Should we name the gunman?

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There's a small, painful debate playing out very quietly among the survivors of public shootings. If the shooter was killed or killed himself, do we name him among the dead? Or do we shun his memory and even his name as evil? Or, yet again, do we refuse to name him in order to lessen his notoriety and reduce the possibility of imitation? Yoko Ono has campaigned for decades against including the name of John Lennon's killer in stories about his death.

In Newtown, Conn., last month at the anniversary of the Sandy Hook shootings, the bell tolled 26 times for the children and their teachers and staff, not for the shooter or his mother, who was also a victim. I posted the Sandy Hook story on my Facebook page, and a friend responded:

> "My mother worked at the American Civic Association in Binghamton, NY. She wasn't there the day in 2009 Jiverly Wong killed 13 other people and wounded four by shooting them, but she wanted to acknowledge, with flowers as I recall, that he was the 14th person killed. It was a highly unpopular thing to do, but she felt it was the right thing, as he too was a person."

The father of the Colorado girl who died last month, a victim of a school shooting, not only named her killer but asked us to forgive him. Forgiveness is a process that generally takes time and some effort. I think it was a great grace that this father could forgive. But we who are at a distance are quick to proclaim evil and to condemn the person as evil. We feed harsh judgment and even mock forgiveness. Here's a link to Michael Davis' eulogy given at the memorial service for his daughter, Claire. It's worth seeing.

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