

NINERTIMES

**REMEMBERING
APRIL 30**



DAY OF REMEMBRANCE 2023

CONTENT WARNING:

THIS EDITION MENTIONS GUN VIOLENCE AND A PAST SHOOTING.

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Sunnya Hadavi

EDITORIAL

Monique Delagey **MANAGING**
Dezanii Lewis **COMMUNITY**
Kathleen Cochrane **NEWS**
Jessica Danesi **OPINION**
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COVER

Outline of the April 30 Remembrance Memorial. The memorial is found in front of the Kennedy Building, the site of the April 30, 2019 shooting.

Layout by Ashley Legassie

LOCATED ON THE LOWER LEVEL OF THE STUDENT UNION

NINER TIMES
UPTOWN AUDIO

NOVA LITERARY-ARTS MAGAZINE
MEDIA MARKETING
MIDAS MAGAZINE

THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT CHARLOTTE

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RESOURCES AND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

STUDENTS WHO ARE STRUGGLING OR NEED SOMEONE TO TALK TO CAN MAKE AN APPOINTMENT WITH CHARLOTTE'S CENTER FOR PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES (CAPS) AT [CAPS.CHARLOTTE.EDU/](https://caps.charlotte.edu/).

STUDENTS WHO WITNESS OR FALL VICTIM TO ANY FORM OF VIOLENCE CAN CALL THE EMERGENCY SERVICES & HOTLINES CAROLINAS MEDICAL CENTER:

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH/EMERGENCY: 704-444-2400

MOBILE CRISIS UNIT: 704-566-3410

SUICIDE HOTLINE: 1-800-273-8255

CHARLOTTE CAMPUS POLICE CAN BE REACHED AT THEIR EMERGENCY NUMBER, 704-687-2200, AND NON-EMERGENCY NUMBER, 704-687-8300.

THE DAY OF REMEMBRANCE IS SCHEDULED FOR APRIL 28, 2023, WITH THE DEDICATION OF THE APRIL 30 MEMORIAL BEGINNING AT 3 P.M. TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE APRIL 30 MEMORIAL, VISIT [NINERNATIONREMEMBERS.CHARLOTTE.EDU/REMEMBRANCE-MEMORIAL](https://niner.nationremembers.charlotte.edu/remembrance-memorial). FOR DETAILS ABOUT THE DAY OF REMEMBRANCE EVENTS AND APRIL 30, VISIT [NINERNATIONREMEMBERS.CHARLOTTE.EDU/](https://niner.nationremembers.charlotte.edu/).

THE DIGITAL REMEMBRANCE MEMORIAL, INCLUDING A PHOTO GALLERY, VIDEOS AND ORAL HISTORY, CAN BE REACHED [EXHIBITS.CHARLOTTE.EDU/S/NINERSREMEMBERAPRIL30/PAGE/HOME](https://exhibits.charlotte.edu/s/ninersrememberapril30/page/home).

THE J. MURREY ATKINS LIBRARY ARCHIVE DETAILS MANUSCRIPT COLLECTION FROM APRIL 30, INCLUDING MEMORIAL ITEMS FROM THE KENNEDY BUILDING, WHICH CAN BE FOUND AT [FINDINGAIDS.CHARLOTTE.EDU/REPOSITORIES/4/RESOURCES/1535](https://findingaids.charlotte.edu/repositories/4/resources/1535).

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

NINER TIMES EDITOR-IN-CHIEF REFLECTS FOUR YEARS LATER

I am the first Niner Times editor-in-chief who was not a student at UNC Charlotte on April 30, 2019. However, I still feel the impact of that day. I think about Ellis “Reed” Parlier, Riley Howell, their families and friends. I think about Rami Al-Ramadhan, Sean DeHart, Emily Houpt and Drew Pescaro. These are people I will never forget.

On April 4 of this year, I had the opportunity to meet and interview Reed’s parents, Brian and Julie Parlier, for a feature in this edition. I had the interview questions written down and felt confident, but looking back now, nothing would have prepared me for what happened during and after the interview.

Mass shootings and gun violence have become commonplace in our nation. Every week, I open Instagram and TikTok only to learn about another mass shooting, another tragedy. Every week, I see outrage and frustration toward the state of our nation. And every week, it gets easier to become desensitized to it all.

Speaking with the Parliers made it all feel real. It’s no longer something I just see on social media; it’s right across from me and all over this campus.

Through the Parlier’s stories about Reed, I could not help but feel their pain and anger but also their immense love for their son. I learned about the similarities between Reed and myself and what made him so unique and special. I thought about my parents and the love I have for them. I shook while asking questions, and I teared up on multiple occasions. After an hour and 22 minutes, we concluded the interview. I left with a heavy heart and mind and a lot to say.

As of March 28, there have been over 130 mass shootings in the United States according to a BBC article citing the Gun Violence Archive. Over 130 communities have been torn apart and even more families than one can count. With each shooting, every victim and community becomes a statistic. Those unaffected can move on as if nothing happened. But for the loved ones and their communities, it never will end. For us at Charlotte, this tragedy is something we can—and should—never forget.

Through my own reading, campus events and now this interview, I feel much more connected

with our campus community. I can begin to understand the effect of such a tragedy and all its complexities despite not being here when it happened. Not only about the way it impacts loved ones, but it can also bring people and communities together.

Following this tragedy on our campus, we’ve seen our community come together and remain unified. Starting with the vigil held the day following the shooting in 2019, students, faculty and staff came together to mourn and support the victims. With annual wreath-laying ceremonies and the construction of the new Remembrance Memorial, the University does its part in ensuring they are never forgotten.

We also now have The Riley Howell Foundation Fund, a foundation that provides “support to victims of gun violence and help[s] them meet their immediate needs” and the annual Mighty 4 Miler run to honor Riley. Directly aiding Charlotte students, there is the Ellis “Reed” Parlier Memorial Scholarship which has been made possible by the contributions of the Parlier family and is supported through the annual Reed Parlier Golf Tournament.

Four years after this tragedy, the majority of students from that time have graduated. What remains are the University staff, faculty and us newer students. As current students, we are responsible for remembering and educating one another and those

coming in after us. Not just on what happened on April 30, 2019, but, more importantly, the type of people Reed and Riley were. Not just that Rami, Sean, Emily and Drew are survivors, but rather by their lives and the people they have become.

We hope to do just that with this edition of the Niner Times.

The Niner Times Editorial Board has worked on the gathering and writing of the content in this edition. As student journalists, we feel that it is our responsibility to tell the stories of those affected, especially the Parliers and Howells, and provide that to Niner Nation. The Niner Times publishing a single article or gallery of photos is not enough, hence why we chose to create a full-length edition. We hope that this edition will serve as a resource, bring our community

together, and provide a way for everyone to remember what happened for years to come.

We would like to thank the Parlier and Howell families for taking the time to speak with us and tell us their stories. We hope this edition does justice and communicates all you want to share well. Thank you to Dr. Christine Reed Davis, dean of students, Dr. Kevin Bailey, vice chancellor for student affairs, as well as Brenda Shue and Brian Peck for being a big help in the organizing of interviews and providing the contacts that made this edition possible.

Charlotte Strong.

Sincerely,

Sunya Hadavi
Editor-in-chief



The Charlotte community left flowers and lit candles at the 49er Miner statue on May 1, 2019. | Niner Times File Photo

LETTER FROM THE CHANCELLOR

CHANCELLOR GABER'S MESSAGE TO NINER NATION

Dear Niner Nation,

In the aftermath of the darkest day in UNC Charlotte history, the University made a promise to never forget those lost and impacted. On Friday, we will fulfill that promise during a Day of Remembrance with the formal dedication of a permanent memorial to those affected by the senseless events on April 30, 2019.

The constellation garden will ensure that the legacies of Riley Howell and Reed Parlier will never fade and will offer a place of peace and reflection for our community and visitors. Designed to unite Riley's love of nature with Reed's passion for technology, the April 30 Memorial also shows the strength of the survivors and the students and faculty in Kennedy 236, and it serves as a testament to the power and resilience of Niner Nation.

I am appreciative to the Niner Nation Remembrance Commission, the Memorial Jury — chaired by Brook Muller, dean of UNC Charlotte's College of Arts + Architecture — and the Memorial Advisory Group for their work to make this lasting tribute a reality.

Much has been written and studied about the healing

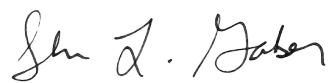
power of memorials. My hope is that this memorial — in the heart of campus — will help us continue to heal.

I encourage you to attend Friday's Day of Remembrance and memorial dedication if you are able. You can learn more about this and other Niner Nation Remembrance events for students at ninernationremembers.charlotte.edu.

Even for those of us who joined Niner Nation after April 30, 2019, remembering Reed and Riley and recognizing the strength of our survivors is a powerful responsibility and honor. Please join me on Sunday in pausing for a moment to do just that.

The memory of April 30 will never fade, and Niner Nation will never forget.

Sincerely,



Sharon L. Gaber
Chancellor



Students embraced outside the Kennedy Building following April 30, 2019. | Courtesy of UNC Charlotte

LETTERS FROM THE STUDENT BODY PRESIDENTS & VICE PRESIDENT

TIFE OLUSESI & ISAIAH GRAYSON:

As students, there are several things that will be burdensome as we progress toward our ultimate goal of graduation. One of the comforting notions we may sometimes overlook is that our struggles are shared by thousands of students who are navigating a plethora of circumstances very similar to ours. This is to say that our community is, and always has been, a place for us to relate, share and connect with each other beyond the confines of the classroom.

As we arrive at the four-year anniversary of April 30, we are given the honor of remembering

Riley Howell and Reed Parlier, who were abruptly taken from our community. The pain and grief we are left with are, in many ways, a monument to the sadness we feel over their loss and the place that they will forever hold in our hearts. However, the true spirit they exemplified was one of courageousness and love. With that in mind, and no matter how difficult, we are charged with carrying those same ideals with us as we interact with others in our community, just as they did. Our progress depends on the collective strength we draw from each other and

the dedication each and everyone one of us has to uplift those around us.

This year, as we should every year, let us take a moment to pause and appreciate the opportunities we have been given to uphold the standard that these two men set. Furthermore, let us continue to show the strength and resilience of Niner Nation despite us mourning and grieving over our own.

Ultimately, we are certainly shaped by the tragedies and events that transpire in our

community, but we are not defined by them. As such, Niner Nation will continue to hold Riley, Reed and all those affected by the tragedy on April 30 dear to our hearts. In doing so, we can continue to uphold their standard as we heal, grow and thrive alongside one another.

Humbly,

Tife Olusesi & Isaiah Grayson

Student body president & vice president

TATIYANA LARSON:

As I sit here on campus on this beautiful spring day, I can't help but think of all of my fellow students, especially those who were on campus four years ago today. As we remember April 30, 2019, I want us to recognize the heroes who were in the Kennedy Building. Riley and Reed, on behalf of the entire student body, we will absolutely never forget you. You were selfless students who will forever have an enormous impact on Niner Nation. The new memorial will be for you two. The constellation

garden will represent the celestial, starry heavens and symbolize hope, anguish, sadness and resilience. Students and members of Niner Nation, as you interact with the structure, the lights will become more dynamic, representing that the more of us who come together, the more support and power we can have amongst the community. We can now endure the memory of this day for the rest of time and create a sincere recognition of how strong Niner Nation is.

I also want to acknowledge those that were

directly affected by this event. Sean DeHart, Drew Pescaro, Emily Houpt, Rami Al-Ramadhan, Professor Adam Johnson and all the students who had to bear this trauma. You are all incredibly brave and strong individuals.

Students and faculty, as we remember this day, I want to encourage you all to take a moment to breathe, reflect and focus on yourselves. Your well-being is of the utmost importance. There will be a series of health and well-being activities for you to participate in if you so

choose. Be sure to check out the Niner Nation Remembers website for more information. I cannot emphasize enough how appreciated and loved each of you are. Should you need anything, remember there is an entire nation of Niners here to support you.

With love,

Tatiyana Larson

Former student body president

FOURTH ANNUAL APRIL 30 REMEMBRANCE DAY ON APRIL 28

by James Kmosko
Staff Writer

UNC Charlotte will unveil the Remembrance Memorial on Friday, April 28, the fourth annual Day of Remembrance. The memorial will commemorate the victims of the tragedy on April 30, 2019.

Chancellor Sharon Gaber will host the dedication ceremony outside of the Kennedy Building at 3 p.m. The dedication will include the Day of Remembrance's annual wreath-laying ceremony.

The ceremony is a tribute to Riley Howell and Ellis "Reed" Parlier, the two students who lost their lives on April 30, and the other students

and professors who were present at the time. Attendance is not limited to Charlotte students and staff; anyone can RSVP to attend the dedication.

The memorial is designed to be a "constellation garden," a series of metal arches that suspend strings of lights in the air. The lights are positioned to represent the stars that were in the sky on the night of April 30, 2019. The memorial will also be interactive, as the lights activate and change when touched.

A memorial wall will also be located outside the Kennedy Building from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Smaller memorials are assembled annually in

front of the 49er Miner statue, in the botanical gardens and at other places around campus.

From 12 to 1:30 p.m., the Charlotte Center for Counseling and Psychological Services will sponsor Canine Connection in the Health and Wellbeing Courtyard. The event will allow students affected by the day to interact with therapy dogs at no cost.

The University Recreation Center (UREC) will host a series of fitness classes, including yoga, zumba and cycling, from 8 a.m. to 6:15 p.m. A full list of the classes and times can be found on the Niner Nation Remembers website.

Niner Nation Remembers has also created

an online memorial that hosts photos, videos, letters and other media in remembrance of the events of April 30. Anyone with relevant media can submit it to the memorial and have it archived on the website.

Two students, Ellis "Reed" Parlier and Riley Howell, were killed in the April 30, 2019, shooting. Howell lost his life after tackling the gunman, giving his nearly 60 classmates time to escape. Four additional students, Drew Pescaro, Rami Al-Ramadhan, Emily Houpt and Sean DeHart, were injured in the shooting.

REMEMBERING ELLIS "REED" PARLIER

THE PARLIERS, PROFESSORS AND STUDENTS DISCUSS REED PARLIER'S IMPACT AND LEGACY

by Bryson Foster
Sports Editor



On April 30, 2019, an avoidable tragedy claimed the lives of two, including Ellis "Reed" Parlier. Reed was 19 years old but left an unforgettable impact on others.

"Reed didn't have to boast about what he did because he just did it," said his father, Brian Parlier. "Just like he was naturally born with his hair, he was also naturally kind."

Reed was born in Charlotte on Oct. 2, 1999, to Julie and Brian Parlier. He had a younger sister, Mallory. He attended high school at the Central Academy for Technology and Arts (CATA) in Monroe, N.C. In 2019, Reed was a sophomore at Charlotte studying computer science.

Reed was fascinated with objects as a child, including a train set he put together at age 2. Reed was active and engaged but, most importantly, was content. Parlier said his son was a trained thinker.

"We gave him a train set around 2, and he was meticulous when putting it together," said Brian Parlier. "He was very smart, and when we met with his first-grade teacher at a parent-teacher conference, I started to ask him multiplication problems, and he got them all right."

His mother, Julie, said her son was silent until he had something to say.

"He had a dry sense of humor, and he would make us laugh out of nowhere," she said. "He never caused us issues, and he made being a parent easy."

Reed has been described as a giver who made others feel wanted. Julie said his giving nature was present from a young age.

"He helped special needs kids, tutored his fellow students and helped his grandmother who had Alzheimer's," said Julie Parlier. "Reed would save money when he went out with his friends, and if they needed something, he would pay for it without asking for it back."

As a high school student, Reed gave back to his classmates.

"He was tutoring a student at his high school that had cancer, and Reed offered to help them

catch up so they wouldn't be left behind," said Julie Parlier.

In the days after the tragedy, Julie, Brian and Mallory saw butterflies that reminded them of Reed. Julie said the family always sees Reed in those butterflies.

"We had a lot of people around our house right after the tragedy. Mallory went around the garage to get away from all the people, and a Monarch butterfly landed near her," said Julie Parlier. "Then, one of my friends took me to a park to escape everything, and we stood over a water bridge, and two butterflies kept flying around my face."

Brian said he had a similar experience.

"When I was walking through the yard, two butterflies landed on my shoulders," said Brian Parlier.

Impact on other students

At Charlotte, Reed's impact has been felt by students and professors.

Nathan Weisskopf was the first recipient of the Reed Parlier Memorial Scholarship. He received \$72,000 from the University in honor of Reed. Weisskopf, a graduate of Reed's high school, is a junior at Charlotte studying software and AI.

Weisskopf was selected from 1,500 candidates for the scholarship and said being chosen was wonderful.

"It is an indescribable feeling having the scholarship. I was trying to quantify it when I received it, but I always wonder, 'why me?'" said Weisskopf. "I hope I have been able to do right by it through my school and extracurriculars."

"I never knew Reed, but I had friends that knew him. I remember an acquaintance from high school breaking down and crying after the shooting because they knew him," said Weisskopf. "It was in my life from the day of his passing, but it isn't in the same ballpark as his family and friends."

Weisskopf works for Lenovo STARS Teams as

a brand representative. He said his new job has allowed him to give back something he learned from Reed.

“Reed is someone who has given more than me,” said Weisskopf. “My favorite aspect of my new job is that I feel I can improve someone else’s day through my work.”

Weisskopf said Reed has impacted him by giving him freedom.

“Not having that burden on my parents and the freedom has allowed me to find who I am as a person, which I wouldn’t have without this scholarship,” said Weisskopf. “I am blessed and glad, but it wasn’t worth what happened to Reed.”

Weisskopf shared what people should take away from the tragedy.

“Reed wasn’t here for long but had such a major impact on others, and that should be enough to make you wake up every day and give your all to help those around you,” said Weisskopf.

Relationship with professors

Dr. Nadia Najjar taught Reed in his final semester. In Najjar’s class, she built relationships with students as they had to check in with her during projects.

She became close with Reed over the semester and described him as a quiet student with comprehensive knowledge of topics.

“He was in a class of 100 plus students, but I knew him personally because of those touchpoints,” said Najjar. “He was a quiet student, and I knew that he had a lot of knowledge in the topic and had a lot of experience outside of the regular curriculum.”

Najjar first heard the news of the tragedy after she had left campus. She was teaching a class in the Kennedy Building just an hour before.

“I immediately contacted all my students, asking them to let me know if they were okay,” said Najjar. “The next morning, the names came out, and Reed’s name is Ellis Parlier. I got to know him as Reed, and as soon as I heard his name, I told my husband that he was my student. I checked my class roll, and it was him, which was really hard.”

Najjar said Reed was beloved by his fellow students because he made everyone feel important.

“When I asked a question, he wouldn’t jump to answer but instead waited to let his fellow students answer the question. If no one raised their hand, he would jump in and speak,” said Najjar.

“We did paired programming in that class, and since he had that extra experience, he

would take the time to help other students learn by answering their questions. I could see that the other students appreciated his patience, and he created a bond with all of them.”

Reed was an avid video game player who had become friends with fellow gamers nationwide. Najjar said Reed taught her a final lesson after meeting his friends.

“I was honored to be invited to be a part of the celebration of life, and when I went there, I got to know more about him,” said Najjar. “I have a son, and at that point, he was 9 or 10 and was starting to get into gaming, and seeing Reed’s friends from gaming changed my perspective, as it allowed me to see how they connected. He taught me something even after he wasn’t with us anymore.”

Carrying on the legacy

Reed’s parents are carrying on his legacy by hosting the 2023 Reed Parlier Golf Tournament on Monday, May 1, at the Pine Lake Country Club. Since the event’s inception in 2019, more than \$750,000 has been raised in honor of Reed.

Reed’s father said the event was created due to the abundance of people hoping to help.

“People want to give in those situations, and we didn’t want to benefit from Reed’s death. So we set up a scholarship for students and the golf tournament,” said Brian Parlier.

Reed’s mother said the event continues to add more people each year.

“Finally, we made the golf tournament an annual thing. And each year, it gets bigger and bigger by raising more money for students,” said Julie Parlier.

Reed was a giver, and his impact continues to live on. The pain of losing a son is something that the Parliers will never forget. Brian said people should continue to live their lives even when tragedy strikes.

“The world is a great place, but sadly, there are bad spots along the way,” said Brian Parlier. “You can’t stop these tragedies, but we can’t shelter our students because we want them to achieve great things.”

Julie shared one thing people should take away from this event: “Live your life like it is the last day.”

A tragedy occurred on Charlotte’s campus four years ago, taking Reed from us. Reed made a lasting impact on those he encountered in just a short amount of time. Reed’s legacy will live on and has created everlasting beauty that will continue to grow on the University’s campus.



Mallory Parlier, Reed’s sister, (left) and Ellis “Reed” Parlier (right) | Courtesy of WFAE



The plaque of a tree planted in honor of Ellis “Reed” Parlier in front of Woodward Hall. Woodward houses the College of Computing and Informatics that Parlier was a part of. | By Sunnya Hadavi

REMEMBERING RILEY HOWELL

TEDDY HOWELL DISCUSSES HIS MEMORIES OF HIS OLDER BROTHER AND HIS LASTING LEGACY

by Bethany Ivan
Arts & Culture Editor



Riley Howell | Courtesy of the New York Post

In the fall of 2018, Riley Howell of Waynesville, N.C., enrolled at UNC Charlotte as an environmental studies major after transferring from Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College. Throughout his time at Charlotte, Riley was described as optimistic, joyful and selfless. Eventually, he was hailed a hero.

On April 30, 2019, a gunman opened fire on anthropology professor Adam Johnson's class presentations in the Kennedy Building. To prevent any more harm, Riley tackled the gunman and urged students to "go, go, go" for their safety, according to survivor Rami Al-Ramadhan. In the process, Howell died from his injuries along with his fellow student, Ellis "Reed" Parlier of Midland, N.C. Howell was 21 years old, and Parlier was 19.

After the shooting, both young men were hailed as heroes by their families, friends and their communities for their sacrifice.

Riley was not only a student at Charlotte and a hero, but he was also a friend, son and loving brother. Riley's younger brother, Teddy Howell, now 18 years old, gives an in-depth glimpse of who his older brother was before he lost his life.

Before his death, Riley was like everyone else: he was a big fan of Star Wars, liked spending time outdoors, especially time spent with his family and friends, worked out and listened to music such as The Rolling Stones. Their song "Jumping Jack Flash" was one of his favorites.

Teddy's memories of Riley

To Teddy, Riley was an older brother and role model to his siblings and everyone he interacted with.

"He was definitely like a big brother, but to us in that nature, he'd pick on you sometimes, but it was always out of a good-natured spirit. If you were ever in real trouble, he was right there. If you ever got hurt or anything, he'll dive right in head first to help you out."

Teddy described his brother as kind, caring and inspiring. Despite their seven-year age difference, it did not stop Riley from spending time with his younger brother.

"He would always put up with me because, of course, I wanted to hang out with him all the time. He and his friends, whenever they'd be over, I'd want to be right there. They probably didn't want to hang out with [his] nine-year-old little brother when he was 16. But he always did. I appreciated that. At the time, I didn't think anything of it because he would always hang out with me."

When Riley started college at Charlotte, Teddy described his relationship with Riley as "a big change" for him, as Riley and his sisters were closer in age.

Teddy recalled more memories of his older brother before his death, ones that he will always remember. Age and time never stopped the brothers from spending time with one another. Teddy explained their bond became stronger throughout his time in college.

"It wasn't until that first year he went to Charlotte that we became closer as not just brothers but as friends. He could be his true self, and I was growing into more of my true self."

Around the summer before Riley's death, another memory that stuck with Teddy was when Riley taught Teddy how to drive a boat.

"In the summer of 2018, we had this houseboat on a lake called Fontana near Bryson City. It's a floating house. It's pretty old and rundown, but it's fun. We always go there in the summer," said Teddy. "At the time, it was him, his girlfriend Lauren and I, and he taught me how to drive a boat. I was super nervous because I'd probably driven a car before, but a boat is sort of daunting because of the freedom you have to drive wherever. There aren't lanes or anything. You just sort of know to stay on the right side."

"That moment always stuck with me because he taught me how to do a lot of things. But that

was one of the biggest because I know for him, me and probably all of our family, that houseboat is like our favorite place in the world.”

Teddy was thankful that it was Riley who taught him how to drive a boat.

“I always knew I was gonna learn how to drive a boat, but to learn from him was such a special time with just us.”

Another memory Teddy recalled was Riley’s birthday. To him, Riley was “a big eater,” and their mother came across a certain dish that Riley would soon typically eat on his birthday.

“I don’t know how my mom found it. They’re called Kentucky Hot Browns. They’re open-face sandwiches, served on basically white bread. There’s gravy, tomatoes, bacon and thick-cut turkey breast on it. We’d always make those for his birthday.”

From the moment their mother made that one particular dish, Riley took a liking to it; inevitably, it would become a tradition.

“I think originally, Mom just made them one day. My sisters didn’t like them because they had raw tomatoes on them, and at the time, they didn’t like tomatoes. It became a tradition because Riley ended up really liking them.”

Riley’s legacy

In the aftermath of the shooting, Riley is remembered for his sacrifice and legacy. He was posthumously awarded a Purple Heart and the Bronze Star for his actions.

His memory was not only awarded but was immortalized as a Star Wars character. Lucasfilm sent a letter to the Howell family, where they expressed their deepest condolences and informed the family of the tribute to their son’s memory. The first mention of Riley’s character, Ri-Lee Howell, was in the book “Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker: The Visual Dictionary.”

Teddy recalled the day he and his family received the letter.

“I remember when we got the letter from Lucasfilm. We didn’t really know what the extent of that was or what all it was going to mean, but it was super cool.”

The Howell siblings’ former professor at Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College even informed Riley’s girlfriend, Lauren Westmoreland, about Riley’s appearance in the book.

“Lauren, Iris and my other sisters all had Mr. Boyd, [Riley’s old teacher]. He messaged Lauren because he had the book. We looked at the picture, and it’s literally Jedi Riley,” said Teddy.

“They used the last name Howell. Everything just sort of went off the rails right

there. I remember Mark Hamill retweeted it. It was just crazy,” said Teddy.

“I know Riley would feel humbled, like, ‘I probably didn’t deserve that’ because that’s the kind of guy he was. On the inside, he probably would’ve been ecstatic because he is an official character. Our initial reaction was just shock and wonderment. [Riley] would’ve been humbled but excited at the same time.”

In May 2019, the Riley Howell Foundation was founded. The organization was formed to help and provide counseling and funeral expenses to the families of victims who were lost to gun violence. The foundation is run and is made up of Howell family and friends, including Riley’s mother, Natalie Henry-Howell as the advisory board president.

Remembering Riley

To Teddy, Riley was not only his older brother but one of his best friends. He remembers his brother as someone who was always willing to go out of his way to help others.

“Watching him live as a person, he was always willing to lend a helping hand if needed. He was always willing to help anybody, really. He was not a judgmental person at all. I think that’s what made him such a wonderful person. He would help you if you needed it, and he’d probably go out of his way to help you if you needed it, no matter the situation.”

“Riley, as a person at his core, was willing to help. That especially showed on that day.”

Teddy admired Riley for his selflessness and how he has inspired others to improve one’s self and be a better version of themselves.

“It’s an amazing thing what he did. He definitely shouldn’t have had to, but it’s great that he did. I’m glad that people can take his story and find inspiration within themselves and appreciate nature in the way that he did, find a new hobby or do something to try and make themselves a better person.”

Teddy continues to live every day in Riley’s memory. His older brother continues to be a role model to others and himself.

“There are always ways people can improve; there are a billion ways I can improve. Riley is helping me every day because, now, moving forward, anything I do, I do it for him,” said Teddy.

“Because of him, even if it’s getting out of bed, which is sometimes the hardest thing to do in the entire day, I’d do it because he would want me to.”



Riley Howell (left) with family members. | Courtesy of the Riley Howell Foundation



Artist Shafi Adam created a piece of Jedi Master Ri-Lee Howell for the Riley Howell Foundation. Lucasfilm added Ri-Lee Howell into the Star Wars canon as a tribute to Riley Howell. | Courtesy of Shafi Adam

ABOUT THE APRIL 30 MEMORIAL

by Jessica Ceballos
Staff Writer

After four years, the April 30 constellation garden memorial to commemorate the deaths of Ellis “Reed” Parlier and Riley Howell is complete.

On April 30, 2019, UNC Charlotte had an active shooter on campus. The gunman killed two students, Howell and Parlier, and injured four others: Rami Al-Ramadhan, Sean DeHart, Emily Houpt and Drew Pescaro.

The shooting occurred in the Kennedy Building in room 236 at approximately 5:40 p.m.

The dedication of the memorial will occur on April 28, 2023, at 3 p.m.

“I think, and I hope, that area of campus gives a place for people to pause and wonder about ‘Why is this here?’ and read the plaque so that the students will be remembered,” said Kathryn Horne, director of planning, design and construction. “That’s the primary purpose is to remember the lives of the students that were killed and the students that were injured and to recognize the impact that it had on the University as a whole.”

The memorial was designed, installed and constructed by TEN X TEN, Hypersonic and Susan Hatchell Landscape Architecture. They were chosen as the finalists based on their design for the memorial by the Remembrance Commission. The total budget for the memorial is \$2 million.

The memorial was inspired by the idea that there is a network, or constellation, of grief and trauma that people share.

“It doesn’t take a lot to see that Charlotte was impacted greatly by this tragedy,” said Brian Parlier, Reed Parlier’s father.

According to Hypersonic’s UNC Charlotte Constellation Memorial Lighting Animations presentation, the memorial is a structure with 14 tubes arcing approximately 25 feet in the air.

The six points, or circles, where the tubes touch the ground represent the lives of each of the students who were killed or injured. The cables between the steel tubes represent the network of trauma. The lights represent the scale of loss.

“Our number one goal was that Reed, Riley, Drew, Rami, Sean [and Emily] are never forgotten,” said Julie Parlier, Reed Parlier’s mother. “But at the same time, this is such an exciting time in your life. It’s not something that I want people to dwell on, but it’s kind of like only going to church at Easter. I think the memorial was going to help with that. Hopefully, it’ll get people talking.”

The original design proposal had benches with Parlier and Howell’s names on them. In order to stay within the budget, the benches were eliminated. However, the design will still have a seating area on the pebble stones made of polished gray granite, directly under the structure, for people to lie on and stare at the lights.

The tubes, at the six points, are interactive with touchpads. People can touch the tubes, and the memorial’s lights will glow brighter. The more people interact with the structure, the brighter the lights glow.

1,440 LED lights are distributed across the suspended cables. The light animations will play 365 days a year from dusk until dawn.

There are particular days in the year when the lights will play in a different pattern. The dates are April 30, Oct. 2 (Parlier’s birthday) and Dec. 13 (Howell’s birthday). The birthdays will have a celebratory animation with balloons on the tubes, and the light designs will be based on what Parlier and Howell were passionate about. The anniversary of the shooting will have the lights dimmed for a respectful atmosphere.

There are three ambient modes and three

interaction modes for the memorial. Ambient modes are when the structure is idle and has no interaction.

The primary ambient mode is the “specific lights mapped to the star locations, frozen in space as of April 30, 2019, at 5:40 p.m.” The second ambient mode uses “algorithmic noise” to cause the lights to sweep and trickle around the structure. The third ambient mode will act like wind and water over the memorial by “flowing, rippling and branching.” The movement will flow from the center outward and from the outer edge of the structure toward the center.

The first interactive mode occurs when a person touches the touchpad sending a star across the structure to “form connections.” The second mode uses a slower motion on the touchpad with the user’s full hand to imitate an “organic light arm” to reach across the structure. The third mode is creating an energy or orb at the center of the structure that will grow in intensity as more people interact with the touchpads. Each of these interactions was created to connect visitors.

The design for the memorial is based on hope

and remembrance, according to Brook Muller, dean of the College of Arts + Architecture. Some of the landscaping has been chosen based on what the various plants represent.

For example, the UNC Charlotte grounds team has planted star magnolias, Princeton elms, allium and snowbells for April through May. For August through September, pink muhly grass, yarrow and aster were planted. Allium was chosen because it represents strength, and Aster was chosen because it represents hope.

The memorial has experienced some delays as it was set to break ground on April 30, 2022, according to a Niner Times article published in September 2021.

According to Horne, the delay was utility relocations in the ground that were not in the space they were anticipated to be.

In addition to the dedication of the memorial, the Niner Nation Remembers website has compiled a list of events that will take place on April 28 to reflect and remember the event that took place. This will be the fourth Remembrance Day at UNC Charlotte.



UNC Charlotte University Archivist Katie Howell (left) speaks with Brian and Julie Parlier (right) about the construction of the Remembrance Memorial. | Courtesy of UNC Charlotte

FACULTY PERSPECTIVES ON APRIL 30

by Zoya Zalevskiy
Layout Editor

April 30 has become synonymous with tragedy on UNC Charlotte's campus. It is a day of remembering lives lost and lives forever changed. Student perspectives are important when reconciling with tragedy, but students will eventually leave the campus. Professors, however, stay past the graduation of their students.

The Niner Times sat down with three UNC Charlotte professors to reflect on how April 30 affected the Charlotte community.

Dr. Jason Black is a communications professor at Charlotte and was the communications department chair in the spring of 2019. As a department chair, he dealt with many administrative tasks following the shooting and played a big role in outreach to students.

Dr. Nidia Najjar is a teaching assistant professor for the College of Computing and Informatics. She was Reed Parlier's teacher.

Jamie Strickland is a senior lecturer for the Department of Geography & Earth Sciences. She was Riley Howell's department advisor and professor.

Building a community

In the aftermath of the tragedy, students and faculty found strength together as a community, with faculty reaching out to their students and to each other.

Black reached out to as many faculty and students as he could to offer support and resources following the shooting.

"No one needs to be alone in general. But no one needs to be isolated in the aftermath of trauma and tragedy. It's the recipe for heartbreak," said Black. "And it's a recipe for feeling outside of the family that cares for you."

Having students that were involved in the shooting was something that affected Najjar and many of her coworkers. She said forming a connection with her colleagues helped her most throughout the healing process.

"[Fellow faculty member] support was tremendous for me. We tried to further form that support in our college," said Najjar. "The people that came together and offered support, that's what made the most difference."

Strickland says that seeing the community members gather and mourn a collective loss at the vigil the day after the shooting had the most profound effect on her.

"I think there were about 8,000 people who came to campus: current students, faculty

and administrators, but also alumni, families and community members. The University library's archivist did a tender and thorough job documenting and collecting elements from the spontaneous memorial that grew up at the foot of the stairs of Kennedy."

In remembrance

2023 is the four-year anniversary of the shooting, and with it, there is an air of introspection about the years that have passed. This year, Charlotte's Remembrance Memorial will be dedicated on April 28 during the Day of Remembrance ceremony.

Black said that he hopes the memorial will bring a productive space for students to reflect on and remember the students impacted by the shooting year-round.

"During this time of year, there's a solemn sense of remembrance. The key is to remember throughout the year. That's the case of a moment of trauma and tragedy, but it's also the case of moments of celebration," said Black. "The construction of the memorial is a material reminder of what happened at Kennedy that fateful afternoon. It brings a bit of hope to see the benches being built around the memorial where there will be reflection spaces for Riley and [Reed]'s remembrance, and also of what Drew, Sean, Rami and Emily went through that day as well."

Najjar said that strength and connection would come from the memorial, as it offers a space for this difficult piece of Charlotte's history to be remembered, along with the memory of her student, Parlier.

"Even though Reed is no longer with us, he is still a part of us. He is still part of this community, this story. Nothing can change that. I think that is very, very important," said Najjar. "It just made us stronger. It's important to say that these one-off events are not our story. It is not the story we want to tell, it was just put upon us, and we just had to deal with it."

Strickland said the completion of the Remembrance Memorial serves as a reminder that people are still healing and that we can continue to learn from each other.

"I am filled with a sense of gratitude for being able to reflect and to return to the present moment on the resilience of our campus community. As a campus, I think we are more aware of the need to think about all of the aspects of our humanity in relation to the higher education enterprise: academic health, yes, but

also physical, mental and emotional health," said Strickland. "Spring 2023 is the closest to a 'normal' spring semester we have had in the last four years. That is part of the reason I am so glad that the remembrance memorial is being dedicated this year. It is providing me with a sense of calm fortitude about the future that I find hard to explain more than that."

Looking forward

Everyone had a different experience surrounding the shooting. Professors, on or off campus during the time, all saw their jobs from a different perspective following the aftermath of the shooting.

Black said the shooting caused him to emphasize the importance of building positive connections, both in and out of the classroom.

"It heightened the idea of human fragility in the fleetingness, that we never know what's going to happen. And it's a reminder, anytime these things happen, there's a reminder of mortality that in the scheme of the universe, our place here is already so tiny," said Black. "But in the face of tragedy, you're reminded even more that we have to do good in the short time that we have."

Black recalls a message from former Chancellor Philip Dubois that impacted how he views the Charlotte community following the tragedy.

"We're all these different strands of different colors, backgrounds and experiences, and we come together. A thread you can break, but when you put 1000s of threads together, you can't break," said Black. "I loved his metaphor [about] fabric because it celebrates the diversity of our experiences, but also the fortitude and survival and strength."

Najjar said that the shooting exemplified the resiliency of Charlotte's students.

"[Students] were able to stay strong in the face of adversity like this, despite it being a tragic situation. They didn't let it destroy their goals or their image of this community," said Najjar. "They showed that you can still be strong in spite of things that have happened to you."

Strickland said that being more aware and making the classroom into a safe space for students became a bigger priority.

"We live in a very unpredictable and increasingly combative world," said Strickland. "Cultivating safe spaces in our classrooms and our campus community is a top priority."



Candles placed at the UNC Charlotte vigil on May 1, 2019. | Niner Times File Photo



PHOTOS FROM THE MAY 1, 2019 CAMPUS VIGIL

Niner Times File Photos



A. The Kennedy Building as seen from the fountain and plaza across from its entrance. Kennedy was the site of the shooting on April 30, 2019, in which two students were killed and four were injured.

B. UNC Charlotte students and community members raise their phones with flashlights on in solidarity as members speak out at the candlelight portion of the vigil held on May 1, 2019.

C. A UNC Charlotte student holds a candle while in attendance at the candlelight portion of the vigil on May 1, 2019.

D. The first portion of the campus vigil on May 1, 2019 was held within Halton Arena inside the Barnhardt Student Activity Center.

E. Students and members of the community gather outside of the Barnhardt Student Activity Center for the candlelight vigil.

F. Student leaders hold hands and grieve during the portion of the vigil within Halton Arena.

G. Members of the Charlotte community place flowers and candles overlooking the site of the campus vigil.

H. The American flag is flown at half-mast outside the J. Murrey Atkins Library on the day of the campus vigil.

I. Members of the Charlotte community left flowers and candles in multiple locations around campus following the April 30 shooting.

LETTERS FROM FORMER NINER TIMES EDITOR-IN-CHIEFS

JEFFREY KOPP | EDITOR-IN-CHIEF 2018-2019

Living in the aftermath of a mass shooting is something that no one is able to prepare you for. Those first few days and weeks after seeing your community be upended by violence are difficult, but the years that follow are still filled with grief and trauma. One singular act of cruelty by an individual has the ability to instill pain in thousands. It's a reality that far too many have faced, and the UNC Charlotte community is part of that unfortunate list.

That final day of April in 2019 is still clear as day to me. I was wrapping up my time as editor-in-chief of Niner Times and passing the torch to my successor, Madison Dobrzenski. Little

did I know that my time in charge would be extended to manage the organization through a crisis. Reflecting on that time, there is a strange sort of mental block formed that prevented me from processing the actual event, perhaps so I could focus on the task of covering the shooting and putting out a special edition of the print newspaper to honor the victims. Only as the years have passed have I been able to fully realize just how traumatizing it was to live through a college mass shooting.

I don't have an exact number of the shootings that have occurred since April 30, 2019, in the United States, but I know it's a lot. Every single

time I get a news notification that one of these evil acts has been committed, I flash right back to the moment when I was frantically running across campus in fear for my life. I hear the screams of fellow students pouring out of Atkins Library, warning of an active shooter. I feel the vibrations of messages from the Niner Times editor group chat blowing up my phone as everyone realized what was unfolding. I feel the dread and confusion as I call my mom whilst running, looking for some sense of direction and comfort in the chaos. It is a complete reliving of the darkest day of my life.

I don't have an answer for how long this

trauma follows survivors. I do know that mass shootings and gun violence are major problems in this country. For as long as that problem is ignored by policymakers and the general public, the survivors left in the wake will continue to be haunted by each new killing spree that makes headlines. If you were on campus that day or were personally impacted by another shooting, you surely know how retraumatizing it is to bear witness to the cycle of gun violence in the United States. Sharing personal experiences is crucial for painting a better picture of the consequences of this American crisis. It also lets us all know that we aren't alone.

MADISON DOBRZENSKI | EDITOR-IN-CHIEF 2019-2021

I was editor-in-chief of the Niner Times from 2019-2021, meaning that when the April 30 shooting occurred, I was just hired.

I'm going to be honest, when I agreed to write something about the April 30 shooting, I thought it would be easier. The more I tried to write, the more I realized I didn't know what more to say, and, hey, who really cares what I think anyway?

The answer probably is not a lot of people. However, the main thing that got a lot of us through that day, and the past four years, has been a sense of community and the feeling that we are not processing or experiencing this alone. So I am going to talk about some reflections and experiences I've had, and maybe someone will resonate.

One thing that I found strange shortly after the shooting and even now is that there is a Wikipedia page dedicated to the April

30 shooting. It's thorough, detailed and even timestamped. I read it again recently, and even with all the details they provide, I don't think anyone can properly explain how it felt to be on campus that day.

My personal experience of the shooting began in Crown Commons; I was grabbing dinner before the Waka Flocka concert. I was in the pasta line when I received texts from the Niner Times editor group chat. We typically messaged that chat anytime something happened on campus, big or small. The texts were flooding in from people that were closer to Kennedy than I was. There was about a 5-7 minute window before the Niner Alert was sent, where I had this information and had to figure out how true it was and what to do with it. I sat down and informed my friend of what I knew. I wanted to go downstairs to the newsroom, but I was also paralyzed with fear. I waited too long and ended up in lockdown in the Student Union for four

hours. When they were confirming it was only one shooter, there was definitely a lot of concern about where possible second locations could be. Along with the rest of the students on the top floor of the Union, I refreshed every social media platform and news source possible.

It was tormenting to take in so much information about not only my school but my home, being the scene of so much violence, panic and grief. When it came time to report on the tragedy, my team and I did our best, and I know it tore a lot of us apart.

April 30 still feels like a day where I should feel no joy. I've been invited to events or hangouts on the date or days leading up to it, and it always feels so wrong. It is a day of mourning. I should be sitting in front of Kennedy with flowers. I should be in bed uncontrollably sobbing. I should be torturing myself by reading everything about it. I should be praying for everyone that was in Room 236. I don't know

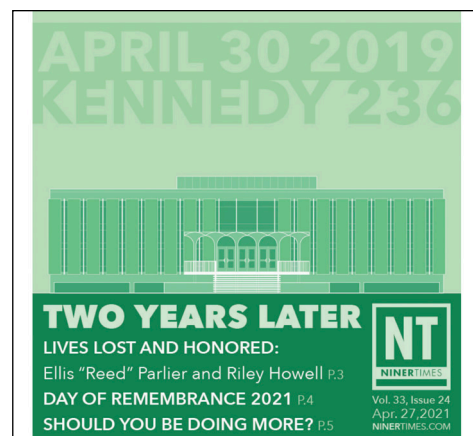
if there will ever come a time when I don't feel that way. In addition, I don't know if people that didn't experience it will ever understand that.

To UNC Charlotte, my home of 5+ years, the place that provided my education and brought me so many memories: I promise I see you as more than a place where tragedy struck.

To the current students who maybe weren't present for the April 30 tragedy: Please keep the survivors, victims, victims' families and anyone impacted by the shooting in your thoughts and prayers on April 30. Please respect your school's history.

To Reed and Riley: I am so sorry your lives were taken in a place where you should have been thriving and learning.

To the victims' families: I think of you constantly. I am so sorry, and I will never know your pain. I am sorry they were taken from you in a place they should have been safe.



Previous covers of the Niner Times issues for remembering April 30, 2019. | Niner Times File Photos

APRIL CARTE | EDITOR-IN-CHIEF 2021-2022

I was a freshman, excited to finish my first year of college and ready to celebrate the year. So excited, in fact, I had planned to leave work early that day to make it back to my dorm in time for the LDOC concert. I left my outfit out on my bed, I curled my hair before I left to save time, and I packed an extra snack so I wasn't hungry before the concert. Suddenly, it's just before 6 p.m., I'm rushing to leave work, and my boss comes to find me, "I wouldn't leave yet; I just got a notification saying your school is surrounded with helicopters right now," she says. I run to find my phone and see the Niner Notice first: Run, Hide, Fight. I see a text from my mom second. She took a job at the University about six months prior to April 30. Luckily, she left work early that day. Then the texts really start rolling in. My roommates, college friends, my friends from home, family

in different states, the list goes on. Two words: "I'm safe." But I felt guilty for being safe; that I wasn't with my friends in our dorm room and that two members of Niner Nation weren't ever going to make it home to their loved ones. I've learned more about survivors' guilt since then, it's normal, but it felt so wrong at the time.

Instead of returning to campus that night, I went to my parents' house, and the first thing I heard when I walked through the door was the sound of the news. I remember instantly shutting down, and the frustration began. How did this happen? Why at my school? I sat down to watch the news hoping to get some answers. The next day was the vigil, and I knew I wanted to attend. When I returned to campus, it felt like time had stopped for everyone. There were belongings laid around in random places on campus, my outfit for the concert was still laid

out just how I had left it, and there was very little movement on campus. It was brutally quiet. The vigil changed that. People were pouring into Halton Arena with wet eyes and big packs of tissues. Many people without seats, all there to support one community. Those were the two hardest days of my life. I felt so many emotions and knew very little about how to process them.

I wish I could say that four years is enough time to heal from a day like April 30, but healing truly has no timeline, especially when we live in a country that refuses to protect us from gun violence. When your healing process has to pause and start over every time there's another headline. As I sit here writing this, the Gun Violence Archive has documented 130 mass shootings in the United States this year. Most recently in Nashville, Tenn. My heart aches for anyone that has to grieve the loss of their loved

ones. And it also aches for all the survivors. Everyone that will choose a seat closest to the door in case they need to escape. Everyone that feels extra jumpy at loud noises. Everyone that's triggered by the sight of a mugshot. Everyone that will encounter more than one mass shooting in their life because policy change just feels like a conversation with little action. But having these hard conversations is important.

I wasn't even on campus at the time of the shooting, yet every detail of that day and the days following is ingrained in my memory forever, which is true for many people that experience dark days like April 30. I'm thankful for my time at the Niner Times and how we have chosen to cover this day every year: telling stories, grieving as a community. But I wish, more than anything, we had fewer yearly grieving anniversaries in this country.

EDITORIAL: WE CANNOT FORGET TRAGEDIES

by Niner Times Editorial Board

Jessica Danesi, opinion editor

Gun violence is a tragic problem plaguing the United States. Charlotte is not exempt from this issue. When tragedies like these occur, it is important to take time to reflect and remember their impact. While tragic events can spark political discussions, the way they affect individual people's lives and emotions can too.

After traumatic events, people experience feelings of shock, grief and fear. It is crucial to maintain empathy and awareness when discussing these events to be respectful of those directly impacted. During some political discussions, people use tragic examples callously and without regard for people who lost their lives or those people's living loved ones.

Advocating for change can be a necessary process. However, it must be done with sensitivity and emotional intelligence. Political arguments without consideration for victims and survivors are irresponsible and not as valid as others that acknowledge people's suffering. People are at the core of the consequences of tragedies, so they must have their feelings addressed.

Although I was not a student at UNC Charlotte on April 30, 2019, I remember hearing about it from my peers. I was in high school and considering attending Charlotte. This unfortunate event is a sign that things need to change, but also that our community can stand strong through adversity.

Lola Oliverio, assistant opinion editor

When the April 30 shooting at Charlotte

occurred, I was 15. I did not hear a single word about the incident until several days later, despite living barely two hours away.

It is important to note that the Gun Violence Archive explains that an incident earns the description of "mass shooting" when there are at least four victims shot — meaning April 30 just barely qualifies.

This casualty-dependent under-coverage is a critical issue: we are only made aware of shootings with an incomprehensible number of victims because the incidents with one to three lives lost are occurring so rapidly that mainstream media would be reporting about them every single day.

Many hear the words "two were killed" or "one was injured" and automatically deem the incident less severe than, say, a shooting with 15 victims. However, even one life lost is a tragedy. That one victim was someone's child, cousin, sibling, parent, friend or lover. One life lost is enough to ruin the lives of an entire community.

The lack of reporting 'smaller' shootings deeply desensitizes the public and severely underplays the number of gun violence incidents that take place every day.

We cannot remember tragedies if we are never made aware of them in the first place. The media must give all shootings intense coverage, or else those deemed "insignificant" will simply fade away after the next news cycle, despite being life-altering for everyone involved or affected.

We cannot forget April 30, 2019. We cannot forget about any shooting, no matter how many victims. Gun violence will not go away if we

continue to refuse to acknowledge its frequency.

Monique Delagey, managing editor

I was in high school when it happened. I remember coming home from school and hearing the news on the television. I remember scrolling through social media that day only to see the words "another mass shooting." They explained this tragedy like it was just a number to a statistic. They said it as if the lives lost too soon were just names for a list. They were filled with youth, ambition and hope. These were lives that were loved and cherished. Those around them were forever changed by tragedy, and yet after that day, no more words were said.

The students and the families were affected by loss and pain, only for it to be named "another mass shooting." Why have we based the violence committed against so many on so few words? When did the countless number of American youth affected by gun violence just become "another" tragedy? We should never have been so desensitized to names on a list or a number on a statistic.

The victims that day were like many of us. They did not imagine it could have ever happened to them until it did. If we forget them, we forget how quickly our lives, too, could change in an instant. If we forget the students that were lost, we forget how important they were to the lives of many. We must never forget Reed Parlier and Riley Howell.

Jackson Martin, assistant news editor

I remember listening to WFAE that evening

on April 30. I listened as journalists recounted what happened at my future school. I had recently committed to Charlotte that fall, and I was feeling kind of romantic in the process of looking for a dorm room. Charlotte looked like a heavenly, dreamlike future for me. It was a darker time after April 30. Something I was really excited about was now soaked in blood and anxiety. I wondered what my friends who already attended Charlotte were thinking about; I wondered if they were alright. Moving to college is already a big change for all first-year students. They should be worrying about making friends and good grades, not identifying an exit strategy in their classrooms.

Gun violence is an epidemic in the U.S. According to ABC News, 11,523 people have died by gun violence in 2023 as of April 10. This statistic carries weight, but it does not loom over our history quite like the Kennedy Building. I am haunted every time I walk past that building. It's hard to truly feel a statistic, but it's not hard to feel the loss Charlotte faced before I even attended the school.

We carry on. Day by day, I watch the Remembrance Memorial fall into place. Day by day, people continue to fall victim to gun violence. Our actions are influenced by our memory. I encourage our readers to engage with Riley and Reed's stories. I encourage you to think about them when you walk past Kennedy. People will continue to die, but it takes collective thought to create any sort of change. Think about them. If we don't think about this issue, history will repeat itself.

#CHARLOTTESTRONG

DAY OF REMEMBRANCE 2023