



Residents rally for peace at Freedom Hall

by tony lee / metro boston

SEP 12, 2006

BOSTON – Just days after the city suffered its 50th homicide this year and only blocks away from where it happened, state and city officials, family and friends of murder victims made a strong call for peace yesterday at Freedom Hall in Dorchester.

Fueled by the efforts of the parents of Herman Taylor III, 18, who was shot to death near his Roxbury home July 12, the rally was followed by a march through the streets of Grove Hall and a vigil.

Battling through tears, Sarah Coleman, Taylor's mother, said her son's zest for life was the inspiration to do something more than grieve when he died.

"He was one of the most open people, and had a natural ability to deal with adversity with the greatest of ease," Coleman said.

Adversity was dealt with often in neighborhoods like Grove Hall this summer, when violence gripped the city and concerned officials were intent on taking back the streets.

"Peace is more than just a state of mind, it's a course of action," said an impassioned Larry Mayes, director of human services for the mayor's office. "We must demand what is right and prohibit what is wrong."

Holding a sign with the name of four recent murder victims, Carmen Velasquez, a Dorchester mother of three, is hoping rallies such as this one can help prevent future tragedies.

"It scares me when [my two teenage sons] are not around," Velasquez said. "It's hard to lose a child. I don't want to take that chance."