

school buildings. In 1922, Bishop Barry of St. Augustine dedicated a three story, red brick building which opened to 100 students. Today, St. Anthony's campus includes seven buildings and the enrollment has doubled in just the last 10 years.

As the oldest parochial school in Pasco County and in the Diocese of St. Petersburg, St. Anthony's strives to offer students the best educational start possible regardless of religion. In its 125th year, St. Anthony continues to welcome a new generation of young students with the goal of educating the total person: mind, body and spirit.

Madam Speaker, it is truly an honor to have such an exceptional and longstanding school in my district. St. Anthony Catholic School and all who have contributed to its success over the last 125 years should be commended for their commitment to education, child development and service to the community.

COMMEMORATION OF ARMENIAN
GENOCIDE

HON. HENRY A. WAXMAN

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 22, 2009

Mr. WAXMAN. Madam Speaker, today marks the 94th Anniversary of the beginning of the Armenian genocide. This devastating event is a reminder that we cannot allow for such atrocities to happen again. It is unacceptable to witness thousands of innocent victims suffer and die without taking any action.

Ninety-four years ago, the Ottoman Turks began their attempts to exterminate the Armenian people. From 1915 until 1923, 1.5 million Armenians were tortured and killed. Men were separated from their families and murdered; women and children were forced to march across the Syrian desert without water, food, or possessions; many died of hunger or thirst or were killed when they lagged behind during the forced marches into the desert.

These acts of intolerance cannot be termed anything but genocide. We must honor and recognize those who survived but also remember those who perished. Acknowledging the commemoration of the Armenian genocide, is an important to tribute to the Armenian people, especially the American-Armenian community.

CHICAGOAN RITA SALLIE'S COURT
STATEMENT BEFORE TWO MEN
WERE SENTENCED IN HER
DAUGHTER'S SLAYING

HON. BOBBY L. RUSH

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 22, 2009

Mr. RUSH. Madam Speaker, it's my sad responsibility to call your attention to the anguish that Ms. Rita Sallie is experiencing. Hers is a pain felt by so many mothers and families across this great nation. Losing a child is a tragedy that no parent should have to endure but, once again, an innocent child whose life was so full of promise abruptly lost her life due to gun violence in my Chicago community.

Rather than add more of my own words, I'm taking this opportunity to enter into the record

the entire statement by Ms. Rita Sallie. Somehow, she found the courage to speak through her pain and wrote a heartfelt statement to the Chicago Sun-Times—a statement aimed, directly, at the convicted murderers of her daughter, 15-year-old Schanna. It is important that history remembers her petition as it sadly resonates for millions of parents throughout the United States.

Here's her statement, in its entirety:

They stole the life of a beautiful, kind, free-spirited girl and made her a statistic. Why? To get revenge for an argument? A fight? The leader should have gotten over it and walked away. But he was mad, you see, so the only reasonable thing for a coward to do was to get an idiot to shoot up a park where children play, only to hurt my child who was feet away.

She was born on Dec. 16, 1993, and was a cute, bald bundle of quiet joy. She grew to be a sincere, respectful, loving, selfless spirit filled with the joy of life. Her smile is infectious and no one can deny her energy and pure heart. She has a confident yet modest bearing and a smile like a balm to the soul. I would not realize until after I saw her smile how much I yearned for it.

The child I anticipated seeing everyday was gunned down in the middle of a park, behind Funston Elementary School, by two nothings. She was supposed to start 8th grade in the fall of 2007, but she never made it. She will never have the chance to show herself to the world. I will never have the chance to watch her make her way.

Schanna has always been so full of life. Her energy and vitality would leave me rolling my eyes in exasperation because sometimes I just wanted her to sit still and take a breath. They took the energy that left me breathless and left her lying, unmoving in the park behind Funston Elementary School where people could see her at her most vulnerable. They denied her the right to live, breathe, laugh, love and dream.

Schanna has such a generous spirit. She thought nothing of sharing her time or her possessions with you. She hated to see others unhappy or angry. There was nothing that she had that she wasn't willing to share. This child would take her birthday money and buy Christmas presents for everyone else. She was supposed to donate her organs so that others could continue living, even though she would not. They denied her that right, as well, because her heart stopped before her organs could be harvested, leaving them unusable and the recipients to wait and maybe even succumb themselves.

I have always been amazed by her. Over the years I would ask myself what did a barely passable person like me do to earn the privilege of having Schanna as my child? Somehow I was blessed to have a little girl with a brilliant mind, a big heart and a generous spirit. Although I struggle with being a better person, I do try to teach my children to know right from wrong, to make principled decisions and to have good moral character. Schanna took what I taught her and magnified it. She not only listened to what I advised, she put it into practice so much that she became the teacher, and I, the student. She is the person that I have struggled all my life to become.

People have always been drawn to her. Even as a toddler, people would stop me on the street to admire her and buy her small gifts, a piece of candy, or lollipop. That never changed. Up until she was taken from me, I would watch her walk to school by herself and before she made it, she would be surrounded by so many friends that I would no longer be able to tell her apart from the sea of blue and white uniforms.

All I have left are memories. The memories of our life before they intruded. The memories that I cannot call up because they are pushed aside for what they did to her on June 25, 2007. I saw my baby lying in the park, eyes open staring, with bits of her favorite fruit scattered around her. I struggle to recall the constant twinkle in her eye, the bright smile and the distinctive cackle of her laugh. I am embarrassed to admit that I try to avoid thinking of her at all because I don't want to recall that day and all the days that came after. I have to put her away, for now. Maybe, in the future, but not now.

She had a life plan at 12 years old and they denied her all of her dreams and aspirations. She'll never experience going to high school, or college, or even the 8th grade. She will never be consumed by her first love and I will never have the chance to help her through her first broken heart. There will be no stories of her travels, the people she would meet and the things she would see and do. She never even got the chance to ride public transportation by herself.

Over the years, people have told me that I was a strong woman. On June 25, 2007, I was exposed as a fraud. I'm not the strong woman I've always considered myself to be. My armor is only as strong as its weakest point. My weakness is my family, my children. They not only put a chink in my armor, but shattered it and left it lying at my feet, leaving me fearful and weak. I have gone from a strong, independent person to someone who would like nothing more than to crawl into a dark hole and lick the wounds that will never heal. My sleep is restless. I am overly emotional and struggle to make the simplest decisions and have felt no true happiness since that time.

Since losing her, I have tried to find some sense of normalcy to my life. But I can't, because I know that I'm supposed to kiss three children before I go to work, not two. I know that I'm supposed to cook for four people, not three. I know I am supposed to hear three voices when I come home from a long day. I know I'm supposed to talk to three children about what is going on in their lives. I know that I'm supposed to hug three children. It's impossible to return to normal when you know these things in your heart and mind and that knowing is not enough. Her absence is the 800 pound gorilla in the room that everyone notices but tries to ignore, hoping that someone else will mention it first. The emptiness is physical and must be kept at bay.

They left me powerless. I would do everything to help my children through crises real and imagined, and they knew it. They took away my power when they hurt my little girl. I had to leave her in the care of the paramedics, police, hospital, morgue and funeral home, only to lay her to rest in a cemetery surrounded by strangers.

She could forgive people for anything. Make her sad or angry and a few minutes later all would be forgiven, whether you apologized or not. Knowing her, she's probably forgiven them. For years I wished I were more like her, but I'm not and despite my best efforts, I never will be. Schanna is a better person that I am in every way. She may have forgiven them, but I hate them. I have a fiery hatred for both of them that I know will one day consume me. The anger eats away at my mind and heart, knowing what they did to her, I seethe at the very thought of them as part of our history, that they are an asterisk on my family tree. We don't want them there, but they are, forever.

When the situation occurred, my imagination made them seem big, menacing, nearly otherworldly. Upon actually seeing them, I realize they are two nothings. One, a pint-sized, arrogant wannabe outsider and the

other, a stupid and spineless follower. Two insignificant, pathetic nobodies who barged into my life and took away my child. They had no right to decide if anyone lives or dies, yet they took the liberty of walking away with the life of my child.

The leader made the fateful decision to have his lackey discharge a weapon in broad daylight into a park behind a school where scores of children congregated because he was mad. Even after hurting my child, he neither ran like the coward he is nor admitted his involvement like the man he should have been; rather he stood on the street and drank alcoholic beverages as though hurting a child made him thirsty. The circumstances surrounding the loss of my little girl makes me light hearted with nervous rage.

The leader came to my country, my state, my city, my neighborhood, took my child's life and stole her future. Because he was mad, he committed an act from which none of us can ever recover. Not my family, not the shooter's family or even his family. His arrogance and leadership over those in the gang made for a potent mix and we, my family and the community, paid the price for it. He came here thinking that he could do whatever he wanted to whomever he wanted, whenever he wanted and would suffer no consequences. This makes him extremely dangerous to the general public.

After the guilty verdict for the shooter, I happened to run into Susanna Rosa, who proceeded to tell me that that shooter was a good kid and that the gang threatened him. They told him to do it or else they would kill him. She let me know that he'd graduated from high school and everything. Well, the shooter is stupid and lacks moral character. He let a person who is of no importance tell him to commit an act with wide-ranging consequences. Why? To defend him from an argument that he could have and should have walked away from. The only person wielding a gun out there was the shooter. He hid near a car like a 2-year-old and came out gun blazing like an Old West villain to defend someone else. Nothing Ms. Rosa told me changes my opinion at all. I will accept no excuses. My hatred has not dimmed but flares white-hot at the idea of the destruction he's caused in our lives, throwing away his own in the process for a nothing, a nobody.

I had the opportunity to observe the shooter and watched him smile. He neither smirked nor grinned, but smiled a big smile when he sat at the defense table towards the end of the trial. My stomach clinched and my skin became flushed. I was mad, just like his leader, the arrogant nobody who he came to rescue, but I did nothing, nor did I try to enlist anyone to do anything. The leader and his defender should have done the same thing and none of us would be here today and my little girl would be finishing her first year of high school.

During the trial, the shooter had a number of family members and friends at court to support him. He didn't consider those same people who sat behind him and gave him them their strength. He didn't think about those people then. No. He thought only about rescuing his leader from an argument by using armed violence. High school diploma or not, if he's stupid and dangerous enough to let someone convince him to hurt others, then he needs to be taken off the street for the rest of his life.

They took away her life and her future, her sister Joyce's best friend, her brother Antwun's protector and my dearly loved child and teacher.

What they did is nothing less than an act of domestic terrorism. They took Schanna Danielle Gayden, just 13 years old, and left in their wake a destroyed family, distraught

friends and a traumatized community. Despite their actions, Schanna actually brought the community together. People recognized how special she is and they came together for her and for us. They stood vigil with us during the darkest hours of our lives and they stand with us still. Schanna touched more people in her 13 years than I have during my entire life and continues to do so. She has an intangible gift for which people would recognize and respond.

A tree was planted and a stone set up in her memory in the park where she suffered such a terrible hurt. The park has also been dedicated to her memory. This is the same park where so many children came to play or just watch the world go by. In fact, had they been just a little earlier, I could have been their victim, and my Schanna would still be here to continue the path she set out for herself. I've done all I'm going to do in this life, whereas she hadn't even begun. But it says something about her as a person that a park would be dedicated to her and a memorial tree and stone placed in her memory. On June 27, 2009, there will also be a tree planted at the cemetery where she has been laid to rest. It will be dedicated to her and all of the children lost to violence. These actions say that she is not disposable, the damage done is not collateral. She is important, not just to her family, but to her friends and community.

It is fortunate for them that I was not responsible for charging them with a crime. If I were, they would have been charged with aggravated theft for stealing my baby's life, a gift which is truly priceless and cannot be replaced; and attempted murder, for all the people who were there who could have also been victims. Were it up to me, life without parole is nothing less than they would receive. With that sentence, Your Honor, I am being generous.

However, I do request that because of their deplorable and thoughtless actions, sickening behavior and blatant disregard for all life, and the convictions that stemmed from these, I am respectfully requesting that you, the Honorable Judge Nicholas T. Ford, sentence both defendants to the maximum punishment allowed by law.

Thank you for your consideration.

RECOGNIZING THE VOLUNTEERS SERVING WITH THE FAIRFAX COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

HON. GERALD E. CONNOLLY

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 22, 2009

Mr. CONNOLLY of Virginia. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize the volunteers who assist the Fairfax County Sheriff's Office. These volunteers work with deputies and civilian staff to help inmates to improve their lives during incarceration and to prepare them for a successful transition back into the community.

With more than 500 deputies, the Fairfax County Sheriff's Office is the largest Sheriff's office in Virginia and among the largest in the country. These deputies perform invaluable services for Fairfax County residents to include providing court security, managing the detention center, serving the civil law process. Volunteers with the Sheriff's Office help provide inmate programs and services at the Adult Detention Center (ADC) and Pre-Release Center, including mental health counseling, religious services, alcohol and drug support groups, health education, library services and job training.

Volunteers complete a Sheriff's Office training program and also work closely with staff to ensure that best practices are followed. A recent study completed at the Fairfax County Adult Detention Center showed the significant impact that detention center rehabilitation programs can provide. The efforts of these volunteers improve the lives of those incarcerated, reduce recidivism, and make our communities safer.

Each year, the Sheriff's Office hosts a luncheon to thank all of the dedicated individuals who help make the volunteer program a success. The office also recognizes one individual in each service area and it is my honor to recognize these extraordinary citizens:

EDUCATION

Bill Richey shows tremendous dedication as he works to help Hispanic inmates improve their literacy level and enable them to take better advantage of the educational resources provided to inmates. He works very hard to ensure that these inmates achieve some measure of education to provide a much needed tool on their pathways to success.

ALCOHOL AND DRUG SERVICES

Noah Freeman recognized the need to provide more substance abuse services and helped to coordinate with Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) to provide greater resources and assistance to those in need. A testament to his impact is witnessed daily as individuals he assisted share the message and practices of AA with their fellow inmates.

CHAPLAIN'S OFFICE

Celine Baker serves as the volunteer female chaplaincy coordinator. She has worked tirelessly to launch new services, develop a consistent ministry strategy for female inmates, coordinate one-on-one ministry for female inmates, and provide counsel and advice to volunteers, staff, and the chaplains. Celine often dedicates in excess of 25 volunteer hours per week and consistently exemplifies the character and integrity of the chaplaincy office.

OPPORTUNITIES, ALTERNATIVES, and RESOURCES

Ben Perchik began to volunteer at the Adult Detention Center with the goal of "generating good." He has succeeded in this effort and has even received letters from several past students naming Ben as the person who most positively affected their lives. Since beginning to volunteer with OAR in 2004, he has consistently undertaken more responsibility and currently serves a facilitator for two classes—Life Skills and Fatherhood.

SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Norma "Timmie" Edwards has served as a volunteer at the Adult Detention Center longer than some employees have worked there. In fact, the Sheriff's Office volunteer program does not know how long it has been and she cannot remember! Ms. Timmie's commitment to serve the inmates at the Adult Detention Center is impressive for its longevity and her passion. As she reluctantly ends her time volunteering at the Adult Detention Center, there is no doubt about the inspiration she has provided for inmates, volunteers, and staff.

The outstanding efforts of the above-mentioned individuals are particularly noteworthy but one must acknowledge the nearly 300 volunteers who have contributed their time and support to the Sheriff's Office during the past year. These volunteers provide services that help to place inmates on a path to success. They offer their time that could be spent elsewhere to provide encouragement and support