

THE DENVER POST

The death of Ginsburg, music of Hamilton, spirit of girls – and hope

Hamilton

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In a confluence of events I could not have imagined years ago, or perhaps didn't want to, I found myself celebrating the first night of Rosh Hashanah alone with my 7 year-old daughter, in an unfamiliar church courtyard with two dozen strangers, watching the film production of the musical *Hamilton*, as I sat heartbroken by the recent death of Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg.

Divorce, the pandemic, a daugh-

ter in college in D. C., a senior in high school away for the evening, friends and family inaccessible due to virus restrictions, scuttled holiday plans set in relief my circumstances: a single dad — alone — with a second go-around at parenting a young girl due to a lovely, later in life surprise. A second chance to try to succeed and avoid failing in raising a young woman, in a world seemed bent on pushing our girls into corners, spaces that Ginsburg had so ferociously

tried to architect escapes from through legal acumen, resolve, and intellectual pugilism.

Under the stars, the music blaring, the evening felt thick with heaviness and pregnant with meaning, too much to capture. So I focused on what was another truth, that I must be one of the few people who know nothing of *Hamilton's* music, let alone have seen it. People hummed along around me, an ethnically diverse crew of girls,



slightly older than my daughter, clad in pajamas, sang along under masks as they did flips over playground bars and

reminded me of why I became a psychologist two decades ago, and the countless girls

and women I had seen, trying to understand their experiences and, best I could as a

privileged man, walk with them in journeys of discovery and healing. The dull eyes of one my first clients which haunt me still, those of a 6-year-old girl recovering from incestuous rape, seemed there in that courtyard, calling out my attempts and failures, both personal and professional, to be an ally. The night began to feel hope-

less as I imagined the flood of calamity I feared Ginsburg's passing would uncork. Teeth gnashing and hair pulling from fellow liberal friends and family buzzed my phone. My oldest daughter was walking to the U. S. Supreme Court to join mourners. What would we do? But then, as if propelled by energy I could never know, the young girls

gnashing and hair pulling from fellow liberal friends and family buzzed my phone. My oldest daughter was walking to the U. S. Supreme Court to join mourners. What would we do? But then, as if propelled by energy I could never know, the young girls around me, my daughter included, did something remarkable.

They began to dance.

Masked, bound by social distancing, the girls' gymnastics heightened to crescendo and all around me they twirled, flipped and did roundoffs, some landing perfectly, others slamming on their backs. I was a mere, hum-

bled spectator at their efforts. My daughter twisted and flailed, sometimes surprising herself and smiling, other times landing painfully. One girl perfectly, fearlessly, walked on her hands for yards on the courtyard's concrete path.

And then I seemed to hear *Hamilton's* music for the first time that evening – the words of revolutionaries gearing for a fight — “And when our children tell our story, they'll tell the story of tonight”.

What, I wondered, will it be? In that moment I could only hope. But I believed in the girls in front of me.

And I knew that if Ginsburg were there, she would surely have faith in them too.

Rick Ginsberg is a psychologist in private practice in Denver and the past president of the Colorado Psychological Association. He is the father of three children, a boy and two girls.

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