



Interfaith Center on  
Corporate Responsibility

*Inspired by faith, committed to action*

475 Riverside Drive, Suite 550  
New York, NY 10115-0050  
www.iccr.org

Tel: 212-870-2295  
Fax: 212-870-2023  
info@iccr.org

**February 7, 2005**  
**JOINT STATEMENT AND SIGNATORIES ON**  
**VIOLENT VIDEO GAMES**

We come together as citizens, consumers and investors concerned about the marketing of a culture of violence in our society. We are especially concerned about the marketing of violent entertainment, particularly violent video games, to children.

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, violence (homicide, suicide, and trauma) is the most prevalent health risk for children and adolescents.

One factor contributing to violence is entertainment media products such as violent video games. Years of research have shown that viewing entertainment violence can lead to increases in aggressive attitudes, values and behavior, particularly in children. Research on violent interactive media indicates that it has a strong and more lasting effect on violent behavior.

Video games have emerged as a popular form of entertainment, with 70% of children living in a home with at least one video game player, and 33% with one in their bedrooms. \$7 billion were spent in the United States in 2003 on video and computer games.

This statement is addressed to corporations in the video game industry, and to adults who will be purchasing video games for children.

We believe that corporations in the video game industry, who may pride themselves as good corporate citizens with an interest in promoting healthy communities, must assume greater responsibility in ensuring that violent interactive entertainment is not accessible to children and youth.

Companies need to consider what messages are being sent to children and youth when they market certain video games that promote violence and gender and racial stereotyping. For example, the Federal Trade Commission's July 2004 study expressed a concern about advertisements promoting Mature-rated games (for ages 17 and older) in publications oriented toward younger children. We believe this type of marketing must end.

While a number of retailers have made efforts to restrict the sale of inappropriate games to children, we are not satisfied with the results. The Federal Trade Commission's

“Mystery Shopper Survey” in 2003 found that 69% of children were able to purchase Mature-rated games in retail stores. A New York City Council Investigation Division investigation in 2003 revealed that 97% of the time, “a young person can walk into almost any store selling video games in New York City and purchase games that encourage and reward them for performing acts of violence and brutality that include beating women, shooting cops and committing racially motivated acts of violence.” The report concluded: “Retailers must make a real commitment to keeping video games with graphic violence or strong sexual content out of the hands of children.” And we add to that conclusion teenagers as well.

We call on the marketers and sellers of video games to:

- Publish standards for marketing video games that encourage or reward players for performing acts of violence and brutality, and that depict images demeaning to women and minorities.
- Place M-rated games in a location separate from other games in stores
- Post signage describing the video games ratings systems.
- Evaluate and report on their enforcement and compliance programs of policies to prevent minors from purchasing violent video games.

We urge those who purchase video games for children, to do so with great care. While the game software industry finances a rating system through the work of the Entertainment Software Ratings Board (ESRB), we are not convinced that parents can completely depend on its accuracy. Some parents’ concept of what is acceptable for children and teens may not be the same as that of the ESRB. A study by Dr. Kimberly Thompson of the Harvard School of Public Health concluded that “physicians and parents should be aware that popular Teen-rated video games (ages 13 and older) may be a source of exposure to a wide range of unexpected content” including games that involve intentional violence, such as rewarding or requiring players to kill.

We encourage parents to exercise their power as consumers and hold retailers accountable for the way that violent video games are marketed and sold. Parents can visit retailers and find out how they display the games and how stores enforce the current ratings system. They can urge retailers to stop selling violent games or at the least separate them from child-friendly ones They can advocate by writing to companies and letting them know their concerns about the marketing of violent entertainment media. They can find out what their Internet service providers are doing to prevent children from purchasing or playing violent video games online.

Finally, we wish to name several games whose scenes of violence, gender and/or racial stereotyping are such that we would urge parents to avoid purchasing them. Some of the best-selling games of special concern are:

- Grand Theft Auto-San Andreas, and all earlier versions of the game
- Halo 2 and all earlier versions
- Half-Life 2 and all earlier versions
- Doom 3 and all earlier version

- Hitman 2 and earlier versions
- 100 Bullets
- Manhunt
- Mortal Combat: Deception
- Shadow Heart
- Gunslinger Girls
- America's Army

With increased awareness and the empowerment of citizens, consumers and investors, the marketing of violence will decrease and the video game industry will be responsible and accountable for creating a positive system for all video games, but especially those made available to youth.

**Signatures:**

- ❖ Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility
- ❖ Barbara Arnwine, Executive Director, The Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law
- ❖ Vicki Bergkamp ASC, ASC Investment Group
- ❖ Dr. Martha Burk, Chair, National Council of Women's Organizations
- ❖ Mary Brigid Clingman OP, Dominican Sisters of Grand Rapids
- ❖ Kathleen Cummings, Our Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters, Huntington, IN
- ❖ Sister Anne DeConcini, RSM, Sisters of Mercy, Regional Community of Merion
- ❖ Pamela Eakes, President and Founder, Mothers Against Violence in America
- ❖ Sr. Michaeline Falvey, SNJM
- ❖ Gwen Farry, BVM, Sisters of Charity, BVM
- ❖ Nancy Finneran, SL, Sisters of Loretto
- ❖ Margaret Fitzer, Sister of St.Louis, Woodland Hills, California
- ❖ Brian Fry, Justice Coordinator, Congregation of St. Joseph, Cleveland, OH
- ❖ Mary Ann Gaido, St. Joseph Health System
- ❖ Mary Ellen Gondeck, SSJ, Office of Peace and Justice, Sisters of St. Joseph, Nazareth, MI
- ❖ Julie Gorte, Calvert Group
- ❖ Joye Gros, OP Dominicans of St. Catharine, Kentucky
- ❖ Valerie Heinonen, Dominican Sisters of Hope, Mercy Investment Program, Sisters of Mercy-Regional Community of Detroit, and Ursuline Sisters of Tildonk-U.S. Province
- ❖ Sr. Marion Irvine, Dominican Sisters of San Rafael
- ❖ Jo Ann Jansing OSU, Ursuline Sisters of Louisville
- ❖ Susan Jordan, SSND, Coordinator, Midwest Coalition for Responsible Investment
- ❖ Rob Keithan, Director, Washington Office for Advocacy, Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations
- ❖ Ruth Kuhn, SC, Coordinator, Region VI Coalition for Responsible Investment, The Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati, Corporate Responsibility Committee
- ❖ Anne Mary Lochner OSU, Ursuline Sisters of Louisville
- ❖ Patricia Marshall, Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament
- ❖ Reg McKillip, Sinsinawa Dominican Shareholder and Consumer Action Advisory Committee

- ❖ Lillian Moskeland, Loretto Community
- ❖ Nora M. Nash OSF, Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia
- ❖ Mary Jo Nelson, OLVN, Our Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters
- ❖ Ann Oestreich, IHM, Congregation Justice Coordinator, Sisters of the Holy Cross, Notre Dame, IN
- ❖ Cecile Paulik, SSM, Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother
- ❖ Bernice Powell Jackson, United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries
- ❖ Frank A. Rauscher, President, Aquinas Funds
- ❖ Judith Rice OSU, Ursuline Sisters of Louisville
- ❖ Sue Scharfenberger OSU, Ursuline Sisters of Louisville
- ❖ Daniel J. Steininger, Chair, The Catholic Funds
- ❖ Claire E. Regan, SC Sisters of Charity of New York
- ❖ Mark A. Regier, Mennonite Mutual Aid/MMA Praxis Mutual Funds
- ❖ Sister Frances A. Renn, Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother
- ❖ Sister Ruth Rosebaum, CREA and NECRI
- ❖ Catherine Rowan, Corporate Social Responsibility Consultant
- ❖ Sister Jane Ann Scanlon, Diocese of Brooklyn
- ❖ Sister Maureen Sullivan, Sisters of Charity of Saint Elizabeth
- ❖ Marie Jeanne Surette, O.P., Dominicans of St. Catharine, Kentucky
- ❖ Julie Tanner, Christian Brothers Investment Services, Inc.
- ❖ Julie Taylor, Executive Secretary for Children, Youth and Family Advocacy, Women's Division, The United Methodist Church
- ❖ Susan Vickers, Catholic Healthcare West
- ❖ Martha Walsh, SC Cincinnati.
- ❖ Margaret Weber, Corporate Responsibility Coordinator, Adrian Dominican Sisters and Basilian Fathers of Toronto
- ❖ Sister Anita Whitely, Ursuline Sisters of Cleveland
- ❖ Jean Anne Zappa OSU, Ursuline Sisters of Louisville
- ❖ Patricia Zerega, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA)

Monday, February 07, 2005