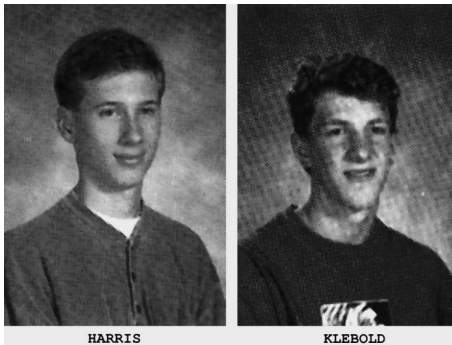


Sixteen dead after high school massacre at Columbine High School

The Guardian, 21 April, 1999



Two teenagers in black trench coats laughed and hooted as they opened fire on classmates in their suburban Denver High School, killing 16 people, including themselves, in the deadliest U.S. school rampage on record.

Eric Harris (18) and Dylan Klebold (17) marched into the library of Columbine High School yesterday with guns and pipe bombs, demanding that "all jocks stand up. We're going to kill every one of you," said student Aaron Cohn.

One of them looked under a desk in the library and said "Peek-a-boo," then fired, Cohn said. Anyone who cried or moaned was shot again. One girl begged for her life, but a gunshot ended her cries. "They were laughing after they shot. It was like they were having the time of their life," he said.

Cohn said one killer put a pistol to his head but did not shoot him. Instead, he said, the shooter turned his attention to a black student, saying, "I hate niggers." Cohn heard three shots but couldn't see what happened. (...)

At least 23 people were hospitalized, most of them with gunshot wounds. One girl suffered nine shrapnel wounds. The dead included students and one teacher. Both gunmen, Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold, were juniors at the school. The two exchanged shots with police and were later found dead in the library with self-inflicted gunshot wounds and bombs around their bodies, said sheriff's spokesman Steve Davis.

While the motive was unclear, several students said Harris and Klebold were members of a group calling itself the "Trenchcoat Mafia," outcasts who bragged about guns and bombs and hated blacks and Hispanics, as well as athletes. (...)

However, some neighbours described Harris and Klebold as quiet boys - one said Klebold was a gifted and talented student who also took part in a fantasy baseball league. They said the Harris family moved in about two years ago and that the boy's father, Wayne, recently retired from the military. Harris may have taken his father's guns for the slaughter, they said.

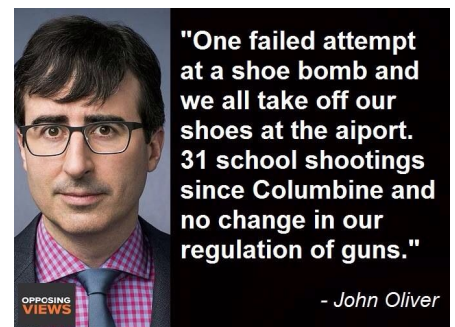
The two gunmen, wearing fatigues and black coats, opened fire in the parking lot around 11:30 a.m. before entering the school cafeteria. Bullets ricocheted off lockers as students raced toward the exits. (...)

The killers fired as they walked into the cafeteria and continued shooting as they moved upstairs into the library.



Dozens of students hid in classrooms before escaping with the help of police in an armoured car. Others were trapped for hours while police commando teams searched for the gunmen and their bombs. Some students had called their parents on cellular phones from inside the building to whisper they were OK.

Students who fled the building were weeping and holding their hands above their heads while the police were frisking them. Many parents gathered at a nearby elementary school and answered questions from investigators, who were trying to identify some of the victims based only on what they were wearing.



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