TRY TO FORGET THIS
By Mike Sanker

Does a world without crisis exist within the bounds of our reality? Is there a less unstable humanity lying beneath the chaos that has been manifested from our own minds? With the clutches of evil upon every person's shoulders, how can there be? Perhaps more fundamentally: why should there be? Do I deserve to be exempt from all of the wrong-doings caused by my fellow cohabitants of this Earth? Am I to blame? Why is that only I am asking these questions? Why is that upon my expressed concerns I'm greeted with a dismissive ear? Had I done something wrong to deserve this? The nature of consequence guarantees that I had, in one way or another, caused this harsh truth around me. In doing so, I have only added to the disorder of the world. No! It's not of my own doing. Rather, I have the misfortune of being placed into a situation that takes toll after toll upon my life and sanity. They don't care! They pretend my concerns do not exist. They pretend I do not exist. But now if consequence affects me, I must therefore assure they are also affected. There must be an action I can take to stop the torment in my life and let them know I do exist!! Whether they understand my actions or not, the echoes in the school halls will forever haunt as a reminder of how they dismissed me. As for my feelings upon my decision: I do not believe anyone will care about me when it's all over. They will critique, analyze, scrutinize, make policy changes, hide the truth, and scar my name even more. All of those actions will allow them to somehow feel recovered, perhaps even feel as though they've justified what I have done. But I will not give them the satisfaction to ever fully understand. They had their chances, time and time again….this time, I win!   -- J

The above letter obviously cannot model all of the vast reasons that mortal violence lives amongst teens; rather, it is an illustration of how confusion turns to self-blame, then to anger, and then to vengeance. I, in no way, claim that the above dramatization exhibits the thoughts of Jeremy Wade Delle (the teen upon whom the song "Jeremy" by Pearl Jam is based). But I do feel the noticeable breakdown in sanity and understanding, paired with the increased feelings of isolation were among some of the traits that Jeremy had felt prior to his fatal act.

While researching information pertaining to the background of the song, I found several web-pages and articles related to a high school sophomore in Richardson, Texas who had shot himself in front of his classmates. A question that had kept running through my mind was, "Who is to blame?" Granted, in a situation as disheartening as this, I feel that passing blame will only deepen the depression exhibited by those involved, but I still feel the need to try to understand what had led him to this point. I cannot ever save Jeremy, but I believe his death should not live in vain. Below, I offer two opposing views, which one may elect to feel with regards to Jeremy's actions, followed lastly by my own analysis.

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The most popularized view would have been that of Pearl Jam's. While, perhaps this would not have been the most immediate stance, I feel it is probably the most agreed upon: blame environment. Pearl Jam makes it very apparent that family and society have corrupted the boy. His own blood does not even care or acknowledge him ("Daddy didn't give affection…..Mommy didn't care"). There are some behaviorists that would

swear on their life that a child is most affected by what occurs at home, whether that is in a positive or negative manner.

But why shouldn't that be true? The first people we have conscious contact with are our parents. Whether or not the person responsible for the upbringing of a child is biologically connected, he/she is still a parent in the child's eyes. A child will recognize negativity in the home, but often times accepts it as 'normal' because there is nothing yet for which to compare. Conceivably a child may progress a step further than acceptance of the situation, and engages in the position of responsibility for the situation. For many, self-blame, while typically unhealthy, is the most convenient and immediate means of understanding.

Possibly Jeremy felt responsible for his parents' detachment towards him. To satisfy his need of instant gratification (which is exhibited by more than most of Americas) for understanding, he blamed himself. This attitude was reinforced by the other children at school ("Clearly I remember pickin' on the boy"), but in this case, his environment did not cause him self-blame; rather, it caused him to displace his aggressions back to his aggressors. He even began to defy authority, creating a false view of the world where *he* made the rules, and no one could reach him. *We* created his problems, and then dare to act innocent in the aftermath, trying to forget what *we* had done.

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Another stance, although not necessarily as popular as environmental influence, but probably the first judgment of many after hearing the news, would be to blame the originator of the action: blame Jeremy.   Here we demonstrate our need for immediate

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understanding in the form of surface facts: A kid shot himself in school. No one else held that gun nor pulled that trigger except Jeremy.

Obviously, we are all governors of our own actions.   It would be ridiculous to think that anyone else caused Jeremy to shoot himself. We are all constantly bombarded with situations that cause us stress and grief, but do we all grab guns and go crazy? Absolutely not! Jeremy was just a punk who wasn't man enough to accept that some people didn't like him. He was probably always an outcast and a loner. But, he's the one who would've chosen that life. At least he was decent enough to only take his own life.

If he was really in that bad of shape, he should've found help. Although it was 1991, there were still psychologist and counselors. He was always fighting with the other kids ("He hit me with a surprise left…"), and he even was late to class the day he shot himself. Total irresponsibility--which would explain why he never got help. He is the only one that can be held accountable for what he did. The only good he served was showing other teens how irresponsibility doesn't pay.

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The two most mainstream viewpoints revolving an incident such are Jeremy's (or similar) have been presented. I would like to express, from a personal view, my feelings.

Initially, after finding that the song was based on true circumstances, I immediately felt pity and sorrow for the boy.   I experienced feelings of slight depression because I realized that Jeremy will never know anything else in life except that he wanted his to end. All of the great things that he could have accomplished were lost. I couldn't help but feel that the last thoughts running through his confused mind were feelings of

anger and revenge, when I wish he could have at least found peace before his death. Perhaps on some level he did.

Upon further investigation into what had actually taken place, I learned that Jeremy had only recently moved to the high school where he took his own life. He spent less than a year at the new school. Jeremy had been in ISS (in school suspension), and had also been receiving counseling with his father, although the details pertaining to that are not publicly known. In my eyes, he was a young man progressing through one of the most difficult times of his life while being extracted from a familiar environment and thrust into another. I believe this played at least some bearing upon his decision.

Ultimately, I consider his actions to be a combination of personal and environmental irresponsibility. Jeremy had a choice, even up until the moment he fired that bullet, to abandon his plan. However, the choices with which he would have been left were death (which includes the satisfaction of escaping his life), or living the apparent hell that was his life. I do not believe that he would have allowed his own existence to become such a mess as to force him into a corner where he felt no options, which leads me to also place accountability on his environment.

People who take their own lives are not necessarily insane, but rather feel utterly helpless and trapped. Suicide is an election to administer a permanent solution for a temporary problem. I, as a future educator, realize that although Jeremy Wade Delle had died almost 15 years ago, there will be other Jeremy's and some may even pass through my classes. I would be blind if I never considered that possibility. Other prospective and current educators need to understand that risk, if they have not already. A teacher (or

other educational authority) may be the last line of defense for a young mind, or perhaps be the last option for council.

In closing, I conceptualize the underlying disorder of this nation's youth and accept the possibility that one day I may directly experience an unpleasant incident similar to Jeremy's (by this, I mean as a bystander). I, however, pray that the possibility never manifests. I cannot help but imagine that all I could do in the wake of an incident is tell myself that I could've done more. There are factors in life that drive a person to the edge. I hope I am never one of those factors, for if I were, it would take more than I am to try to forget it.