what killed DANIELLE
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By Paul Bass

On the first Thursday night of her first February, Danielle Monique Taff sat in an armchair in her grandmother's living room on the first floor of an Orchard Street tenement. A bullet from a semi-automatic, one of at least 14 fired by someone she didn't know, flew through the shattered glass of the apartment's front window. It ripped into her skull, right above her eye.

Her mother was in the bathroom, making a cigarette. Her clothes—mother's and daughter's—were packed neatly in a car that was already at the curb, a half hour to bring Sunnyside home, to an apartment in a somewhat safer neighborhood.

Unlike the cab, the ambulance arrived promptly. Like the cab, it was too late to save 7-month-old Danielle's life.

The gun that fired the bullets came from a private home in Sheepshead, police believe. They believe the burglar stole the gun. Rather than protect a middle-class homeowner from criminals, the gun ended up in the hands of New Haven's black community. The semi-automatic ended up in a different family's hands, and it shot more than just Danielle before police retrieved it.

A week after the shooting, a small part of Danielle remained upstairs in a small bag with a floral design. Danielle's mother, Shirley Troutman, carries the bag with her every day, and it rests on Danielle's favorite toy—a plastic pencil—and the beads Danielle wore in her hair in the time of the shooting.

Pulled up inside the bag is a silver T-shirt, the one Shirley wore when she ran out of the bathroom, grabbed Danielle, and discovered her baby's head ripped apart. The shirt still has the baby's blood stains on it.

"No one," Troutman says, clutching the shirt, "can ever make me wash that shirt again.

A few Danielle's Caress offered the first, deeply moment of evidence in her life. She became a household name in New Haven. People's attention focused on the "Who?" question. Who would do such a thing? Who killed Danielle?

As of press time, police were closing in on three young men they believe were responsible for the killing. They believe the one of the three shot up the apartment in revenge for a fight earlier in the day involving Danielle's 16-year-old uncle.

Is the end, who killed Danielle? May prove a relatively simple question than the "What?" question: Who killed Danielle?

To people who live in such a neighborhood, it's easy to forget that she was a baby. That's why, for instance, Shirley Troutman and Danielle's father are willing to talk candidly about their daughter Danielle's short life, to relive for a stranger the greatest pain a human being can feel, the pain of watching or his own baby blown away. They want the community to understand what killed Danielle—to stop other children from being killed, too.

Palm Sunday Dinner

When Danielle is Shirley Troutman knew she was on the way. Shirley had only a few months to prepare. Danielle discovered Danielle's presence in her womb almost a year ago, on Palm Sunday. She and Danny were over at her mother's house for a Palm Sunday dinner.

"Danny made a ham-and-cheese sandwich for me with lemon and tomato. My mom was making our dinner and macaroni and cheese. I said, 'There's something hoozing around in my stomach.'

She called everyone into the living room to take a look. Shirley's belly had grown quite a bit recently. She says it never occurred to her that she was growing in there. "I used to be huge in high school. My cycle was all messed up, anyway."

Shirley had wanted to have a baby for years, since finishing up Hillhouse. She tried and tried, with different guys, but no luck. A few months earlier, she ran into Danny on Winchester Avenue, near the Elm Flats projects. She hadn't seen much of him since she grew up in the old Elm Flats high-rises, one floor apart. "I used to look at him a lot, but I never knew." On this afternoon he was driving his truck home from a work job. She was sitting by the window. Older than when they lived a few spots.

Shirley lost her weight. Her face had grown into a woman's, with soft features. She hadn't grown into the look of delightful misfit in her eyes. "I hated him for ages," she said. He asked me to come in the truck. And that was it."

Now, on Palm Sunday, Danny was lying over Shirley's stomach in her mother's couch. Something was definitely moving in there. They could see the baby kicking. "We were so happy."

They celebrated. Then Shirley thought about that one occasion she'd been doing the past few months that this baby had been growing inside her. "I thought," she said, "oh my god—"

I turned out Shirley was already into her third trimester of pregnancy. That meant that even before Danielle the fetus had a fully formed brain, she was, taking in cocaine.

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Shirley Trotman and Danny Tal sitting on a bench outside a building.

"He told me that it was my responsibility to see what I could do to go help mankind. It was not his."

During Christmas dinner, Jane was asked to make cookies for English Street. Daniel's parents have a tradition of making cookies for English Street, so Jane decided to make them. She enjoyed making cookies and felt fulfilled by helping others.

Christmas Dinner was a success, and everyone enjoyed the cookies. The tradition of making cookies for English Street continues to this day, a small gesture of kindness that brings joy to many.
Danielle

On a quiet, sunlit day, Danielle sat in her apartment on Orchard Street, her thoughts wandering as she sipped her morning coffee. The bustling city outside seemed far away, and she felt a sense of solitude.

The apartment was small, with a narrow living room that opened into a compact kitchenette. Danielle had decorated it with soft, neutral colors, creating a cozy space despite its size.

She studied the faded wallpaper, which told a story of its own. The patterns were worn, with peeling paint revealing the layers beneath. Danielle liked the way it made her feel connected to the past, to the generations before her who had lived in this apartment.

As she sipped her coffee, Danielle thought about her grandmother, who had lived in this apartment many years ago. She had been a strong, independent woman who had navigated the challenges of the time with grace.

Danielle's heart stirred with a sense of nostalgia as she imagined her grandmother's footsteps echoing through the narrow hallways. She wondered what her grandmother had faced during the Great Depression, and how she had managed to rise above it all.

The sun slowly moved across the sky, casting long shadows across the floor. Danielle finished her coffee and stood up, ready to face the day with renewed energy.

As she walked out the door, she took a deep breath of the fresh morning air. The city was waking up, and she knew there was much to do. Danielle made a mental note to visit her grandmother's favorite bakery later that day, to pick up a treat and relive some of the memories she held dear.

The day ahead promised to be busy, but Danielle was ready. She knew that her grandmother would have expected nothing less.
NEWS

By Paul Bass

“It’s In Your Blood”
The Gunowner Whose 9mm Killed Danielle Taft Speaks Out

Harry Gilbert bought a gun because, he said, he feared he might have to use it in New Haven, in case of trouble. As a member of a National Guard Security System, he realizes that the系统’s members are expected to help their neighbors in case of emergencies. He wanted to be ready.

But Gilbert’s gun did not end up being used on New Haven streets. In fact, it ended up killing a 7-month-old New Haven girl.

Gilbert, 40, was a Vietnam veteran who served in the marines. He was interested in guns and had purchased his 9mm handgun as a way to feel safer in his neighborhood.

When Gilbert bought the gun, he said, he felt more secure. He had heard stories of violent crimes in the area, and he wanted to be prepared.

But the gun ended up being used in a tragic way. According to police, Gilbert went to visit a friend who had just had a baby. When he arrived, he found the baby dead in its crib.

“Was it an accident?” one officer asked.

“No,” Gilbert replied. “I came here to check on her.”

When police arrived on the scene, they found the baby dead on the floor. They also found a 9mm handgun nearby.

“Why did you bring the gun?” one officer asked.

“I brought it with me,” Gilbert said. “I wanted to feel safer.”

The baby’s death was ruled a suicide by suicide. The gun used in the incident was obtained legally.

“The gun was a factor in this case,” said one officer. “It could have been used in a different way.”

Gilbert said he regretted bringing the gun to the scene. “I should have left it in my car,” he said. “I didn’t think it would be used in this way.”

Police said they were investigating the incident and that there were no suspects.

“Anytime a gun is involved in a death, it’s a tragedy,” one officer said. “We’re doing everything we can to make sure this doesn’t happen again.”
How Danielle's Block Fell Apart

Orchard Street landlords tell their side

by Paul Bas

B y f a t h e r, Schindler says he was born into a family of German Jews
who lived in New York City. When he was 70 years old, he
married his wife, Danielle, who was born in the United States.

Schindler says he was born in 1917 and grew up in the Lower East Side.
He attended public school and then went on to work in a variety of jobs
before starting his own business in the 1940s. He moved to Orchard Street
in the 1960s and has lived there ever since.

Orchard Street is a neighborhood in the Lower East Side of New York City.
It is known for its diverse population and its vibrant cultural traditions.

Schindler has been a landlord for over 50 years, and he currently owns
several properties on Orchard Street.

The area is home to a large number of people from different cultural
backgrounds, and Schindler says he has seen it change over the years.

Schindler says he has always tried to treat his tenants fairly and
respectfully. He says he has tried to keep the rents low and
provide a safe and comfortable living environment.

But in recent years, Schindler says he has faced increasing challenges
from tenants who are not paying their rent on time or taking good
care of the properties.

Schindler says he has had to evict several tenants over the years,
and he says he has had to deal with damage to the properties.

He says he has tried to work with tenants to come up with solutions
for these problems, but sometimes he has had to resort to legal action.

Schindler says he is proud of the fact that he has been able to
maintain a good relationship with most of his tenants.

He says he hopes to continue living in Orchard Street for many
years to come, and he looks forward to seeing how the neighborhood
will change in the future.