

CASE REPORT

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PSYCHIATRY & BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES

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A Female Mass Murder

ABSTRACT: A case study of a 44-year-old woman who committed a mass murder is presented. Following a chronic course of psychotic deterioration, and a likely diagnosis of paranoid schizophrenia that remained untreated, she returned to her workplace after 3 years from her termination and killed seven people and herself. Her history is reconstructed through investigation of primary and secondary source materials. Although there are very few female mass murderers in recorded criminal history, this case is quite similar to the known research on mass murderers in general. Such individuals often have a psychotic disorder evident in violent and paranoid delusions, show a deteriorating life course before the mass murder, intentionally plan and prepare for their assault, and methodically kill as many individuals as possible before taking their own lives. They typically do not directly threaten the target beforehand, but do leak their intent to third parties—however, in this case, leakage and other obvious warning behaviors did not occur. Such acts are impossible to predict but depend on threat management and target security for risk mitigation.

KEYWORDS: forensic science, mass murder, female, targeted violence, threat assessment, workplace violence

Throughout known history, virtually all mass murders have been committed by men (1,2). If one defines mass murder as the intentional killing of three or more individuals in close time proximity to each other, criminal databases suggest that no more than four to six women have ever acted alone to carry out a civilian massacre. Duwe (2) summarized that “among the 116 mass public shootings that occurred between 1900 and 1999, not one was committed by a female. Instead, the mass murders committed by females tend to be familicides in which they kill their children and, occasionally, their spouse or boyfriend” (p. 75). Even when examining single homicide cases, women account for less than 10% of offenses in the United States (3). Women-perpetrated mass murders are what Taleb (4) refers to as “black swans”: events that are viewed as extremely improbable, but when they do occur are socially catastrophic.

In a series of three studies (5–7), a significant number of men who are adult mass murderers have major mental disorders and often personality disorders, and over the course of time proceed on a “pathway to violence,” nurturing a grievance, researching an attack, planning and preparing for such an attack, breaching whatever security stands in the way, and carrying out the killing. They often exhibit a pattern of fascination with war and weaponry and develop a “warrior mentality” that is characterized internally by grandiose and violent fantasies. These ruminations eventually coalesce into a desire and decision to commit a mass murder. A triggering event, however, often a humiliating loss in relationship or work, may start the clock and determine the time, place, and targets

of the killing. Such perpetrators typically do not communicate a direct threat to the target(s) beforehand, but do leak their intent to third parties. Two paradoxes have also emerged from these studies: the psychotic mass murderer usually has a greater lethality, evidenced by more casualties, than the nonpsychotic mass murderer; and despite the delusional nature of such individuals, their killing behavior remains quite organized, methodical, and without conscious emotions. Mass murderers do not “snap.”

In this paper, we present a very rare case of a female mass murderer who killed seven people in January of 2006 in Santa Barbara, California. Although case studies do not typically shape scientific knowledge, they often serve as a departure point for critical thought and may highlight anomalous behavior that has heretofore gone unnoticed or unstudied. In some cases, such reports do advance our understanding of threat management of those who are at risk to be extremely violent.

The Offense

On a chilly Monday evening January 30th, 2006, Ms. T., a 44-year-old single Caucasian woman with no children, began what was to become the largest workplace mass murder committed by a woman in American history. Earlier on that same day, she flew back to Los Angeles and drove 2 h to her old apartment complex in central California after being away in New Mexico for 2 years. Prior to her return, she purchased a 9-mm handgun, a 15-round Smith & Wesson model 915, from a New Mexico pawn shop for \$325 without identifying the purpose for her purchase. As required, she filled out the background check application. She picked up the handgun 2 days later despite her history of psychiatric problems and involuntary hospitalization.

Ms. T. was about to resolve her years of perceived slights—psychotic, paranoid, and delusional in nature. Her first target was her old apartment complex, where neighbors had complained about her behaviors, specifically the noise and her loud music. On that Monday evening, Ms. T. went to the apartment of Victim no. 1,

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a 54-year-old Caucasian female telephone operator who, at that time, resided alone in her apartment. Ms. T. entered the apartment with her weapon and fired two shots at close range, the first striking Victim no. 1 in the right side of the head. The bullet exited her left lateral neck area. Ms. T.'s second shot struck Victim no. 1 in the right side of the nose area. The bullet exited the right bridge of her nose. The police later found Victim no. 1 lying on the floor of her condominium wearing an overcoat. The room was cold as evidenced by a temperature reading of 60° and a dysfunctional fireplace. They found one shell casing on the floor near the television, another by the couch, and an unspent bullet near the sliding door.

After killing Victim no. 1, Ms. T. left the residence and drove 5 miles on Interstate 101 to her prior place of employment. She arrived at c. 2100 at the United States Postal Distribution Center in Goleta, California. She gained entry to the locked parking lot by tailgating: closely following another employee's vehicle with her own car as the first car passed through the security gate. When Ms. T. exited the vehicle, she threatened the employee she had followed into the parking lot area and demanded the access key to the entrance. However, she did not kill this employee. As she prepared to enter her former workplace, she encountered Victim no. 2, a 28-year-old African-American woman, and shot her in the parking lot. Ms. T. aimed the gun at close range to the right side of Victim no. 2's head and pulled the trigger, the bullet exiting from her left parietal lobe.

Ms. T. then proceeded to shoot Victim no. 3, a 37-year-old woman of Asian descent who was born in Laos. Ms. T. had referred to Victim no. 3 in her prior writings as "making me very uncomfortable." Ms. T. shot her from an intermediate range on the left side of the cheek/head area with an exit wound out the back of the right side of her neck. Ms. T. then twice shot Victim no. 4, a 42-year-old African-American woman, at the edge of a cement walkway outside the front doors. The first shot struck Victim no. 4 in the mid-forehead with no exit wound, and the second shot struck her in the upper left chest area and exited through the upper left side of her back. Ms. T. expended six rounds and killed three women in the parking area of the Distribution Center. Given the interior noise level of the Center, as well as employees likely wearing earplugs, the workers inside did not hear or mistook the gunshots for heavy equipment noises.

Once she entered the Distribution Center, the sequence of shootings is not as clear. Ms. T. apparently walked up to Victim no. 5, a 44-year-old Filipino woman, and shot her from an intermediate range in the left cheek with no exit wound. Ms. T. may have then dragged Victim no. 5, given a blood trail identified by the police. Moreover, Victim no. 5 was the only victim brought to the hospital alive, although in critical condition. She was pronounced dead at 7:30 a.m. on February 2nd, 2006.

Ms. T. then fired four shots at Victim no. 6, a 52-year-old Caucasian woman. One bullet struck her in the right ear from an intermediate range and remained lodged in her left cheek area. In addition, she had a gunshot wound to her left middle finger and three bullets grazed her left anterior shoulder. The bullet-wound pattern suggested that unlike the other victims, Victim no. 6 was aware of what was happening and attempted to defend herself. At some point between the killings of Victim no. 5 and Victim no. 6, Ms. T. reloaded her 9-mm handgun. It was not clear if she reloaded with additional bullets or if she brought another gun clip. She subsequently fired two bullets from a distant range, hitting Victim no. 7, a 58-year-old African-American man, in the left side of his head and just below his jaw area. While her only male victim, and the last one to be shot, Ms. T. had referred to Victim no. 7 in her 2003 writings.

After killing Victim no. 7, Ms. T. aimed the gun at her head and pulled the trigger. The police found her 110 lb. body face down between Victim no. 6 and Victim no. 7 with her firearm in her right hand and finger on the trigger. She suffered an entrance wound through her right temple and exit wound around her left ear area. All cartridges at the two crime scenes were fired by the same weapon. During a subsequent search at Ms. T.'s home, the police found a cashed check with the word "will" in the memo line.

The entire episode at the Distribution Center lasted <2 min. In the end, Ms. T. killed a total of five women and one male postal employee and one former female neighbor. Two of the seven victims were referenced in her prior writings. She killed three African-Americans, two persons of southeast Asian descent, and two Caucasians. All victims except for one were shot at close range.

History and Precipitating Events

What would motivate a 44-year-old unemployed woman to kill seven previous coworkers and a neighbor—individuals she had not seen in several years—and then take her own life? In this paper, we attempt to construct partial answers to these questions through a comprehensive and intensive review of both her writings and other source material on the case, gathered from police files, medical record summaries, and newspaper articles.

Ms. T. was born on December 6th, 1961 in Brooklyn, New York, and attended Edward R. Murrow High School, one of the top academic high schools in the United States. She graduated in 1978. According to her 2003 "They Kill Jews and Niggers. The First Edition of the Racist Press" Newsletter, Ms. T. repeatedly referenced several prominent events and persons that coincided with her teenage and early adulthood years.

Ms. T. wrote about attending the "Rocky Horror Picture Show," which played in the late 1970s in Greenwich Village, New York, as well as her recollections of David Berkowitz and Richard Nixon. On July 29th, 1976, David Berkowitz began his killing spree by first wounding Jodi Valenti (age 19) and Donna Lauria (age 18) in front of Ms. Lauria's Bronx home. David Berkowitz continued his homicides in 1977 in the Bronx and Brooklyn and was eventually apprehended on August 10, 1977, at his home, in Yonkers. While it remains unclear where Ms. T. resided during these years, her physical features were similar to victims selected by Mr. Berkowitz. She specifically referenced Mr. Berkowitz in her Newsletter, including that he worked for the New York City Post Office around 1976 and 1977. Ms. T. also referenced President Nixon's resignation on August 9th, 1974 and his enactment of the Postal Reform Act. While her specific reasoning behind mentioning these events remains unclear, she wrote that her life took a downward course "29" years prior to her mass murder in 2006. It is possible that this time period and events coincided with the onset of emerging psychiatric symptoms, although this was difficult to corroborate because of the absence of early developmental records.

Following high school, Ms. T. completed 2 years of college, first at Brooklyn College and then at Rutgers University in New Jersey where she studied Natural Resource Management. She reportedly did not graduate and there are few, if any, records to document her whereabouts, relationships, or occupations for the next 10–15 years. Between 1990 and 1993, Ms. T. worked as a Correctional Officer for the California Rehabilitation Center in Norco, Riverside County, and was responsible for supervising inmates in the state prison. She left her job when she relocated to New Jersey, living briefly in Santa Barbara. The California Rehabilitation Center was at that time a medium secure correctional facility offering inmates

convicted of felony and drug offenses the chance to remove their felony convictions.

Between April and October 1994, Ms. T. worked as a front desk clerk at the Sheraton Hotel in Eatontown, New Jersey, south of New York City. She left her job after 6 months to return to California and worked as a residential counselor for St. Vincent's Group Home in Santa Barbara. For 2 years, she supervised female convicts on probation, but left because of a self-reported "change of career goals." Around August 16th of 1997, Ms. T. began work as a Manual Distribution Clerk for the United States Postal Service (USPS) in Santa Barbara, California. About that time, she began to keep hand-written notes detailing her perceived slights.

In October 1998, Ms. T. applied to work in Food Service for the Santa Barbara School District. She worked part-time as a Food Service Assistant for 3 h per day and earned \$514.13 per month. She performed satisfactorily between November of 1998 and August of 1999 but she left on or around February of 2000 for "personal" reasons.

In February 2001 at age 40, Ms. T. was involuntarily hospitalized after reported problems with her co-workers at the Post Office. On February 5th, her supervisor called the Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Office because of Ms. T.'s suicidal statements and "erratic and aberrant behavior." Sheriff's deputies responded at the Postal Location at 11:04 p.m. for "disturbing the peace" and placed Ms. T. on an involuntary psychiatric hold. The records from that time, which included a review of her own writings, referenced "paranoid" and "needs medication." Ms. T. reportedly acted irrationally and had to be removed from the facility. During her involuntary commitment, Ms. T. alleged that the Santa Barbara County Sheriff physically assaulted and abused her.

In February and March 2001, Ms. T. wrote down her own version of the events prompting her involuntary hospitalization. She denied talking about suicide or making suicidal statements, asserted that the Police Officers who escorted her to the hospital "grabbed my arm w/o provocation" and held her down while she conveyed, "You're hurting my arm." Ms. T. identified a male supervisor, who was involved in calling the authorities, as intimidating her when she didn't respond to his requests to come to the office to discuss her alleged suicidal statements and erratic behavior. She recalled that another male supervisor threatened that they would call the sheriff if she did not comply with their requests. Ms. T. wrote that the authorities "grabbed my arm" and "proceeded to physically assault me, wrestled me to the ground, and placed me in handcuffs after kneeling on my face. I had 23 visible bruises on my body that were catalogued and photographed for my records. The Sheriffs proceeded to have me removed and locked in Southern California Psychiatric Institute."

Ms. T. likely returned to her home after her probable 3–4-day inpatient stay although the specific time spent in the hospital as well as the type of medications prescribed remains unclear. Two weeks later, Ms. T. recorded hand-written notes about the Sheriff arriving at her apartment complex after a neighbor complained about television noise. On March 12th, 2001, Ms. T. was placed on a mandatory 21-day unpaid leave of absence, the USPS requesting an evaluation to help determine whether she could return to work. In the next 2–3 years, Ms. T. completed at least two fitness for duty evaluations but the results and findings were not available for review.

Later that same year, Ms. T. continued to have difficulties with her neighbors who complained of her stereo noise. Ms. T. called the Sheriff's Department to inquire about how loud she could have her stereo without disturbing her neighbors. In September 2002 and while residing in Goleta, California, Ms. T. wrote a letter to

Mr. Bill Lockyear, the Attorney General of California. She referenced an earlier letter sent August 6th, 2002 where she conveyed her concerns about the Santa Barbara Sheriff Department's misconduct. In September 2002, Ms. T. wrote a separate letter to Mr. Ronald L. Iden, Assistant Director in Charge, Federal Bureau of Investigation, about "Police Misconduct/Violation of my Civil Rights" in the Federal Government Office and the consideration of a "Racially Motivated Hate Crime." In this letter, she stated: "On a daily basis, I am harassed at *my* place of work, stalked on the way to and from home, and verbally assaulted at my residence. I have been targeted on two occasions by automobile 'accidents,' together with threats 'not to walk through a particular neighborhood' and to 'comply' to the hierarchical racist/sexist form of discriminatory mandate in practice at this facility. The violent display of aggressive behavior against me as protocol by my employer, the federal government, along with local law enforcement agencies, leaves me to believe this procedural conduct organized as a group of persons together with the intentional consequence to inflict harm puts my life at risk, as well as the security of other persons in this city and possibly across the nation."

In this same letter, Ms. T. cited "co-conspiratorial behavior" with the United States Post Office as well as the predominant influence of "German and/or Dutch" culture in Santa Barbara. Ms. T. wrote that "their force has been a point of discrimination against me on behalf of their concept of what a 'white american' is ie., 'our right' and ethnic traditions 'rule' the community businesses and municipal law enforcement agencies. I am of Italian decent and I am under the impression we are all subject to follow the same federal and municipal legal standards in America. Their violent acts of racist aggression and intimidation toward me at my place of employment and residence by persons working on my employer's behalf and other members of the community has been ongoing for a period of at least 2 years. The violence demonstrated against me has caused me serious distress." On October 18th, 2002, Ms. T. was the subject of a requested fitness for duty evaluation. From the sources available, it is not known whether the origin of the request was herself, her attorney, or her employer.

They Kill Jews and Niggers. The First Edition of the Racist Press—Volume I–V (2003)

In 2003, the USPS separated Ms. T. from her employment. Although the records are unclear as to whether she was terminated or retired, she was granted a mental disability retirement, ostensibly because of her demonstrable mental problems. She had worked for the USPS in California between 1997 and 2003.

That same year, Ms. T. wrote five volumes of a Newsletter she titled, "They Kill Jews and Niggers. The First Edition of the Racist Press." She likely wrote these in Santa Barbara although she attempted to have them published when she relocated to New Mexico on or around late 2003–early 2004. We carefully reviewed her writings to understand any process or content which suggested delusional and paranoid thinking and hinted at future violent acts.

In her first Newsletter or Volume I, Ms. T. referred to her middle age and her rationale for her subsequent volumes. She wrote "thirty seven... thirty eight... now forty is right around the corner..." and that her life for a period of 29 years was "reading like a brilliant masterpiece." On at least six occasions, she references her experience since 1975, or prior to the time she began high school. Her paranoid ideation is evident when she referenced "At the bottom of each top secret counter espionage movement, the United States Government unfortunately is the country I am referring to. Having been employed by them for almost 6 years, I have

found is guilty of this crime. The intricacy by which an affect of murder has occurred and has violently targeted Americans operating using the philosophy of a 'White Supremacist' strategy over the last 29 years, will be outlined in this and other Volumes to follow." She referenced her former employer, the Postal Service at least twice, evidenced by, "I pledge my life to defend the premise of democracy in this country, and could not in good conscience pay for or justify a politically motivated racist murder, not one, or a thousand. I could not support it where I worked, and as a result received threats of murder and great bodily harm from several people there. The purpose of The Racist Press is to offer information to you on how and why government sanctioned murders have occurred in America, in their colleges and in their offices, and still continue to this day. The Horror Show." Finally, the most commonly used thematic words employed in Volume I included "America" and "murder" and "government."

In this first volume, she linked the Rocky Horror Show to the USPS and its military-like function although how and why she linked the two was unclear: "The Post Office functions as a paramilitary organization and operates with its own police force. Trained employees handle investigations of theft of property and threats through the mail whether written or hazardous... The Post Office attracts many personnel who are currently on military reserve, or who have previously served in our armed forces..." She ended the first volume in this manner, "My current concern specifically is the last 30 years of American culture. The violation of law and the violence perpetrated by the government to sanction racist murders will be addressed here and in additional Volumes of The Racist Press."

In her second volume, Ms. T. emphasized the intrusive role of government and religion and alleged that the "government functions as an extension of Ku Klux Klan..." or "militarized organizations, sanctioning racist murders must be examined." Her thinking remained delusional and paranoid; e.g., stating the Ku Klux Klan and the government worked in unison. Her writing became increasingly disorganized. For example, she linked the United States, specifically, the Nixon administration, as formulating a religion called "Zen" to "represent the 'KKK' as an American political figurehead." She linked her own circumstance to conspiracy theories that people were out to get her and ended Volume II by foreshadowing violence (possible leakage) when she wrote: "some events like a loud pop (an actual gun shot, with the intent to kill) is not so easy to recreate at any time."

In her third volume, Ms. T. continued to assert that the government sanctioned murder: "For almost three decades a political ticket is responsible for countless murders and charges of conspiracy to commit murder..." For the first time, however, Ms. T. introduced sexual-related material: "Sex can be categorized anywhere from promiscuous intercourse to nonconsensual rape whether you are sober, inebriated on alcohol, or incapacitated on drugs. Believing your sex act was filmed without your permission, for someone's scrap book or sexually explicit photos are taken, and distributed to acquaintances or employers would be even more worrisome..." and then referenced The Rocky Horror Picture Show and that she had "too much to drink" and "got in a compromising situation. So what. That was a long time ago."

Ms. T. introduced the term "incest" for the first time when she wrote "chronological order (time)—irreversible events, i.e., a female victim of incest; an unplanned birthday celebration with the introduction to lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD); later audience 'participation' at a local college pub which one, familiar with campus tradition might call a hazing. We were refused service at a bar we had been drinking at for months ([I was 16 she

was 17]). As we exited the bar there was mass rush toward the door virtually leaving me as the last one (out???)". T-w-e-n-t-y N-i-n-e-years ago. A psychedelic experience at the Rocky Horror Picture Show, 'hide and seek' around an unfamiliar neighborhood. Movie patrons trying to find their way home high on drugs instead of viewing the film."

In Volume IV, Ms. T. specifically referenced her 2001–2003 work-related and law enforcement interactions: "I was physically assaulted by police, mentally tortured and mandated to comply over a period of 2 years." Her thinking grew increasingly disorganized, tangential, and delusional when she continued to link the Rocky Horror Picture Show and government; "MBA a familiar term in American culture, is an integral part of the murder strategy used in conjunction with the Rocky Horror Picture Show... My suggestion the Rocky Horror Picture Show can be unraveled as a white supremacist movement intentionally written for government murder, is done from a point of view in retrospect." She defined the term "MBA" as "To some man beat animal."

Her loose associations and neologisms included, "The component of the film representing the police department (Zichard "dick" Cranium; Richard Detecfie, or Richard Nixon... [gap]... the tricky-penis)." She continued to reference a possible sexual assault, but in this volume linked this to the Rocky Horror Picture Show; "A sexual perpetrator (rapist, child molester, incest) in prison life is low on the totem pole pecking order for status. The entertainment factor of audience participation in the Rocky Horror Picture Show is particularly thought provoking though when during part of the film the audience shouts 'incest is best.' How that got started I have no idea. I viewed the film in the third or fourth year of its showing and at every performance as if on cue that was part of the show... A strange reference for an audience member who might happen to have been a victim of incest."

Toward the end of Volume IV, Ms. T. specifically referenced her work environment when she wrote, "In actuality, the persons I worked with routinely referred to themselves as 'klan,' neo-nazi German but were obviously decedents of other cultures. They can and do define themselves in the following ways: Eastern Indian, Philippine Islander, Thailand, Mexican and Korean to name a few."

In her fifth and final volume, Ms. T. increased her references to work-related problems that included "Shuffled between The Grand Jury, Internal Affairs and Office of The District Attorney in Santa Barbara, I was unable to resolve the conflict. The crime of attempted murder you or your children across this country is overwhelming. When assistance is not available, it becomes a pervasive and traumatic event. Having knowledge the agencies involved condone this violence is unbearable.... I tried for almost 3 years to see beneficence or welfare of the plan, but I found none... The indication to perform, or get out was clear. My sense of humanity forces me to accept the consequences of losing my job. The victimization continues separate from the post office politics... The difficulty for me forced me to relocate." Moreover, she referenced her work-shift when she said "In a 24-h facility, however, the mood shifts in the evening and, as the weekend is about to start the controlled environment becomes more relaxed."

2004–2005 (New Mexico)

According to the *Gallup Independent* (8), Ms. T. moved to Cibola County, New Mexico, in 2004, specifically Milan and Grants. The local residents and businesses considered her behavior eccentric; however, she was reportedly not arrested or hospitalized involuntarily. Neither public records nor her writings during this period were found for review.

According to the local newspaper, Ms. T. began to issue a letter-sized publication, referred to as the “Racist Press” in 2004 (8). The City of Milan denied her an occupation operating license on the grounds her business was outside the village limits. In March 2005, Ms. T. apparently visited the Village Hall where the people present called the police chief to remove her after her harassing visits worried workers. Ms. T. left prior to law enforcement personnel arriving on scene, but she reportedly stopped visiting the Hall (9).

In another Grants incident, she reportedly drove into a convenience store on June 18 without her clothes on to refuel a vehicle (8). The clerk instructed her to get dressed. Once city officers arrived, they could not arrest her because she was clothed. Deputy Clerk Terri Gallegos noted that at one point, Ms. T. harassed an employee so much that the worker got up and left, leaving other employees to wait on her. Any time someone would ask her a question, Ms. T. would respond but otherwise, “any time someone was not talking to her directly, she was off in her own little world” (8). Ms. T. would also shout furiously to herself, order food at restaurants and leave before eating, kneel in prayer at the roadside, and remove her clothes in parking lots (9).

Ms. T.’s biological brother was interviewed shortly after the offense by Santa Barbara County Sheriff. He reportedly saw her about 5 months before the murders, at which time he tried to convince her to seek medical/mental health help. Ms. T. refused. Her brother informed the police that his sister was “fixated” on her former workplace in Goleta, but did not voice any intention to hurt or harm anyone. She told him the place was “evil.” Two months prior to the mass murder in December 2005, a mental health practitioner called the police after Ms. T. was in the parking lot kneeling at her car and talking to herself (9).

Discussion

Ms. T. did not “snap,” a misguided assertion often advanced by the popular press when mass murders are reported. Instead, she completed a pathway to violence which culminated in a civilian massacre. It included a real-world grievance—her rejection by her employer—which was grossly magnified by paranoid delusional beliefs that focused upon the USPS. Consistent with prior findings on mass murder (5–7), she purchased a weapon in advance of the mass murder, came prepared with a loaded 9-mm handgun with additional ammunition, and reloaded at least once inside the postal facility before taking her own life: all behaviors that suggest predatory, rather than affective violence (10) and a clear homicidal-suicidal intent. She shot her victims at point-blank range with most having exit wounds; the latter victims’ defensive injuries suggest that they may have attempted to stop her from continuing the rampage. Ms. T. was familiar with the entrance procedures to the postal facility and was likely aware that the gunshot sounds would be muffled by the loud machinery inside the facility. She had a history of chronic psychosis, likely paranoid schizophrenia, and her victims were opportunistic rather than targeted, the latter referring to the selection of specific people toward whom she felt homicidal.

Ms. T.’s first victim was a prior neighbor who may have called the authorities when Ms. T. played her stereo too loudly. She then drove to the postal facility where she killed six more individuals, mostly women. While she killed two persons referenced in prior writings, she likely selected her victims because of their availability at the time of the shift and symbolic identification as a U.S. postal employee. She may have entered the facility during the evening shift because of her familiarity with the environment during that time of day, and to maximize the likelihood of encountering persons she irrationally believed wronged and subjugated her in the

past. Ms. T.’s victims included six women but more importantly five minority victims (three African-Americans, one Asian, and one Filipino). Although her racism is apparent in her writings, and prejudice is often fertilized by subclinical paranoia, it is impossible to know whether her target selection was based upon race rather than opportunity. We think the latter is more likely, as people of color make up a significant portion of the USPS employee pool, and we have no data indicating that other Caucasians were immediately available to her as a target on that day and yet were not chosen by her to die.

Her pathway to violence (11) began during her grievances with the USPS in February 2001. While she demonstrated disorganized and psychotic thinking prior to working for the Postal Service in 1997, her behavior during her employment with the Postal Service was increasingly erratic; she demonstrated bizarre, persecutory, and paranoid beliefs about government murder conspiracies, linked the government to the Ku Klux Klan, and merged memories of her early childhood (e.g., Rocky Horror Picture Show) with paranoid beliefs about the United States. When examined in totality, her five volumes of the “Racist Press” were also replete with violent ideation that included multiple references to “murder” and “violence” alongside references to the “United States” and “government.”

Most mass murderers leak their intent to third parties (12), engage in “warning behaviors,” but do not communicate a direct threat to the target beforehand. Ms. T. did not appear, from the available records that we reviewed, to leak her intentions or plans to a third party nor communicate a direct threat to her target. In her writings, Ms. T. expressed her frustration with her employer, violent ideation, and repeatedly used terms such as “murder,” but made no indirect or direct threats. Direct threats are also notoriously absent in public figure attack and assassination cases in the United States and Europe (13). It is possible that she may have leaked her intentions while she resided in New Mexico, including her plan to return to Santa Barbara. However, the absence of records and statements made by persons familiar with her behavior make it very difficult to confirm whether Ms. T., in fact, demonstrated “leakage.”

Ms. T. did engage in a series of warning behaviors—acts that strongly suggest research, planning, preparation, and implementation—which included returning to Santa Barbara, the site of her perceived grievance and involuntary hospitalization, after being away for 2 years, and purchasing a handgun with enough ammunition to reload her weapon. After her purchase of a weapon, it was not clear if she engaged in any surveillance or probing behaviors prior to entering the postal facility; however, her entrance during the evening shift suggested that she likely tried to reduce the chance of being detected and maximized the likelihood of a successful breach. There is little evidence that Ms. T. engaged in any “final act” behaviors, including settling long-standing debts, contacting family members, leaving hand-written notes or similar activities; however, she included the term “will” on the memorandum line of one of her deposited checks.

Ms. T.’s refusal to seek and/or comply with psychiatric treatment served as a further catalyst to her deteriorating condition. We did not have access to her psychiatric and fitness for duty records which would have provided critical information about the type and dose of her medications. Prior findings indicate that most persons committing mass murder have a history of mental illness and non-compliance with care. The severity and intensity of Ms. T.’s psychiatric symptoms were the driving force behind her criminal acts rather than specific workplace-related problems. She was preoccupied with violent thoughts and images which she integrated with her persecutory ideas about how the government conspired with the

USPS to subjugate her interests and aspirations. While paranoid and delusional in the past, she found in the USPS an organization to blame, to hold responsible for her repeated failures and life spiraling out of control. As she refused treatment, her condition worsened, and it is evident in her writings that she likely experienced threat/control over-ride delusions, specific symptoms that increase risk for violence among some psychiatric patients (14). Ms. T. stands out, however, in that most females commit mass murders against family members and not in public locations (2).

From an employer's threat management perspective, cases like Ms. T. are fortunately very rare, but also discouraging, and very typical of the management problems presented by paranoid employees. First, Ms. T. appears to have forced her management into having to take firm actions against her—an involuntary hospitalization and two fitness for duty examinations—for the sake of a workplace free from disruption, fear, and risk. Paranoid individuals or employees, with their angry, irrational, and accusatory behavior, are extremely challenging to manage and can be nearly impossible to reason with (15). The employer is ultimately forced to remove them, especially if the employee rejects treatment, which is usually the case. This commonly includes a careful review of the employee's rights under the Americans with Disabilities Act. But the paranoid employee will likely perceive any separation decision as an injustice and an attack, which can feed his or her motivation to act violently in retaliation or to protect him or her from the perception of harm to come. Interventions intended to prevent violence and/or to avail people of professional help can have the opposite effect on some individuals, especially paranoid ones—referred to as the intervention dilemma in threat management practice (15). Ms. T.'s later writings indicate how wronged and demeaned she felt by various parties: her employer, law enforcement, and the neighbors who complained about her loud music.

Second, the lengthy time between her separation from the USPS and the attack is unusual, although not unheard of, and is also very troublesome from a workplace violence prevention perspective. The implication for employers is that a seriously disturbed and deteriorating employee who never truly restabilizes can pose a violence risk years later, in Ms. T.'s case *c.* 4 years. Monitoring such an individual's behavior over an extended period of time, especially a secretive one, is not commonly undertaken, as it is onerous, costly, risks further provocation of the individual of concern, and could violate their privacy rights.

As a strategic remedy with seriously paranoid and delusional employees, employers may gather as much current risk assessment data as possible and practical, interpreted by qualified professionals, prior to the employee's separation. This may or may not include a direct clinical evaluation for risk. Alerts should be clearly communicated to managers or others for any new contacts from such employees. Still, it is doubtful, if not impossible, that any employer could have stopped Ms. T., after years of no information coming forth about her, unless its physical security measures were specifically thorough enough to prevent an armed attack by a suicidal subject.

In the end, Ms. T. believed that she had to kill off her oppressors whom she held responsible for a failed life. A kernel of truth—her dismissal from the USPS—grew in the toxic soil of her paranoid delusions for at least 5 years, completely unknown to her employer who was geographically distant, but the intimate and sole cause of her suffering, at least in her psychotic state of mind. Mass

murderers who return to kill after months or years of absence from the workplace are extraordinarily rare, completely unpredictable, and utterly catastrophic. Such behavior is contrary to the conventional wisdom that threats decrease over time (days and/or weeks of no violence), but very consistent with paranoid and psychotic mass murderers: they will ruminate for months, if not years, on their mistreatment and maltreatment at the hands of others, often recording and remembering in detail the humiliations they have experienced. At some point in time—often a precipitating loss or humiliation—all of these incidents are condensed, a target is selected, and revenge is taken. This may also be the moment when the actual date and time of the killings are chosen. The act of mass murder is completely rational from within the delusion of the perpetrator, but horrifying to those who suffer its consequences.

Ms. T.'s gender as a female places her among the very few women who have committed a mass murder in the recorded history of criminal behavior. Even though her motivation appeared to be driven by psychosis, we should not forget that it takes a severe degree of aggression and callousness to commit such an act, something that is usually found only in men.

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