

# If Only it Were True

✘ In the aftermath of the Colorado shootings, the President, and Mitt Romney both spoke eloquently about the tragic and deliberate act of violence. The President also went to visit with the families, and he said something idealistic about how we will remember the victims not the murderer. This is a proper goal, but it is certainly not what currently happens. For perhaps voyeuristic reasons, the media concentrates all too often on the murderer in reporting on these types of incidents. There could probably be bipartisan agreement on the goal of the President's statement. Rather than politicians wasting time talking about guns and gun control in this terrible story's aftermath, they could work on ways to discourage any opportunity for fame that this act can create for the killer.

"Out of this darkness a brighter day is going to come," President Obama said. "Although the perpetrator of this evil act has received a lot of attention over the last couple of days that attention will fade away. And in the end, after he has felt the full force of our justice system, what will be remembered are the good people who were impacted by this tragedy." This is a wonderful sentiment, but it is simply not true. How many victims do we know stories about from the Oklahoma City bombing? What, on the other hand, do we know about the perpetrator of that crime? We found out about his politics, how he was able to combine the explosives, followed through the trial, and his execution. There are some rare exceptions, such as Todd Beamer and a handful of others on 9/11. Unless the person murdered, however, is already famous we hear very little about them. The focus of media attention is almost always on the murderer.

The goal should be to discourage attention paid to these people as if they are important. Encourage going back to the times when we only saw them on their public execution day.

Perhaps if there was little hope of becoming a celebrity there would be less interest in committing one of these horrifying acts. Even if this does not deter future acts of violence, it is a public good to shun attention to these perpetrators. Most of these acts are violations of state law, but there could be a federal role. Why not pass a law that would require a special broadcast on PBS with stories exclusively about the victims culminating in the public broadcast of the execution. Conservatives may sign on to this, since Public Broadcasting keeps avoiding the budget axe. States that don't have the death penalty should be encouraged to do so. A speedy trial, quick appeal, and a quick execution would all help as well.

The President had a good goal in mind when he spoke in Colorado. It is a shame that we glorify these killers by covering every aspect of their lives, while almost ignoring the people we should care about. The media is free to cover what they want, but there can be a higher goal set for them to follow. Make some worthwhile use of the public broadcasting airwaves. Set the example of what is important to remember from these incidents, and who we should ignore.