

TANEKAS' SONG

It has been hard to weather the recent deluge that has befallen Fairfield. The torrential rains have been unseasonably severe. It is harder to weather assaults against the community conscience and there is no season which welcomes the unfathomable fatal assault of a young woman

Taneka Talley, a single parent, working for modest wages, was fatally stabbed in the chest during the normally docile morning of 29 March at the Dollar Tree on North Texas Street.

Medicine, the military and life has taught me that one of the diagnostic tests of the heart and barometers of a community's conscience is communal mourning; a shared sense of loss that transcends outrage. I did not know her and probably, neither did you. Yet she was known to her 8 year old son, her family, her coworkers and the many that built a memorial at the doorstep of the Dollar Tree and attended the candlelight vigil last Wednesday. Know her or not, she has a familiar face; yours.

Is there anything more deeply shared by all than that which is most precious, life? Is there anything more meaningless than the senseless loss of it? So, as the torrents rain down on Fairfield, tragedy reigned on not just the Dollar Tree, but us all.

My wife and I could not shake this feeling. We went to the Dollar Tree. Flickering in the rain were tens of candles, teddy bears, bows, cards, ribbons and balloons. We were not there as investigative journalists or criminologists, just deeply unsettled citizens. The staff was eager to talk, and cry. We heard of a young mother described similarly by all... "Beautiful....you just felt so good to be around her...she never argued, she gave people money for tax they did not have....I just can't forget her smile...she wanted to be a fashion designer".

We heard of the tender, quick corporate reaction, the professional grief counselors and something the employees said that I was embarrassed to have never thought of, "The Dollar Tree Family." Of all the familiar, colorful comments describing those who work at The Dollar Tree and those who keep it afloat with their ninety nine +1 pennies; that observation struck a chord. Suddenly, I found myself a little less blind to a very familiar color, the color of flesh and blood. The young woman's chest that was fatally pierced was as much a home for hope as any of ours.

So no, there will be no snappy repartee from me this week about Proposition or Preparation H. And for just right now, there will be no finger pointing at the Great and Mighty Solano County City Manager, Michael Johnson, or whatever albeit real, but comparatively picayune crises of the moment. A young single mother was murdered in our home town, and it just plain breaks my heart.

There is nothing you or I can do to bring her back and yes, I suppose it could have happened anywhere. This is not necessarily a testimonial of the state of affairs in Fairfield, but our mourning will be. It is testimony regarding our society; drugs-rage- tragedy.

I do know we each craft a melody, a veritable symphony of rhythms, rhymes and notes as we compose the overture of our lives. Some say, when the music stops, we die. In the grand orchestration of it all, we are mere instruments conducted by a higher hand exhorting us to play our tunes with all the virtuosity we can muster. Taneka's' tune was cut short

Taneka, I do not know if you can hear this melody, but it is written for you, a woman I never knew. I hope and pray that the melodies of those whom you touched and the song yet to be written by your young son will soar high and long.

To hear "A Mother's Melody – This Time for Taneka", visit www.Tonydeaf.org

Kevin Ryan is a retired Colonel, physician, musician and author who lives in Fairfield.