



Crime & Punishment

James Alan Fox on criminal behavior and the justice system

CAMPUS CRIME

Teacher's death - heroism with tragic outcome

Posted by James Alan Fox, Crime and Punishment June 4, 2010 06:00 PM

Douglas Vaughn Lloyd was doing the right thing when he attempted to break up a fight between two Fitchburg High School students, but he paid with his life. All too often we choose not to intervene when witnessing violence, even in situations where there is a legal duty or ethical responsibility to do so. It is easier, and certainly safer, to look the other way and pretend not to notice.

Because of Lloyd's death, teachers and administrators may, in the short term, be hesitant to act appropriately if confronted with a violent or potentially violent situation be it a domestic fight between students, bullying, or a gang battle in the hallways. Such inaction would be the wrong legacy for Douglas Lloyd.

In the wake of tragedy like this, it is important to maintain perspective. Even though schools are often chaotic places where even teachers are victimized, they rarely turn fatal. According to a 2004 [national survey](#) of school staff, 7% of teachers indicated

having been threatened at school during the academic year, and 3% reported having been physically assaulted. However, since 1992, when such data were first recorded, only three dozen teachers and administrators have been the victim of a school-related homicide. One involved a guidance counselor in Lowell, MA who also died after breaking up a fight. While each of these homicides of teachers and administrators is tragic and should never be minimized, such events are rare.

How today's incident in Fitchburg is classified legally must, of course, await further investigation. Although the Lloyd's collapse and subsequent death may be linked to a pre-existing medical condition, according to investigators, it definitely occurred immediately after the fight.

By all appearances, today's fatality is a rare and unpredictable occurrence. In the long run, hopefully, school personnel from principals to custodians will follow Douglas Lloyd's heroic example whenever there is sign of turmoil.

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