

HOW A TRAGEDY AND A WISE WOMAN'S GENEROUS HEART IGNITED THE MIRACLE THAT LED TO LOVE

By Brenda Zosky Proulx

Many healing years had passed after the brutal murder of Daniel Rudberg, when suddenly incidents of youth violence were all over the news. Mostly they were fueled by increasingly drastic social and familial dysfunction, and by drugs, gangs and media violence.

And so **Twinkle Rudberg**, Daniel's widow, began to believe that the fourteen-year-old boy murderer of her husband was also a victim. Who and what was really to blame? The neglectful, abusive parents? Poverty? Isolation? The taunting bullies at school? Did these factors make him more susceptible to the role modeling he saw in violent entertainment, especially video games? **Could a tragedy like hers be prevented? How?**

At the same time two Montrealers, unknown to Twinkle or to each other, were on the same track.

Stan Chase was a community-based art educator at Dawson College's outstanding professional photography programs. He had already begun to recruit at risk youth – from Montreal's extensive alternative schools network to learn basic photography with him after school, at Dawson College. His goal was to provide a safe, creative, inspiring outlet in an educational setting to help youth to overcome their problems, especially related to violence.

Brenda Zosky Proulx, a journalism teacher at Concordia, had recently created a graduate course called 'How the media cover diverse groups.' Students were given a free hand as to which group they would research. One chose youth. Surprised at first, Brenda immediately agreed that it was an excellent idea since the media, who almost never cover youth issues, even

seemed unwilling to explore the recent hike in youth violence.

Wouldn't it be great, Brenda thought, if someone brought together youth whose lives have actually been touched by violence – and if that someone could guide them, as budding 'journalists', to explore the causes, the impact, of violence, and ways to prevent it? They would develop critical thinking skills, written and oral communications skills. It could change their lives.

One day, a local politician came to talk to Brenda's class about how the media portray the Black community, and he brought an uninvited guest: artist, teacher **Clifton Ruggles**. Impressed by the insights on youth violence that Clifton added to the discussion, on a whim that turned out to be a key to LOVE's future development, Brenda took down Clifton's phone number.

Brenda began to talk incessantly to her family and friends about the journalism-based violence prevention program she was planning.

WHAT WERE THE ODDS?

Meanwhile, Twinkle, still in pursuit of a violence prevention program, went to a McGill Faculty Committee made up of both law and social work professors. "Could you help me to develop an idea and a program that would help youth to reject violence?" Twinkle asked the group of heavy-weights around the table....

And to her shock and amazement, Justice Michel Proulx of the Court of Appeal of Quebec immediately answered with his well known enthusiasm. "Absolutely!" adding, "and you have to meet my wife, Brenda Zosky Proulx. She has a great idea."

So Twinkle immediately called Brenda to hear her idea. Brenda immediately called Clifton Ruggles to ask for help. Clifton immediately insisted that we had to call Stan Chase at Dawson College because Stan could make it happen!

And almost overnight Twinkle's dream became a reality.



*Les premiers participants au programme de LOVE
LOVE'S very first program participants*