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Forget YOU, Mass Murderer!

By Mark Pixler

April 18, 2007, 6:50 AM – As I write this, the “search for a motive” for the tragedy at Virginia Tech goes on. Given what we know so far about the individual who was responsible for it, I’d like to assume for the moment that he was mad at the world, hated his life, and wanted to take some of “them” with him as he went out in a “blaze of glory.” He provided the “blaze,” the mass media provided the “glory.”

I hereby propose that we quit giving these sick bastards the publicity they seem to so desperately want, and instead doom them to eternal anonymity. I realize that’s anathema to the “If it bleeds, it LEADS” policy of our mass media, but as one who was trained as a journalist, I suggest that we exercise a little something I’ll call “discretionary journalism.” From now on, let’s make an all-out effort to eliminate the phenomenon of instant infamy for mass murderers.

In our society, it ordinarily takes something of an effort to become famous. I mean, you at least have to win (or place well in) a reality show. But infamy is available to anyone who is willing to KILL to get it. We need to stop offering it, NOW. We need to refuse to publish or broadcast ANY identifying information about mass murderers. By all means, report the news, just don’t publish the mass murderer’s name or image in any form. Inform the public, without “glorifying” the killer. Make it clear to those who would kill for their “fifteen minutes of fame” that it’s just not going to happen anymore. Not in America.

Of course, it would take a concerted effort on the part of all law enforcement agencies and every media outlet to make such a thing happen. Yeah, right. OK, so maybe my modest proposal IS totally unrealistic. After all, given the competitive nature of media coverage, somebody somewhere is going

to want to “get the facts.” Leaks happen, the information gets into the pipeline, and then everybody rushes to report it. It’s just human nature.

Besides, it’s much more sensational to report the news the way it’s done now. Sensational sells, and that’s what it’s really all about, anyway. Do I sound jaded? Sorry. I just think it’s disgusting to glorify these sick bastards by publicizing their names and faces. I’d much rather see the media refer to these killers as “the mass murderer” or some other generic term like “perpetrator” or

“a**hole,” and then focus on reporting the other facts of the crime. Like, for instance, the heroism of one of the victims of the tragedy at Virginia Tech.

I’m referring, of course, to the actions of Professor Liviu Librescu, the 76-year-old Holocaust survivor who saved the lives of the students in his classroom by blocking the way of the mass murderer. Coincidentally, he sacrificed his life to save others on Holocaust Remembrance Day. It makes me wonder

if it was Professor Librescu’s destiny to survive the Holocaust for this purpose. If so, there may be some order to the universe, after all.

Let’s remember the victims. Let’s forget the murderer.

Postscript – April 19, 2007, 7:05 AM

Yesterday afternoon it was announced that the perpetrator of the Virginia Tech shootings had mailed a package to NBC News. The package contained self-made videos, 23 pages of his writings and 43 photos. So, it’s pretty clear he wanted publicity. He got it. Of the millions who will see and hear his rambling, incoherent, hate-filled manifesto of violent retribution for the wrongs society had supposedly done him, how many will get the message? The REAL message: You, too, can be INFAMOUS!

Stay tuned, folks. Stay tuned.



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