

• BY MICHELE KLEIN

It is a quiet Sunday morning in Rehovot, 36 hours after the murder. The accordionist plays his usual Jewish tunes at his usual corner in the town center.

Thirteen people in front of me in the queue at the post office gripe about the long wait for service. Billboards announce funerals and bereavements, but not the funeral of 17-year-old Adameh Tarikan.

"Another murder over nothing," occurred on Friday night not far from my home, when one gang of Ethiopian teenagers met with another gang near Rehovot's main street. At least one of the boys, if not more, had a knife. Adameh was stabbed to death.

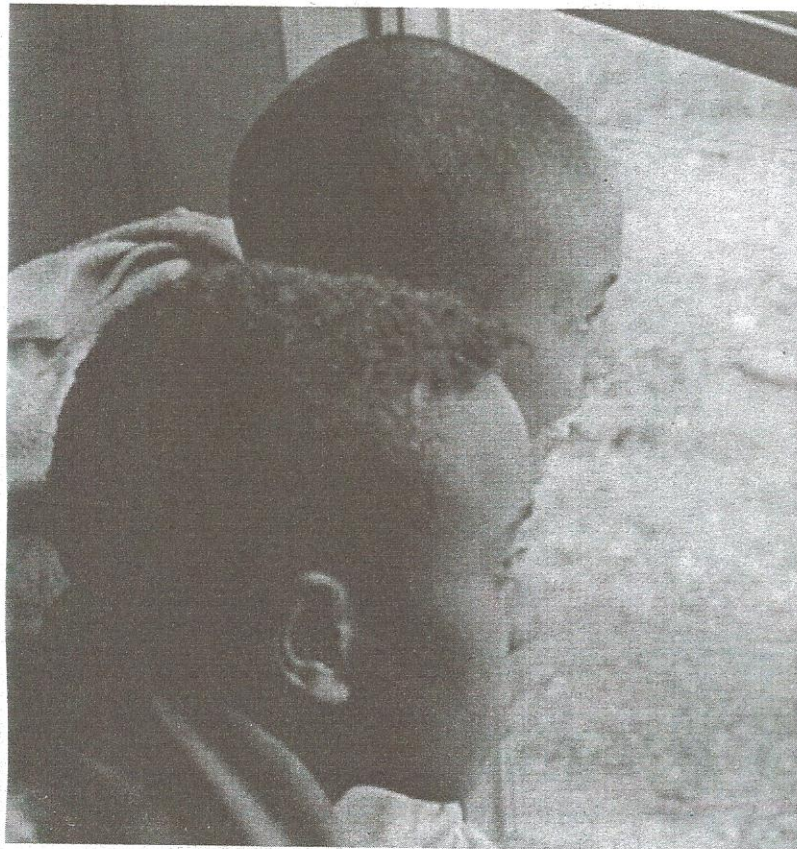
This is the third murder in three years by an Ethiopian teenager in Rehovot. Just a year ago, an Ethiopian teenager raped and murdered 15-year-old Ma'ayan Sapir in Rehovot.

In a local government office, at 8:30 a.m., the official behind the desk makes the first reference to what had happened in our neighborhood over the weekend. "They should never have been brought here. They should have stayed in Ethiopia," he says, expecting – but not receiving – a sympathetic ear.

By lunchtime, the Hebrew news website YNET has 170 comments on the story of the murder. Most remarks blame the state: the inefficiency of the police and failure of the education system in Israel. People bemoan the lack of values, the lack of Jewish values, poor education, poor Jewish education. Calls for the death sentence or life-long imprisonment for the murderer are about as frequent as expressions of sorrow and shock over the murder. And many people blame Rehovot – they pick on the mayor for running the town badly, on the fact that the Ethiopians are concentrated in a poor neighborhood, Kiryat Moshe, or simply that something is wrong with Rehovot.

Other responses: Why did the murder happen? Stop the violence! Wake up! Find a solution!

It is so easy to blame the state, town, and school. It is



WHOSE RESPONSIBILITY? Sooner or later, there will be another murder. (Illustrative photo)

Another murder in Rehovot

Non-profit organizations continue to replace inept and uncaring government institutions in dealing with troubled, underprivileged and violent youths

so easy to express anger, sorrow or fear. But no-one in the town, at a glance, seems inclined to lift a finger to prevent the next murder. Sooner or later, there will be another murder. And the prisons will remain overcrowded.

The state is to blame. The social services department, police, judicial system, absorption ministry and educational system are all guilty. The municipality and citizens of Rehovot do not reach out sufficiently to help the underprivileged in our midst. And the boys' parents and families are not innocent.

As ordinary citizens, we cannot change the way the police force works; we cannot lock up a delinquent boy

ourselves or search his pockets for a knife. We cannot change the way the school system works; we cannot catch the dropouts and put them back in class. We cannot make a boy's family teach him values. And yet we want something to be done to stop this violence.

So where can we find a solution? As usual, it's the non-profit organizations that step in with solutions and show the authorities the way. Non-profits lead projects in schools and neighborhoods designed to reduce violence. Non-profits tutor children in deprived neighborhoods after school hours and run constructive, supervised after-school activities. Non-profits operate hostels that help

young offenders. They find volunteers to help out in these ways. And they raise money to make these activities happen.

"C" is Ethiopian and lucky. He grew up in a neighborhood not unlike Adameh's in Rehovot. He was bullied and teased at school. He sniffed glue with the gang. He drank alcohol, and stopped going to school – there was no point, he was too behind in his work and no longer cared. He carried a knife and one day used it on another boy. The boy didn't die.

C was 15 then. He is not a murderer. His father cares a lot about him, but has work and isn't home to discipline him. He doesn't know how to discipline him. C's mother is at home and also doesn't know what to do

about her son. There are siblings, too, who don't know how to help him either. He's a wonderful kid, artistic, graceful and thoughtful. He just grew up in a place where life is tough. He ended up on the wrong path, the path that could ruin his life forever. And he didn't know where to find help.

After the knifing, the police caught him. He was sent by court order to a closed center for a few months, for observation and assessment, and then was referred to our non-profit organization for rehabilitation – Wing of Love.

He was a surly, defensive boy, who alternated between sleeping and smoking. He began to work in the Wing of Love wildlife park and care for the animals. He began to draw and paint, ask questions, help others, take responsibility and catch up with his schoolwork. His counselors have provided good role models, creative outlets for his energies, as well as considerable patience and understanding for his difficulties. He wants to live a normal, happy, productive life – and has a right to this. Wing of Love helps the state to help him.

The boys working in the Wing of Love wildlife park have police records that include knifing and stealing, but they have hope; they and their counselors hope that they can still learn to become good citizens. The 16-year-old boy now under arrest in Rehovot has no hope. Although he had police records, he was not referred to a non-profit organization for rehabilitation. He was unlucky.

Wing of Love and similar organizations are showing that there is a solution – a costly solution. It depends on volunteers, financial donations, community involvement and the involvement of the state. Our rehabilitation effort involves tailor-made education, care for animals, a strong work ethic, mutual respect, bicycles, a daily routine, clear boundaries, fresh air, lots of dedicated, professional staff and many other ingredients.

The alternative is even more costly – too costly: Without such rehabilitation efforts by Wing of Love and other non-profit organizations, there will be more teenage murders, not only in Rehovot.

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