

Appearances

As a retired teacher, I can't help but respond to the letter to the editor (Student Perspective on What Went Wrong, National Post, October 5th) from Sunny Seth, 16.

With regard to the recent high school shootings, Sunny Seth attempts to answer "What drove these killers to such drastic lengths?" Seth tells us first that "...the blame lies with society itself," and then immediately shifts the blame elsewhere: "Human nature prevents many from accepting difference or change..." Well, which is it? Are we taught by those around us to react violently as a result of violent music and video games, or is it in our very genes, brought into this world with us when we are born?

Most of us *don't* wonder why "...a teenager who has a different appearance or a different taste in music approaches a seemingly normal child, [and] is automatically shunned and ridiculed." Even you, Sunny, distinguish between that different person and a "normal" child. Most of us are intimidated when approached by someone who isn't normal because we have no way of knowing what kind of person he/she is.

These days, when I'm sitting on the subway, being assailed by the thundering music from my neighbor's earphones, I am, at least, disconcerted. I might ridicule that person for his disrespectful attitude in subjecting his fellow passengers to what some of us consider noise. If someone who looks like a thug approaches me, I am afraid. Should I stand there and risk being assaulted or should I shun that person and move to a safer place?

We depend upon first impressions for our safety and peace of mind. If you want to look and act different from the rest of us, don't expect us to know that you are just a nice, docile person in disguise.

Ted Scott