



Written by [Selwyn Duke](#) on May 27, 2014

Elliot Rodger: A Killer's Journey From Hollywood to Hell

"I wanted to inflict pain on all young couples.... I was capable of killing them, and I wanted to. I wanted to kill them slowly, to strip the skins off their flesh. They deserve it. The males deserve it for taking the females away from me, and the females deserve it for choosing those males instead of me" — *My Twisted World, The Story of Elliot Rodger*, page 87.



On the surface, Elliot Rodger had it all. The son of a Hollywood director, he lived a life of opulence and opportunity, able to attend private schools, receiving VIP passes for special events and film premieres, and visiting six different countries by the age of four. He regularly bought expensive designer clothes, wore \$300 Armani sunglasses, and could fly first class. And when he killed six people this past Friday in a rampage centered around the University of California, Santa Barbara campus, he was driving a BMW 328i coupe, a car most Americans can scarcely afford.

But it was Rodger's unfulfilled desires for women's attention and sex that truly drove him — to despair, jealousy and, ultimately, to murder and suicide.

The good-looking Rodger's fairer-sex fumbling was not inexplicable. Plagued by childhood shyness, he developed social anxiety and a fear of girls intense enough so that he at one point begged his parents to send him to an all-boys high school. Yet as he proceeded through adolescence, he became increasingly distraught by the fact that he was still a virgin who had never kissed a girl, while all the "popular kids" were enjoying lives of "fun and pleasure." He was superior to them, he said, and was being denied his birthright. It became so bad that he couldn't even stand to see opposite-sex teenagers having fun or young, amorous couples walking together; he would seethe with hatred and envy and then often drive home crying in his car; he'd avoid occasions where they might be present; he'd immerse himself in a video-game fantasy land for long stretches to escape the outside world.

By his own admission in his 141-page [manifesto](#), Rodger was always a jealous child — and, it seems, one who was used to having others satisfy his desires. Writing about his mother, Lichin "Chin" Rodger, a nurse from Malaysia who once dated producer and director George Lucas, he stated on page 21, "Mother always got me what I wanted, right when I wanted it. At my mother's house, all of my needs were met with excellent precision." And he wrote on page 34 about his maternal grandmother, "Ah Mah is just like my mother, [sic] she always knew what I liked and went out of her way to get it for me."

As for his father, *Hunger Games* assistant director Peter Rodger, he had divorced Chin when Elliot was



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young and then moved French-Moroccan actress Soumaya Akaaboune into the house. Akaaboune didn't cater to Elliot's desires, causing him to dislike her and to develop a preference for his mother's home.

But Akaaboune wasn't the only one who failed to serve his wants. Rodger cites puberty as his life's turning point; in fact, he mentions puberty quite a few times in his manifesto. And this obsession makes sense: That seminal point was when Rodger would, for the first time, develop strong desires that others would *not* satisfy. And he would hate the wider world — whom he saw as the enemy denying him happiness — far more than Akaaboune.

When you watch Rodger's videos and read his manifesto, what strikes you are his superficial values. A man is defined by sexual conquest, beautiful girlfriends, status, and by wealth, which he said was "one of the most important defining factors of self-worth and superiority" (p. 102). And he saw wealth (above and beyond what he had) as the key to attracting the women he desired.

Now, I will take a moment here to head some misunderstandings off at the pass. With the social analysis that will follow, there's no implication that a person exposed to one or all of the influences mentioned will become a killer. What's being said is that they have a powerful effect on society, but this effect varies from individual to individual.

Why would sex take on such importance, seeming larger than life itself? Sure, I know that teenage boys have sky-high libidos (been there). But as Rodger pointed out in his manifesto, when he asked best friend and fellow virgin James Ellis why seeing others who enjoy pleasures of the flesh didn't bother him, Ellis replied that he focused on his strengths instead. And football stars Tim Tebow and Prince Amukamara, both well into their twenties, happily are virgins by design. It's not written in the sky that sex is a prerequisite for contentment.

But it is written in our sex-saturated culture, which is why there are so few Tim Tebows today. I remember when talk-show host Michael Savage, who has a Ph.D. in nutritional ethno-medicine, talked about his travels to the South Pacific in search of plants possessing medicinal qualities. He said that when he made a return trip to Fiji years after his initial visit, the people were no longer happy. They had finally acquired television and, I suppose, were now aware of the lifestyle they "should" have but couldn't.

Note here that Rodger said he was a great fan of James Bond movies as a young child (under 10 years old). Not only are such PG-13 movies not meant for such tender ages, and not only does this reflect poor parental judgment, but Bond is like so many heroes today: a philanderer. And seeing lecherous behavior modeled by swashbuckling, brave, capable, and cool men they so admire instills young boys with certain ideas that, tragically, often become part of their emotional framework. You have to sleep around. This is what real men do. This is what it means to be cool. This is living.

Of course, this is just part and parcel of omnipresent sexual messages, in schools, the media, the rest of entertainment, and the street. And this atmosphere is especially intense in the tony southern California neighborhood and Tinseltown set in which Rodger circulated. And Rodger made clear in his manifesto that if he couldn't live the life of sexual pleasure the popular kids were supposedly enjoying, there was no point in living at all. Literally.

It's also not surprising that Rodger talked so much about "fun" and "pleasure" and of how his "enemies" were enjoying "hedonistic" lifestyles.

Hedonism was all he had.



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Rodger was given material things; he had a childhood of pleasure. But not once in his book-length manifesto is there mention of faith — not even a “They took me to church a few times and I hated it.” Nothing. The only time “God” is mentioned is when Rodger says that his father created the failed 2009 documentary film *Oh My God* and when, discussing the day he would avenge himself upon the world, wrote, “I am the closest thing there is to a living god.... I will truly be a powerful god, punishing everyone I deem to be impure and depraved.” It is clear that Rodger had a thoroughly secular upbringing.

This matters because if there is no God, no Truth, and no afterlife, there are no great causes to live for, nothing to die for, and no true right and wrong; there is no inherent meaning. So without Truth to guide behavior, the only thing left to fall back on are feelings. And what feels better than pleasure? There’s nothing else to live for in a godless Universe. Hedonism is the only worldview that makes sense.

This godlessness explains much. We all feel envy at times. But do you let it go, maybe saying a prayer, or do you wallow in it, feeding it with the fertilizer of vindictive fantasy and letting it metastasize like a mind cancer? And letting go is unlikely absent Truth because there’s nothing to even say that envy is wrong. Was Rodger ever told as a child that it was a Deadly Sin? Feelings are the instinctive atheist’s yardstick for behavior, so what is the conclusion when something, such as envy, feels right? A yardstick cannot fail to measure up to itself.

Rodger had nothing above his feelings to tell him they were wrong. There was nothing credible that could persuade him that there really was something higher than money and sex to live for. He perceived no perfection from above, compared to which he’d pale, that could tell him he wasn’t “the perfect man” he claimed to be and inculcate humility, though I’m sure “self-esteem” — now a euphemism for pride — was emphasized in his schools. There was no chance he could understand that God’s approval is enough; he didn’t need man’s approval. And there was no reason for him to think of others as children of God deserving of love and forgiveness and not enemies who denied him love and affection, enemies deserving of what he called his “Day of Retribution.”

Of course, it was a unique set of influences and personal peculiarities that led to Rodger’s actions that fateful Friday. It’s called “*the Truth*” but “*a lie*” for a reason: There’s only one of the former but legions of the latter. And when someone doesn’t have the narrow road of Truth, you never do know which dead-end path he will follow.

Then again, if all this is too deep for Hollywood thinkers, we could just blame guns, knives, cars, and the stars.

Photo: Elliot Rodger





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