

## OTHER OPINIONS

## Surviving the loss of a parent

These days, my mind keeps going back to the moments in which I have entered small churches, sorrowfully waiting in line to proceed up that maroon carpet.

The carpet that led me past elderly women and men whose souls had soaked up more tears than we could ever imagine. Surrounding me were young, bitter faces peering at the face of yet another African-American male dead because of violence.

While examining lips that once smiled at me, the sight of the satin-lined box triggered a question in my mind. How is his death going to affect the upbringing of his children in this non-family oriented society that we've become?

Seeing the tears run down the face of his little girl, who sat on her crying mother's lap, caused my mind to flash back to a similar satin-lined box I had come face to face with when I was 15 years old and my father died of a heart attack. Eye to eye, I saw the beginning of my storm; I was that little girl searching for answers about how to survive.



GABRI'LLA TARA BALLARD  
*Point of View*

We were both coping with accepting the loss of our fathers, and we were both searching for support, encouragement and acceptance from our community. We both have to go up unfamiliar paths without the love, guidance and presence of our fathers.

## Life after death

smallest thing seemed to be going wrong in a household, but in today's world, most of the people who live next door to us are no longer really neighbors. We have put up a social barrier and pretend we are content within our isolated worlds, not realizing that community support and input is needed, particularly in the lives of children who are experiencing a loss in their lives.

Through the eyes of a fatherless child, staring at a community that has literally given us no way to look but down, life seems so hard. Not knowing what to do or who to go to in order to get over the emotional humps that bind us to our secluded worlds of depression, we are consumed by anger and contempt.

While coping with my father's death, I constantly wondered if anyone cared about how I felt. I made excuses for people who I thought cared about me; "maybe they are too busy" or "they will get back to me . . . whenever." The truth was they didn't know how to care. When I saw that my "community" was not there for me, I searched for love and support from

young men who were my peers. But they had no idea what I was going through or what to do or say to help me cope. In the long run, the result was emotional setbacks and scars.

When we feel like no one cares, we turn to sex, drugs, violence and sometimes suicide. At a young age in this society we are no longer taught to cope, we are taught to run away from our problems. But how can we successfully run away from the reality of dealing with death, especially when we are just beginning to understand what life is about?

We cannot afford to let our future go to waste as a result of our negligence of the children in our community. Life is already hard enough without dealing with the silent storm of losing a father. Yesterday our lips used to kiss Daddy's face, but today we wear Daddy's face on our T-shirts.

When we are left behind, whose hands and hearts will help our mothers guide us through the storm?

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