Opening Extract from...

BORN KILLERS

Written by **Dr Kris Mohandie**

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BORN KILLERS?

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For my mother, Linda Merle Roberts,
and father, Luc Francois Mohandie.
No mere words will ever be enough
to thank my loving parents
for all they did for me
and so many others as teachers,
and human beings.

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I know I've left so many out, and I don't think I've done an adequate job of acknowledging everyone, or justice to all who have done so much for me.

I am especially grateful to the Source of all. Thank you, God, for this life, the experiences you allowed me to have, the people you surrounded me with, and the flow of inspiration.

PROLOGUE

It was 1988, and I was all of twenty-four years old. I was in my second-year internship half-time, and I was also moonlighting after-hours at a private practice. At this point, I'd met a guy who dreamed of killing and was terrified of the images in his head—in retrospect, probably a budding sex killer who was trying to fight his images and urges. I'd interviewed a woman who had a genuine multiple personality disorder, from years of horrifying sexual abuse, and recently met a tragic boy who set fires and acted out, who had been kept chained in a basement, fed dog food, and used by his father and all of his pedophile friends as an object until he was rescued. But most of my work was with normal people struggling with anxiety, failed relationships, and some school misbehavior.

I received an intake sheet in my box at the private practice: "Robert P., has an Uzi, will kill people if his court case doesn't go his way." I was to see him this very day, and I really didn't know quite what to think. The secretary buzzed me later that afternoon to let me know he had arrived. I went out to the waiting room and invited him into my comfortable outpatient office.

He was about forty, married with two kids, and highly educated; he had a nice house in a suburb and was working at a local tech firm. He proceeded to tell me his story.

The company had some lucrative government defense contracts, and he had blown the whistle on some cost-overrun issues—you know, like

five-thousand-dollar hammers or one-thousand-dollar toilet seats. At that point, he perceived he was retaliated against, and his employer made his life difficult and very stressful.

So much so that Robert took a week of sick leave to regroup. He returned to work and started to obsess about it. "Why should I have to use *my* sick time? This should be a workers' comp reimbursement." So he filed a workers' comp suit. All he wanted was his week of sick time back and to be left alone.

His employer made a federal case out of it, and Robert went through the adversarial questioning of his truthfulness, the legitimacy of his claims, and so forth in the pretrial proceedings. His integrity was questioned. The case was going to a final hearing. The stress had been so much for Robert that he wasn't eating, wasn't sleeping, and was infuriated. "How dare they?"

He decided what he was going to do. He made a list of all the people who had betrayed him, dirtied his image and, in his words, "destroyed" him. He then sought and purchased an Uzi on the black market, with a ton of ammunition. He told me that if the hearing did not go his way, he was going to kill all these people.

I asked him where he was keeping the Uzi. He said at his cabin.

He perceived he had been destroyed, yet he had a cabin. And a nice home. And a wonderful family. By the way, he was also moonlighting. In addition to his nice 1988 salary of one hundred thousand dollars, he was also pulling down another hundred thousand dollars a year dabbling in the real estate market.

But cognitive constriction had caused him to fixate on the questioning of his integrity and the sense of being wronged. Moral righteousness was the theme.

I was terrified, overwhelmed, and sure my career—before it had begun—was over. I was going to lose the degree I had not yet earned, would never get licensed, and didn't even have malpractice insurance yet. I said to Robert, "I'll be right back."

Now if you are ever in a therapist's office and you've just told him or her something heavy and the response is "I'll be right back," it might be

a clue that something is amiss. Bless his heart, Robert stayed while I fled to my supervisor's office.

I told my supervisor the same story I just told you. He said, "I'll come with you. I think we can help him."

So we both sat down with him. My supervisor told Robert we could help him, complimented him for coming in to address this, and focused on the part of Robert that must not have wanted to do what he had been planning. The workers' comp hearing was about two weeks out. We had some time.

Robert went home that day. I met with him a few more times. He ultimately saw the big picture that his life hadn't been destroyed, that he had already made his point, and he was going to accept the outcome of the hearing, no matter what.

During our last visit, Robert thanked me. He then volunteered that he had gotten rid of the Uzi. Out on a friend's sailboat, between Los Angeles and Catalina Island, he had slipped it out of his briefcase and into the deep water of that channel.

I said, "Robert, but you paid eighteen hundred dollars for that gun. Why didn't you sell it?"

He replied, "I didn't want some crazy guy to get it."

He offered to let me use his story with his real name, even to go speak to anyone about what he had gone through. I have chosen to protect his identity here. But I am grateful for the experience, for his courageous decision, and to fate for intervening. I occasionally think of Robert, and I hope he is well, and I hope that his life has over and over again proven to him how glad he is to be alive and reinforced that he made the right choice.

It wasn't my great clinical skill that led to this positive outcome. We should have hospitalized him until he let go of his homicidal plan and impulses. We should have warned the intended victims. We should have called the police to let them know about the threats. But it was 1988, and we really didn't know what we were doing with this stuff. We did not do any of that.

I got lucky.

Later, I told my supervisor about a postdoctoral internship position at the Los Angeles Police Department; the advertisement specified to contact the Director of Behavioral Science Services Section, Dr. Martin Reiser. My supervisor encouraged me to apply. The real journey was about to begin. We all have to start somewhere.

CHAPTER 1

The Human Abyss

"Yea, though I walk through the valley
of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil."

—Psalm 23:4

Over many years now, I have studied and met killers and various criminals from all over the world.

Terrible people doing terrible things. Evil thoughts, wicked deeds.

When I was six years old, I remember walking through tall grass, wet with the morning dew, in wonder at the world around me. Innocent and free. It was a world of caterpillars, lizards, snakes, and birds, and if I was really lucky I might see a woodpecker or even a hawk circling above. I'd lie on the grass and watch the clouds pass by in the blue sky. It rained a lot back then, but it was the rain of hope, and everything was beautiful and green.

I was twenty-five years old in 1989 when I earned my Ph.D. in clinical psychology.

Originally, I had been a political science major and wanted to eventually become a lawyer, but I switched over to psychology during my first year of undergraduate study at California State Polytechnic University, Pomona.

I've always been sort of lucky—right place at the right time—and compared to kids these days, not so planful. I grew up in Southern California and did not have any desire to go anywhere else to attend school. So I applied to two local schools without giving it much thought. Hell, it was 1980, and things were pretty relaxed.

At Cal Poly, I did not care at all for the political science professors or the coursework. It seemed difficult to do well or master the material if you didn't agree with their views, which in retrospect tended to be Marxist and socialist nonsense, and I had trouble tracking their often meandering logic and analyses.

If I had known more back then, I would have challenged them about violent true believers like Joseph Stalin and Chairman Mao who were armed and inspired by these ideas, and the millions who died as these philosophies were rammed down their throats at the point of a gun. Believe or die.

But I found the psychology coursework in my general education fascinating. I'd had a little taste of it in high school in a religion-and-psychology class. Learning about the human psyche, what makes us tick and why, quickly became my passion. I was seventeen and had finally figured out where I was going, at least generally, and I was all in. For the first time, I gave school my all. I knew I couldn't stop there, because if you go into psychology, you have to get your doctorate to do the really interesting stuff. There was a lot of talk about graduate school, and I applied to a few, but the one that really caught my eye was the California School of Professional Psychology—the Los Angeles campus, to be exact—in a simple ad. It was American Psychological Association-approved and, well, it was in California! It was a nontraditional professional school, the first of its kind. Less research, more emphasis on practice. I got in, and it was an amazing experience.

During those five years, I had the opportunity to complete several internships. As luck would have it, my first one was at the Anaheim Police Department counseling first-time juvenile offenders. The next year I worked in a community mental health center in Pomona, doing rotations with the severely mentally ill and the psychiatric emergency

team, and performing standard outpatient work. My final year, I interned helping out developmentally disabled kids and their families. And in the midst of it, I moonlighted in a private practice in Upland, where I had my first brush with danger—that client from my prologue who was planning to commit a workplace mass murder.

Joining the Los Angeles Police Department in 1989 as an unpaid intern was the beginning of finding my true niche. I saw the advertisement for a part-time internship at the LAPD, a tiny posting on the bulletin board at my graduate school as I was approaching the completion of my Ph.D. It seemed like it might help me develop a specialty that could be useful in my future career. A simple ad, after all, had resulted in a grad school choice. And I'd gotten a taste of police culture at the Anaheim PD.

I called Dr. Martin Reiser, not knowing at the time that this was the man who had founded police psychology in the 1960s and become the first full-time staff psychologist with any police department in the country—the LAPD.

He eventually hired me as his psychological assistant. I was relieved, exhilarated, grateful, and overwhelmed. I was going to learn to do therapy with police officers, be taught hostage negotiation, go out on dangerous-incident calls, teach, maybe do some research, and receive mentoring from the very man who had developed this unique niche. Maybe I'd even be able to pay off my student-loan debt!

We worked out in the field and in the office together. I learned my craft firsthand from Dr. Reiser, and in 1991 became a licensed psychologist still working with police in Los Angeles.

I've been interested in criminality and violence ever since I can remember. I used to read the Hardy Boys mystery books as a kid, the first things that got me excited about solving crimes and understanding the makings of a criminal. I'd had an innocent, serene childhood, with warm memories of exploring the outdoors, lying in fields of wet grass, watching the clouds and butterflies drift by. But there was always that attraction to darkness. For some reason, I always wanted to hurl myself as deep into it as I could.

During my teenage years, I sensed the mounting antisocial turbulence in society. Unlike most kids, I was transfixed by deviant sociopolitical violence and criminal behavior like plane hijackings, the Jonestown mass suicides, and the activities of the Manson gang and the Symbionese Liberation Army.

I grew up in Los Angeles County as the Crips and Bloods were first forming in my neighborhood. Born Krishnan Raj Mohandie in a rough area of Altadena and looking "racially ambiguous," I experienced all sorts of colorful nicknames—sometimes as a misperceived outsider, other times as a misperceived insider.

But I survived, adjusting to the volatile world around me through my wits and my ability to talk and listen to many diverse types. I was observant, could think on my feet, and talked my way out of the gauntlet of racially charged conflicts that were part of my daily life.

By the time I joined the LAPD and began working with Dr. Reiser, his unit—the Behavioral Science Services Section—largely treated shell-shocked police officers, suffering from what was later known as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD); worked to hypnotize victims to enhance their memories of horrifying events; and used psychology to help defuse life-and-death hostage situations.

Hostage negotiation teams began springing up in the early 1970s after the well-publicized standoffs at Attica state prison in New York and the Munich massacre at the Olympics in Germany. It was then that law enforcement began to wonder if maybe there was a viable alternative to storming a building with guns blazing, which usually resulted in loss of life, second-guessing, and litigation.

The New York Police Department began using hostage negotiation techniques in the 1970s for garden-variety domestic violence situations, holed-up criminals, the mentally disturbed, and the like.

My chosen professional niche within the field of police psychology became operational psychology—the application of psychology to police tactical and investigative operations. And my first love was hostage negotiation, as a member of what we now call Crisis Negotiation Teams, or CNTs. The name shift reflected the reality that most domestic incidents

do not involve a hostage taker leveraging for money and political change, but rather some distraught or deranged individual, often under the influence of drugs or alcohol, overwhelmed with emotions and contemplating the worst-case resolution to their life dilemma.

The LAPD hostage negotiation unit that I joined in 1989 as a college grad was only the third such agency established in America, behind New York's and San Francisco's, which put me on the ground floor of the emerging field.

I rolled out to incidents in progress watching Dr. Reiser give his real-time input to help prevent suicides and homicides. He turned me loose on my first solo assignment in 1990—a parolee with an AK-47 holding his common-law wife and child hostage. When I arrived at the scene, the first responding sergeant was screaming over the phone at the guy. It was not going well.

I applied some suggestions I'd learned from Dr. Reiser and the most recent CNT class I'd attended: "speech lower and slower," for example, and a few other basic tricks of the trade.

At one point, we heard the sound of metal clacking against teeth over the phone line as the man placed the rifle barrel into his mouth. I suggested the sergeant ask him to please take it out as we didn't want a mishap. And he did! I was thrilled.

After hours of talking, the man finally agreed to surrender. It was a terrifying yet tantalizing first real-world look into the human abyss of criminality. The suspect survived, and so did I. I was hooked.

The LAPD's first CNT was unlike the New York City/East Coast model, which separated the tacticians, or uniformed police, from the talkers—people like me.

The LAPD had already formed the first domestic SWAT (Special Weapons and Tactics) team in the world, and it was considered the best. It was founded in the 1960s under the command of Chief Daryl Francis Gates, who would later find notoriety for the failure of his paramilitary approach to policing, and for his command staff's failure to act decisively at the outset of the infamous Rodney King riots in 1992.

From the beginning, psychologists like me in Los Angeles were attached to hostage negotiation units led by SWAT teams. My role meant accessing information and providing it to the entire team on-site, known as psychological intelligence gathering.

I was to determine whether a person was "negotiable" or not—could he or she be talked off the ledge, and if so, how? In addition, I was expected to provide specific strategies and dialogue during these tense hostage situations, and to be present in order to monitor and provide real-time feedback during the negotiation process.

By 1992, at age twenty-nine, I wore three hats at the LAPD. I was a practicing psychologist treating a full slate of patients such as PTSD-afflicted police officers. Simultaneously, I was serving as a consultant to numerous units within the department, including the elite LAPD hostage negotiation/SWAT team, the threat management unit, and numerous investigative squads, like those for sex crimes and robberies and homicides. I also was serving as a training instructor, sharing knowledge about all of the above inside and outside the LAPD.

Fast-forward more than two decades and I wear even more hats. Along the way I picked up some forensic expertise and began consultation with other police agencies, as well as in the private sector regarding threat and risk assessment, including in the entertainment industry. Around 2002, it became too difficult to juggle the consultations I was doing with law enforcement agencies and private clients, work on criminal and civil cases, and a contract with the FBI in its Behavioral Analysis Program assisting around the country on counterintelligence and counterterrorism matters.

With the birth of my son, I never went back to the LAPD as an employee and officially retired from the agency in 2003.

While I am no longer employed full-time by the LAPD, I continue to work as a clinical, police, and forensic psychologist based in Los Angeles. My work takes me all over North America.

No two days are ever the same. One morning, I'm helping an entertainment client deal with a potentially dangerous stalker, and in the afternoon, a university is calling with concerns about a threatening and unstable student. A day later, I'm testifying about a sanity issue for the

prosecution in a homicide trial. Within twenty-four hours, I'm reviewing materials for two other murder cases and a police shooting, then I move on to working on yet another shooting and another homicide case.

In the middle of it all, I'm getting my son up for school, making breakfast, spending some quality time with my family, making sure homework is getting done and turned in, and doing the nighttime family home routine. I'm grateful to get to do what I do, but being a parent is the best and most important role of all.

By week's end, I'm juggling a long conference call on multiple threat and risk cases with a large corporate client, while being on standby to provide testimony in a federal police shooting case. Then comes an emergency call from a university with concerns about one of its students possibly posing a campus violence threat.

I love it! I'm in my zone.

Unfortunately for the world, there is never a shortage of work in the arena of threat assessment, extreme violence, and victimology, a fancy way of referring to the social science dedicated to the study of the relationships between victim and perpetrator and the psychological effects on them from their experiences. Traumatic bonding, Stockholm syndrome, and counterintuitive victim responses are all part of victimology.

I deal with nefarious characters of all types, and work with clients including police departments, federal and international law enforcement agencies, and criminal and civil courts. I have testified more than seventy times in criminal trials and twenty-five in civil cases, given more than forty depositions, consulted to both defense and prosecution teams, and worked on numerous death penalty cases in multiple states and jurisdictions, including California, Alaska, Washington, Nevada, Nebraska, Oklahoma, and Texas, as well as Canada.

Occasionally I dabble in on-air endeavors as well, having appeared in and hosted several TV true-crime documentary-style shows, such as the Investigation Discovery network's *Most Evil* and *Breaking Homicide.*

Everything I've done, seen, and learned going all the way back to college has taught me much about evil deeds and the people in every corner of society who commit them.

My hope here is to provide an informed peek behind the curtain of criminality in a world that's getting darker and more dangerous by the day, a chance to delve into the minds of the vicious while providing insight into why these people do what they do and lessons we can learn as a society to help stop or at least reduce the bloodshed.

America has become the international capital of mass shootings, the once-shining light upon a hill now often viewed in muzzle flashes and body counts garnering headlines around the world. And even though not all events happen on American soil, it seems that our criminals have inspired many international offenders.

Mass casualty shootings occur far too regularly as demented gunmen fire on throngs of innocent people in random cities and towns across the U.S., like Parkland, Florida; Las Vegas, Nevada; Sutherland Springs, Texas; and San Bernardino, California, to name just a few.

We are no longer shocked when kids and teachers hide in closets from gun-toting predators, followed by the ubiquitous "thoughts and prayers" but very little action to stem the carnage.

Is it any surprise that the mother of a recent victim said, rather than prayers, she wants people to actually do something to stop these tragedies from occurring again and again and again?[1]

It's gotten to the point where some believe the best solution is to arm teachers and fortify schools like military bases or prisons. Do we really want to arm teachers? Do they want to be armed? Even police officers who train extensively occasionally discharge their weapons accidentally.

How are first-responding officers supposed to know the difference between the hero teacher with a gun and the armed offender? Do we want to make it easy for a violent student to access the gun by overpowering an armed teacher? I don't think so. If teachers wanted to be cops, they would have gone to the academy. These solutions create more problems than they solve.

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[1] "Distraught Mother of Mass-Shooting Victim Says She Doesn't Want 'Thoughts' and 'Prayers,'" Women in the World, November 9, 2018, https://womenintheworld.com/2018/11/09/distraught-mother-of-mass-shooting-victim-says-she-doesnt-want-thoughts-and-prayers/.

Targeted, purposeful, goal-oriented and agenda-driven violence fueled by cognitive thought and fantasy in which anger and rage are converted to cold-blooded planful revenge used to be the province of the assassin.

Now we see many categories of individuals who have stepped up to the targeting platform, with a myriad of ideological and personal issues driving their plans.

Much has been learned about targeted violence, including the fact that the perpetrators typically engage in certain behavioral and thought sequences. This knowledge can help with early detection and interruption of the violence, and assist experts in distinguishing the hunters—the truly dangerous—from the howlers who may be all talk.

"Leakage" is at the top of these patterned responses and forms the foundation of "See something, say something" campaigns. Would-be violent criminals very often telegraph their plans to friends or family or on social media platforms, offering a window into their maniacal thoughts before they carry out the vicious act.

If something makes you uncomfortable, fearful, or anxious that something bad might happen, screenshot it or otherwise record it and get it to the police.

And if the first responder doesn't seem to be on board, find another one who is. Maybe it's not a real threat, but if it is, there will be no reversing it once action has been taken.

Are you afraid to report a loved one who is out of control? Do you feel that no matter what you do, it could have a bad outcome? Arguably that is telling you that the person needs intervention to keep him or her and others safe.

Do you think it is helping not to keep a potentially dangerous person and the people around that person from being harmed? Better to have some relatively minor fallout now than to later experience something permanent, a traumatic scar, another event on a landscape already brimming with blood and pain, and more graves leading to inconsolable sorrow.

No two violent criminals are the same. All have their own reasoning and rationalization for their righteous indignation, but there are at least

three common threads that often string them all together: power, fear, and the need for notoriety—the yearning for omnipotence, the unbridled desire to instill and inflict terror, and the absolute goal of being remembered for what they have done.

In their minds, they're standing on a pulpit while the world is listening to their commanding sermon.

The truth is, though, with the advent of social media and its allure of instantaneous cult celebrity, for many, it's not just in their minds.

Social media stokes the inherent narcissism—the extreme selfishness and self-absorption—of many offenders who believe their agenda merits a shout-out to, and recognition by, the world, a sense of entitlement to take what is owed to them and exact their revenge.

They can now leave behind a virtual manifesto, selfies, Facebook posts and YouTube videos, so-called cyberprints of their violent pathway, visible to the masses in perpetuity, an indelible mark on the world that makes offenders feel as if they will become part of history.

In reality, they live in infamy, but they're unable to, or unwilling to, discern between famous and infamous. Oftentimes, it doesn't matter to them so long as they're remembered.

Long ago, in many cases of completed suicide, the notion of cognitive constriction (tunnel vision) that death is the solution to a person's life problems was observed. The homicidal subject shares much in common with the suicidal, and there is often overlap. Taking a life, whether it is one's own or another's, still means a life lost.

Many mass shooters take their own lives at the conclusion of the event. Death becomes cemented in their minds as the sole answer to a plethora of troubling life questions, leaving them to focus solely on the technical execution of the crime.

Many of these offenders start their journey with self-hate and a self-destructive wish, and then they come to the conclusion that those who "drove them to it" should pay the price first.

After all, is not the malignant killing of other humans a form of self-destruction?

For many, killing brings a sense of overwhelming power, and going down in a blaze of glory only magnifies their satisfaction in carrying out the ultimate attack on a mass of innocents.

Some of the most infamous serial killers believe they were called upon to commit their crimes by a greater authority or out of a so-called code of mercy. One example is Efren Saldivar, an "angel of death" who killed up to two hundred hospital patients while working as a respiratory therapist in California, largely in the early 1990s.[2] He is regarded as being among the most prolific serial killers of our time.

I interviewed Saldivar extensively and can tell you there was nothing merciful about his actions, nor did he actually live by the code he used as the impetus for his crimes. It was merely his hunger for control over life and death that consumed him more and more with each killing.

The hostage taker, by comparison, is in a different category of criminality altogether. In hostage cases, bad decisions are heaped upon worse decisions, and the offender's hopelessness and anger erupt into a frustrated life and a dramatic acting out. Police arrive quickly, and the negotiation to save lives begins. It is literally a life-and-death situation.

Stalkers, meanwhile, come in four district categories: the Intimate Stalker, the Acquaintance Stalker, the Private Stranger Stalker, and the Public Figure Stalker.

They can terrorize anyone, from the ordinary citizen who becomes the fixation of their former intimate partner to the celebrity stalked by an unstable individual who psychotically perceives a relationship where none exists. Ivanka Trump, President Donald Trump's daughter, had a dangerous stalker for years; the same man also had other victims who were unfortunate enough to cross his path and become targets of his disturbed fixations and grandiose and violent delusions.

The truth is that the average stalking victim is an everyday person—a woman tries to say goodbye or simply "I'm not interested," and the rejected man cannot handle the word "no." We live in a world of

[2] Paul Lieberman, "Saldivar Admitted to Possible Role in '100 to 200' Deaths," *Los Angeles Times*, January 13, 2001, https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2001-jan-13-mn-11940-story.html

increasing entitlement, and the more pathologically narcissistic take rejection deeply to heart.

The stalker then embarks on a campaign of harassment, vengeance, and perhaps a twisted attempt to coerce the victim into a relationship. These are, in fact, the most dangerous cases, and most domestic-violence murder victims were stalked prior to the tragedy.

Delusional people have found a place to feed their psychotic misperceptions and conspiratorial thinking in the virtual world of social media. Like-minded individuals validate and encourage paranoid thought processes and embolden the criminal with groupthink.

Support for any form of deviance, even cannibalism and bestiality, can be found online. Cyberspace and social media ferment ideas that used to simply dissipate into the atmosphere; delusional, conspiratorial, and angry, disaffected individuals now have a home to stimulate their thoughts, instead of receiving corrective feedback from an in-person confidant or mental health professional.

So-called violent true believers, a term coined by my friend and colleague Dr. J. Reid Meloy in a scholarly analysis we wrote after the September 11 terror attacks, can be domestic or foreign. They commit acts of violence based on belief systems. Maj. Nidal Malik Hasan, for example, a psychiatrist no less, in 2009 shot and killed thirteen people and wounded thirty others, most of them unarmed soldiers, in the worst mass murder in American history at a U.S. military installation, in Fort Hood, Texas.

Hasan had been inspired by Islamic extremist beliefs he found primarily on the internet. He was not formally attached to any terrorist group, nor had he ever attended training to commit such a violent act. His radicalization was virtual, fed by the internet and social media, but his killing was very real and underscored that we have entered a new era in which identification with a belief system doesn't have to come from face-to-face interaction but can be achieved via computer while living in the real world.

Violent true believers identify with an extremist belief system and have accepted, indeed embraced, that violence is an essential part of achieving the goals associated with those beliefs.

The truth is that in America, despite all the attention paid to Islam, our worst and most frequent violent true believers are homegrown haters fed by fear or rejection, or by some perceived slight to their way of life. Some call themselves "incels," involuntary celibate woman-haters.

The latter was the case with twenty-two-year-old Elliot Rodger, who killed six students in a 2014 rampage near the campus of the University of California, Santa Barbara. In online postings, he railed against the women who had rejected him and the men they had chosen to have sex with instead.

In a final handwritten entry in his journal on the day of the killings, he penned, "This is it. In one hour I will have my revenge on this cruel world. I HATE YOU ALLLL! DIE." His laptop was later found by authorities open to a disturbing YouTube video he had recently uploaded, titled "Day of Retribution."

He was on a mission for payback, and no one could stop him. Rodger, however, also neatly fits into the category of a mass casualty shooter. Many of these violent offenders qualify for several categories of criminal offense.

These individuals often have another kind of duality about them. On one hand, they may be very aware that others do not agree with their dark thoughts and fantasies and thus censor much of what they share about them. But they also have accepted, usually without any lingering questions or doubts, that the evil and malignant solutions that drive them to commit such atrocities are reasonable and therefore actionable.

The often calm and matter-of-fact narrative they use to describe their ideas and impulses can be enormously unsettling.

Even among those with mental health issues, thoughtful choices and decisions are made, often with chilling deliberation. A person can be very mentally ill yet behave rationally and carry out crimes with premeditation and malice aforethought.

Regarding those with obvious mental health issues, our country suffers from the very freedoms we hold dear. We come upon situations in which we are not able to force the afflicted to get treatment, and only

after a crime does the clamor begin that the person with the broken brain must receive help.

We blame the guns. We blame political rhetoric. We blame hatred, racism, and religion. But where does the blame truly fall?

In a number of cases, there is shared responsibility, to varying degrees. But free will and freedom of choice are necessary values for our democratic society to function, leaving us with a conundrum: How do we stop these violent acts before they are carried out without infringing upon the very rights that millions of law-abiding, sane citizens hold so dear?

Throughout all of my work as a forensic psychologist, I help answer some of the most pressing questions. Why did the person do it? Was it related to mental illness? What is wrong with this person? Is he or she sane? Insane? Are there understandable factors that could be used to argue for or against leniency in sentencing after a criminal conviction? Should a juvenile offender who killed at school be tried as an adult? What drives the serial killer to wreak such havoc on society?

The questions are challenging, but the work is immensely gratifying.

The field is full of experts for hire who sell and distort their opinions to fit the narratives of their clients, who are paying for someone to provide the answers they want, not necessarily the truth. These "hired guns" justify their distortion of the truth with all kinds of excuses.

We see this play out often in criminal trials, where defense and prosecution teams pit professionals like me against one another on the witness stand in what amounts to a battle of the experts, leaving jurors to determine who is more believable.

I am not that guy. I tell anyone who hires me, "I will tell you what I think, whether you like it or not."

I often think of what I do as a descent into the depths of human depravity, pain, and suffering, where most people would never allow themselves to go.

I walk through my life knowing what people are capable of and understanding that appearances can be deceiving. There are a lot of memories: the shock wave of the earth beneath me as a suicidal man hurtles from his jumping platform 270 feet high after hours of negotiation; the

bitter smell of tear gas introduced into the barricaded residence of a methed-out subject when the wind shifted; the sight of a child's bloody handprints trailing downward on the sliding glass window of the room where his father hacked him to death with a machete, cut his own wrists, and set the apartment on fire.

The trail of death and mayhem has yielded a mind-expanding post-graduate education.

Thankfully, I seldom dream or have nightmares about my cases anymore, and I find safety and calm in embracing my purpose in all of it.

I wasn't dragged here. I came here of my own free will.