

'I AM FOREVER CHANGED'
BY SPRING NELSON, LITTLETON, COLO.

I am a graduate of Columbine High School. I graduated in 1992, my sister Dawn in 1994, and my sister Courtney in 1998. My brother, Timmy, is to attend next fall.

Littleton is a comfortable and growing community and it is a place where I felt totally safe. Upon hearing of the shooting, I sat in total disbelief, which quickly turned to tears. I had to take my son, Louis, to school that afternoon fearful for his safety. When I returned I watched a boy, his body limp and bloodied — we later found out he'd been shot twice — throw himself head first from the second-story library window. It was apparent to me that he was able to do this by his sheer will to live. I am forever changed.

I have spent this last week crying from the very depth of my being. I work in an intensive care unit where four of the most critically wounded were brought.

I continued chanting daimoku to the Gohonzon and invited my 6-year-old to do the same with me. I wanted him to feel safe. Answering his questions has been painfully difficult — “Where do I hide if this happens at my school? Can I hide in my backpack?” I'm left reassuring him he is safe and that he will be protected.

When I returned to work this week, I found a place I felt useful, helpful. I had chanted many daimoku to be compassionate, to be a shoulder for these lives to cry on, to encourage them and make them feel safe. One mother of the victims began talking with me and I shared with her my sincere prayer for everyone and that although I did not know them, I loved them. I made a promise to make changes. I will make those changes necessary to ensure that these tragedies will never happen again. She wept and I wept and we hugged.

I am a mother, a daughter, a sister, a friend and a Buddhist. I will make those changes. I will be at the forefront of change with dialogue, compassion and love. I will ensure that our children are safe. They are all of our children. We are each other's neighbors. My tears are your tears and my courage will be yours as well.

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