



# Crime & Punishment

James Alan Fox on criminal behavior and the justice system

## Nancy Lanza -- Accessory or victim?

Posted by James Alan Fox, Crime and Punishment December 14, 2013 01:00 PM

---

*Note: A [longer version](#) of this piece appeared in USA Today on December 12, 2013.*

Today marks the one-year anniversary of the Newtown, Conn., school shooting that tragically claimed the lives of 20 young children and six staff members. While the local townsfolk opted not to hold any public observances, Gov. Dannel Malloy has asked that churches across the state ring their bells 26 times, once for each victim of the massacre.

Throughout the year, there have been heart-wrenching gestures of support for the grieving families, including a vigil with 26 candles attended last December by President Obama and moments of silence at sporting events around the country. Last April's Boston Marathon, before being eclipsed by its own catastrophe, was dedicated to Newtown, one mile of the race for each victim.

These and other tributes to Newtown have apparently ignored Nancy Lanza as a victim. She was fatally shot by her son Adam just hours before he launched his deadly attack at the nearby Sandy Hook Elementary School. Worse than just being excluded from Newtown remembrances, in the court of public opinion Nancy Lanza is treated more as an accessory than as a victim. She has been blamed for everything from removing her son from the high school where he was so miserable to her ownership and storage of firearms.

Nancy Lanza is not around, of course, to answer the accusations about her parenting. She couldn't defend her life from gunfire last December, and she can't now defend her memory from the slings and arrows of public scorn. Out of fairness, however, we should assume that she had the best of intentions in raising her son Adam, unless and until there is definitive evidence to the contrary.

As Americans say a prayer today for the 26 innocent victims killed one year ago at the Sandy Hook Elementary School. Hopefully, at least some people will find in their hearts the decency to include a prayer for the woman who struggled in parenting a difficult son and lost her life in the process.