

A perspective on recent tragedies

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By Rachida Djebel

Within 3 months (give or take a few weeks), I have learned of the death of two young Algerian woman who came to the US, both meeting tragic ends. The first one, just barely into her womanhood, died under 'mysterious circumstances' and the death is called 'suspicious'; the second, just recently, by her own hands. In both instances the young women had troubles with not only their own family situations, but with the external society. Both had been involved in legal procedures, and in both cases, after the deaths, the Consulate of the Algerian Embassy became involved because authorities and families had requested aid. In both instances, after the deaths were made public (the first within literally hours of the young woman's body having been found), people came forward either in misplaced anger or with offers of aid and comfort to the surviving family members and to help with funeral expenses. Both deaths were tragic; either, seemingly needless death, and almost incomprehensible because the victims had the promise of life's adventures stripped from them-one no doubt at the hands of another and the other by her own hand.

For the two young woman who now lay under the earth, we can only pray for Allah's mercy to them. For myself, especially in the case of the suicide, I believe that Allah understands her circumstances were greater than what she felt she could bear. And since I believe in his mercy, forgiveness and love, I believe that she will have the chance for peace rather than the condemnation of our Creator. For the other, who died under mysterious circumstances, I pray that the authorities do not desert her case and will find and prosecute the one who took her life. But as sad as both of these deaths are, I know that no one dies except at the place, time and on the date Allah has prescribed. Nothing happens in this life to anyone without Allah's permission and knowledge; but that is not to say that a murder is condoned by the Creator. Whether one takes another's life, or takes one's own life, either act is murder.

For the two mothers whose daughters are now dead, I pray they will learn acceptance of what cannot be changed; but more importantly, that they use the tragic circumstances to help prevent future events that could happen to other daughters (or even to sons)-whether their own or other's children.

Both of these tragedies could have been or might well be our own. For these two cases, the tragedy was for others-other families will grieve-but it could have been our daughters (or sons). Having suffered through the death of a daughter, though certainly in far different ways than these two mothers, I can empathize with their grief.

Perhaps the greatest tragedy is that both of these young women were without good support and without good advice, both of which may have made their young lives easier and far more bearable.

Every mother makes plans for her daughter, and hopefully most want better for their lives than what she had in hers; some mothers sacrifice much at their own expense so that their daughters have an education (of schooling and of social skills) and the knowledge of how to cope with life and its ups and downs. These daughters are fortunate because they have a mother who will fight for them in the best of ways; not with weapons of destruction but with implements of construction.

If you have a daughter, especially one who is young, protect her in the best of ways.

Teach her that she is equal to others in Allah's eyes and that all have duties and responsibilities not only to themselves but also to and for others, and that she has the right to kindness, goodness and to knowledge. Teach her to strive for the best and never to settle for second best, and certainly not to accept the worst of anything or of anyone.

Teach her the strength of true femininity-gentleness, firm resolve, caring, a loving heart, but also not to allow any one to coerce her into doing what her conscience tells her is wrong or to let any one abuse her in any way-not by word or by deed. Give her self-confidence by supporting her endeavors and by letting her explore her world. Be her best example and not her worst. Set reasonable boundaries because everyone needs boundaries, but don't confine her so that she cannot reach whatever potential she has been given. Teach her how to set goals for herself, goals that expand as she grows. If she fails at a task, comfort her and give her the confidence to try achieving the goal again. Remember that her world is and will be far different than yours; the world changes and so do people. Teach her to look for the good, but help her to recognize that which may not be good. Teach her that peaceful responses to problems will resolve them faster than hostility and anger. Teach her, as the Qu'ran says, "If you fear trouble, move away from there." Teach her the laws of mankind and those of Allah-but be certain that you know what those laws actually are, because you could teach her wrongly. Be happy in her successes and in her joys, and comfort her in her failures and in her sorrows. Let her teach you, for she will learn things which you are not acquainted with.

Teach your child to live life on two planes: on the one plane that says they have forever and on the other which dictates that time (as we poor mortals know it) can end in a flash.

Give your child hope, not hopelessness. Give them the proper tools to live this life in such a way that they may never waste what little time they have to live it in fruitless regret.

Remember that you as a parent do not 'own' the child Allah allowed you to bring into this world. The child is a great, precious gift, but is only in your care for a brief time. She (or he) is not your slave nor your chattel. Treat your child like a plant-tend her or him with diligence and care, so that upon adulthood, that child can live in the knowledge that she (or he) was loved and was given the best of opportunity to achieve happiness.

And, pray that your child outlives you.....