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ONE WEEK, TWO MASSACRES

An Atlanta man buys a pistol. Hours later eight persons lie dead.



For Police Issues by Julius (Jay) Wachtel. According to the World Health Organization, “[compulsive sexual behavior disorder](#)” is an [impulse control disorder](#) “characterized by a persistent pattern of failure to control intense, repetitive sexual impulses or urges.” In the U.S., though, the levers of power are held by the American Psychological Association. And it’s repeatedly refused to officially recognize a like syndrome, “[hypersexual disorder](#),” as a bonafide mental disorder. APA’s dictionary, though, does offer a catchy definition of yet another wannabe, “[sexual addiction](#)”:

The defining features of a sexual addiction include sexual behavior that is out of control, that has severely negative consequences, and that the person is unable to stop despite a wish to do so. Other features include persistence in high-risk, self-destructive behavior; spending large amounts of time in sexual activity or fantasy; neglect of social, occupational, or other activities; and mood changes associated with sexual activity.

Whatever one calls Robert Aaron Long’s condition, there’s no doubt that the twenty-one year old resident of Atlanta was obsessed with sex. A former roommate at a local rehab facility where Long spent several months receiving treatment for sex addiction [said that his buddy was “tortured”](#) by his compulsive thoughts, and especially so because he was very religious. Long complained that he simply couldn’t stay away from massage parlors, which he frequented for sex: “He’d feel extremely guilty about it. He’d talk about how he was going to harm himself.” Yet Long also shared good things about his upbringing. A favorite memory was of getting a gun when he was ten.

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Long's "passion for guns and God" was mentioned in *The Daily Beast*. His since-deleted Instagram account reportedly featured the tagline "Pizza, guns, drums, music, family, and God. This pretty much sums up my life. It's a pretty good life."

Apparently, not so much. Long's parents had reached [the end of their ropes](#). Fed up with their son's obsession with pornography and his repeated visits to parlors for "massages with happy endings," they kicked him out of the house. That supposedly happened on March 15. On the very next morning Long bought a 9mm. pistol at a gun store. Like most buyers, he apparently quickly passed the Fed's automated "[Insta-Check](#)." Georgia [doesn't have](#) its own waiting period or background check, so Long promptly left with the gun.

[His murderous spree](#) began within hours. It would claim eight lives. Long's first stop was in the Atlanta suburb of Acworth, where he burst into Young's Asian Massage. His fusillade left four dead: owner Xiaojie Tan, 49, masseuse Daoyou Feng, 44, handyman Paul Andre Michel, 54, and customer Delaina Yaun, 33. Long also shot and seriously wounded Elcias Hernandez-Ortiz, a passer-by. He then drove to Atlanta's "Cheshire Bridge" area. Long opened fire inside Gold's Spa and, across the street, at Aromatherapy Spa. In all, [four employees](#) were killed: Yong Ae Yue, 63, Hyun Jung Grant, 51, Soon Chung Park, 74, and Suncha Kim, 69.

Informed that their son was wanted, Long's parents told police that his car had a tracking device. A highway patrol officer spotted the youth and performed a pit maneuver. [Long's car spun out](#) and he promptly surrendered. His pistol was in the car. Word is he was on his way to Florida, where he intended to continue his murderous spree.

Six of Long's victims were of Asian descent. That brought on a torrent of speculation that Long, who is White, was motivated by racial animus. But while pundits have feverishly cited the tragedy as the undeniable product of racism, we haven't come across any reliable information that Long was a bigot. Indeed, he insisted that he wasn't a racist but was angry at the spas for feeding his sexual obsessions. They were, [he allegedly told the cops](#), "a temptation that he wanted to eliminate."

Indeed, such "temptations" abound in the Cheshire Bridge area where Gold's and Aromatherapy are located. [According to the Atlanta Journal-Constitution](#) the zone has been long known as the city's "unofficial red light district" (click [here](#) for the paper's earlier, comprehensive account about the area's notoriety.) During 2011-2013 [Atlanta police arrested ten employees](#) of Gold's Spa who "offered to perform sexual acts on undercover officers for money." Each of the arrested was female, and several [listed the spa as their place of residence](#). [According to USA Today](#) all three massage parlors are

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listed on erotic review site “[Rubmaps](#),” and user comments mention their special “benefits.” Young’s Asian Massage is supposedly being investigated for prostitution, and police received complaints about possible sex work and exploitation at the other two spas as recently as 2019. Yet city officials insist that as far as they know the businesses operate legally.

So we’ll leave it at that. Our focus is on a concern that your writer, a retired ATF special agent, can personally attest to: the ease with which deeply-troubled persons can “legally” acquire guns at retail. Posts in our [Gun Massacres special topic](#) have repeatedly discussed the problem. Long seemed clearly in the grips of a mental crisis. But he wasn’t a felon. He was never involuntarily committed to a mental institution nor formally adjudged mentally defective. So nothing in [Federal law](#) prohibited him from buying a gun, impulsively or otherwise.

Many States have adopted [a variety of measures](#) to address such gaps. Some extend the prohibition on gun possession to certain categories of misdemeanants. And/or expand the definition of disabling mental conditions to include voluntary treatment. And/or impose mandatory “waiting periods” before firearms can be delivered. A few have even enacted “[Red Flag Laws](#)” (also known as “extreme risk protection laws”) that empower judges, based on information from police and family members, to order the confiscation of guns from risky individuals

When it comes to Long, though, none of that was available. Georgia, whom the [Giffords](#) gun-control group regularly awards an “F”, [has not enacted any restrictions](#) that go substantially beyond Federal gun laws. It doesn’t offer a way to [preemptively seize guns](#). Neither does it impose [a waiting period](#) on gun deliveries. It’s basically “walk in with the loot, walk out with the heat”.

Had he been forced to wait ten days before picking up the gun, would Long have still carried out the massacre? Could a delay have blunted its impulsive underpinnings? Might a deeply-troubled young man have rethought his intentions? It’s impossible to say, but at the very least eight people would have stood a chance of staying alive.

But Long didn’t have to wait, and the consequences are plain to see.

In past years we’ve written about other gunslinging youths with long-standing mental issues of which family and friends were well aware. For example, [Elliot Rodger](#). A 22-year old college dropout, he had received mental treatment since childhood. Rodger eventually settled in Isla Vista, a Santa Barbara (CA) neighborhood populated by students. He would soon produce and share a lengthy and chilling “manifesto” that [excoriated co-eds for spurning him sexually](#):

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I will punish all females for the crime of depriving me of sex. They have starved me of sex for my entire youth, and gave that pleasure to other men. In doing so, they took many years of my life away.

During 2012-2013 Rodger bought three 9mm. pistols at two gun stores and practiced with them at a range. On May 23, 2014, two weeks after a call from his worried parents prompted a visit by Sheriff's deputies (they were satisfied he was o.k. and left) Rodger stabbed three students to death. He then went on a shooting rampage, killing three more students and wounding thirteen. Rodger then shot himself dead.

Then there's [Jared Lee Loughner](#). Also twenty-two, and also a one-time student – [he had been expelled from an Arizona college](#) for erratic behavior – Loughner opened fire with a 9mm. pistol at a January 8, 2011 Tucson political event. Six fell dead and thirteen were wounded. One of the latter was then-Representative Gabrielle Giffords (D-Az), who went on to found the well-known gun control group whose website we referenced above. Loughner bought his gun at a local gun shop five weeks earlier. On the morning of the massacre he went to get ammunition but his odd behavior [led one store to turn him away](#) (he got what he wanted at another store.) After his arrest Loughner was placed on medication and confined to a mental ward. He ultimately pled guilty and was sentenced to “forever.”

Just like Long, Elliot Rodger and Jared Loughner readily bought guns at a store. Both were free of felony convictions. While each was (like Long) a longtime mental basket case, neither had been committed to a mental institution nor formally adjudged as mentally defective. Both had reached that magical age – twenty-one – that qualified them to purchase a handgun. (Eighteen is the Federal minimum for buying a rifle or shotgun at a store.)

Before Boulder happened we intended to present data – we've put together some fascinating numbers – that probes the effects (if any) of waiting periods and such on State homicide rates. But things have changed. So once we collect enough information about the Colorado massacre we'll be back with Part II. Hopefully that will conclude the series.