

MSU, continued from front page

time machine. I get to see old friends and teachers. I'm comforted when I hear the band playing the alma mater as I walk through a campus that I could navigate with a blindfold on.

For the students on MSU's campus last week and others in East Lansing, any warm feelings of nostalgia and the comfort of home are now tainted by the odor of gunpowder and echoed screams. They're tainted for me too. At times it has felt as though someone walked in my front door and wreaked havoc in my home. I hope that comfort isn't tainted forever.

I can't blame you if you're like me and you've succumbed to the everyday-ness of mass shootings. I'm ashamed that it took this happening at my home for me to feel something again, but I hope you'll read this and not want to be like me.

To a fault, I'm usually not the most emotional guy. For me, vulnerability equals discomfort. But I've cried more over the past seven days than I have in quite some time. I can say with certainty this isn't the last time that a shooting like this will happen. Odds are, it will probably happen in the home of someone reading this and shake them too — maybe it already has.

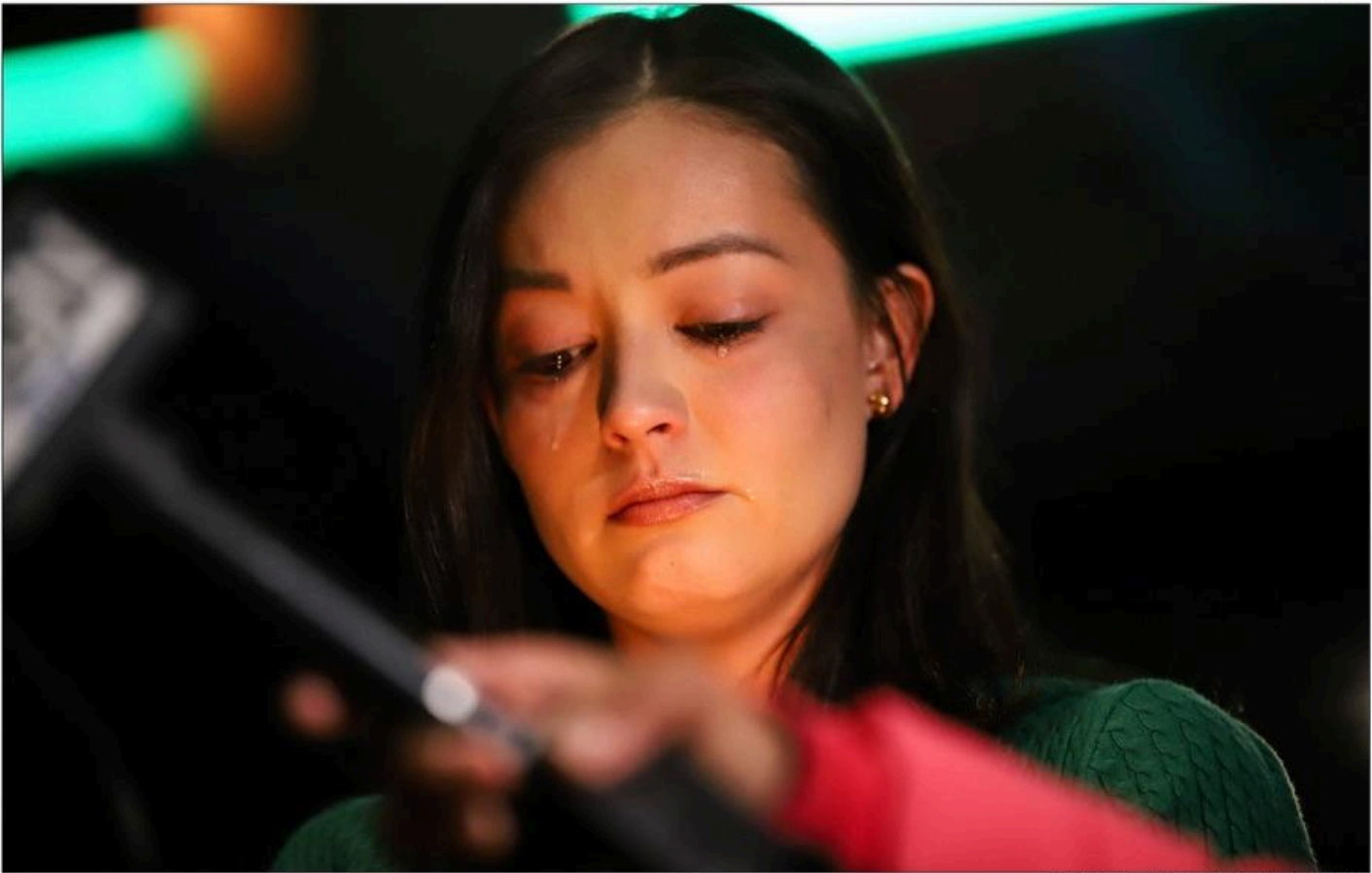
MSU head basketball coach Tom Izzo spoke at a vigil on campus last Wednesday night, and a few of his words have stuck with me since. He implored those in attendance to embrace their emotions and support each other.

"Be vulnerable. Don't be afraid," he said.

In ancient Greece, Spartans were legendary warriors, known for a collective toughness, accomplished only through their unwavering unity. As I look through photos of those in my hometown coming together in support of one another, it's obvious how fitting the symbol of Spartan helmet is for a group of people exemplifying support and community.

I used to think toughness and vulnerability were on the opposite ends of the human spectrum. This week has taught me that's not true. There's a toughness in being vulnerable. Armor is heavy, and it takes courage to shed it so others can better hold you up.

Our country's violent reality and relationship with guns won't change any time soon. We're going to keep going through this, and communities everywhere will have to come together, be vulnerable and support each other in order to heal.



PATRICK SLOAN- TURNER | THE DEPAULIA

Jacquie Becker, a Lansing, Mich. native, MSU Alum and Vice President of Chicago Spartans, grieves at the candlelight vigil in wake of last week's shooting.

Just as it is in building ourselves back up, I think togetherness is also the foundation for change.

There's a well-known battle cry at MSU sporting events, in which one side of the stadium or arena will yell "Go Green!" in unity and the other side will respond "Go White!" It'll give you goosebumps to hear and feel the unison of 80,000 people shaking the cement floor of Spartan Stadium with nothing but collective, raw, human desire.

This week, my perception of "home" has fundamentally changed. It's long been a Mmidwestern college town, but now, it's a little more abstract. As I walked down State Street in an MSU hoodie the other day and heard a "Go Green!" my reflexive response of "Go White!" made me realize "home" is people just as much as a place.

Like others, I desperately want change. I want sweeping gun reform. I want an effort from lawmakers to do something substantial.

I don't know exactly how that can happen, but I do know that if change does finally come, it'll be because people came together in the same way MSU was forced to last week. It will be for the sake of a larger, collectively shared abstract "home."

It will happen through community.

Read about the vigil held in Chicago for the victims of the shooting at Michigan State University on page 11.





Read The State News' editorial following the shooting



NICK KING | LANSING STATE JOURNAL VIA AP

Friends of Brian Fraser gather around The Rock on the campus of Michigan State University, in East Lansing, Mich., on Wednesday, Feb. 15, 2023, during a vigil honoring MSU shooting victim.