental illness would have diluted their preferred motives. MPR News in Minneapolis mentioned that Andrew Engeldinger, 36, who murdered six people at a Minneapolis sign company in 2012 had been using marijuana and alcohol since a young adult. In 2011, Jared Laughner, 22, murdered six people and wounded 13 in Tucson, Arizona. In 2008, he had been rejected by the Army, after admitting he was a frequent marijuana user.

Marijuana use may not be a factor in every mass murder or school shooting, but the number may be higher than most people realize. Law enforcement and news media should consider reporting violence associated with marijuana use a high public safety priority. This is especially true because of the sharp rise in THC (Tetrahydrocannabinol) content in marijuana products since 1985. THC is the principal psychoactive chemical in cannabis. Average THC content in Colorado rose from 3 percent in 1985 to 20 percent in 2017, and cannabis retailers frequently offer cannabis candy and cookies with 30 percent content.

According to the Rocky Mountain HITDA reports, the consequences of increased use and higher THC content are showing up in Colorado hospitals and emergency rooms. The yearly rate of emergency room visits associated with marijuana increased 52 percent from 2012 to 2016. Marijuana related hospitalizations rose 148 percent during the same period. No wonder Highlands Ranch students were shouting “mental health” rather than “gun control” at the politicized vigil the day after the shooting. More gun control would simply encourage more crime and bring in more criminals.

In the very same week, Denver voters narrowly approved an initiative decriminalizing psychedelic mushrooms. If military and overseas ballots don't change that, Denver will become the first city in the country to decriminalize psilocybin, the key compound in psychedelic and potentially hallucinatory mushrooms. Decriminalization will not mean official legalization, only that the Denver Police Force will make enforcing federal laws against selling this type of mushroom their lowest priority.

Pot prosperity may ruin the peace and future prosperity of the states that choose it. Legalizing recreational marijuana contradicts federal law and is virtually a proclamation that a state is no longer family-friendly or supportive of traditional American values and work ethic. Widespread Amotivational Syndrome does not draw or retain industries that must compete in brain-power, technology, and productivity. It is also a political whirlpool that drowns strong and responsible leadership and produces only foolish and cowardly political leadership. So far, nine states and the District of Columbia have legalized recreational marijuana: Alaska, California, Colorado, D.C.,

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Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Nevada, Oregon, and Washington. This may be most of the low-hanging fruit for the prophets of ruin, but they don't have to flood every compartment of the American ship to cripple or sink her.

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When the gods would destroy, they first make mad."