

## Surrogate

By Mike Berger

The crime was brutal, heinous and senseless. He stabbed a young mother and her two young children for a few hundred dollars of jewelry and forty dollars in cash.

He languishes now on death row while people debate the death penalty. The Hawks say, "Someone that evil deserves to die." The doves claim we have no right to take another life.

Probing much deeper, let's ask a hard question. Was this ugly man seduced into the killers role. Do we all need a whipping boy to take the punishment that we tacitly feel we deserve?

Let's look at the seduction process. We found a child genetically disposed to poor impulse control. An alcoholic father smacked the boy around while an inept mother stood and watched. Anal retentive neighbors played their part. They couldn't stand the kid.

Peers took over the job with sneers and exclusion. Teachers were the next, adding fuel to the battered child's fire. They wore anger and frustration on their sleeves. The Vice Principal was the most brutal of them all. Hard assed cops took over the task. They would teach this surly kid a lesson.

Employers wouldn't hire that scruffy looking kid. The bank wouldn't give him a loan to buy a car. His girlfriend left for another guy who had it all together. The local liquor store provided self medication.

You can lead to worse to water, some say but you can't make him drink. However, you can run the horse all day and feed him dry crackers before you lead him to the trough.

Did we put this man in the position, with no other options but to do what he did?

But what are the innocent victims?  
Unfortunately, they are collateral damage.  
Just casualties in the grand charade.  
As we debate the death penalty, we can puff up our chest over our own nobility. Our dark desires and ugly thoughts remain masked. We can use the surrogate to hide our own guilt and shame. Punishing the surrogate for our own sins becomes a balm.

Is that evil men, in reality, a tragic hero, sacrificing himself for the sake of a sick society?

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