

## A PRAYER FOR THE CHILDREN OF UVALDE



When I saw the first pictures of the young children of Uvalde who were killed and then the one of a young girl crying uncontrollably by herself, I found myself thrown back to another time when I, too, felt so alone... lost in the inextricable terror of that moment when you know that someone you love has been brutally torn from you forever. Everything around you is a blur... frozen in time and without context. Nothing makes sense or has any meaning anymore, as the unending tears from that unimaginable moment are played out again and again. And what is left are the scattered pieces of memories of your loved one that come back to you, that now, belong only to the past. As Mickey Newbury once wrote: the future is not what it used to be.

When my mother was murdered in 1985 I was a young teacher at the peak of my profession. Her death shattered everything that I held dear and sacred: home, family, safety, laughter, love, trust, hope, fearless dreams, faith in others and the world. I would never be the same again. Family was no longer something I thought would last forever. Each day had now become a struggle just to make it through another day, one hour at a time.

These are excerpts from my diary. I am sharing them with you so you can better understand what violence does to a person and a family. That those moments stay with you and change

you. And if you are lucky, they will not define who you are. But, it is a struggle that I have learned to live with and learn from, but the tears are always there...

It is my hope and prayer that we end this gun violence. Do it for our children, for our communities and for the very soul of this nation. Honor their deaths by honoring the sacredness of life itself. If not you, then who? If not now, then when?

### **The Winter of '85**

In the winter of '85, my mother was murdered. She was shot five times in the head. It was a warm Tuesday afternoon. Those are the facts of how she died. In the beginning, whenever I was asked what happened, those are the kinds of answers I would give. It was easier and simpler that way, for me and for the person asking.

### **The Morning After**

It is the next day and the sun rises to a gray sky. How strange, it is only morning. My room is a mess - red envelopes and candy, dried up tissue from yesterday's grieving, clothes waiting to be washed, and a vase of flowers taken from someone else's garden.

I am a collection of all these things. I borrow from the past and the future. My tears are old and tired, and at different moments I am scattered and pulled apart like the left over change I save for another time.

I need rest and peace right now. A place to survive, to hold on, to gather my strength, to remember and to forget....

### **Alone**

I don't remember a whole lot from that first year, only that I kept crying all the time, especially on warm days and when something good happened to me.

When I was alone, it was like I was in a deep sleep, frozen inside that moment without the words to help me understand what had happened. Each moment seemed different and remote from each other. I felt like an island floating endlessly and nowhere at the same time.

I hated the nights, because that was when the memories of that moment were the most vivid and terrifying. For months, I dreamt of hiding her from him. But, he was always stronger and more cunning than I was, pulling her away from my arms and dragging her into the laundry room. The one room that I hated and was so afraid of, because it was so dark and cold and where she died.

Each time I awoke in the morning, I was so exhausted. It was like her death was mine...dying again and again into a pool of blood and darkness and muffled screams.

## So Many Ifs

On the day she died, I had planned to take the day off to come and visit her, but at the last moment I was called away to a meeting at our school. For a long time, I blamed myself for not being there to protect her.

There are so many ifs that I've given up trying to visualize what might have been. What happened that day changed my whole life and that of everyone in our family. Even our friends were frightened by the way our mother died. Our experience made them appreciate the preciousness of family. They seemed like ourselves, to sense the frailty of life and the strong bond between a mother and her children.

It is so hard to let go of her. To have not had the chance to say good-bye and to let her know how much I loved her. I can only hope that she can hear me, now. I whisper it every day.

### A Prayer of Departure

When you are long light  
and taken by the clouds  
I will try to remember your eyes  
And not the terror that tore you from us.

And when I have once more  
filled the attic  
with the flowers of memory

I will light the candles  
in hopes that I may  
forgive, accept,  
and love again.

*Lee Mun Wah*

# June StirFry Facilitator Spotlight



**BRETT KUWADA**



**DR. ELAVIE NDURA**



**AVIVA WILCOX**

## **BRETT KUWADA, PSY.D.**

My name is Brett Kuwada, and I identify as a temporarily able-bodied, multi-racial, cisgender, heterosexual, man, who is also a father, family member, life partner, and a lover of all people and others. I am the President of The CHEC (Cultural Humility, Empathy, & Compassion) Center, where I provide consulting, coaching, workshops, education, and keynote addresses, focused on diversity, equity, inclusion, and access (DEIA).

**Read more about Brett at <https://stirfryseminars.com/staff/brett-kuwada-psy-d>**

## **DR. ELAVIE NDURA**

Dr. Elavie Ndura brings more than 30 years of leadership, scholarship, and practice, blending passion and policy to create and implement effective programming and innovative diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) programs in diverse and complex academic settings. She currently serves as Associate Vice president and Campus Diversity Officer at California State Polytechnic University Humboldt (Cal Poly Humboldt).

**Read more about Elavie at <https://stirfryseminars.com/staff/dr-elavie-ndura>**

## **AVIVA WILCOX, PSY.D**

Aviva Wilcox is a licensed clinical psychologist and school psychologist with experience in college counseling, primary care behavioral health, school-based work, teaching and supervision. Aviva is currently the Assistant Vice President of Counseling, Health and Wellness at Mills College in Oakland, California, where she has also been the Director of Counseling and Psychological Services. Aviva also identifies as an educator committed to anti-racist practice with a focus on engaging other white people in disrupting systems of oppression.

**Read more about Elavie at <https://stirfryseminars.com/staff/aviva-wilcox-psy-d>**

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