

What is their aim?

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Hollywood, MD - In the wake of another horrific school shooting it might surprise you that not everyone in the media—local or national—is prepared to point the finger—or anything else—at a certain American association. The outrage some have directed at the National Rifle Association (NRA) is, in my opinion, misplaced. The culpability lies solely with the perpetrator. Police have a suspect in custody. He will get his day in court. This sad story is an onion that contains several layers. The criminal use of firearms is certainly one of them. For that the NRA must be held harmless.

While you may not like what the NRA stands for or their lobbying tactics, they do provide venues and instruction for gun owners. Those components are crucial. To promote weapons and not offer guidance on how to responsibly use this controversial product would be troubling. In Southern Maryland (in this case the three Lower Southern Maryland counties and the southern portions of Prince George's and Anne Arundel) there are at least 10 places to practice shooting listed in the NRA's national registry. There are also locations in the region to receive NRA firearm training.

Forgive me for slightly shifting gears. The rhetoric has been quite heated the past few weeks. Late last week the NRA sent a spokeswoman to the foreground to defend them, as if they needed defending. While I defend this woman's right (with a slingshot and a stone) to say what she did, I think she was wrong. Members of the media do not "love" mass shootings. There is no aspect of it that people who work in this profession find palatable. It's a compelling tale that tells itself with absolutely no embellishment needed. The NRA spokeswoman decided to taunt members of the press like a drunken sniper by stating "you love the ratings." Really? This story has the full attention of the world and cannot be ignored. Lives have been lost and families are grieving. Is the press supposed to airbrush the grief-stricken individuals out of the images captured from the ongoing drama so that there is no spike in ratings?

The NRA has top-notch instructors, here in our region and throughout the nation. Now they need to recruit a top-notch spokesperson—one who has intelligence to match her looks. Firing recklessly at the press does nothing to salvage the NRA's image, whether they've earned it or not. The spokeswoman's poor marksmanship only further shakes the country's confidence that we can all come together and get through this latest tragedy.

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